

Special rules for BHGS Challenge 2023 & now updated for 2024

Foreword

It has been 6 years since DBMM v.2.1 was published, and various issues have come up in the meantime that are beyond the scope of the Clarifications document. These proposals, which we have called DBMMx (x for experimental), are put forward by the Challenge Organiser and a team of other experienced players solely for use at the BHGS Challenge in 2023 on a purely experimental basis.

This is NOT a draft version 3 of DBMM, which would be a matter reserved for WRG and in particular our esteemed author, Phil Barker, who owns the copyright. They are more in the nature of experimental “house rules” applying to one competition only, that we hope will improve gameplay, present some new tactical challenges, or adjust issues that have had many players asking “why?” for years. That said, the results of the experiment may inform any future development of the official DBMM rules (so give us plenty of feedback).

There will inevitably be a lot more items that DBMM players out there (including us) would like to change. Challenge 2023 is a Book 1-dates competition; therefore we focussed on a limited number of issues that have most relevance within this period. We do not pretend that the changes in this document will be perfect. The intention is to use and develop these at [Challenge 2023, 24, 25 and 26](#) as an experiment to see whether they work in the heat of competition. We hope that this will be beneficial and foster even greater enjoyment among players.

[This is now updated to include a couple of changes arising from 2023 and some new changes for 2024 – and hopefully some interesting alterations additions to Stratagems. – Some of last years will get a stronger test with this being Book 2 in 2024 - Those new to 2024 are highlighted in green.](#)

We will start with the one that’s been the hardest to crack – this started as a mechanism to permit contact when a geometric ploy or more likely geometric consequence of trying to contact the elements that form a T and contact currently can’t be made which is highly frustrating. It quickly expanded to look at making contact easier in some cases (whilst still retaining the ability to protect flanks). It is now the first two changes listed below – it has not been easy and its probably taken as much time and effort as the rest put together and even with that it may still need the caveat - unintended consequences may be overruled by the umpire.

EMTLU

Rule change:

A moving element or group not in contact with enemy can use EMTLU (without needing to be in a TZ) to line up with an enemy flank or rear edge it will contact, or front edge up to 160p ahead. This EMTLU counts as straight forward for the purposes of (a) initiating close combat with an enemy corner, or (b) moving directly towards any enemy exerting a TZ.

Purpose:

To enable attacks on enemy flanks, rears or corners that can currently only be contacted by an attacker that is already suitably lined up and orientated because an enemy TZ prevents lining up while in contact.

Contacting a flank edge in a TZ

Rule change:

This special rule may allow you to contact an enemy element's flank edge when a TZ would normally prevent you lining up with the element contacted.

However, it does not apply to “legitimate” TZ protection. If a hypothetical friendly element was already lined up with the enemy element's flank edge to be contacted, and moved straight ahead, would the contact be allowed? If NO, then this flank edge is protected, you cannot use this special rule to contact it.

This special rule allows an attacking element or group to initiate front-to-flank combat when the attacker is already lined up with the TZ-ing element; or lines up with it and makes/remains in contact with the enemy flank edge. (If it was a group move, the element ending in flank edge contact and the one lining up in the TZ may be different).

This rule does not allow you to ignore other TZs affecting you before you reach the one you are lining up in.

If the contact is allowed: when “turning to face” happens in the turn sequence, the contacted enemy lines up in front edge to front edge combat with the element in contact (the one in contact with its front corner if there is a choice).

Note: The normal exemptions from turning to face a flank contact (e.g. front edge is in combat) apply. If the enemy does not turn because another friendly element is in close combat with another edge, the attacker is treated as in close combat with it.

Purpose: Correction of a rules-anomaly that can prevent elements being legally-contacted because the need to line up with the contacted element conflicts with TZ restrictions.

Terrain placement

Rule change:

In addition to the normal terrain-placement rules:

Any 2 FE difficult going must be at least partly within 400p of a short table edge.

Any 1 FE difficult going must be at least partly within 800p of a short table edge.

As usual, any terrain pieces that cannot be placed are discarded.

Purpose: A large piece of difficult going dominating the centre of the battlefield can easily create a non-game, where the players either physically cannot get at each other or one player sits in the terrain and the other won't go in. There were exceptionally few set-piece historical battles which involved terrain of this type in the centre of the battlefield (an awful lot seem to have no DBMM-style terrain at all). We recognise that armies for whom light infantry are the dominant troop-type can need difficult going, but by restricting it to be at least mainly near the edge(s) of the table we hope to provide more opportunities for both armies to get to grips and both players to have a game.

