
Battle of the Wilderness, SPI 1975

Replay by George Nap



Battle of the Wilderness – SPI Publications

Taking out this old game from the glory days of **SPI**. I purchased the quad a while ago with the intent of playing through it. The game is much maligned in reviews, but no comprehensive replay exists. I will be using the attacker effectiveness rule, where a unit suffering an Ar (attacker retreat) result is combat ineffective for the rest of the day, retaining its defensive abilities and ZoC, but having to move away from eZoC if in one at the beginning of the movement phase.

Blue and Gray II rules set is refreshingly brief and clear. I will allow artillery bombardment to fulfill the requirement of attacking units in ZoC. This game would probably work best, and also feel best for the campaign, as a double blind, but that would require two more individuals, so that is not happening. That would definitely give the feel of now knowing what was going on in this tense and close-ordered slugfest of a battle.

My strategy for the US will be to fall back and protect the objective hexes, worth a hefty 15 VP each, they are marked with tile squares on the map. My strategy as the CS will be to strike the flanks of the Union, seeking the Hickman and Spottswood objective hexes. Reading about this game a CS rapid advance on day 1 is apparently offset by the US reinforcements. US units are more powerful and plentiful, but cannot leave road/trail/clear hexes on day 1, on day 2 they may move adjacent to such hexes but not penetrate the deep woods which are not adjacent. I am still unsure what constitutes a woods hex, I will rule any hex partially woods counts as such for determining where the US can move, but will not apply the MP costs

to hexes containing clear terrain, reversing my ruling in the **Road to Richmond** replay. CS units pay 2MP for woods hexes, although crossing a spine containing a woods coloration will result in the 2MP, not the clear 1MP cost. It's the little things that count...



BLUE & GRAY II
Battle of the Wilderness
Gaining the Initiative, May 1862
EXCLUSIVE P
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13A INTRODUCTION
14A INITIAL DEPLOYMENT CHART
141 Confederate Army
142 Union Army

Turn 1 – 5 May 1864

“It shouldn't have been a surprise, us coming at them. We were running out of space and time and it was time to make our presence felt.”
Fleetwood Rogers Johnston, Colonel Jenkins Brigade (dismounted)



CS – denuding the center we send forces north and wrap around the US center, the southern column advances towards Parker's Store.

US – we send the reserves to the flanks, look to delay the seccessh at Parker's Store. In retrospect I probably should have pulled V corps back on the Orange CH turnpike, leaving those three units in the clearing to the south to their fate, as they are surrounded by woods I am ruling they will not be able to move.

Turn 2 – 5 May 1864

“It had been a long slog through Virginia and we were tired, damn tired, and these spooky woods muffling some sounds, magnifying others. Then they came at us out of the woods screaming their horrid noise, we coolly levelled muskets and fired...” Julius Marchand, Sergeant, VI Corps



CS – we open with the battle of Parker’s Store in the south, falling upon the exposed 3/1/VI in the north, continuing to maneuver around the intrusion from the US center. Here I am surprised to see that forest does NOT effect combat, I had not noticed that before. That works in the CS favor at the start.



Battle of Parker’s Station
Davis,
Walker et al vs 46-
6=6-1+
1/3/V

DR
Lane/Dan’s/KrkInd
vs 3/3/V 6-1 Dr,
elim no retreat, first
blood. Spottswood
flank,

Gordon/Staffrd/et
al vs 3/1/VI 30-
8=3-1 Dr elim no
retreat.

Not a bad start.





US – Hammer is falling, will withdraw exposed units, sacrificing those too extended to save, supply is not a factor in this game so even isolated units will have to be rooted out. Need to bolster the southern flank and try to save Hickman, and maybe create a reserve, V Corps gets the call. We will counterattack in the north 1/1/vi and 3/2/vi with arty vs Stffrd 4-1 dr. 1/3/vi vs Hays 1-1 Ar combat ineffective, 2/3/vi vs Gordon 1-1 Ar combat ineffective. 1/3/V vs Scales at Parker's station mandatory 1-1 Dr, advancing after combat to sacrifice unit, pinning 6 CS brigades and blocking the road for a turn. Disastrous attacks in the north, but such is risk. Bought time in the south, which was the goal.

