

The BLUE & GRAY Quads (SPI)

Each game has one 17" x 22" map, 100 counters, 4 pp. standard rules, 3-4 pp. exclusive rules; scale 400 meters/hex

On the whole, "quadrigames" are not generally conceded to be at the pinnacle of the designer's art, but even the *Blue & Gray*, which rank right down there with *Island War*, have some positive aspects. They are games, not pretending to be simulations, and some of their inaccuracies and design compromises annoy me. At least they are easily learned and fairly quick, if not fun, to play.

The chief deficiencies in these games arise from two aspects of the Civil War, new weapons and incompetent leadership handicapped by a lack of good tactical intelligence about the enemy. A bloody lesson eventually learned was that the effective range of rifled weapons made Napoleonic infantry/artillery tactics costly at best and frequently fruitless. So what is the basic game system chosen for the quads? *Napoleon at Waterloo*, of course.

A result of increased firepower was a clearcut advantage to the defender, yet in these games attack and defense use the same combat factor and 1-1 odds have an equal chance of loss for both sides. However, the

attacker is handicapped in a peculiar way; if a unit suffers an attacker retreat, it is rendered unable to attack again. If in an enemy ZOC at the start of its turn, it suffers an automatic retreat result as well, since ZOC's are rigid and combat mandatory. While attacking units could be badly battered, applying the result to every failed attack is too lavish in its use, especially since no similar effect applies to defenders. Defending units, even ones which have lost "attack effectiveness," can be literally booted from one end of the board to another without an iota of ill effect on their morale or defensive combat power. In all but one game, units must rest overnight to regain attack effectiveness. If there is no next day, tough.

Incompetent leadership is inevitable when a nation generates mass armies overnight. The Union, with more men under arms, had more incompetents to begin with and took longer to get them out of positions in which they could do harm. Even good leaders were hampered by poor reconnaissance, and the combination of the two was debilitating. McClellan at Antietam had a good plan, but failed to execute it, partly because it was his style to dither and partly because he was convinced Lee outnumbered him. Of the eight games of these quads, some sort of arbitrary rule is introduced in almost every one to handicap the Union player, the attacker (the Union in five cases anyway) or both. Usually this handicap is a restriction on the number of units which can move, apparently on the grounds that since the historical commander employed his troops foolishly, the player must be compelled to do likewise. The result is a tendency for the games to reach their historical outcomes, not because the situation is accurately modeled but because of these restraints on the players. Handicaps are fine in horse races; in wargames, they are a cheap out for the designer.

BLUE & GRAY I 1975

CEMETERY HILL

Design: Ed Curran

Rating: D-

This creation has many deficiencies, so I am not sure where to start. It covers the whole 3 day battle at a pace of 4 day and 1 night turn per day. Units are divisions and artillery brigades for the Union and half-divisions and artillery battalions for the Confederates. Terrain types are restricted to clear, rough, forest, forest-rough, road and town, with fordable creek hexsides. The map bears little semblance to the battlefield, and the course of the game bears little semblance to history. Even without the handicap of loss of attack effectiveness, the Confederates on the first day are hard-pressed to hold their own against the mighty XI Corps, much less sweep the field before them.

SHILOH

Design: Christopher Allen

Rating: C

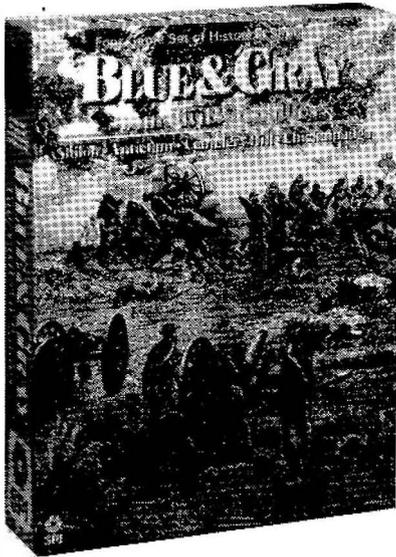
The chief defects of this game are those of the quads as a whole, particularly the attack effectiveness rules. Basically, the Confederates are not likely to win. The battle is

covered in 13 turns (6 per day plus one night) with infantry brigades and artillery battalions as the main units (and, of course, the Union gunboats). The terrain is mostly forest, rough and forest-rough, slowing the Confederates while not helping the Union much, since forests have no effect on combat. During the first two turns, all Union units not in enemy ZOC's must move one hex north or northeast, which may force them to vacate nice defensible terrain.

ANTIETAM

Design: Tom Walczyk
Rating: B -

This is a one day battle in ten turns on a brigade level. Terrain is largely clear with blocks of rough and forest. The chief obstacle to the Union advance is Antietam Creek, which can be crossed only at five fords and three bridges. The Union right wing starts already across the creek, though, and since they are both stronger and more numerous units, they should have a walkover. But, McClellan attacked piecemeal, or rather made no effort to coordinate the attacks of his corps commanders. So the Union player is compelled to do the same. He starts the game with 46 units but can move only 15 on the first turn and 10 on the later turns. Of course, he can pick which ones will move, a luxury not afforded McClellan, which makes it historically inaccurate. Given the structure of the game, such a restriction is needed to prevent Union victory every time; however, it would be better to limit movement to the units of any three corps each turn. The Union offensive moved by fits and starts, but at least the corps acted as units in whatever they did. All things considered, this is the second best of the eight games in the quads.



