

Special rules for BHGS Challenge 2023

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 Challenge 2023 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.

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

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.

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, and (I) and (F) relative rarities. • Bge(F) can be very difficult to kill because of the flee-result on beaten (but not doubled) and will slightly benefit from the change to the (F)-factor in combat. • Bge(S) ought to be more expensive than (F), but not by much, due to the difficulty of moving it with the troops around it and the tendency of those troops to recoil through it rather than pushing it back behind them (which may be further changes to consider in the future).

Baggage costs	O	I	F	S
Irregular	1	2	3	4
Regular	2	3	4	5

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