

TSS has, and will continue to, inspire endless debate as to who was who and what were they really doing when, etc. Mr. Epperson here pursues that line in a most thoughtful manner. Now, see—if we can find a room big enough...

## GAME PROFILE:

# TERRIBLE SWIFT SWORD

## Authentic Quality

by James F. Epperson

As anyone who has played it will admit, *TSS* is a complex simulation. But it is not *complicated*, and therein lies its beauty.

The game system itself is simple; what makes the game complex is its size and the myriad little things that must be done every time a combat is resolved or a player sneezes (God help the poor S.O.B. whose cat jumps onto the game board): check for Rout, check for Leader Casualties, check for Ammunition Supply, etc. But none of these special rules are so intricate that they bog the game down. It is simply bookkeeping (it might have been nice if a few summaries, especially of Pin Effects, Rout Effects, etc., had been included on separate sheets like the CRT's were). The interleaved Phases and Split Fire Rule perhaps are the key to the game system's success. The order to the Phases is perfect, allowing the Defender that edge that he typically enjoyed in any Civil War action. And the Split Fire Rule is an innovation that has been a long time coming; this finally allows Players complete freedom in firepower allocation. Granted, it adds to the bookkeeping hassles of the game (as does the Battle Fatigue Rule, another - albeit uncut - gem), but in a simulation that is already as complex as *TSS* this matters little. Besides, the gain in historical accuracy (especially with respect to artillery) is immense.

The Leader Rules in *TSS* are one of the best attempts I've seen at simulating tactical command control—for any period. I do feel that a little more might have been possible, though. The Union brigade officers should have been included, making the two command structures the same. There should be some sort of "pyramiding" required between divisional and brigade Leaders; i.e., if a brigade Officer is more than 10 cavalry MP's from both his division and corps Commanders, then his unit is out of command control. Again, this is more bookkeeping, especially in a two-player game, but the restriction is necessary to preserve the historical flavor. Otherwise, there is nothing to prevent a C.S.A. player from sending isolated brigades on long flanking maneuvers, something that would never have been attempted (this restriction would not apply to the cavalry on either side). As a special case, some limits might be imposed on Heth's actions during the July 1 Scenario, at least until Lee arrives on the board. Historically, Heth was under direct orders not to push a fight with the Army of the Potomac. Beyond this, the Leader Rules are clean and simple, yet they do manage to simulate the tactical command situation without *artificial* restrictions on the players' actions. As a last comment, I would note that when a Leader becomes a casualty, common sense seems to

indicate that he shouldn't be able to add one to his unit's strength when checking for Rout.

One major piece of work that needs to be done is a full set of command rules for multi-player games. Granted, in most such situations, the teams themselves could work out something, but a uniform code, based on the doctrine and tendencies of the times, is desirable. At the same time, a complete seniority list of generals in both armies could be compiled (this could be done from Warner's *Generals in Blue* and *Generals in Gray*). While both Lee and Meade had discretion in replacing lost officers, this would typically not be exercised until a lull in the fighting (such as at night-time); the immediate solution would be that the senior brigadier would replace the division general, and the senior division commander would replace his corps leader. This arrangement was rarely altered at the lower level, but neither Meade nor Lee was averse to shuffling officers about to get a better man in charge of a corps. Hence, Newton was brought in from the VI Corps to replace Reynolds at the head of the I Corps, and Gibbon was elevated to command of the II Corps whenever Hancock was elsewhere, even though he was ranked by Caldwell; for Lee's part, he moved Richard Anderson from the Third Corps to command of the First when Longstreet was wounded in the Wilderness.

Because of the difference in command systems, tactical doctrine for employment of the Leaders differs from the Union to Confederate forces. Although the brigade was the basic unit of both armies, only the Rebels are forced to operate in brigades (which is one reason I believe the Union brigadiers should have been included). This has both advantages and disadvantages; it gives the Confederate good local command control, but it does not allow them the freedom to group their strongest units together. Generally, though, they have the command advantage if only on sheer number of Leaders (this is a bit ironic, if you reflect on the historical conclusion that Lee lost Gettysburg because his officers and command system failed). The Officers will obviously be deployed with their brigades, although they should be kept with the trailing units except when it is imperative that they be exposed—such as in a crucial Melee or when you want to make sure that a unit doesn't Rout; the Commanders should trail behind the line, making sure that they aren't exposed, and "picking up" any units that are forced beyond their Officer's Effectiveness Radius. For the Union the Officers are not as expendable because they usually have more units in their command, and the Replacement Pool Officers are somewhat less effective, both in Range and Morale. With