Turn 3 – 5 May 1864

“We shoved them back, they surrendered in droves, today would be good day for Dixie” – Polonius Webber, Private, Stonewall Brigade

CS – will let reinforcements take care of the pocketed V corps units, will try to crack the union defense. The delay at Parker’s station works in our favor, it is an inflection point from whence we can head towards either Hickman or pivot north towards Wilderness Tavern... We can also pressure Spottswood as well as maybe block Germanna Ford which would fatally delay US reinforcements. Fortune favors the bold. Isolated artillery is attacked at Chewning, the Battle of Parker’s Station continues, and the drama towards Spottswood builds toward crescendo. Parker’s Station 1/3/V dr elim no retreat. Doles/Lane vs v corps arty at Chewning 2-1 dr elim no retreat. Pegram 2-1 vs 1/1/vi ar combat ineffective, Battle/Gordon vs 2/3/vi (ineffective) 1-1 ar combat ineffective. Horrible rolls, the CS left is combat ineffective.



Turn 4 – 5 May 1864



They came at us near Spottswood and we cut them down like wheat. Hercules Franklin, Vi Corps

CS – Our left has to rest, our center is thin and our right is overwhelming. We shall violate the strictures of war and split our forces at Parker's Station, heading towards both Wilderness Tavern AND Hickman. Scales/et al attack 1/2/vi to clear the road to Hickman, cannot block off retreat 3-1 Dr



US – reinforcements from the east, long slog through the woods but might be in time to save Hickman and the left. Going to secure Germanna ford with our ineffective unit, dancing with the ineffective CS units. One mandatory attack on the Orange Plank road 1/2/Vi vs Scales/et al 1-2 Ar ineffective

Turn 5 – 5 May 1864

“Well, damn them, they’re just sitting there. Time to slice them apart.” Major John Street – Jone’s Brigade

CS - Orange Plank road McGwn/et al vs 1/2/vi 3-1 Dr. Battle of Hagers: Doles/et al vs 2/4/v 4-1 dr elim no retreat, Stonewall/et al vs 3/4/v 3-1 dr elim no retreat, Jones vs 1/4/v 1-2 Ae. By my read 1/4/v cannot advance into the woods hex because it is not in ezoc per the special rules, which is too bad, as they will be forced into an unfavorable attack.

US – Wilderness Tavern and the center are now endangered, so we will fall back on them. 1/4/v forced to attack Thomas/et al 1-2 Ar ineffective.

Turn 6 – 5 May 1864

“Dear Mrs. Street, I wish to gently inform you that your husband, Maj John Street, of late from Jone’s brigade fell at the Battle of Hagers in the Wilderness. Leading a charge towards my unit, I was forced to fire and watched him fall. It was quick and upon advancing to where he fell, I noted a peaceful look on his face, his unseeing eyes pointed towards God, you picture in his hand. I could not stay to tend to his body, but kept the photo and diary sent with this message. A brave man and more fierce foe never existed.” Private Peter Nicholson, 1st Brigade, 4th Division, V Corps, Army of the Potomac



CS – continuing pressure on Hickman, although those bluebelly reinforcement will soon make their weight felt, setting up an attack towards



Wilderness Tavern, although having to clean up the Hagars battlefield leaves us weakened. The left starts at the Yankees, unable to attack. McGwn/et al towards Hickman 2-1 dr occupied to delay and force a counterattack. Walker/et al vs 4/2/vi 2-1 ar ineffective moot night approaches. Davis/et al vs 1/4/v 2-1 ar ineffective moot.

US – We will strike where we can, the center is alarmingly weak, but fighting deep within the woods near Hagars continue, so someone is doing some good for us there. 3/2/v et al vs KirkInd/et al 3-1 dr, the Brock Rd/Orange Plank intersection is retaken. 1/4/v vs Johnston 2-1 dr.



