El Gran Capitán

Miniature Warfare in the Age of Córdoba, 1500-1546

By Arofan Gregory. Copyright (c) 2021 Bloody Scotsmen Games LLC. All rights reserved.

Profound thanks go to Alex MacDonald for playtesting, assisting with the design, and indeed prompting the development of this system. Many of the figures in the photos are his, and he gets credit both for the painting of the miniatures and the taking of the photos.

Contents

- Introduction
- Equipment Needed for Play
- Units, Troop Types, and Base Sizes
- Turn Sequence
- Using the Game App
- Leaders and Command Control
- Actions
- Formations and Movement
- Fire
- Combat (Charges and Melee)
    - Charges
    - Melee
    - Ongoing Combats
- Combat Effects and Rallying
- Special Rules for Specific Nationalities
- Army Morale
- Design Notes

---

^ Introduction

Gonzalo Fernández de Córdoba y Enríquez de Aguilar, 1st Duke of Santángelo was known as "El Gran Capitán", winning a long series of victories in the reconquest of Granda in the Iberian peninsula, and later in Italy, at the start of the Great Italian Wars. He was the originator of the Spanish tercios, being the first general to deploy units of arquebus and pike in a coordinated fashion, leading to dominance on the field of battle. The late Medieval period is often seen as ending in 1495 at Fornovo, but it was Córdoba's defeat by the French at Seminara in the preceding month which lead him to reorganize the Spanish forces in the style that came to characterize "pike and shot" warfare for centuries.

These rules are designed to portray those battles which occurred during this era - the first half of the 16th Century - in which the troop types common in late Medieval warfare took the field alongside the more innovative ones increasingly employed by Córdoba and others. It was not until Pavia in 1525 that the arquebus became truly ubiquitous, and by the middle of the 16th Century warfare had begun to change yet again, with pistol-armed cavalry becoming a new, dominant force to replace the mounted gendarme.

These rules are designed to produce fast games which capture the flavor of the period but which do not become an endless series of die-rolls and minute adjustments of individual bases - a form of arcane geometry which can be fascinating, but which bears little resemblance to any actual experience of command in battle. Because the app performs all calculations and die rolls, the game is easy to learn, and well-suited to both remote and convention play.

These rules are designed for use with 25mm miniatures - the easiest popular scale to see when remote gaming, and the most eye-catching in a crowded convention setting - but could be played with smaller miniatures by substituting centimeters for inches, or halving base sizes, ranges, and distances. Popular basing systems will work (if you play *DBR* or *Field of Glory* no re-basing is required). The focus of the game is from the start of the 16th century to the middle, covering battles through Ceresole in the 1542-1546 war. The final installment of the Italian Wars, ending in 1559, witnessed an increased degree of discipline leading to closer integration of pike and shot, as well as the beginning of the primacy of pistol-armed cavalry. This era is not covered by this game, having a stronger resemblance to the French Wars of Religion and the early part of the 80 Years' War than to the earlier Hapsburg-Valois conflicts in Italy.

Is it really "pike & shot"? Landsknecht pikes and crossbows confront gendarmes.

^ Equipment Needed for Play

As with any miniatures game, figures and terrain are needed to represent the battlefield and combatants. This game is meant to represent entire field battles, and so is not a skirmish game in terms of tabletop representation. As with many Ancient, Medieval, and Renaissance rules sets, exact man:figure ratios and ground scales are not specified. Miniatures may be understood to be representative, however: a couple of houses surrounded by a wall represent a village, etc. One figure is a larger number of actual combatants.

Rules and tape measures in inches are required for play. Dice are not. The game app will perform all needed randomization. Markers are needed for Disorder and Demoralization - further losses are expressed as base losses (see below on unit basing). Small chits or other markers for showing which units and Leaders have already acted during the turn are quite useful. The use of a tablet or smart phone during play (rather than a PC) is not critical, but may prove convenient. Only one device for running the game app is required, and it is used by the game master (or whoever is appointed to act in that capacity). The game app will run on PCs, tablets, and smart phones: any device with a javascript-capable web browser may be used. If desired, more than a single device may be used during play, but the "official" one for determining outcomes must be clearly identified for any given action.

A normal wargames table is required, although for most battles a fairly small one will suffice. 4 foot x 6 foot or larger is ideal. For smaller tables, players may wish to reduce figure scale to 15mm or smaller, and to reduce all distances and ranges by half, or replace inches with centimeters.

^ Units, Troop Types, and Base Sizes

The following list provides all of the different troops types used in the game.

Gendarmes: Knights of all types and their retinues. They are heavily armored, and often ride on horses which also use protection. Their primary weapon is the lance. Despite their protection, they are still quite vulnerable to missile fire. Because of it, they are not incredibly maneuverable.

Footmen (Billmen, Spearmen, etc.): Dense formations of infantry, typically armed mostly with bills, halberds, spears, and similar weapons. They are not heavily armored, and may or may not carry shields. This category includes Spanish/Neapolitan sword & buckler men operating independent of pike formations, and the Italian imitations thereof.

French/Italian Pikemen: These are the lower-quality pike formations fielded primarily by France and Italy, but also possibly by other nations. They tend not to be armored, and are well-defended against cavalry but lack the fighting spirit of Landsknechts, Spanish pikemen, or the Swiss. These dense formations would include a proportion of men armed with two-handed weapons such as halberds and/or sword & buckler men, and might even include some pistol-armed troops, but have no integral shot component for game purposes.

