Intermediate GETTYSBURG '88

by Alan Marian and Jim Brown

The release last year of The Avalon Hill Game Company's ***125th Anniversary Edition GETTYSBURG*** game serves two very useful functions, sufficient to overcome any initial question of "Why mother Gettysburg game?" First, it is an introductory level wargame, specifically designed with the novice or casual player in mind (and the hobby press has certainly and accurately decried the lack of good introductory games to enlist players into our declining ranks), on one of the best-known battles in American history. Second, it is simple enough that veteran players can turn to it for a relaxing yet challenging night or two of actual game playing instead of grappling with some overly ambitious, overly complicated bore. One of the more entertaining characteristics of wargamers is that most of us are inventive tinkerers when it comes to a design that "needs" only a simple rates change or bit of chrome to "fine-tune" it or to add some favorite historical touch. This newest ***GETTYSBURG*** is no exception [as the other variant articles herein will attest], especially when played by experienced players. We have experimented with a number of changes, some of which worked and some of which were discarded, with the primary goal being to add more realism, but only in a streamlined manner, in keeping with the intent of the game's design. If you've given the game a try and now would like a new perspective, consider these brief suggestions.

ENTERING THE MAPBOARD

1. If an entry hex contains an enemy unit, the entering unit has two options:

a. Attack the occupied hex front off board, advancing into the entry hex if successful; waiting unbound until next turn if not,

b. Make an onboard move as per the original rules, and enter the nearest edge hex that is free of enemy units or ZOC; the entering unit must stop in the first hex entered, however, to simulate the time spent moving,

2. If an entry hex contains an enemy ZOC but no unit, the entering unit still has two options:

a. Enter at the designated hex and fight the enemy units exerting the Z0C, advancing if victorious or retreating off board if all adjacent hexes are enemy occupied or in enemy ZOU,

b. Make the onboard entry move as described in 1b above.

3. The "range" of available entry hexes for each side is limited as follows:

a. Union C1 counterclockwise through O11.

b. Confederate: M1 clockwise through S11.

This range applies when using the onboard move and entry rules, and allows some realistic flexibility at the map's edges, but hunts, each player to the road net actually available during their respective approach marches. Of course, nothing prohibits a player from delaying the entry of any unit as long as desired, whether or not the entry hex is blocked.

MOVEMENT

1. Units cannot combine road and off road movement in the same turn; the road bonus applies only to units, which move entirely along a path of connected road hexes,

2. Units cannot use the road bonus if they begin their movement in an enemy ZOC and/m end their move in an enemy ZOC

These two simple changes restrict the almost unlimited movement in a game, which has a small map and large here. The second shows the effects of formation changes without unnecessary detail,

UNITS

1. The cavalry brigades of Huey (USA) and Robertson and Jones (CSA) did not arrive on the battlefield itself and should be considered optional units whose use must be agreed upon before starting play. If they are used, change the entry hex for Robertson and Jones to M1. In reality, Huey was left behind to guard the Union supply base, and the two Rebel units were guarding Monterey Pass on the Fairfield-Hagerstown Road.

2. Buford, with his cavalry brigades of Gamble and Devin, must exit off the south edge of the map on Turn 11. If they cannot reach the edge that turn, they must continue by the quickest route possible on succeeding turns until they do exit. If cut off front the south edge by enemy units, they exit from the east edge. In the confusion of July 2nd, Meade did not know that Buford had been ordered from the field until he was gone and the Union player now faces the same problem. The players should agree upon this optional rule before the game begins.

3. The Order of Appearance chart for Union units arriving on Turn 11 should be changed; the three artillery units and the AR HQ should arrive in hex A8. This is the Taneytown Road, and *Coddington's Gettysburg Campaign* (among other sources) states that the Artillery Reserve did arrive in separate sections but along the same road.

4. The Order of Appearance chart for Union units arriving on Turn 13 should be changed; the two cavalry units and HQ should arrive on the Hanover Road (sources suggest that Kilpatrick's division filtered into the area further north than the Baltimore Pike).

COMBAT

To our mind, one of the most serious omissions from the existing game is lack of any distinction between the three branches of the service, which can lead to some improbable and ahistorical missions for the various arms. Therefore, the following modifiers are applied, in addition to those already existing in GE77TSBURG '88:

1. The cavalry brigades of Gamble and/or Devin get a +1 when attacked by a force containing only infantry and/or artillery, since they were equipped and trained to fight dismounted (+1 even if both engaged in the same fight).

2. Infantry attacking or defending against only cavalry (not horse artillery) get a +1 (at this point, cavalry rarely stood up to formed infantry in combat).

3. Cavalry attacked by a force which does not contain enemy cavalry may attempt to retreat before combat. Any die roll of "2-9" permits a one-hex retreat, and the attacker does not advance since there was no combat resolution. A die roll of "1" means no retreat occurs and normal combat resolution follows. A die roll of " 10" means that the cavalry must retreat two hexes and must take a one-step, loss (due to panicky retreat), and the attacker does get to advance into the vacated hex.

4. Artillery defending against any attack, which contains no enemy artillery unit, gets a +2. The guns were tremendously powerful, especially at close range, and each does represent several batteries. A maximum of +2 only is allowed, regardless of the number of batteries involved.

5. If any attacking or defending unit occupies the Gettysburg town hex, the enemy gets a +1 (because the town was a liability for cohesion and firepower, not air asset).

6. A unit defending on Culp's Hill, Little Round Top or Big Round Top gets the +2 drm as per the game's original bonus even if attacked from a connecting hill hex (because these three locations were physically dominant heights).

REORGANIZATION

In the original game, there is no chance for reorganization during day turns, while at night it is automatic (even for two units in the hex) if they remain immobile for 24 hours, Reorganization should be neither automatic nor impossible, and should always possess an element of chance to reflect varying troop quality and leadership, For the changes presented below to the optional rule, only two units can attempt reorganization.

1. During night turns, units reorganize on a die roll of "6" or less, with a -1 drm applied to the roll if stacked with an appropriate leader.

2. During day turns, units reorganize on a die roll of "2" or less, with a –1 drm applied to the roll if stacked with an appropriate leader,

3. Reorganization can only be attempted after four complete game turns in which the unit did not move or attack.

OPTIONAL RULES

To play a reasonably historical game, players should utilize all the Optional Rules contained in Section 10 of the "Battle Manual" (including the modified l0c2 above). In our opinion, the "correct" flavor of the battle simulation requires the rules for command control, Hancock as Meade's deputy on July 1st, ranged artillery fire, and reorganization.

Optional Rule 10e relating to the Initiative Chit could be amended so that a player retains the chit if he wins a combat in which he made use of the chit. It is given to the other player only if the holder lost the combat. Initiative on the battlefield should remain with the side having success, rather than randomly and arbitrarily switched back and forth.

SUMMARY

As stated in the introduction, one must resist the temptation to add too much to an elegantly simple game such as ***GETTYSBURG '88***, because once you've started it's tough to stop. Some changes were tried in our playtests but did not work; others were not in keeping with the spirit of a clean, quick-playing game and were discarded,

One feature remains questionable, and readers may wish to experiment on their own with the game's original limit of a + 10 maximum modifier per side in each combat resolution. At first glance, this seemed to unrealistically aid the defender, since an attacker could not bring all available power to bear on a key hex. Then we tried playing with no limit; it unrealistically helped the attacker by making almost any hex indefensible. We finally accepted the arbitrary limit as per the original design. When you play, you may wish to alter the limit upwards or down and reach your own conclusions.