

OPERATIONAL ANALYSIS:

TERRIBLE SWIFT SWORD

The Importance of (Being) Buford

by Richard Berg

And you thought that I was self-indulgent (see my PGG article this issue)—Mr. Berg now herein advises you on a critical aspect of the play of his lovechild (which he persists in including in all sorts of "best game" lists that he generates—see SPI Game Library article). Remember, you are mortal, Richard.

The Union success at Gettysburg, particularly on the second and third days of the battle, can be traced to the exceptional defensive position that they held after the first day. This defensive line, historically known as The Fishhook, stretched from Culp's Hill to Cemetery Hill then south through Cemetery Ridge down to the Little Round Top. The advantages of the terrain—and the breastworks that the Union soldiers were able to throw up—were such that the second and third days of the battle assumed a quasi-WWI atmosphere, with immense Southern charges being repulsed with great loss of life. In fact, it was the Union's position, and Lee's inability to realize the value of that position, that resulted in the great Union victory. And the person who was most responsible for enabling the Union to take that position was the capable Union cavalry commander, Brigadier General John Buford.

The situation, historically, was this: on the evening of June 30th General Heth's vanguard had spotted Union troops in the area of Gettysburg. Receiving permission to reconnoiter "in force" the next morning, Heth marched his division down Chambersburg Pike toward the town, unaware that the troops were the 1st and 2nd Brigades of the Union First Cavalry Division. Heth had some 6700 men at his command, and he was followed at some distance by Pender's Division, with another 5100 men. In addition, directly to the north of the town were two of the best fighting divisions in the Confederate army: Rodes' Division (7500) and Early's Division (5600). When reports of early fighting reached Lee in the morning he had sent messengers to these two forces to proceed directly to Gettysburg. And in the center of this impending maelstrom stood the two brigades of Buford's troopers, 2900 strong.

This is the immediate situation that confronts *Terrible Swift Sword* aficionados in the opening turns of the game. It is a situation fraught with danger—danger that the slightest mistake in tactical considerations can produce a disaster of the first order. For the Union player knows, as did the exceptionally capable Buford, that the hills and ridges to his rear will afford good terrain coverage for the Union Corps that are approaching. (Buford, on spotting Heth's approach, had sent a message to Reynolds,

commanding the Union I Corps some distance to the South, requesting immediate support.) His problem, therefore, is how to delay 2 full Confederate divisions for three hours (8 or 9 Game-Turns), until the First Division or the I Corps can get into position on McPherson's Ridge. The dilemma of numerical inferiority is compounded by the fact that the Union player has only one battery of artillery (against 13 Confederate batteries) and considerably fewer actual units. (The Confederate Player has 16 regiments, in addition to his overwhelming artillery strength, to the 8 cavalry regiments of the Union). As for the Confederate Player, he knows (unless he's a total stranger to the Civil War) that unless he wins big in the first day's fighting his chances of success in the game are distressingly small. And a quick glance at the general situation shows him that he has to have pushed the Union off McPherson's Ridge before the XII Corps arrives in strength. If the Union has managed to maintain a good defensive position northwest of the town by the time the XII Corps arrives, the Confederate player will be hard-pressed to do anything but sustain high casualties. However, if he can be assaulting Union positions on Cemetery Hill and environs *before* the arrival of the XII Corps his chances of success are excellent.

Thus the crux of the tactical situation comes down to the confrontation between Heth and Buford. Can Heth push Buford's troops back at a fast enough rate so that they can take McPherson's Ridge in good order? Or can Buford's troopers hold their ground and/or delay Heth long enough so that the I Corps can take its position?

The Union player definitely has a difficult time ahead of him in attaining the above goals. (This task will be all the more difficult if the players opt for the optimum Horse Holders rule.) Historically, Buford had phenomenal success against Heth's division: he not only enabled the I Corps to move into line with ease but he managed to inflict ferocious casualties on Heth's men, sustaining losses of only 129 men himself. These figures alone are a paean to Buford's capabilities; unfortunately they also bear witness to Heth's ineptitude at reading the situation. Heth insisted on sending his regiments in piecemeal, whereby they proceeded to get chewed up by the fire from the Union carbines. It is doubtful whether a Union player will be so lucky as to find a Confederate opponent *that* dumb! Thus, with the Confederate player having the benefit of historical hindsight, Buford's position becomes even more tenuous.