Swiss Pikemen: The famous mercenary Swiss are the best of the pike-armed troops in this era. These represent fast, aggressive troops who are lightly armored, carrying pikes with a small proportion of other weapons (typically halberds) in dense blocks. They have no integral shot troops.

Spanish/Landsknecht Pikemen: Both Spanish and Landsknecht troops fought in imitation of the Swiss, and proved to be excellent soldiers, gradually becoming their equals. Not as fast or aggressive as the Swiss pikemen, they are superior to most other infantry. These dense formations contain pike with a proportion of bladed weapons (sword & buckler, hand-and-a-half swords, halberds) and possibly some short-range firearms used only immediately before close combat (they have no ability to fire in game terms).

Arquebusiers: These are massed formations of men armed with the arquebus and similar early gunpowder weapons.

Archers: Archers in this era represent massed longbowmen or those Balkan mercenaries using composite bows. They are a relict of the past, no longer as effective as they had been in earlier ages, being replaced by troops armed with the arquebus.

Crossbowmen: Massed crossbowmen still formed a significant proportion of French and some Italian armies of the period, at least until Pavia in 1525. These

formations often used pavises in the Medieval style, but were losing ground gradually to troops armed with the arquebus.

Levy: Militia infantry operating in dense formations, unarmored and equipped with a variety of hand weapons including swords, clubs, spears, staffs, bills, and so on.

Cannon: Divided into Light, Medium, and Heavy types. Lighter artillery pieces include more mobile ones such as bombards and organ guns, with a shorter range but a higher rate of fire. Medium guns are heavier guns intended for field use. Even heavier artillery was sometimes used on the battlefield in static positions, and this makes up the Heavy Cannon category.

Light Lancers: Troops such as Spanish ginetes and their imitators, lightly armored but armed primarily with close-combat weapons, notably the lance. While fighting in a style different from the massed charges of the gendarmes, they did not shy from combat in the field. This class of cavalry became increasingy common during this period, and may include the better-armed type of stradiotti.

Mounted Crossbowmen/Arquebusiers: Mounted crossbowmen, arquebusiers, stradiotti, and similar lightly armoured troops who primarily functioned as skirmishers armed with missile weapons. In no case are they line-of-battle troops, however: they are useful to harrass the enemy, and may often run when charged. This was a common troop type in some armies of the period, notably the Italian, Swiss, and French.

Skirmishers: These troops may be armed with crossbows, arquebus, bows, javelins, or any combination of these, and will also carry hand weapons. They operated in loose formations on foot, opening battles by scouting and skirmishing with their enemy equivalents. They will generally avoid close combat in the open.

Forlorn Hope: This is a troop type peculiar to this period, and whose name came to refer to missile-armed troops later during the Renaissance. In their original form - the one represented here - they are small formed units (usually only a base ot two) of troops armed with bladed weapons such as halberds or sword & buckler, used to disorder approaching pike formations. They are not heavily armored and move quickly, and can fight well for their size, especially against fixed positions or rough terrain, but are not good against enemy cavalry in the open.

Units will consist of 1 to 6 bases, all of the same type (a normal size unit will be 3 or 4 bases). Any troop type may come in any size unit, but some units such as Cannons and Forlorn Hopes tend to be only a base or two in size. The following chart defines rectangular base sizes for game purposes. Note that these bases may need to be composed of two single-rank physical bases, depending on how troops are mounted.

All units are based on a 60mm (2.5-inch) frontage. The number of figures is unimportant, but they should be of the appropriate troop type.

Type	**Base Depth**
Leaders	60mm (square or round)
Gendarmes	40mm
Footmen	40mm
Arquebusiers	60mm
Archers	60mm
Crossbowmen	60mm
Levy	40mm
Pikemen (All Nationalities)	60-90mm
Light Lancers	40mm
Mounted Arquebusiers/Crossbowmen	40mm
Skirmishers	30-40mm
Cannon	60mm
Forlorn Hope	30-40mm

Note that the size of a unit at the start of play is significant. When a full half or more of the bases in a unit are destroyed, the unit is immediately removed from play. Units in this game represent the body of that troop type within a "battle," so a typical army will have three to six units in each of three or four battles/wings, with each one commanded by a leader, in addition to the army commander. (Because this is not intended as a tournament rules set, point values and army lists are not provided: these can be taken from the usual sources to provide a sense of proportions and relative values of different troops types).

An Italian general orders his Florentine foot forward, with some support from mercenary stradiotti.

^ Turn Sequence

The game is played as a sequence of turns, during which each unit notionally makes a single action (there are exceptions). During each turn, each leader on the tabletop will be given a single initiative, and will have a set number of activations which can be used to act with the units under their command.

One side is designated the Attacker, and the other the Defender (the terms are only meaningful by scenario). The turn sequence is:

1. Click the Initiative button. A side will be identified. That side may choose to go first, or to have their opponent do so.
2. The side acting first will now select a Leader to give the Initiative to. Click the "Command" button, to be given a number of activations (from 1 to 3). To this number the Leader modifier (if any - see below) is added. Up to that number of activations may be taken by the Leader who is given the Initiative. Each Leader may only be given the Initiative once per turn (that is, they may only "act" once per turn).

