
Road to Richmond

by SPI Games

Replay by George Nap

This is an SPI Blue and Grey quad system game. The designers are up front in their description at the start of the rules, *it is first and foremost a game, and secondly a simulation.* So, we will not have granularity between unit types. Excepting symbology there is no difference between cavalry and infantry, the only difference with artillery is their range, which is two, except for the union siege arty [range 4, defense 1, move only on roads/trails], and union trains defense only move only on roads and trails.

The object for the Union is to get the hell out of dodge holding the door open for the army to retreat. The Rebs must stop them. Victory points for exiting units, the Union trains being worth quite a bit, and for eliminating units. The Union army is coming mainly through the 0414 hex area (near the terrain key on the map) all the way up to turn 14, needing to withdraw via hex 1528, so there will be a need to keep the Rebels at bay. The Chickahominy River is uncrossable except at bridges and fords. CSA moves first. Standard IGO/UGO, 20 turns.

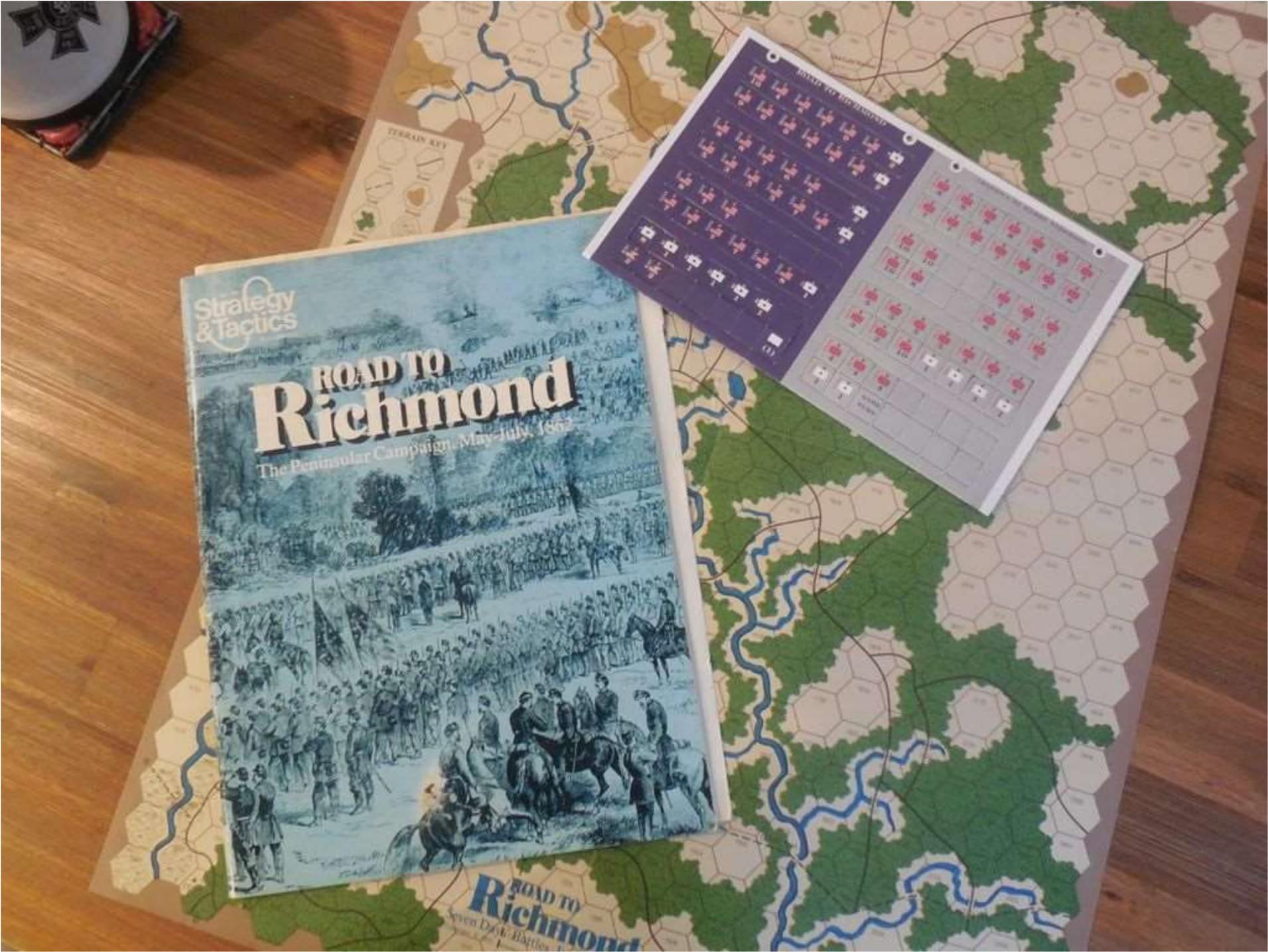
I cannot determine from the rules (and this is probably my oversight and lack of patience) if artillery bombardments count as fulfilling the requirement to attack all adjacent units. I will allow it to do so, meaning if one unit is adjacent to two enemy units it normally must attack both at the same time, however if an artillery unit bombards one of those units, then the adjacent unit must only attack the other. Units which are adjacent still must attack somebody, so this does not negate that requirement.