Turn 7 – 5 May 1864

“We will push towards Lacy and through to Wilderness Tavern. The flower of the south cannot be stopped by that northern rabble.” Hortio Tolliver, Lt Col, Stonewall Brigade



CS – With so many units combat ineffective our choices are limited, but a night turn beckons next. We are forced into an unfavorable attack near Hickman Kirkland et al vs 2/3/ii et al 1-2 dr, we will not occupy as it would trap us in a cul de sac. Stonewall et al vs 1/1/V on the Orange CH Tpke towards Wilderness Tavern 2-1 dr occupying.

US – we are pushed back but not sundered. We may yet weather this. Counterattack near Wilderness Tavern 1/1/v et al vs Stonewall/et al 1-1 ar combat ineffective. 1/1/v vs davis/et al on Orange CH Tpke 1-1 dr occupied. 2/3/ii et al vs KirkInd et al outside Hickman 2-1 dr cannot occupy woods hex.



Turn 8 – 5 May 1864 Night –

Night turns, no combat zocs remain locking, cannot enter ezoc. Combat effectiveness recovered at END of night turn.

“It was a battle at Brock road, we rolled our smoothbores right up on them, charged with double cannister and cut fuses and lit it off. They ran, they surely did.”
Napoleon Scales, Sergeant II Corps Artillery, Army of the Potomac.



CS – Our right is in the air, our center solid, our left stretched but solid. We have major elements coming to the battle and will continue to slug it out. Have to hold on through the night and let our reinforcements pour in. Since there will be no battle we will spread out and deny the right. Curiously, movement rates at night remain as in the day, although the night turn represents more total hours than one day turn, in this battle in this trackless place movement at night should be extremely limited, one hex total. I will allow movement as in the rules though.

US – Movement restrictions still in place. Starting with turn 9 we may enter ANY hex adjacent to clear terrain, road or trail, still limiting but less so. We will prepare to receive an attack and then to move forward. Major CS reinforcements are due.

Turn 9 – 6 May 1864

“Being part of the 4th Division of the Vth Corps weren’t the same as when we were with Reynolds at Gettysburg, but we were still the goddamned Iron Brigade and the rebels were learning what that meant. We were behind their lines but holding them off and bleeding them white. Let them come at us again.” – Winston LeCour – 2nd Wisconsin Regiment, Iron Brigade.

CS – Time to bring on reinforcements and make the push forward. I am including Pickett’s reinforcements optional rule. We will push hard at their center. Daniel/et al vs 1/2/v and 2/1/v 3-1 DR occupied to fix their center. Doles/et al vs 2/2/v 3-1 dr. Hays/et al vs 2/3/vi 2-1 Dr occupied. Pickett’s division/Davis/et al vs 1/4/v and the remnants of the Iron Brigade on the Orange CH turnpike 3-1 dr, elim no retreat, the Iron Brigade shatters having bought the union an entire afternoon of time.



US – Using the Burnside rule, a roll of 6 and ix corps does not move, passed. We are locked into some attacks. The mass of CS at Parker's Store can go toward 3/rds Wilderness Tavern or Hickman, Wilderness Tavern is in more danger, so we will shift weight there.



Major actions swirl about Wilderness Tavern, we will attempt to cut some units off without retreats, but odds are low that this will work out, desperate times...Far right vi corps attacks from Germanna Ford Road area 2/3/vi et al vs Gordon/et al 2-1 dr occupied, 1/1/vi et al vs battle 2-1 dr occupied. Wilderness Tavern area 2/2/vi et al vs doles 3-1 ex occupied 2/2/v vs Stonewall 1-1 ar ineffective, 2/1/vi vs Thomas 1-1 ar ineffective, the center wavers.2/1/v et al vs Daniel 1-1 dr occupied. 1/1/v et al vs KirkInd/et al 2-1 dr elim no retreat. A major victory relieving the pressure on Wilderness Tavern and destroying two strong CS brigades. The battle hangs in the balance at the morn of day 2.



Turn 10 – 6 May 1864 – (some pictures mistakenly display turn 9, disregard that)

Halfway through the game victory points stand as follows: US 45 geographic + 56 for inflicted casualties = 101. CS 0 geographic + 162 for inflicted casualties. There is an exposed union unit at 1214 which can be killed. Two US brigades are ineffective so cannot contribute to the US cause. Will try to lock some US brigades into unfavorable attacks to force them into combat ineffectiveness, also, and then hang on as the CS. US brigades are uniformly stronger, so attacking is not the best course, especially given our advantage in victory points.