3. For each activation, one unit may make an action such as moving, firing, charging, fighting an ongoing melee, rallying, etc. (see below). During this phase, the Leader my move at any single point, to bring them into contact with one of their units, or to bring units into their command radius.
4. When the Leader is done moving and activating their units, the Initiative passes to the opposing player, who then clicks the "Command" button and uses their activations, as above. The Initiative will pass back and forth, one Leader per side, until all the Leaders on the table have been given an Initiative, and have activated their units.
5. Any units which can fire, but have not already acted for the turn, may now do so. This fire is simultaneous.
6. Any Swiss Pikemen which are able to charge an eligible enemy unit must do so if they have not already acted. Any units which are involved in on-going melee, but which have not yet acted this turn, will now fight the ongoing melee. The order of activation for all of these cases is determined by clicking the initiative button, and the Attacker or Defender will select any one of their units to charge/fight, as indicated. This activation passes back and forth between the players for each activation, until all required units have fought.
7. Check to see if either side has lost their camp or baggage train. Count the number of destroyed and demoralized units, and the number of killed or captured Leaders, to determine if either army has broken. If not, repeat the turn sequence.

Note that using markers to indicate which units and Leaders have acted can be a good idea (small colored chits work well for this).

^ Using the Game App

The tabletop game is run basically in the same fashion as a traditional paper-and-dice game, but instead of rolling dice and looking modifiers and results up on charts, you simply consult the app. The sequence of events is still driven by players, following the steps listed above.

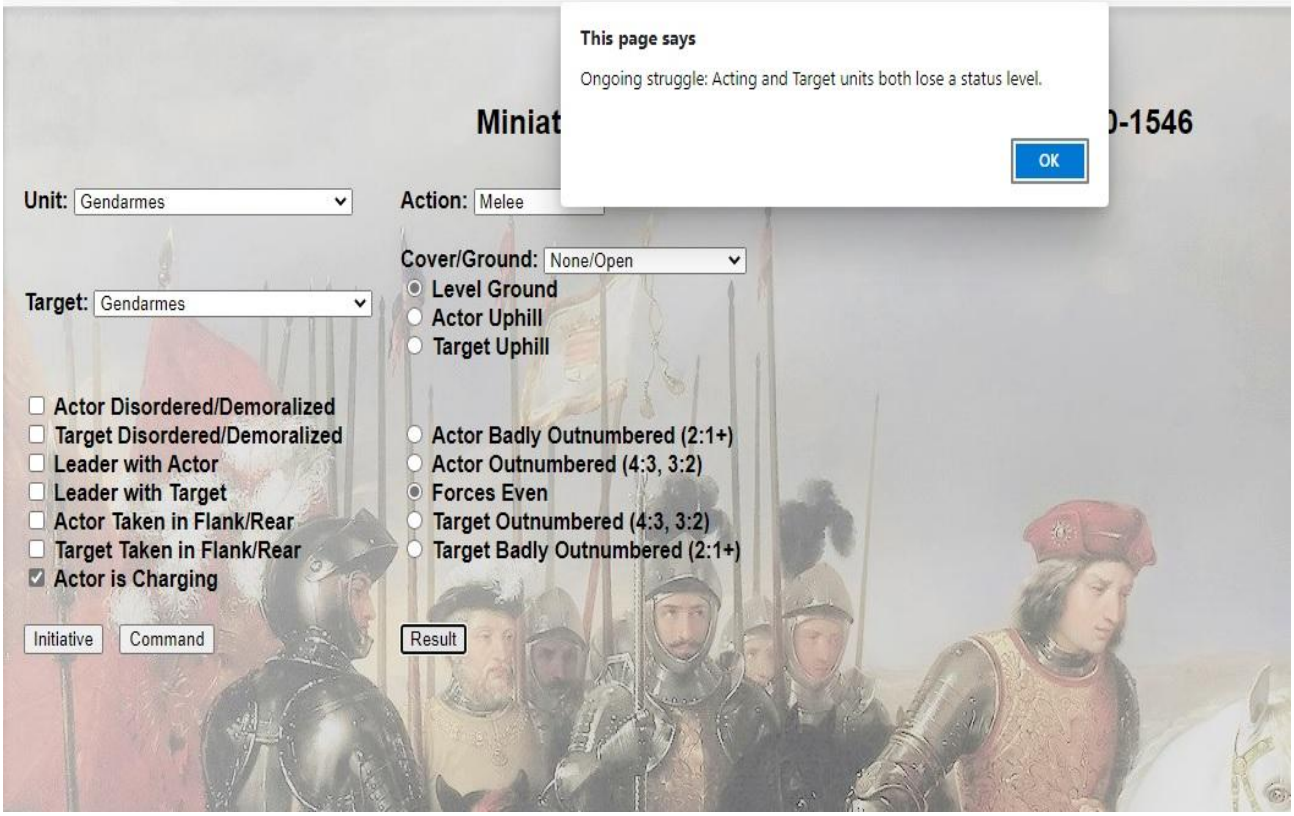
The app interface is shown below:

The Initiative and Command buttons are in the lower left-hand corner. Using these buttons requires no other fields to be set - you simply click, and a result box pops up, telling you which side has the initiative, or how many activations the Leader who is given the Initiative may use.

All other actions require that at least two of the app's controls be used: the "Unit" list, and the "Action" list. Other fields may also need to be set, as described in the Actions section, below. Once all needed fields have been set, the Result button in the lower right-hand corner is clicked, and a result box will pop up, explaining the results of the action, or asking a question.

When asked a question, "OK" always means "yes" and "Cancel" always means "no." Once any questions have been answered, a result box will appear. Click "OK" when you have read the result, to dismiss the box.