It is also unclear from the rules if terrain modifiers are cumulative or the best of available. (For instance, a unit defending behind a ford x2 in rough terrain x2, would this be x4 or x2?) I will make a ruling that it is the best option, not the cumulative option. A quick read of posted errata on bgg.com yields that terrain movement costs are cumulative; combat modifiers are a best of choice for the defender.

There is some non-specific terrain. For instance, if a hex is partially rough/forest then does it cost 6MP's to enter it? I am treating this as yes, but if a road transects the hex and the road occupies a part of the hex which is not rough/forest then I am allowing units to enter the hex via the road rate of 1MP, rather than the 6MP cost of rough/forest.

I am using Kerry Anderson's counters from the SPI wrecking yard, love the US cavalry guerdons.





Strategy & Tactics

ROAD TO Richmond

The Peninsular Campaign, May-July, 1862

ROAD TO Richmond
Seven Days Battles



Turn 1:
CSA: - Remembering that crossing the Chickahominy or approaching 1826/2425 will trigger early release of USA reinforcements. Moving towards the US lines.



T1 USA: We move forward to defend the ridge forward of the stream. This is more of a gaming move to make a more effective delay, militarily it would make more sense to defend the rough terrain behind the stream, but you gain no advantage in the game doing this. Siege arty and regular arty bombard Wilcox and Colquitt to no effect.



Turn 2

CSA: The one US cavalry unit stacks up our reinforcements for this turn. Pryor and JR Anderson push back 2/3/V, Wilcox is eliminated. Stuart eliminates 1/CR.

USA: A race to stop the flanking maneuver ensues. We are locked into some combats (locking ZOC are the rule in this game. Pryor and Wilcox repulse (AR) a counterattack by the Union. (Here I will note I am not using the "attack effectiveness" optional rule for just this reason. You are locked into Enemy ZOC and must attack. A savvy opponent can force this and then cause your army to become offensively crippled pretty easily.)



Turn 3:
CSA: Terrain is congested and with the MP cost of forest and rough it forces you to stop prior to entering such hexes and then slogging through one at a time absent roads/trails. Nice modelling in a simple game. I do not have the Wilderness version of this quad, but I bet that is interesting. The V Corps forces Stuart et al back at Old Cold Harbor (if only they knew). Pryor is repulsed and JR Anderson is eliminated near Woodbury's Bridge which repulses an attack by Pickett and Garland. The US left is holding.



USA: Need to extend the right and hold the left. Time for the siege army to start moving before it is trapped. No attacks, we are endangered on the right, we are also hurt by the 6MP requirement to enter forest (if only it was 5MP!)



Turn 4

CSA: There may be a strategy at game start to head down the SW side of the map and try to take 0414, but given the defensive values of the units covering the Chickahominy and the losses we have already suffered, this seems like a nonstarter.



Slamming into the entire Union line while sending Trimble on a long flanking march. Winder and Elroy force 1/2/V back, Stuart and Lawton repulsed by 1/3/V, 2/2/V repulses Field and Ripley, Gregg and Branch push 3/3/V back, 2/1/V and 3/2/V are pushed off the ridge and eliminated (no retreat) by Pender and GB Anderson, RH Anderson and Pryor are repulsed by 3/1/V and 1/1/V, Garland and Pickett are eliminated (1:2 rolled a 6) by 2/3/V and V Corps arty. Bloody turn, but the Union is locked into a series of unfavorable attacks.