“I was ready to go in and take the Tavern, we all were. Then the Colonel comes by and says, hold boys. Back to the woods. We were mad, our friends were dead for this ground and we surely did not want to give it up. Shows what we knew.” Pvt Pericles Smith – Corse’s Infantry



CS – Defending forward will give us the maneuver advantage given the forest terrain. Have to take care not to get caught too far forward and cut off. Then eight turns of retreating, snipping off vulnerable US forces. Thomas, et al attack 3/1/v 3-1 de, nice start. Laws forced to attack 3/2/ii et al 1-3 ar ineffective. Daniel vs 3/2/v et al 1-2 dr. Gordon et al vs 2/3/vi et al ar ineffective. Stfrd et al vs 1/1/vi 1-1 dr.



US – Burnside roll passed. We have to destroy the CS army, every loss of ours add three vp to them, we only gain two for what we inflict, so we need to be deadly and careful. Still limited by terrain, so not much room for elegance or maneuver. We will engage in the center and buy time to bring up

our strongest units. Trying to attack at 3-1 or better to minimize ar results. 4/2/vs et al vs Daniel 2-1 ar, ugh. 1/1/v and arty et al vs Lane 3-1 ex, ugh again. 1/2/v vs Corse 2-1 dr/1/v et al vs Davis 2-1 ar, ugh. That probably did it, a serious chunk of combat power out of action.

Turn 11 – 6 May 1864

“We loved Burnside. He loved us. And we struck their line like avenging angels.”. Cpl Elliot Reeve, IX Corps

CS – time to withdraw. Will leave Daniel entangled to his fate, the rest of us will retrograde. Daniel vs 1/1/v 1-2 ar ineffective



US – Burnside pass. We have to push, and at unfavorable odds. This will most likely result in us being fought out without gaining the upper hand in casualties, but it is our only option in the limited time remaining. 1/1/v vs Terry et al 1-1 dr, 1/2/v et al vs Stonewall et al 2-1 ar 4/1/vi vs corse 1-1 dr. 1/1/vs vs stuart 3-1 dr, 2/3/vi vs Pegram 2-1 dr, 2/2/ix vs Stafrd et al 2-1 dr. All units remain engaged. In the south 2/1/ii vs andrsn 2-1 ar, 1/4/ii et al 4-1 vs Hmphys de