Although the game begins with the 0740 Game-Turn, it will be at least 40 minutes (of game time) and maybe more, before the

Confederate Player can get his two lead brigades into battle-formation. During this time the Union Player will have to make his initial decision: whether to sit and hold his original deployment or move forward. The initial deployment itself should not be taken lightly. Because of the fact that the Union player has but eight regiments of troopers, his susceptibility to a Confederate flanking maneuver is great. It is obvious that he will have to protect the center (where the pike runs through Herr Ridge); the main question is, on which flank should he concentrate?

A glance at the game-map will show that the center of Herr Ridge is protected from fire by a spur of the ridge which cuts in front of the main ridge. This spur tends to separate the fire alleys and protects the Union center and right from any fire from the Confederate right. As the southern portion of Herr Ridge is heavily wooded, the Union tendency is to ignore his left (the southern flank) and concentrate on the center and right. This strategy usually invites a major Confederate sweep to the south in an attempt to envelop the Union cavalry while setting the stage for a strike towards the Baltimore Pike. The Union player must guard against this at all costs. The Union Player should thus divide his cavalry into three distinct groups. There are three leaders (Buford, Gamble and Devin), so this is not the imposition on leadership that it might seem. The 1/1/Cav should take the position in the center, at Herr Tavern (under Gamble) while Devin's brigade is split to the north and south. The two C4's in 2/1/Cav should be located in the grove north of the RR, under Devin, while the C3 and C2, plus Buford, set up in the woods to the south. (See map; Union Position nr. 1)

Before the Confederate has a chance to deploy his brigades into line, the Union should advance to the forward positions noted on the map, while A, 2US battery moves into place at 2115, giving it a clear line of fire at most Confederate troops. Exactly how far the Union commander is willing to advance his troopers (who are, of course, dismounted) is directly proportional to his ability to bluff. The Confederacy doesn't want to tangle with the Union until it is in its most efficient formation; the Union carbines are too deadly, and they provide defensive protection as well—a major help in this situation. The Union player simply wants to slow the CSA movements to a crawl. Thus, at this point in time (the first 2 or 3 moves) the South is particularly vulnerable, having to get its units into some kind of fighting formation. (Note the movement of the 17th Penn and 3d WVa regiments to the south to forestall any Southern flanking maneuver there.) Using his single artillery battery to either silence

whatever artillery the Confederate player can bring up quickly, or to pin the larger advancing regiments, the Union Player should be able, with a minimum of luck, to delay a concerted Confederate advance—with minimal Union losses—for at least another turn. The Union player then should fall back immediately to his original line at Herr Ridge for a second delaying turn.

It is important to remember that the Union Player does not want to sacrifice his entire cavalry detachment at this point. In the first place, cavalry is expensive to lose in terms of victory points; and secondly, a strong mounted force on the flanks can serve as a quick deterrent to any threatened sweep by the numerically superior South later in the morning. He therefore wants to have the majority of his cavalry intact after I Corps arrives to take over. Thus, the last thing he wants to do is get involved in a protracted—and close-range—firefight with Heth's boys. And even worse would be to find himself outflanked and surrounded! If that happens, the Union commander might just as well drop back to Baltimore.

The tactic, then, is the graceful—and cunning—retreat. Always remember that the Southern Enfields have greater range than the Union carbines; however, the carbine