The screen below shows a result - a unit of gendarmes has made a Melee action after charging into an enemy group of gendarmes. The two units are the same size, and they are fighting in the open, on level ground. The defender has gotten lucky - despite the advantages of the charging unit (impact), the result is a tie, throwing both units into disorder and continuing the fight.



If at any point if you put the wrong values into the app fields, you may simply ignore the result, correct the settings, and click again. (You will need to "click through" any questions just by answering anything to make them go away.) Each click of the Result button is effectively a roll of the dice, but you can never keep a roll if you calculate the modifiers wrong! Think of the app interface as a checklist, which will help you remember all of the modifiers. As you learn the interface, you will find that it becomes easier to use, and that you will understand which actions use which fields. (Each field is essentially a dice modifier.)

^ Leaders and Command Control

Leaders are the commanders of the "battles" (in Medieval terms, now passing from use) or "wings" of an army, one of whom will generally be the overall commander of the entire host. Any given Leader will have a set of units which they may activate - the units in their battle/wing, or, for the overall commander, any unit in the army.

Particularly good Leaders can be given a bonus rating, typically a +1. This will increase the number of activations they may use when they are given an Initiative by adding 1. An incredibly good Leader would be given a +2, and would increase the number of activations by 2 when given an Initiative.

Leaders have a command radius of 12 inches: any unit under their command within 12 inches of their base - measured between any part of the Leader's base, and any part of

any base in the unit - may be given an activation once per turn. When activated, that unit will immediately make whatever valid action the player chooses (see Actions, below). The Leader may give as many activations as they have for that Initiative: the number granted by the app, plus their personal Leader bonus if they have one.

Leaders always also have a 24 inch base move each turn, which they may make before or after any activations are given to units (or even in the case that they give no activations to units). They may activate closer units, then move, and then activate units which they have brought within command range while moving. They may only move once during the turn, however, and may not activate units during the course of their move.

Leaders may take personal command of a single unit at any point, by placing themselves into contact with the base of that unit. This can help with some actions (such as Melee and Rallying). When attached to a unit, however, it is possible for a Leader to be killed or captured in Melee. Leaders who have fallen are not replaced, and count heavily against the army's morale. An attached Leader may still give activations to units to which they are not attached, and is not required to activate the unit they are with. Attached Leaders may detach from a unit at any time, unless the unit they are with is in an ongoing combat: once a Leader has been involved in a Melee action (with either the Acting unit or the Target), they may no longer move in that turn.

Leaders may not be targeted for fire or charges, and are only involved in melees with the units to which they are attached. If "run over," they simply make an immediate free move to take them out of the way. They may use this move to attach to a nearby friendly unit.

A Leader who is not using an Initiative, and who is involved in a Melee as a result of an enemy Melee Action, will be considered to have acted for the turn, and may no longer be given the Initiative during that turn. They are deemed to have been "caught up in the struggle"!

An army will have the ability to command all of its units as long as it still has a Leader on the table. When killed or captured, the command responsibility for that Leader is immediately assigned to any single surviving Leader at the player's discretion. When all Leaders have been killed or captured, the affected side may no longer make activations, although its units may still defend themselves in combat and fire on available targets at the end of each turn. With no Leaders, proactive charges and maneuvering are no longer possible, with the exception of obligatory "ferocious charges" by Swiss Pikemen.

Note that a Leader who is attached to a unit will move with that unit at the player's discretion, even if the Leader has already used its movement for the turn. Similarly, Leaders may always move with the units they are attached to for any reason, in addition to their own independent move for the turn. Thus, a unit making a Retire action with an attached Leader would bring that Leader with it, and the Leader could then use his own movement to go elsewhere during the turn.

^ Actions

The following is a list of the actions which may be taken in the game, as listed in the app "Action" list:

Rest/Regroup: This is the action taken if a unit chooses to do nothing (which does not actually require the app to perform), but is also used to Regroup (also called "rallying"). You must select the unit which will make the action, using the "Unit" list, and indicate if they have a Leader with them by checking the "Leader with Actor" box. No other fields are relevant. A Regroup action - if successful - will raise the Status Level of a unit by one (from Disordered to OK or Demoralized to Disordered) or by two (Demoralized or Disordered to OK). Regroup actions may be made by units involved in ongoing combats, but only if they have a Leader with them. In this case, the Melee action is immediately resolved (see below).

Advance: This is the most common move action, allowing a unit to move and wheel in a forward direction, as well as perform facing changes, etc. (see below). It requires only that the "Unit" list, and the "Action" list be filled out. If a Leader is with the unit, this should also be indicated by checking the "Leader with Actor" box. No other fields are relevant.

Retire: This action is performed by a unit which wishes to retire out of an ongoing combat (see below). If the retire fails, a Melee action is immediatley performed. It requires only that the "Unit" list, and the "Action" list be filled out. If a Leader is with the unit, this should also be indicated by checking the "Leader with Actor" box. No other fields are relevant.

March: This moves allows units to form a column one base wide, and to move further than with a typical Advance action. It requires only that the "Unit" list, and the "Action" list be filled out. If a Leader is with the unit, this should also be indicated by checking the "Leader with Actor" box. No other fields are relevant.

Charge: Charges start with a move into contact by the charging unit. If contact is made, a sequence of other actions is taken, which may include a Fire action by the Target of the charge, an evasion if the Target is Irregulars or Horsemen, and a Melee action. It requires that the "Unit" list, the "Target" list, the "Cover/Ground" list, and the "Action" list be filled out. If a Leader is with the unit, this should also be indicated by checking the "Leader with Actor" box. No other fields are relevant for the Charge action itself - other actions will use other fields.

