

# **Antietam**

**By J.L. Robert**

This is the second game from SPI's venerable [Blue & Gray](#) Quadrigame, and is one of the earliest treatments of this historical battle (if not the very first).

## **Setup**

Like Shiloh, the units on both sides are spread out across the map. But there are a few stacks of units, ready to hit hard and fast. I'm curious to as to the optimal strategies for both, especially with the limited movement options both sides face (the Confederates on Turn 1, and the Union throughout the battle).

Again, Pete Belli has already provided us with a photo of this game's initial setup:



(Photo thanks to Paolo Desalvo)

### **Turn 1**

I choose to have the Union attack across both bridges across Antietam Creek, as well as advance towards Hagerstown Pike in the north. In addition, 3 brigades cross the Creek to fill in the gap in the center of the Union formations. With only 15 pieces to move, these attacks will have little to no support. 2 brigades of I Corps force back Hampton's Cavalry, which surrounds Pelham's Artillery Brigade, which is eliminated when forced to retreat from a 3-1 attack. A 6-1 attack against Rodes' Brigade forces the unit back off the Boonesboro Road. Toombs is similarly driven off the Burnside Bridge, but the threat of a Confederate counterattack commits the lowly 3/2/V Brigade to hold the bridgehead.

The Confederates respond by manning the Sunken Road while counterattacking the points they were

attacked at. Hood and Early lead the CSA Cavalry to drive back elements of I Corps, displacing the brigade that took the rough ground where Pelham's Artillery had been wiped out. A 3-1 counterattack sends the II Corps units back across the Middle Bridge, with Starke's Brigade holding the western bank of the Creek. And the light brigade defending Burnside Bridge is swept aside by a 6-1 attack led by Walker, and Pickett is selected to defend the bridge against future attacks.



## **Turn 2**

The Union move to swing around the Sunken Road and to reinforce the bridge assault to the south. Hays and Jones are forced out of the woods, displacing Hood and Hampton in the process. Rodes and Law are similarly forced away from the entrance to the Sunken Road, but units from the US XII Corps elect not to take the ground and risk encirclement. The Middle Bridge has a similar outcome, as Starke is driven back, and the Federals electing not to expose their brigade to the mass of Confederates on the other side. However, the 1/2/IX does venture across the Burnside Bridge after forcing Pickett to retreat.

The CSA forces indeed rush forward from their defensive positions to surround the XII Corps units. A risky 2-1 attack generates the Dr result, and the encircled Union brigades are eliminated. A 1-1 attack on the other end of that line drives back I Corps units, surrounding a third Union brigade who also routs and is removed from play. But Early's Brigade with Lee's Cavalry fall back, allowing other I Corps units to advance and engage. Pickett again takes back the Burnside Bridge as a 3-1 attack gets the "1" for the De result, wiping out another Union brigade. (3 of the 4 Confederate attack rolls were 1's).



### **Turn 3**

A 1 is rolled and the random Union reinforcements arrive early! As they march towards Antietam Creek, other units fill in the holes in the Federal lines, while continuing their assaults on the bridges and the Confederate left wing. Another IX Corps brigade advances across the Burnside Bridge, hoping for a favorable defense, while Starke and GB Anderson are forced away from the Middle Bridge. Hood and Jones are also forced to retreat, allowing Union forces to encircle Hays, Early and FH Lee. All 3 are eliminated with Dr results.

Confederates counterattack before the Union forces can consolidate. The encircled 3/2/I Brigade falls, then Ripley and Pryor fall back to supporting positions. A 2-1 attack forces the supporting V Corps brigade from the Middle Bridge, but the subsequent 1-1 attack against the 1/1/V is unsuccessful. Pickett continues his tug-of-war with IX Corps over the Burnside Bridge.



#### **Turn 4**

The rest of the Union reinforcements arrive. The attacks along the western flank are mostly unsuccessful, with 2 of 3 attacks being rebuffed. Winder's Brigade is driven back, but Garland's Brigade doesn't survive the Union assaults. The separated 1/1/V Brigade suffers a horrific Ae result, and the Federals lose their foothold on the west bank of the Antietam, just as other V Corps units again force their way across the Middle Bridge.