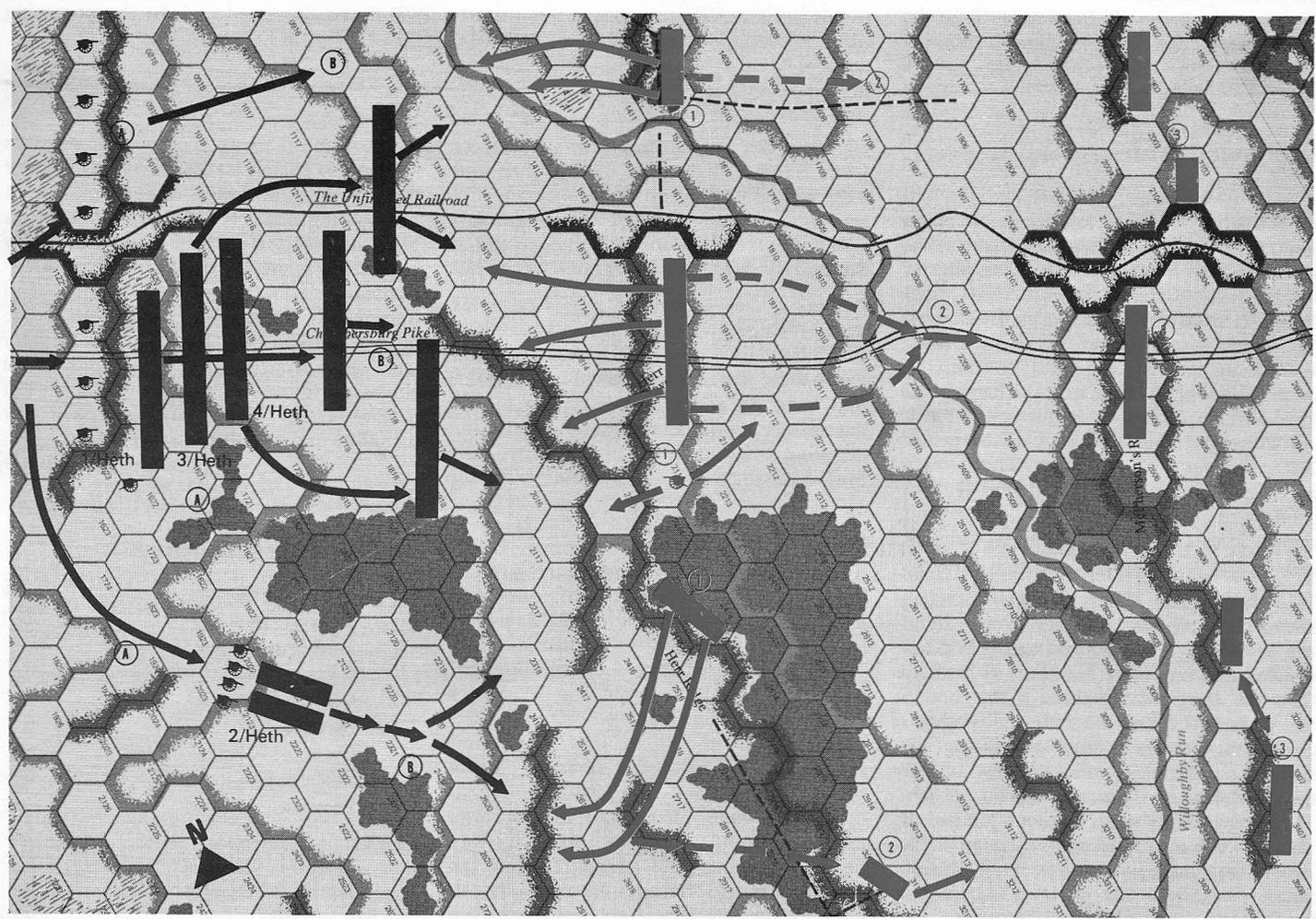
fire-power is murderous at 200 yards and less, if you feel it feasible to let the Confederacy advance that far.

It might even be worth the Union Player's while to allow the CSA to move into such range, if the Union player has good defensive position (meaning a Fire CRT movement of two to the left). Pour concentrated fire into several key units (those big 2d and 42d Miss, plus the 3 big NC regiments are tough to handle, but worth it if you can inflict casualties—and maybe rout them) and head for your next key position. The danger is that if the fire is ineffective turning to retreat might be inviting disaster, for if Heth's division takes the good position you originally held and uses it to his advantage to cut down your retreating units your decision will be regrettable.