Fire: Missile fire is explained below. Needed fields include "Unit", "Target", "Cover/Ground", and "Action" lists, as well as the "Actor is Disordered/Demoralized" check box, if relevant. Additionally, a selection from the force ratios must be made ("Actor Badly Outnumbered", "Actor Outnumbered", "Force Even", etc.). Other fields are not relevant.

Melee: Melee actions are described below. Melee requires that all fields in the app interface be correctly filled out.

Generally speaking, a unit may make any single action of their choice in a turn, when activated by a Leader who has command of that unit (their battle or army commander). There are some restrictions to choice of actions, however, depending on whether a unit is locked in combat, and the formation it is currently in.

Units in an ongoing combat - that is, those units which start their action in contact with one or more enemy units - may only perform a Melee action, a Retire action (to pull out of combat, which may be followed by a Melee action if it fails), or a Regroup action followed immediately by a Melee action.

^ Formations and Movement

Units have two formations: "battle" formation is always at least two bases wide (except for single-base units), and may be as wide as the number of bases (e.g., a single rank); "march" formation is one base wide. In both types of formations, bases must share a facing and be touching along at least one full edge of the base, and arranged in regular rows. The front ranks of the formation never have fewer bases than the back ranks. Single-base units also always have a formation, even if this cannot be easily seen on the tabletop (formation should be noted as "march" when the unit has made a March action, and until it moves again - otherwise it will be in "battle" formation, like any other unit).

Movement as provided by the app is in base inches: the number of inches which may be moved in open terrain. This base number is modified by terrain and by changes of formation and facing. The following movement options are possible, in any combination which does not exceed total base movement:

Forward Movement: Unit moves straight forward, or frontally up to 45 degrees to either flank, or any combination of these. Unit may change depth and frontage, but no base may move more than the full distance used for unit movement, measured from the center of the base's starting point, to the center of the base where it ends up. Units are thus free to extend into a 1-base-depth line from a 2-base depth formation as part of normal forward movement.

Wheels: The unit may move one front corner, while keeping the other in place, paying for the movement made by the moving corner.

Facing Changes: Unit may change unit facing by rotating around the unit center point, or around the center or end of their frontage. Unit may also change facing with each individual base within a unit.

Note that formations will be dictated by how the bases end up on the table. The only restriction is that any forward movement or wheeling in a March action must be made in

a 1-base-wide "march" (this allows a march column to form line to flank, assuming a "battle" formation, at the end of a march move by paying for a facing change).

Movement made with a Retire action is a special case: the unit will move directly backward, up to 45 degrees to either side, paying normal terrain costs. Wheels are not allowed in a retire movement.

Note that you may not move within 1 inch of the front of an enemy unit except to make a Charge action to bring a unit into contact with that enemy, or to Retire out of contact.

Units may freely interpenetrate and be interpenetrated by friendly Skirmishers, Mounted Crossbowmen/Arquebusiers, Cannon, and Light Lancers in any direction, and move directly through Arquebusiers, Archers, or Crossbowmen who are in a formation 1 base deep from the front or rear. No other interpenetration is allowed.

Heavy Cannon (typically siege guns in static positions) cannot move except to change facing.

The table below shows the effects of terrain and facing changes ("factors") on base movement:

Factor	**Cost**	**Notes**
Facing Change	3 inches	1 inch for Cannon
Rough Terrain	2 inches/inch moved	Full speed for Skirmishers and Forlorn Hopes.
Very Rough Terrain	3 inches/inch moved	2 inches/inch moved for Skirmishers and Forlorn Hopes, 4 inches/inch moved for Gendarmes, impassable for Medium Cannon
Linear Obstacles	2 inches to cross	Fences, hedges, walls, ditches, etc. Impassable for Medium Cannon.
Choke Point	3 inches plus distance moved	Bridges, gates, etc.
Roads	1 inch for every 1.5 inches moved	Only in "march" formation

All types of terrain should be fully described by the scenario, or agreed by players before play begins. Some terrain (water-logged fields) will be rough for movement purposes, and combat, but will not provide cover from fire. Most rough terrain (open woods) would also provide cover.

Archer's stakes and similar quantities can be represented by giving any mounted unit frontally charging their defenders a setting of rough ground in the open (or very rough ground, depending) for the consequent Melee action.

A scene from the battle of Novara, 1513: Swiss troops assault Landsknechts and French as dawn breaks. (Alex MacDonald)

^ Fire

Arquebusiers, Archers, Crossbowmen, Cannon, Mounted Crossbowmen/Arquebusiers, and Skirmishers may always fire. Other troop types may not fire. Cannon can fire at any target within 24 inches (for Medium and Heavy Cannon) or 18 inches (for Light Cannon). All other fire has a range of 12 inches. The range is the shortest line of fire between the firing base and any base in the target unit.

Fire may only be conducted from the front of any base in the unit, and up to 45 degrees to either side of facing outward, measured from the edge of the base. Only the front rank of bases may fire.

Targets for fire must be within range and arc, as well as visible to the firing unit (within line of sight). Line of sight is determined by having a clear line between both front corners of the firing base and any point on a base in the Target unit. Line of sight extends 3 inches into, out of, or through woods or similar concealing terrain unless

stated otherwise by scenario. All units block line of sight - you cannot shoot through enemy units.