Against mounting losses, the CSA forces withdraw in the west to new defensive positions. All while still continuing to deny the US forces their bridgeheads. The 2/1/IX is lost at the Burnside Bridge, but takes Pickett's and Toombs' Brigades with an Ex result. Another Ex shatters the US 2/2/V, but takes Taliaferro and Cobb with it. The delaying attacks in the west all result in Ar results, with Union pickets following them.



## **Turn 5**

Union forces continue to close in on Sharpsburg. But their attacks are ineffective, with only one Dr result.

The Confederates, however, continue to fall back to their defensive lines, re-occupying the Sunken Road in force as well as the terrain north of Sharpsburg. Reinforcing the Burnside Bridge with 2 Brigades, the CSA can then dispatch Walker's Brigade to relieve the defenders of the Middle Bridge.



## **Turn 6**

Union forces are trying to press their positional advantage before their forces run out of steam. Law and Armistead are unable to hold their lines, which allows for US troops to encircle and wipe out Jones' and Featherstone's Brigades. With a major assault, the XII Corps gets a toe-hold in the Sunken Road, while Pryor, Drayton, Semmes and Winder all fall back, forcing Wilcox and Hampton to be displaced. A 1-1 attack on Walker fails to dislodge him, and the Federals are forced to concede a second bridge.

CSA efforts to reinforce their defensive lines prove to be moot as all of their counterattacks generate Ar results, leaving US forces on the outskirts of Sharpsburg. With Turn 7 approaching, can AP Hill's forces arrive in time to stem the tide of the battle?



## **Turn 7**

The Union wing continues to press forward. While most of their attacks fail, the 2/3/I drives back Pryor and Drayton into Sharpsburg, while the 3/1/I is able to advance into the town itself. Hampton and Wilcox get surrounded and eliminated with low-odds attacks.

Aside from the bridgeheads, the remainder of the Confederate forces fall back to defend Sharpsburg and drive out the Federals that have entered the town. The 3/1/I is forced out of the town by forces led by Walker's Brigade, but Pryor and Drayton are lost in an exchange with the 2/3/I to the town's north.



## **Turn 8**

The II Corps drives forward to split the CSA forces in two while fighting along the outskirts of Sharpsburg continues. A 1-1 attack eliminates the surrounded brigades of Rodes and Ripley. A 1-3 attack is shockingly successful, sending Law's and Washington's Brigades into the town.

Another round of disastrous counterattacks results in all Ar results, allowing US troops back into Sharpsburg. Hill is just reaching the southern approaches to the town.



## **Turn 9**

The US forces start their final push towards Sharpsburg. Semmes and Winder are driven off the terrain outside of the town, and Barksdale and Kershaw are also sent away, allowing Federals to surround Evans and Kemper, who are wiped out in a 3-1 attack. But the 3/3/I is driven back.

The Confederates muster all of their forces to push the Union troops further away from town. Robertson and Law successfully push back the Union center, surrounding 3 attacking brigades. Hill and Walker prove their value, each leading 2-1 attacks that eliminate the encircled enemy.



## **Turn 10**

Now unable to get into Sharpsburg, the remaining Union forces look to finish off straggling Confederates. The defenders of the Middle Bridge are finally cleared, and Winder's Brigade falls in an Exchange. And the attacks to the north of town disengage both sides.

But, now freed up to move, the heavy-hitting CSA brigades of Hill and Walker lead massed attacks against the shattered remnants of the Union assault line, claiming 3 more brigades on the last turn.

The final tally of VP's: USA 65, CSA 108. A substantive victory for the Confederates.

## **Analysis**

US troops are severely hamstrung by the movement restrictions set upon them. I surmised that the Confederate player is best served by never considering crossing Antietam Creek, which would lift the movement restriction. It seems that this plan worked.

I tried to eliminate smaller CSA units as the US, hoping by removing the number of defenders, the Confederate defense would be spread too thin. That almost worked. There just weren't enough supporting forces available to the US wing to follow up their advances into Sharpsburg.

**A viewer wrote:**

Extremely well presented; concise and interesting!  
My memory is foggy, but wasn't artillery use critical?

J.L. Responds:

This is the very first time I've played this game.

I tried to initially use the Union artillery to dislodge the bridge defenders, but then shifted their focus over the last few turns to try to assist the attacks into Sharpsburg.

The CSA artillery, while weaker, had the advantage of mobility, and shifted back and forth between supporting the counterattacks at the bridges and driving back the US troops approaching the town.