At all costs, the Union Player should avoid mixing it up with the superior Confederate artillery. It takes some time to get those 13 batteries (actually 12; the 2 Whitworth guns are worthless at this stage) into position to use. But if the Confederate player can do so quickly, or if he can bring them forward rapidly into position to concentrate fire, a Custer-like disaster could be at hand. Remember, even though artillery fire has minimal effect on the dismounted troopers, a pin

here, when you are trying to keep your units in good order, can be worse than a casualty. With an average amount of luck—meaning a random distribution on the fire and rout die rolls—the Union player should be able to withdraw from his Herr Ridge Position (to the area of (2) on the map) in good order. And if he can hold the Herr Ridge position until 0920 he is in good shape.

His next tenable position is his final one, McPherson's Ridge (#3). Depending on the heat of the Confederate pursuit, the Union Player should decide on whether to fall back to that ridge on foot, or mount up and make it in one turn. The latter is recommended, if feasible, as there is no reason—or percentage—to stand and fight in the no-man's land between the two ridges. The two regiments to the south under Buford should have little trouble with an orderly retreat, as their initial movement places them in a position to block the main line of advance of any CSA flanking maneuver in that direction and their initial fall-back position is protected by the heavily wooded ridge. Their final position is the least tenuous of all the other Union cavalry units, but if it all goes well, and I Corps assumes its role on McPherson's Ridge, they will be joined by the remainder of their comrades to guard the flank.



The other six regiments should fall back to the positions indicated (#3). It will take the Confederates at least another 40 minutes to reach any viable assault position, and then they will get a nasty shock when they attempt their first charge up McPherson's Ridge. They could easily lose 500+ men in 20 minutes. Do not worry too greatly about a Southern move to the North; the Union commander would like nothing better than to see Heth move the greater body of his troops in that direction. But a concerted move to the South in the early hours of the battle should be followed most carefully. Relocation of a goodly number of troops might be necessary to contain such a move, although Doubleday's division can prove a thorn in the Confederate side if they chose this route.

Above all, if you have successfully assumed a solid defensive position on McPherson's Ridge by 1000 hours, or so, do not waste this effort by throwing away your I Corps units when they arrive (1040 or 1100). Get the Iron Brigade in as fast as possible; remember, they do not rout and are perfect for holding any position—especially the center. They'll get slaughtered (as they did historically), but the time they buy will be invaluable—the Confederate commander will curse the day he ever saw them.

The Southern commander will, in general, be trying to advance steadily on three fronts, perhaps executing a well-coordinated double-flanking maneuver. This is the standard approach, and usually the wisest. True, he has many avenues open to him; but none of

them afford the coordination of activity that approach delineated on the map does. A full brigade (usually Brockenbrough's) and a full artillery battalion should be sent south to pave the way for an eventual thrust in that direction. The remainder of the division (position "A") should be sent, in brigades, against the Union positions (advance to "B") in front of them. Depending on the stance the Union player takes the advance of Heth's brigades should be as rapid as possible. Their strength is overwhelming, and if they can get any sort of good fire position on the Union troopers they can usually rout them from their positions, although it will not be easy doing so. Heth's division can—and most likely will—take heavy losses in accomplishing its mission. But Pender is right behind, and time is a liability not an asset. Heth must reach McPherson's Ridge in strength and in good order by 1000 at the latest. If Buford is not there, or there but in a greatly weakened state, the road to Gettysburg should be opened with ease. However, if Buford has assumed a solid position along the ridge the task will be grim, as only a frontal assault will be able to dislodge a well-placed Union brigade. Losses will be severe on such a frontal assault, but if the ridge is not taken by 1040 the Iron Brigade will be there to ensure its Union occupation. And by that time, Heth's boys will be too worn out to do anything about it.

A key to the Confederate success will be his use of artillery. His strength in this department is overwhelming, and, used correctly,

this early superiority would carry the day. Do not be afraid to use your artillery offensively. Advance them, but advance in co-ordinated and concentrated fashion. Support your advancing artillery with a full brigade of infantry. The easiest line of advance for artillery is to the north; the terrain is (relatively) level, and the Lines of Sight are the clearest in the area. As Buford has only one artillery battery he can't do much damage to your guns, so move them quickly. Concentrated artillery fire can literally paralyze an entire brigade, and the Confederate Player who knows how to use his artillery to maximum efficiency at this key stage will often be a victorious general.