Only bases within range, arc of fire, and with a clear line of sight may fire, but not all bases in a firing unit are required to fire on the same Target. Some bases may be unable to fire, but the action may still be taken by those which are. Fire for each Target in a single Fire action will be conducted separately with the app. However, all fire on a single Target in a single Fire action must be performed with one calculation in the app. (If a Fire action has two Target units, then two calculations are performed with the app to determine the results - one for each target unit).

For any fire except Cannon, closer targets must be preferred to those which are further away. If equidistant, the player may decide which to fire on. It is always permitted to concentrate all of a unit's fire on the closest target unit, measured as the shortest distance between the firer and target. Split fire on a target which is closer only to some of the bases in a firing unit is always optional, and performed according to the player's choice. Cannon may select any valid Target for fire, regardless of proximity, but may only conduct fire with the app on any given Target once during the action.

When calculating strength rations for setting modifiers in the app, the number of firing bases (for the Actor) is compared to the total number of bases in the Target unit. "Outnumbered" is any difference in size which is more than exactly equal in bases, but which is less than fully twice ("Badly Outnumbered").

^ Combat (Charges and Melee)

^ Charges

Charges are a mechanism for initiating a combat with an enemy unit, used by a unit which is not already engaged in a melee. To make a Charge, a unit must be able to wheel and then move directly forward until some part of its front is in contact with some part of the Target unit. This movement may not cross the frontage of another enemy unit within 1 inch. Cannon and units in "march" formation may not Charge, nor may Skirmishers when in the open except against other Skirmishers or Cannon. Arquebusiers, Archers, Crossbowmen, and Mounted Crossbowmen/Arquebusiers may not charge non-Skirmisher, non-Cannon units unless the Target of the Charge is already engaged in an ongoing combat or is being charged in the flank or rear.

Frontal charges against Arquebusiers, Archers, Crossbowmen, and Light Cannon may involve taking fire during the Charge actionif the Charging unit at any point crosses the firing arc of the Target unit. This is done exactly as for normal Fire actions. If a "devastating fire" results (the loss of 2 Status Levels) then the charging unit will fail to contact its target, and end its move an inch short. No Melee action will follow. Arquebusiers, Archers, Crossbowmen, and Light Cannon which have already acted for the turn will not be able to perform a Fire action at a charging unit.

When Charged, Skirmishers and Mounted Crossbowmen/Arquebusiers may attempt to evade the Charge. Once the Target unit has made its evade movement - which is performed like any other movement, including paying for the initial facing change by the evading unit - and movement remaining to the charging unit may be taken, in an attempt to contact the Target. Other Target units may not be contacted, even if they are exposed by the evade move. This charge movement in pursuit of an evading Target may not cross the front of a any non-Target enemy unit within 1 inch.

Note that evade moves will use the evading unit*s action for the turn.

Whether contact (and a melee) results from a Charge action or not, any unit which Charged, evaded, or made a Fire action is considered to have acted for the turn.

Charges may not involve a change of formation of any type on the part of the charging unit. Unit depth and frontage must remain the same as at the start of the move. Only a wheel, followed by movement directly forward is allowed. If contact is made, the front of the charging unit will wheel to either left or right in order to maximize the amount of contact between the two units, but must always wheel to the front of the Target if possible, even if the degree of contact would be less.

When a unit makes a Charge action resulting in contact, and a Melee action is made, the "Actor is Charging" box must be checked. This box is not important for conducting the Charge action itself - only the immediate Melee action occurring as part of that charge.

Note that it is not possible to Charge two units at a time, even if the Charge movement will bring the charging unit into contact with more than one enemy unit. The first enemy unit which would be contacted must be declared as the Target of the Charge. If there is a choice of Targets, it is the charging player’s decision. Note that it *is* allowed for more than one enemy unit to be contacted by the move, and that both of the contacted enemy units may be involved in the combat, but the one designated the Target *must* be involved in the combat. The other may become a Supporting unit (see below).

^ Melee

Whenever an activated unit is in contact with an enemy unit, there may be a combat. This is the case if any part of the front of either unit is in contact with the enemy. This situation may result from a Charge action, in which case a Melee action is immediately made. This may result from two units being in combat at the start of the turn, which is termed an "ongoing combat."

Combat involves at least two units - an Actor and a Target - but may also involve others. Any unit involved in a combat which is neither the Actor nor the Target is termed a "Supporting" unit. The Actor is always the activated unit which triggered the combat - the unit which has just made a Charge action, or the unit selected by a player to be activated. The Target unit is either the one designated in the Charge which was just

conducted, causing the melee, or is one of the enemy units (if more than one) in contact with the front edge of the acting unit, in a case where no Charge action has taken place immediately before the Melee. The acting unit's player may select which enemy unit is the Target under circumstances where there is more than one possibility.

Supporting units do not change the modifiers entered in the game app, except for the determination of force ratios, and whether the Acting or Target units are taken in flank or rear. Supporting units include:

- Any enemy unit (that is, the enemy of the acting unit) which is in frontal contact with the acting unit, whether it has already acted during the turn or not.
- Any unit friendly to the Actor which is in frontal contact with the Target unit, whether it has already acted during the turn or not.
- Any unit friendly to the Actor which is in side-to-side contact with it and shares a facing, but which is not otherwise in contact with the enemy, and which has not already acted during the turn. There may be up to two such units - one on each side (left flank and right flank). Involvement of such units as Supporting units is always optional, and is not allowed if a friendly unit is in non-rear-corner contact with the Target unit on the nearest enemy flank (that is, blocking the potentially supporting unit by contacting it in the flank in front of the potentially supporting unit).
- Any unit friendly to the Target unit which is in side-to-side contact with it and shares a facing, but which is not otherwise in contact with the enemy, and which has not already acted during the turn. There may be up to two such units - one on each side (left flank and right flank). Involvement of such units as Supporting units is always optional, and is not allowed if a friendly unit is in non-rear-corner contact with the Acting unit on the nearest enemy flank.