USA: Our counterattack on the right results in an AR which places us nicely for defense with a night turn coming on. 2/2/V dies (AR no retreat) counterattacking Gregg and Branch. 2/3/V and 3/1/VI are repulsed by GB Anderson and Pender on the rough. We are in decent shape going not the night turn, but need to hold through another day to allow the army to escape.



Turn 5 (Night) - No combat, cannot enter Enemy ZOC, ZOC's still lock units already there.

CSA: Extend to our left.

USA: Extend our right to match the CSA, withdraw the center south.



Turn 6

CSA: Still do not want to trigger the early Union reinforcements, they are a day away and we can use this time to continue to push. Attacks generally succeed, pushing the Union back.



USA: We are locked into unfavorable counterattacks in the center. Emplacing a line behind the center should disaster occur. 2/3/V and 3/1/VI force back Pender and Anderson, Branch and Gregg repel the second assault.



1/2/IV repels and attack by the entire Confederate left, holding the end of the Union line. Branch and Gregg push back 1/1/VI and 2R arty. 3/1/VI and 2/3/V repulse Pender, RH Anderson et al.



USA: Siege arty sets up in the hex with the best fields of fire to support further withdrawals. We withdraw further SE, one arty unit exposed cannot get to cover, 1/2/IV are on their own on the right.