CHICKAMAUGA

Design: Irad B. Hardy III
Rating: B +

Easily the best of the *B&G*'s, this has become a perennial convention tournament favorite, mainly because it is exciting and well balanced. The terrain is mostly forest, with a lot of serpentine ridges of rough and

forest-rough, cut by roads and trails. A superior force of Confederates must cross the length of the board and seize two exit hexes. The piecemeal arriving Union troops must hold them off long enough to get themselves off the board while killing Rebs and keeping them from exiting as well.

The game covers two days in 15 turns with brigade level units. Fairly low unit densities, combined with the numerous choke points on the map, make for a game of maneuver more than head-on combat, and the outcome is usually in doubt to the end. Significantly, there are no artificial restrictions on either side in this game.

BLUE & GRAY II, 1975 FREDERICKSBURG

Design: Joe Angiollilo
Rating: C

This game covers Burnside's disastrous attempt to chase Lee off the Rappahannock front in December 1862. He had about a 50% manpower advantage but had to attack across a river, through a town and up a hill against a fortified enemy. As Burnside was even more inept at running a battle than McClellan, he was bloodily defeated. To insure that the Union Player doesn't do significantly better, he is only allowed to move 15 of his 56 units in any given turn.

The game is on the brigade level, covering two days in 11 turns, though it should all be over on the first day. A new terrain type, the redoubt, is added to aid the Confederate defense. A major flaw is the placement of key terrain near the board edge. Hamilton's Crossing is worth 25 Victory Points (compared to an average of 8 points for all other victory hexes) but is the last hex in the row. Thus it is protected on one side by redoubts and rough terrain and on the other by the edge of the world, forcing a frontal assault on a one hex front to take it. The game has a second scenario, covering the diversionary attack by Sedgewick in May during the Chancellorsville campaign. While not really good either, it is better than the main scenario.

HOOKER & LEE

Design: Richard Berg
Rating: C

The map covers the area west of Fredericksburg where most of the fighting in the Chancellorsville campaign took place, and the game covers the last two days of this campaign in 9 turns, using Union divisions and Confederate brigades.

The game starts with the Union army already across the river, so strategic surprise has been achieved as it was historically. The Confederate player is allowed to try a "tactical surprise," Jackson's flanking move, by removing units from the board and bringing them back on later. Unfortunately, the Union player gets to know what units left, when they'll return, and approximately where. So, just to keep him tied up and as ineffective as Hooker, he can move only 6 of his 27 units on any given turn. In effect, the Confederate has been given the offensive ball to carry.

One redeeming feature of the game is that the map mates up with the one from *Fredericksburg*, and rules are provided for *Grand Chancellorsville*. This game is superior to either of its components, and is similar in scope and quality to the AH 1974 version. It adds leaders to the countermix, and their effects on movement and combat.

CHATTANOOGA

Design: Frederick Georgian
Rating: C

This is another two-day battle in 10 turns on a brigade level approach, covering the Union attack to break the Rebel siege of Chattanooga following Chickamauga. Both sides have lines of redoubts, but except for these and Lookout Mountain, most of the fighting will be done on clear terrain. Once again the Union force is stronger in numbers and average strength. Once again the Union player is shackled — he can move only 11 of his 41 counters on any given turn.

BATTLE OF THE WILDERNESS

Design: Linda Mosca
Rating: D -

The game covers two days of fighting in 16 turns on a divisional level. The board is mostly forest, with a road/trail net and a number of clearings.

In the real battle, Grant tried to flank Lee by marching through the tangled second-growth scrub forest called The Wilderness, in which Hooker had come to grief. Lee managed to block him and the battle which followed was a series of isolated clashes by troops blundering around on the poor roads and trails, often out of touch with even their leaders due to the dreadfully impassible terrain. In the game, Union units cannot even enter forest hexes on the first day unless they contain a road, trail or enemy ZOC. For some reason, on the second day they may enter any forest hex adjacent to a clear, road or trail hex. Not too bad a handicap compared to the other *B&G*'s. However, the Confederates are given superhuman mobility. They travel on trails as if they were roads and in forests as if they were trails.

The game should be played like double blind man's bluff, with inverted counters and lots of dummy counters for both sides. Instead, it plays more like southeast Asia. Rebs come barreling down the pike toward a roadbound Union column. At the last moment, the lead units peel off into the forest on either side to hem in the leading Federals with enemy ZOC's, so an ensuing defender retreat leads to elimination. The conflict becomes one of almost surgical strikes by a mobile defender against a ponderous attack, rather than an inchoate brawl that eventually died out due to mutual exhaustion. ■ ■