Above all, the Confederate player must keep constant pressure on the Union. To allow him to relax is to let him escape, and to let him escape is to allow him to assume a solid defensive position. So co-ordinate and concentrate. If you can keep early pressure on from three directions (see map) you might find that Buford's troopers will collapse quickly and McPherson's Ridge will be yours.

In essence, then, the problems confronting both players are immense. The Southern commander has the strength, but he doesn't have the time. And the Union player will often find himself fighting a desperate holding action, taking losses which he can ill afford. It is suggested, in a multi-commander game, that the Union side be at great pains to place its best tactical player in Buford's shoes. He will be hard-pressed to hold the oncoming Rebel tide; but he'll have a lot of fun trying.

Designers' Notes [continued from page 3]

Highway to the Reich

As the final Highway to the Reich game components enter the Art Department a summing up is in order. The massive playing surface (over 10 feet long and 3 feet wide) stretches from the 30th Corps front lines along the Meuse-Escaut canal to Deelen airfield north of Arnhem. The unifying graphic symbol on the map is the inspiration for the title itself; a thin double line of black ink which stretches across all of the nearly 200-hex length of the map. The terrain covers every imaginable World War II type: primary roads, secondary roads, trails, light woods, forests, towns, cities, dikes, streams, canals, and rivers to name only a few.

Over 1,000 units show complete company level organization for all forces involved. (Did you know, for example, that the U.S. 82nd division had one more battalion of artillery than the U.S. 101st division.) This breakdown (and accurate strength tally) shows clearly the enormous problems facing the British 1st Airborne—the smallest of the three airborne divisions with the largest job. The American airborne divisions jumped at about 13,000 men apiece (4 Regiments), the British first came in with just barely 10,000 men (3 Brigades). The German O.B. is the product of an extensive research into

captured documents and primary sources from Europe, and while the Panther and Tiger platoons are very strong they are very few. Each unit now displays a Hard and Soft Effectiveness rating (on the Front) and a Strength and Morale value (on the back).

Depicting an enormous operation, this detailed game breaks new ground in WWII simulation. In addition to the Operation game there are several individual scenarios that focus on critical events during the 10 days of the battle, as well as guidelines for planning and executing your own Operation: Market-Garden. —J.A. Nelson

Yugoslavia

At this writing the fighting centers around Zagreb, the "Bastogne" of northern Yugoslavia. A crucial road nexus, Zagreb is located in the only big valley in the north. The basic scenario postulates an unsuccessful pro-Soviet *coup*, followed by a Soviet invasion and US intervention. The Yugoslavs start on-map with one infantry division and some extra armor and artillery, and the Soviets enter from the east with three divisions, while dropping an airborne division behind Yugoslav lines. Victory depends upon control of Zagreb and the roads leading to the map edges. Units use Untried Strength—their exact strengths are

unknown until they're committed. People's Militia (the partisans) are taken into account by depriving the Soviets of road movement and making cities obstacles to movement, as Yugoslav partisan doctrine emphasizes delay and harassment. Detailed rules for paratroops, airlandings, ground support and interdiction make the air game more interesting, and rules for mountain infantry and goat-propelled artillery allow the Yugoslavs to run rings around the Soviets in rough terrain. There may be a civil war scenario, and the three-player scenario.

—Phil Kosnett

FEEDBACK RESULTS, MOVES 27

Rank	Article	Rating
1.	Designers' Notes	7.04
2.	Mech War Tactical Doctrine	7.02
3.	Scenarios for Modern Games	6.69
4.	Conservative Tactics	6.60
5.	Forward Observer	6.50
6.	Opening MOVES	6.49
7.	Defense of the Reich	6.28
8.	Footnotes	6.22
9.	Playback	5.95
10.	Cases: SPI Staff Seminar	5.85
11.	Hooker & Lee Game Notes	5.73
This issue (overall)		6.70