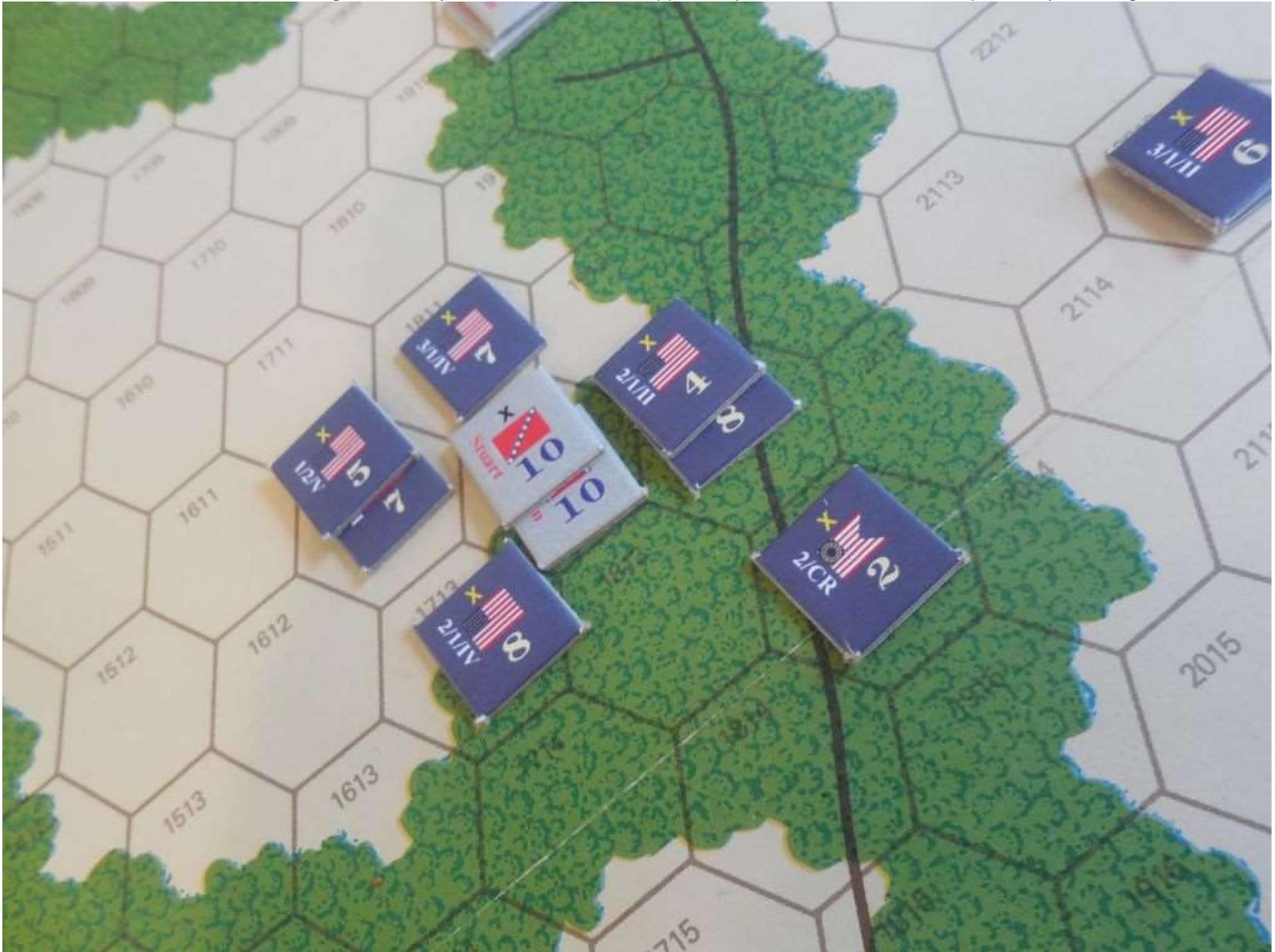


Turn 8

CSA: Pausing to set up attacks for next turn, the movement points for forest really force you to slow down and plan. On attack on the far left against the trapped Union brigade AR, tough boys those 1/2/IV blue bellies. Winder is cut down in an 8:1 ex vs 2R arty. Making progress on our left, USA is locked into some unfavorable attacks.



USA: A critical 1:2 vs Stuart on the right, could lay back but this is a 1:3 opportunity to eliminate him at a 1:6 possibility of losing all attackers.



I roll a 6, AE, the Union right is gone. Live by the sword, die by the sword.



Turn 9

CSA: Finally, we may have some room to move, time to get Stuart going.



We surge forward trying to crack a brittle Union line. Union 2 Cav EX with Lawton/Stuart, not optimal Lawton gone. Hood/Trimble repelled by 3/1/II. Main assault on Union center will involve diversionary attacks. Pender is eliminated in a 1:4, Field survives a 1:5, the main assault by Elroy/GB Anderson et al is repulsed, those boys died for nothing.



USA: Much as our line is firm and canalizes the advance, we need to secure the right, so we will start withdrawing yet again. May have to sacrifice some weak artillery as speed bumps. 1/2/IV drives back Johnson on the extreme right.



Turn 10

CSA: Both attacks on the right succeed in pushing back the defenders and locking them into unfavorable counterattacks. Another turn in the center positioning for assaults next turn.



USA: We survive our unfavorable attacks, back out of vulnerable positions and dare the rebels to attack us.



Turn 11

CSA: One attack on our far left, the US withdrawal in the center forces us to spend the turn preparing another assault. Trimble and Hood retreat "forward" to a road hex on the left.



USA: Supply train arrives, heading for the exits. We withdraw, 1/2/IV continues to battle isolated and left behind.



Turn 12

CSA: Screening the Chickahominy crossings, attacks on the flanks, waiting for the rest of our units to make their appearance.

USA: Supply train exits, time to get the rest of the army out of here. Pulling back from the upper fords, preparing to exit the map.



Turn 13 (night)

CSA: I fear they are escaping, given terrain restraints we cannot bring enough pressure to bear to have an effect.



USA: Next to last reinforcements, large batch will have to hold the left open, but we need to remember the CSA units coming from the south, also. Getting the siege arty to safety, also. We had retreated a bit too far and Colquitt is crowding our entry spaces, bad planning on my part.



Turn 14

CSA: A 1:2 at Sumner's Lower Bridge eliminates Field and GB Anderson. Our attack on the Union far right is repulsed.



USA: Heading for the exits. Units on the far right are eliminated in an unfavorable forced counterattack.

Turn 15:

CSA: Time for some more bedlam. The command control area is reasonably congested with a poor road network for advance and little frontage for attack, but we will try anyway. Semmes and Griffith make progress, as do Colquitt and Rodes to the west. On the far left we push the Union right and force an unfavorable combat in their half of the turn.



USA: We will need to cover the Chickahominy crossings with arty if the attacks go poorly. We roll a 1 on a 1:3 forcing back the rebels, arty will occupy to delay them, pinning them in our ZOC.