All units involved in the combat will be considered to have acted, whether they are the Acting unit, the Target unit, or a Supporting unit. Any Leaders attached to any unit involved in the combat will also be considered to have acted for the current turn, and may not be subsequently given an Initiative.

A unit is considered to be "Taken in Flank/Rear" for game purposes if any enemy unit has contacted them on their sides with any part of its front.

After a Melee has been conducted, any unit which is contacted on the flank, but which is not contacted on the front, may choose to change facing to face any contacted flank. This is always optional, and may only be done once per turn by any given unit. Note that flank contact does not include front-corner contact with an enemy unit: contact must be made along the side of the unit, on the rear of the unit, or on a rear corner. Front corners are only considered to be a part of the unit's front facing.

For determining force ratios in a Melee action, all bases in the involved units are counted, regardless of whether they are in contact or not, or have already been engaged in a Melee action during the turn. (In a push of pike, soldiers would press

forward into the action [or shirk], unconstrained by the training which was common in later periods!)

A push of pike begins, and will soon include most of the units in the battle line. (Alex MacDonald)

^ Ongoing Combats

When a Melee action is taken, but does not result in the destruction of one side or the other, the units will remain in contact after acting. This is considered to be an ongoing combat. Whenever either unit is activated, a new Melee action will be taken. There are some special cases which occur when an ongoing combat is involved.

One of these is when an activated unit attempts to perform a Retire action. If successful, the retiring unit will pull out of the combat and a Melee will not be fought if contact is broken. If unsuccessful, an immediate Melee action will be made.

If a Regroup action is made by a unit in an ongoing combat -- something which requires the activating Leader to be attached to the unit - there will be an immediate Melee action, regardless of whether the Regroup action was a success or failure. The activating unit (the one attempting to Regroup) will trigger the Melee action, and its Leader will be involved in this Melee. Note that units which are contacted on more than

one face at once (to front and flank, to rear and flank, etc.) may not perform Retire actions.

It is possible to charge into an ongoing combat, so long as the Charge action would involve no interpenetration of units, even if otherwise allowed (this is important: *no* interpenetration of units!). In such cases, neither evasion nor defensive Fire are allowed by the unit which is the Target of the Charge. Units in the Melee on both sides which have already acted may influence it as Supporting units (see above). The Target will engage in the Melee regardless of whether it has already acted or not.

^ Combat Effects and Rallying

Unit Status is a measure of how a unit is currently functioning, in terms of morale and losses. Combat outcomes are expressed as a change in Unit Status. All units begin the game with their full strength known (the number of bases in the unit), and all have a Unit Status of "OK". Unit Statuses are:

> **OK:** The unit is good condition. The loss of bases does not stop a unit from having this status.
>
> **Disordered:** The unit is in disarray. This situation is very common, and can be corrected by having the unit make successful Regroup action.
>
> **Demoralized:** The unit is in a state of disarray bordering on panic: this is almost *"sauve qui peut"* territory. The situation can also be recovered from by Regrouping, but it may take more than one action.
>
> **Destroyed:** The unit's soldiers have panicked, surrendered, become casualties, died, etc., and it is removed from play. Any time a unit has lost a full half or more of its starting number of bases, it is immediately destroyed.

Gaining a Status Level means going upward in the list above, and losing a Status Level is movement further toward the bottom of it. For example, an unit with an OK Status Level which goes down two levels will have a new Status Level of "Demoralized". Note that the Status Level does not correspond to the number of bases lost until the unit is destroyed. A unit with no losses can be Disordered or Demoralized, and a unit which has taken losses can be OK or have any other Status.

When an OK unit loses a Status Level, it becomes Disordered. When a Disordered unit loses a Status Level, it becomes Demoralized. When a Demoralized unit loses a Status Level, it loses a base. When a Demoralized unit loses two Status Levels, it loses two bases.

Any outcomes from Fire or Melee actions are implemented immediately. The exception to this is missile fire occurring at the end of the turn, which is simultaneous: any firing unit will make their Fire action before suffering from fire taken during the same portion of

the turn. The effects of melee only impact the Actor or Target: Supporting units are not affected by combat outcomes.

Note that Disorder and Demoralization do not stop a unit from being activated. In many cases, however, it will reduce their effectiveness. These units may still move, charge, fire, and fight.

When a unit charges into a combat and destroys its enemy, it must move forward to occupy the space vacated by the Target of the Melee. In any other circumstance, such a move on the part of the Actor in the Melee is optional. In both cases, the occupying move is only permitted if no other enemy units are in contact with the Actor of the Melee.

Enemy camps and baggage trains may be destroyed if they are in contact with an enemy unit at the end of the turn, but only if the unit destroying the camp or baggage train is not itself in contact with an enemy unit. Once the camp or baggage train is destroyed, the destroying unit(s) will immediately become Disordered, reflecting the fact that troops will inevitably break ranks to loot. Units which are already Disordered will become Demoralized, reflecting an additional level of indiscipline (although not panic). Base losses will never occur from such a contact.

A unit of armored pikemen. (Alex MacDonald)

^ Special Rules for Specific Nationalities

Many rules systems have long lists of special abilities, often as a way of adjusting the rules for a very broad period to fit a specific one within it. These rules are focused on a single era in the history of warfare, and the number of special rules is consequently quite limited.