Turn 12 – 6 May 1864

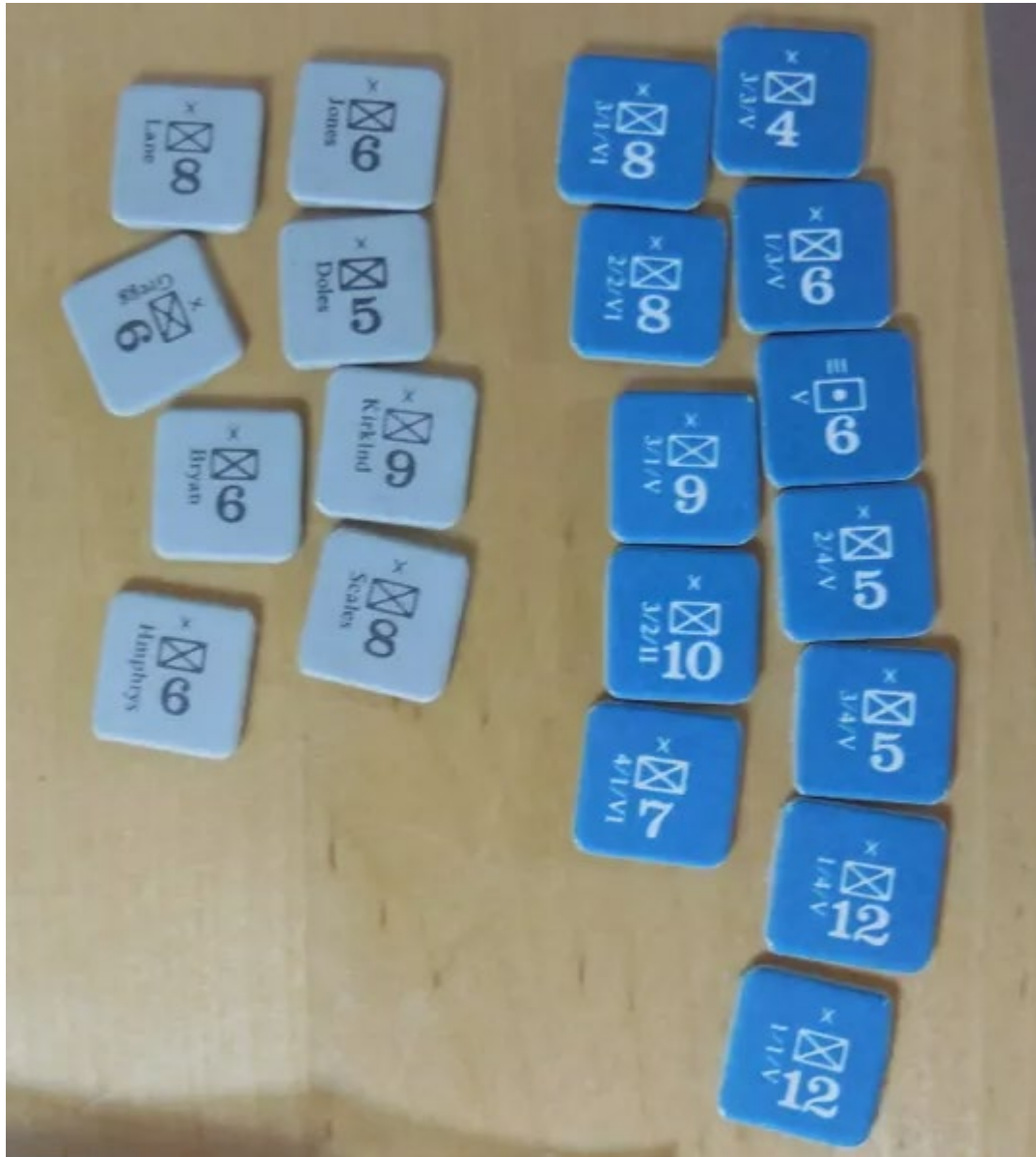
“Most of them died quiet in the scrub. The worst was those who you could hear unable to crawl away from the brush fire, consumed by hellfire. No...that wasn't the worst...the worst was those who lived through it and made it to my hospital. That was the worst.” Maj Rufus O'Neil, Surgeon, VI US Corps

CS – limited local attacks to snip off exposed bluebellies. They are pretty much punched out at this time. Some forced low odds attacks. Stfrd et al vs 2/2/ix et al 1-2 ar, Pegram et al vs 2/3/vi 1-2 dr, Ramseur vs 1/1/vi 1-2 ar. Wright et al vs 1/1/v 3-1 ex. Stonewall et al vs 4/1/vi 4-1 de.

Game Over

I am calling it here. Save the Union right, there is little offensive combat power remaining. The CS can shift westward and southward avoiding losses and keep the US at arm's length.

The Cost of Battle



Not a bad battle. I actually enjoyed gaming it.

It was in doubt for a while there. The combat effectiveness rule grows on you and forces you to do and not do things you would otherwise try or not try. Armies get fought out, just like in actuality. This was a pretty decisive CS victory on casualties. I do not see the US reinforcements as the juggernaut other gamers have described. They are almost too little, too late, too far away.

As the CS I would obliterate every US unit I could, not worry about the objective hexes, and then set up a fighting withdrawal.

As the US I would do what I did, this is a tough one for the US. Adjusting the vp for geographic objectives might be the trick, or the imbalance in casualty vp. Historically I would reverse it. CSx3, USx2 as the CS could not afford to lose men in the macro view.

To the critic who previously complained on my **Road to Richmond** replay that this is ‘...not how you play the Blue and Gray Quads...’ I say that I play within the rules and that is the only judgement on how to play the quads. What works for me, works for me. If we sit across the table from each other, I would expect you to play within the rules, nothing more, nothing less..