Semmes and Griffith are left without a retreat path and are eliminated, as are Rodes and Colquitt.



Turn 16

CSA: Last turn's losses probably spell the end for this battle for us. We will push on the far left to try for the exit hexes but there is not enough time. We attack where we can, we will defend the Command Control area to keep the Union from establishing a path and exiting. Pryor/Archer/RH Anderson force a retreat at Alexander's Bridge. On the far left, VI Corps army dies a valiant death, 2/2/IV repels Cunningham and Law but is forced into an unfavorable counterattack.



USA: We counterattack near Alexander's Bridge RH And/Pryor are unable to retreat and are eliminated.



Archer throws back 1/2/IV. The units on the far right survive the mandatory 1:3 counterattack, retreating.



Turn 17:

CSA: This is a maneuver turn to set up the next assaults on the Union right the only place we have combat power remaining. Archer does not survive his mandatory counterattack.



USA: There was a slight temptation to try and open a line of communication to hex 0117, but that is too much risk for too little reward. Continuing to withdraw.



USA: Have to strike back at Bottoms Bridge, much too close to the exit hex for comfort. The attack on Trimble and Gregg is repulsed, they are across the Chickahominy in a dangerous place.



Actually a very dangerous position. 1/3/III dies holding the far left. Trimble and Gregg hold, the exit hex now in play.



Turn 20 – last turn

CSA: Given the victory point conditions, we cannot gain points for exiting units without a line to 0117. But it is still a pretty interesting battle and we will continue to try and hold the hex in our ZOC that way the Union cannot exit any more units. We force 12 Mile Post Bridge. We force the Union back from the bridgehead. Mahone picks off the 3R arty and force retreats on the far left. The Union army is looking trapped, but we just ran out of time.

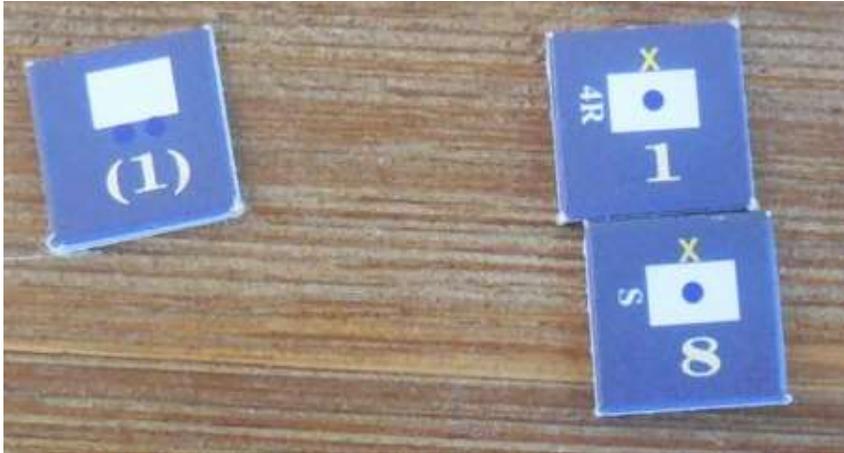


USA: Locked into unfavorable attacks, cannot exit units, but are ending the game this turn. Trimble and Gregg eliminate two attackers, Ripley is forced back as the Union retakes one side of Bottom's Bridge, Branch and Hood stand fast. We take some losses on the last turn.



Both sides are savaged in the battle.

Victory Points: USA: 2 (2 units exited) + 5 (supply train exited) + 112 CSA losses = 119 VP
Exited Units.



USA victory but close.

This game was fun to play. I like exercising a fighting withdrawal. The Chickahominy is a serious obstacle and you need to be willing to attack at low odds and accept the casualties therein. (Malvern Hill, anyone, different game but similar reasoning.)

I did not read the Designer's Notes beforehand, but the fighting withdrawal strategy does call for a sweep of the NW Union flank. Since that is the way to the exit hexes, that might not be a bad CSA strategy anyway. The movement costs of forest and rough really limit the speed of assault, especially since you cannot enter the hex without sufficient movement points, and I play partial hexes as costing the full amount of the most restrictive terrain. The road network is not conducive to advance, nor does it really lend itself to internal lines of communication for the Union, although there is a slight advantage to them in the road network.