this in mind, it often is best to post the Union Officers in a central position behind the line (Note that the command system on each side is peculiarly suited to the strategic role of that side: the Confederate system is offensive minded, the Union more suited to the defense; if this was intentional, it was a stroke of genius, for it *almost* makes the lack of Union brigadiers reasonable.), leaving enough "slack" so that they can extend their portion of the line and still retain control of the flanks. It will depend on the situation whether an Officer should be stacked near a Commander (to increase his Effectiveness Radius), or whether the Commander should be deployed separately to stem Rout. This is the greatest disadvantage of the Union command system; the Union Player will be hard pressed to Rally any units that Rout, because the Leaders will usually be more than three hexes from the Routed unit. For this reason, it is imperative that any Union line be well backed with reserves, if at all possible. One small detail that might be added to the Rout rules: a Routed unit that is forced to retreat through a Friendly unit is *Rallied* if the die roll for Rout (as per case 15.3) exactly matches the retreating unit's strength. In cases where there would not normally be a check for Rout (if the Friendly unit is unlimbered artillery or the Iron Brigade), then a die roll is made anyway. It often was the case that Routed units reformed themselves after passing through troops that were standing firm.

The major flaw with the basic game system is in the stacking rules. The designer expected to be challenged here, and to be frank I think the stacking rules as they stand are way too restrictive. I would allow any one other unit to stack with an artillery battery, and stacks of up to 8 Strength Points of infantry, regardless of how many units it takes. I would require that in stacks of more than two units, all should be from the same brigade. The strictures on who can fire would remain the same for infantry with this exception: if all the units in a stack are from the same brigade, then up to 4 SP may fire, regardless of the breakdown of unit strength; but I would allow both artillery units to fire. In a "mixed" hex (infantry type and artillery) only one unit could fire. I do not believe that these changes are going to grossly affect the combat systems, and they recover a great deal of realism that the original rules lost. A number of the veteran brigades in both armies consisted of five or six (relatively) small regiments (e.g., 2/1/II, Gordon's Brigade, Archer's Brigade). Under the current stacking rules, these units are reduced to impotence because they are not allowed to mass together as a brigade. As for the overlarge stacks, I suspect they will be kept to a minimum by the Players' own reluc-

tance to deal with them (He who wishes to deal with a twenty counter stack is welcome).

Having touched upon the subject of artillery in the above, it seems appropriate to delve into the artillery system in *TSS*. Although the rifled musket had reduced the cannon to a more supportive role in the Civil War, as opposed to its near dominance in the Napoleonic Wars, it still played an important part in many of the battles of the Civil War. Until *TSS* became available, though, no simulation of the period had come close to an accurate representation of the artillery and its proper place on the field. Aside from making it impossible for infantry fire to put a gun out of action (by killing or wounding the gun crew—a not uncommon occurrence in close order fighting), the bare bones artillery fire system is much like the bulk of the game; clean, simple, and playable. There should be some limitations imposed on how far a battery can be moved from the nearest Friendly Leader, otherwise some rather ridiculous flanking moves might be tried. However, my one real complaint about the artillery in this game is a little more substantial than that. Except for sheer numbers and the ability to fire more rounds, the Union guns have no advantage over their Rebel counterparts; yet almost any source on the war will attest to the marked superiority of the Federal artillery, especially in the accounts of Gaines' Mill, Malvern Hill, Antietam, and Gettysburg. This superiority was especially evident during counter-battery fire, and to a lesser extent under infantry assault. However, I must admit that I see no clear cut solution to this problem, short of giving the Yankee gunners a column to the right (or pushing the Rebels a column to the left) on the CRT.

One last comment on the game system and design, before I move on to other areas: the original movement Allowance of seven (five if the unit fired) should have been retained. Granted, this would entail more book-keeping, but the current arrangement contains a couple of anomalies. First, several cross country marches that actually occurred are now impossible, at least in the historically allotted time span; second, I find it a bit perplexing that an infantry column can move faster on a Road than an artillery battery.

Normally an article of this sort does not spend too much time on such mundane subjects as terrain and unit counters. But there are a few things which need to be covered.