Irregular cavalry

Rule change:

Irregular Cv(S) and Cv(I) are not clumsy in good going (same as Irr Cv(O)).

Purpose: Clumsy Irr Cv(S) and (I) have been a “?”-factor for new players (and old hands) since v.1. Making them as manoeuvrable as Irr Cv(O) seems intuitive and brings their on-table behaviour more into line with their point cost. They remain cheaper than their Regular equivalents due to the latter's ability to make a 3rd march-move for no extra PIP cost and to be moved with a Regular sub-general's extra PIP.

March moves

Rule change:

You can march move again after march-moving less than full distance.

Purpose: It is an odd effect of the current march rules that in some circumstances you can get closer to the enemy by march-moves if you start from further away. This rule-change addresses that anomaly, although a player that wants to move short in order to start the next march move from just outside the 400p march-restricted area will still have to pay the PIP-cost for a short move.

Additional sideways shift for group moves

Rule change:

A group move can include a sideways shift of up to 40p to do any of:

- avoid entering or being blocked by a terrain feature that the move would otherwise reach;
- avoid this move interpenetrating or being blocked by a friendly element or elements;
- align its side edge with the side edge of a friendly element or group up to 240p further forward (need not be directly in front).

Restrictions:

You must move at least 80p measured as a straight line from start to finish.

The extra move distance is measured (same as existing shift to line up with friends 240p ahead).

Elements can participate in only one such shift per bound.

Cannot be combined with contracting into, expanding from, or turning 90 into or out of column.

Cannot be combined with EMTLU.

Does not count as straight ahead, but is not a difficult evolution (same as existing shift to line up with friends 240p ahead).

Purpose: It can be exceptionally frustrating to find that a group of elements just clips the corner of difficult going that you'd thought you'd lined up to miss, causing potentially-fraught discussions between players about what was intended at deployment. Also, the sideways shift to line-up with friends (6th bullet on page 29 of the hard-back copy of the rules) currently only allows troops to line up with friends that are already directly ahead, not slightly off to the side. We have deliberately not permitted a shift of any more than 40p, in order to try to avoid this being used by players as an easy way of manipulating match-ups. Because it is a non-straight-ahead move, it will cost extra PIPs for clumsy irregulars.

Halts

Rule change:

You can apply a halt to a subgroup of a larger group, but you cannot halt part of a group and let other parts make spontaneous advances.

Purpose: Correction of a rules-anomaly where non-impetuous troops in a group with impetuous troops can increase the PIP-cost of the halt. Think of a group of Companions with a Thurophoroi in tow.

Light Horse interpenetration

Rule change:

Light horse moving straight forward or straight back can pass through friendly light horse or psiloi facing in the same or opposite direction when making tactical, march, flee (other than any initial recoil), or rout moves.

Purpose: The ability of psiloi to pass through other skirmishers but not light horse to do the same is one of those “?” rules for new players and many old hands.

Fast grading-factor effect

Rule change:

When applicable, instead of getting a -1 on its own total, a Fast element gives its opponent +1.

Purpose: To slightly mitigate the combat disadvantage of (F)-troops, which at present tend to be avoided by players. See also some of the AP changes below.

Baggage(I) outcome on equal scores (Removed in 2024)

Rule change:

Baggage (I) scoring equal to opponent in close combat stand (instead of being destroyed).

Purpose: We are changing the AP value of baggage. Having increased the cost of Bge(I), this special combat effect is no longer needed.

[This has been removed for 2024 – see below](#)

Cavalry outcome versus warband

Rule change:

Cavalry losing to warband, but not doubled, in the warband bound, recoil (instead of flee).

Purpose: This is one of those “?” rules for new and old players.

Pursuit by regular auxilia

Rule change:

Regular auxilia that are not impetuous may choose not to pursue foot.

Purpose: Regular drilled auxilia-types are not the “next step back from warband” that Irregulars often represent. By allowing them to choose whether to pursue, their role in Greek and Roman armies is better represented and players have more careful considerations as to whether to pick, for example, Reg Ax(O) or Irr Ax(S) in their armies. This also brings the extensive Cannae playtesting of Hannibal’s Gauls back into line. See also the AP changes below.

Points changes

We have made some 0.5 AP changes as the existing range of AP does not permit quite the fine rebalancing of AP values that we would like, if we restricted ourselves to whole numbers. In practice, we are all used to using 0.5AP for Hd(I), and most players use spreadsheets that should be easily adjusted and carry out the calculations automatically.