Bad War: When Landsknechts and Swiss Reislaufer fought, no quarter was given - these melees were essentially to the death. To reflect this, if Swiss and Landsknecht Pikemen are engaged in a melee, they will not be removed from play when half their bases are gone. So long as these opponents are directly opposed and involved in a combat, they will continue to fight until all of their bases have been removed from play. If reduced below half, while destroying their opponent, they will be removed from play at the end of the combat *but will not count as a destroyed unit for victory purposes.*

Ferocious Swiss Charges: Swiss mercenaries were famed for their insistence on directly attacking the enemy, so that they could earn their pay as promptly as possible, even when they faced difficult tactical situations. To reflect this, Swiss Pikemen will be required to Charge any eligible enemy unit (Gendarmes, Pikemen of all types, Footmen, Arquebusiers, Archers, Crossbowmen, Levy, Cannon, or Forlorn Hopes) which are within Charge range (9 inches) if they have not otherwise acted earlier in the turn, as indicated in the Turn Sequence section above. This does not require any activation or command from a general - they will do this under their own initiative, and may not be prevented from so doing.

^ Army Morale

Each army is given a Break Point. This is the total number of units in the army, also counting the baggage or camp as a unit if there is one. Each units adds one to the total, and Leaders are not counted. As the battle progresses, each side will keep track of how many points it has lost toward breaking. The status of each army is checked at the end of each turn. Once the total of points toward breaking equals or exceeds the Break Point, the army is broken, and has lost the battle. It is possible for both sides to lose in the same turn, resulting in a draw.

The points counted toward breaking are calculated by adding the following:

> *For each Skirmisher, Mounted Crossbows/Arquebusiers, Levy, Archer, Forlorn Hope, Arquebusier, or Crossbow unit destroyed:* 2 points
>
> *For each Cannon, French/Italian Pikemen, or Footmen unit destroyed:* 3 points
>
> *For each Gendarmes, Swiss Pikemen, or Spanish/Landsknecht Pikemen unit destroyed:* 4 points

For each unit currently Demoralized: 1 point

For a killed/captured Army Commander: 3 points

For a killed/captured Battle/Wing Commander: 2 points

For a sacked camp/baggage train: 3 points

^ Design Notes

This game was created to allow for remote games played using actual miniatures viewed by players over remote conferencing systems such as Skype or Zoom, and for use in convention settings. It is based on our earlier Medieval system *A Bloody Dismal Fight*. Remote play and convention play have some similarities, and we have found that this game works well for both applications.

As we conducted more remote games of different types, we learned several important facts. Games needed to be less finicky in terms of positioning of units on the tabletop. Lots of small units - a feature of many game systems - make for a slow and irritating game. It is too difficult for players to see the tabletop, and when each move must be described verbally to a game master, the entire thing quickly loses its appeal. Further, dice rolling - a critical part of the game - also becomes less important, because the only person who sees the rolls is either the player or game master, depending on how you do it. Virtual die rolling systems do exist, but you quickly reach a point where the dice become a distraction rather than a feature. Why not let the game system roll the dice?

Games also need to be relatively shorter than face-to-face games, because communications over the internet are inherently more tiring than in-person ones. It is also easier to get bored when it is the other guy’s go, since there is not as much to see. When you are communicating through a system which only supports one spoken conversation at a time, side-talk is impossible. And you cannot walk around the table and admire it!

The use of larger 25mm/28mm figures is also a major advantage in remote play, because the camera view of the tabletop is limited in breadth, and must be "zoomed out" to show a big enough portion of the battlefield to the players in a single view. A 25mm figure over a web camera is effectively the same size as a 15mm figure in a face-to-face setting.

In a convention setting, a game which can be learned quickly, and does not require a lot of finicky positioning (and the body of rules which make such positioning significant) is also desirable. Players need to be able to pick up the game system and play the entire thing to completion in a matter of three or four hours, and to do so without rushing. And the larger figures are more eye-catching than smaller ones in a room full of tables with miniatures games on them, where many convention attendees will cruise through the room and look at the many different games as they pass by. The Renaissance has

gorgeous figures and uniforms, and the larger scales allow them to be seen to best effect.

All of these factors have fed into the current design. The game is an easy one to explain and learn. Units are fewer in number and larger than in many other systems for the period, requiring fewer moves. Play goes back and forth between sides more rapidly, so that the game remains more interactive, leaving less uninterrupted "down time" for players. Armies break easier and faster, to accommodate the shorter overall length of games. The use of the app actually makes play go faster, since there is little time spent looking modifiers up or consulting charts in the rules, or, for that matter, rolling dice. This is a benefit because the general tendency of gaming remotely is to slow play down - anything which can be done to speed it up is welcome. (Since remote play of this type is, by its nature, moderated by a game master, anything which helps the GM get things resolved faster is a big plus. For a remote game, they are already sitting at their computer or using their device!)

Games designed to meet the requirements above benefit greatly from having a narrow focus on a specific period. Many of the modifiers and special rules found in other more generic systems covering all of the Renaissance are baked directly into the system, and require no thought on the part of the scenario designer or players. This system is anything but a tournament system: it is directly tied to the historical period it represents.

While we will undoubtedly continue to play other rules systems, for many types of games, *El Gran Capitán* will be the one we use for remote and convention play. We hope you find that it serves these purposes well, and enjoy it in the intended spirit.