Conceptually, the terrain features as they stand work very well, so there is little to quarrel with here. Artistically, of course, the map is one of the best I've ever seen; all it needs is the wheat in the field and the peaches in the orchard. The special terrain effects of the town and the railroad cuts were handled very well. There is a clarity problem in the rules for Line-of-sight. Case 10.72 does not make it clear (although it is intuitively obvious) that Crest Hexsides should be considered Ridge Hexsides for LOS purposes. If they aren't, then most of Cemetery and part of McPherson's Ridges are not elevated. There is

what I'll have to call an out-and-out mistake on the map, though. During the cannonade of July 2nd, previous to the assaults on the Union flanks, an entire Confederate artillery battalion (Latimer's, Johnson's Division, Second Corps) was posted on Benner's Hill to enfilade the Yankee position on Cemetery Hill. However, as reference to the map shows, units posted on the crest of Benner's Hill (hexes B3710, B3609) do not have a line of sight to Cemetery Hill, because of Case 10.77 and the adjacent Woods Hexes. If these three Woods Hexes (B3810, B3711, B3611) were clear (as is indicated in the *Civil War Times Illustrated* Gettysburg maps), then the LOS exists. A word to the wise, however: even though the fire from this angle enfiladed the Union guns on Cemetery Hill, they managed to return a murderous fire. Of the twenty or so guns that were placed on Benner's Hill, all but four were put out of action, and Latimer himself was mortally wounded. The Confederates, however, had not put up any earthworks to protect their guns. More generally, I think that Case 10.77 is perhaps too restrictive; I have found evidence that Union guns on Culp's Hill were used in silencing Latimer; furthermore, it was proposed by some Confederate officers that Big Round Top be seized, fortified, and cleared so that guns could be emplaced there. An entire regiment of men with axes could clear a fairly sizeable area in a night's work. But this is asking too much from the game and the designer. It would have been a nice touch, though.

As far as the OB is concerned, I'm sure that almost everyone has found at least one regiment which he feels doesn't have the correct Weapons Type (that includes this author: the entire Iron Brigade should be "R"). But short of holding seances to contact the dead veterans, it really isn't possible to ascertain for sure the true arms used by a unit. There is a general truth about historical research involved here, and it is particularly applicable to this battle. The amount of controversy and conflicting information associated with Gettysburg is really amazing. It is hard to find two different eye-witness accounts that agree on anything beyond the identities of the commanding generals; for example, the work used as a prime source by the designer directly contradicts my statement above about the Iron Brigade, which I based upon a fine history of that noted unit. It might have been possible to check unit Weapons Types with other regimental or brigade histories, but that would have been a little too much. In essence I agree with the designer's comment in the notes; those of us who feel a certain unit is designated improperly should use the Weapon Type that we believe is correct.

Beyond the petty arguments over unit Types, the OB is superb. The decision to make all combat a function of Weapons Type and a single Combat Strength greatly simplified the game, and allowed for much cleaner, more readable counters. As a contrasting example, consider the counter set for *Sixth Fleet*: very attractive, colorful pieces, but so many numbers that one was constantly referring back to the rules to find out which number

meant what. In a small game like *Sixth Fleet* one could live with that, but I shudder to think of *TSS* with six quantities per counter, *plus* historical information!!

I have not yet played the Brigade Combat Effectiveness or Battle Fatigue Rules, so I cannot comment from experience on them. They are both excellent ideas (Battle Fatigue needs to be refined a bit, though) but neither one fills a gap in the general area of morale: there is no gradation of units to reflect their ability—or lack of it—at standing up to pressure. B.C.E. is only applicable *after* certain losses have been sustained. What is needed is to exempt more units from Rout, as was done with the Iron Brigade, and to mark some as liable to Rout without even taking casualties (e.g., the bulk of the XI Corps, and 3/3/I, a totally green unit from the Washington fortifications).

Judging from the preceding paragraphs, one might get the idea that I thought none too highly of *TSS*; they would be very wrong. I do believe it has mistakes; some of it might have been designed better, or differently; but by and large it is a fine product. Most of my criticisms have been based historically, i.e., on the inability of the game to mimic history in some places. What might have gotten lost in all that is what I think of the game as a *game design*: it is one of the most innovative and original simulations to come out of SPI in a long time. The Split Fire Rule, Battle Fatigue, Brigade Combat Effectiveness, the general Leader Rules, and the combat system all deserve high praise in terms of design concepts. There are ideas here that could easily be modified to fit other games, and other historical eras.

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