Troop type	AP	Purpose
Irr Cm(O)	3.5	Irr Cm(O) are never taken at 5AP. 3.5AP is proposed instead – somewhere between Irr LH(I) and (O). They remain clumsy.
Reg Ps(I)	1.5	All Reg Ps have a large manoeuvrability-advantage over Irr Ps in Difficult Going, which is often their natural habitat. Increasing the AP by +1 for a troop-type that starts at such low AP seems too much.
Reg Ps(O)	2.5	See above.
Reg Ps(S)	3.5	See above.
Reg Ps(X)	6.5	See above.
Irr Bd(F)	4.5	Irr Bd(F) should be a strike-troop, but are often regarded as a choice of last resort (e.g. Dailami are always taken as Ax(S) rather than Bd(F)). We hope that this, together with the change to the (F)-factor in combat, will better rebalance that choice.
Reg Bd(F)	5.5	See above.
Irr Bd(X)	5.5	Bd(X) count for many purposes as Bd(F). See above.
Reg Bd(X)	7.5	See above.
Irr Sp(O)	3.5	Sp should be the default heavy-infantry type of the ancient and medieval world. Instead, they are often shunned and alternative options sought where possible (e.g. armies that have a choice of Sp(O) or Bd(I), the rarity of armies based mainly on hoplites, etc.) The proposed changes are an attempt to better reflect their utility.
Reg Sp(I)	3.5	See above.
Reg Sp(O)	4.5	See above.
Reg Sp(S)	6	See above.
Reg Ax(S)	5.5	Reg Ax(S) are already good value and will benefit from being able to choose whether to pursue recoiling foot. They therefore need a small increase in cost to reflect this.
Baggage	See below	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bge(O) should be the default baggage type, (I no longer exists) • Bge(F) has been replaced by a stratagem • Bge(S) remains but have had ME and AP brought in line

Baggage costs	O	S
Irregular	1	3
Regular	2	4

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2024 Additions

Baggage.

There are now only 2 forms of Baggage – these are old baggage (S) magic carts and similar stuff. These remain pretty much as was however Irr Bge(S) now cost 3AP and are worth 3 ME and Reg Bge (S) have been reduced in cost to 4AP and provide 4ME. This gives an equal AP/ME cost for the majority of the baggage.

The other form of Baggage is static which for consistency we will still call (O) (although see stratagems) this works as follows.

For AP costs they count as Bge (I) so 1AP if Irr or 2 AP if Reg as per main rules

For deployment purposes they count as Bge (F) e.g. can go in flank sector and are not restricted to table edge.

For combat purposes and fortifying they count as Bge (O)

For ME purposes 1ME for Irregular and 2 ME Regular as previous

Baggage AP/ME ratio is thus 1/1 – for list purposes Bge listed as (I) or (F) are now Bge (O) or if Bge (O) exists are negated.

Brilliant Generals

Rules Change:

Cost of Brilliant Irregular generals , Brilliant Regular subs and Brilliant Regular ally generals are reduced to 15 AP.

Purpose: They have reduced functionality over a Regular C-In-C so should cost less

BUA 40 paces

Rules Change:

Remove the 40 paces good going around the BUAs – change this to BUAs which unless legally superimposed may not be placed within 40 paces of DGo or RGo area features. There is no terrain penalty for defenders on TFs.

Purpose: Removes a silliness and also have on good authority it was a mistake.

Impetuous LH(S)/Kn etc doing the cheesy controlled sponno

Rules Change :

Troops making a spontaneous advance do not add the extra 80 paces if the move starts outside 400 paces.

Purpose : This permits players to control sponno more than they should – E.g. decides this turn to go sponno to get the extra 80 paces then doesn't next turn ad nauseum- who hasn't done this and felt grubby. Downside legitimate use of this by group of warband is penalised so a revision may yet

be done pending testing.

NEW or ALTERED STRATAGEMS

These are intended to bring back old favourites into play again – smooth out some issues and to add risk and hopefully amusement/fun

Guides (Altered)

The introduction of the Commentary saw the Guides stratagem all but wiped out overnight which is a shame as this is an amusing stratagem. The issue with Guides currently is that you only move along roads if you are marching along them (because it's assumed that a march is in a column 4-or-so men wide, whereas a tactical move is in fighting formation, which is far too wide for a historical road). So it's easy to shaft guides by the simple expedient of a pair of known elements acting as pickets, restricting anyone within march-blocking distance from using the road. That then traps the Cv using the DGo, for example, restricting them to just 80p moves.

So change to say that the Guides stratagem allows an element or column to march along the marked road using the usual rules, or to tactical move along the route of the road if they were moving in good going (but still to count as in the other terrain for combat purposes). Additionally, the column will count the Guides bonus as the first element enters the “road” and will end when the final element clears it (or you roll the 1)

This is justified on the basis that the guide is taking the column through known easier routes, and the troops are following a guide so don't have to pick their way so carefully. Because only the route of the road is counted as good going, the group wouldn't be able to deploy out of column into DGo (unless Ps). By saying that the tactical move has to be along the route of the road, this avoids some clever dick drawing a road with a right angle turn in it just inside the edge of a Wd and then using that to do a 90-degree line to column manoeuvre.

Mobile Baggage (new – in essence replaces Bge(F))

Mobile Baggage stratagem costs 5AP plus 1AP per element mobilised which allows baggage to act like former Bge (F) as rules currently exist. The 5AP cost is waved (but not the 1AP) if you also have the Flank Attack Stratagem but this will count as an additional Stratagem.

Feigned Flight (new version replaces old)

Cost 5AP per command (more than 1 therefore can be bought)

It/they are listed as a stratagem in your OOB with appropriate points cost – if two or more are chosen this still counts as only one stratagem. They are assigned to commands when stratagems are allocated during deployment.

It works as follows - this is triggered by the commands general for 0 pips – who needs to be alive/on table - rather than C-in-C for 2 pips. Aside from that they are triggered as normal. The command executes its feigned flight as normal as does the oppositions pursuit – however rather than turn around automatically at the end of the enemies turn the command rolls 2d6 and on the result of a 5 will be classed as broken by other friendly commands. Checks are made at this point to see how these impact on other commands of that army ME re loss transmission and loss of overall army – and the results of this transmission will be permanent. Basically the feigned flight hasn't gone as well as been anticipated and the command and friends are confused and tendrils of panic are setting in.

The command other than its commander then all makes single only rout moves until it is rallied (or held). Similarly, the enemy considers them broken if not halted or rallied and will thus act accordingly (but will not make a double move to contact routers).

The command can be rallied if the commander assigns 3 PiPs to it or the C-in C allocates 4 PiPs to rally a command if its not his. The elements still routing on table will then turn around automatically that turn and remain halted for that turn. The commander can use PiPs (when he rolls 1 or 2) to halt groups as normal its assumed if he rolls a 3 or more he will rally the command. Aside from moving himself extra pips here will be lost as the command is halted.

A command may do a FF again as per rules after it has turned around or rallied from rout. You can do as many feigned flights as you have bought +1.

Note if a command has failed its Feigned Flight check and not yet rallied and sufficient elements have been lost by whatever means to dishearten or break the command then there is no coming back.

Night attack.- Replaces current

Replaces existing night attack rules. Cost 5 AP

If conditions for night attack are met: do this instead if stargem has been used

– otherwise ignore Night Attack

At the end of Deployment Stage 2 secretly designate up to 6 elements of Cavalry. Light Horse, Auxilia or Psiloi from a single command to carry out a night attack. After scouting Dice for each night attacking element. On a 1 it lost its way and is spent if Psiloi or Light Horse, destroyed if other. If the enemy used scouting, play the battle normally starting at the time deployment ended. If the enemy did not use scouting: Each remaining element carries out a close combat against an enemy baggage element, except if the enemy army baggage command contains non-baggage elements, these must each be attacked once first. These combats are considered isolated and use no tactical factors except weather, irregulars at night (for the defender), mounted troops in close combat at night, and TF (if the defending element will be deployed within TF and the command has at least 1 TF per baggage element). Only "destroyed" or "spent" results are applied. (Only) if there are excess attackers, several can attack the same element (one at a time). Cannot be used against elements within a BUAF. Start the battle at sunrise.

Early Spring Invasion. Replaces Hungry Horses

Cost 3 AP (as very restricted use conditions). – If this stratagem is used then if conditions are correct then “Hungry horses” weather effect will be in play otherwise it is not in use.

The below is not in use in 2024 but is under review for 2025

Deployment. (Potentially for 2025)

To reduce the impact of offset deployments. Stage 3. The only elements to be deployed are generals, baggage and any detected by scouting. Non-hidden fortifications and obstacles still have to be deployed. Add stage 3a. Army deploying first deploys remaining elements that would normally have been deployed in stage 3 and this includes optionally moving generals up to 160p to form/join a group. Army deploying second does the same. Deployment rectangles do not have to be parallel to table edges, but your own rectangles must still be parallel to each other. Compliance is applied after deployment stage 4.