

A Player's Opponents (Plural)

The opponents of a player are your player opponent (or opponents) and the game system itself, this is a simulation game where you will not get to move a force all the times you wish it to move and not get to attack with a force all the times you wish to attack with it; and this uncertainty needs to be taken into account in one's plans. Getting army and corps headquarters is also up to chance at first and having an advantage here can be decisive.

The way to improve the chances of moving and fighting both involve HQ units, but in different ways. By forming armies and corps, one can give a single free movement initiative to an army commander and move many combat units. Also, forming such an army and corps structure results in multiple die rolls for obtaining attack initiative, which improves the chances of something being able to attack.

Game Victory

What constitutes victory in a game of WBTS? There is (A) the historical victory of the North capturing the 5 major Southern cities (or time running out and they fail to do so) or (B) the player victory of getting C or U result by die roll appeal to the political matrix or a player surrendering. In playing WBTS, the players should treat either type of victory as a victory. This is because it is through your army that you seek to achieve a historical victory and the main determinant of your army strength is manpower, for which you pay political points for volunteer and draft calls. That is, there is a dynamic tension between a player going for a historical victory and going for a player victory, as advancing the potential for one type of victory will often mean reducing the chances for the other.

Note that the political table results of C or U are always probabilistic, there is always a chance of not achieving them; while the historical victory is deterministic, it is either achieved or not at the end of the game, although the various forms of combat that will achieve it are probabilistic. This means that trying to achieve an historical victory is in some sense preferable, as it is not as subject as directly to the vagaries of a few die rolls.

If a player achieves an historical victory, but it is true that at some point in the game, my opponent MIGHT have changed the results due to an appeal to the political matrix, then even if he did not make the appeal, the results might have changed, up to possible total reversal of the outcome, if he had done so. As the total starts at 0, the South has 2 results (KC, MC) that seem favorable; the Southern player needs to make a careful consideration whether the possible advantages outweigh the potential cost.

Battle Victory

If one examines the CRT's one quickly finds that the higher the CRT number, the greater the losses, but that losses are often fairly even (and often are EXACTLY even due to the = result) even at fairly high odds. In the long term, equal losses should be seen as advantageous for the North, as they have more resources, equal losses means their advantage of the remaining strength for both sides becomes greater. While the North can be content to attack for attrition reasons, the South must try to find a better way. For the South, frittering away one's army in attrition attacks is the road to defeat that is even faster than just taking attrition losses while defending; Southern attacks that simply speed this (somewhat inevitable) attrition process are worse than stupid, they are eventually suicidal.

The key insight is to realize that a mandatory retreat result should be interpreted as a tactical loss in battle. If I can make your force move away, then I can take the hexes I need. Furthermore, if I can make your force retreat, but your force is unable to retreat, this results in wholesale elimination of your force. This desired situation arises only if totally surrounded by prohibited terrain and/or enemy units and/or when retreating across a river into enemy ZOC.

However, defending in a city, in rough terrain or with an entrenchment marker means the defender can ignore any retreat result. One obvious goal is to take cities, so what can be done if you cannot force the defender to retreat? This is where supply comes in the equation as a force without supply and/or a supply line will eventually die, as it is halved in combat and will eventually suffer supply attrition leading eventually to outright elimination.

Operations

Players should learn to think in terms of monthly operations, as the monthly strategic turn is when existing units need supply, new units are produced, and the political matrix is potentially checked. In general, the goal of a month's operation should be to advance to get or protect victory points and to threaten your opponent's supply line. This can be done by normal movement, advance after combat, and retreat after combat. Use leaders and headquarters to extend your reach. An HQ with sufficient units is the only way to have a zone of control which interrupts a supply path. A leader without an HQ can command units in 1 hex (its own); with an HQ it can also command units in the 6 hexes around a central hex, this gives it a 1 hex range in any direction or 3 hexes total. An army commander with 2 corps commanders present can command units up to a 5 hexes total and a 5-star army commander with suitable army and corps commanders has an incredible 7 hexes total range.

Turn Flip Flop

Whoever goes first depends on chance, due to the initiative chit pick system. This means one player will sometimes get two back to back moves in a row, but ONLY if he is going second in the current turn. This means that if you want to

have the possibility to do a double move and do something exciting before your opponent can react, you want to be moving second in the current turn. And if you want your opponent to be denied the ability to do a double move, you also want to be moving second. Another reason to possibly want to move second is that every four turns is a new month, when victory and supply are assessed; if you move last, there is no possible enemy response.

The South can influence the odds of going first or second somewhat by either selecting their guaranteed pick or by picking randomly. Usually, the South's guaranteed pick is the way to go, as it means more automatic activations, unless one is happy where one's forces are and/or wants to try for a double move.

Opening Moves

In the 1861 Campaign game, the South can acquire Political Points by taking a Union fort or by taking a Northern city and/or cutting the railroads to it, most easily near Washington, Baltimore, or St. Louis. The other Union cities are far away and Washington is usually defended fairly strongly, but cutting off Washington or St. Louis or even taking Baltimore is a possibility. It only takes 3 Political Points to achieve the best Confederate Political column in '61-'62, which has all positive results, including a 1/6 chance of outright victory and a 1/2 chance of foreign intervention. This means that any such threats in '61 need to be taken VERY seriously by the North; they cannot be ignored; the Northern response to such threats MUST take priority over everything else. The game can be won or lost in '61 as well as '65.

Production

What one produces depends on the type of war one is intending to wage, in other words, there is not a "one size fits all" production strategy. However, there are some things that are obvious goals, one is to avoid wasting personnel points, as these cannot be saved, use them or lose them. In trying to get a handle on production choices, one can make a first pass division of production choices into 2 groups, group A where personnel point costs dominate and group B where supply point costs dominate. Group A consists of infantry, cavalry, militia, and garrison units; these are a player's basic ground combat units. Group B consists of everything else: naval units, supply trains, rail repair, Union siege guns, forts, and naval bases, these are a player's support units. Among Group A units, there are 2 extremes possible: 1) everything to the front ASAP and 2) conversion and/or augmentation, which takes more time. Augmentation is the cheapest way in terms of personnel points to create infantry and cavalry strength points. What this means is that one's strategy should drive one's production decisions. Thinking one can win the war by putting everything to the front will result in very different production decisions than if one plans for the long haul. The Union may wish to play to win by turn 200, so that his production advantages have enough time to be effective, but the South may want to try to upset such plans by striking early.

Manpower

Manpower is a Northern advantage in that the North typically gets more men per political point. This Northern advantage becomes more dramatic as more manpower calls are made by both sides. Once draft calls are made by both sides, the Northern advantage gets even larger. However, during the monthly production phase, the North decides before the South whether to make a new manpower call, this means the South can choose to not make the corresponding call and instead try to reap political rewards. This means the North begins the 1861 campaign in the (perhaps) counterintuitive situation of wanting to make a second volunteer manpower call by the end of the year (that is, as soon as it makes sense) and willing for both sides to do this, but being unable to declare it first without some risk.

This means that the North may want to wait to make the second volunteer call until he gains at least one Political Point. The South should realize that trying to solve its manpower problems through volunteer calls is only a temporary solution at best, unless he has a large Political Point advantage.

This situation repeats itself with draft calls, the North is willing to trade draft calls, as for equal political point costs, he gains substantially more men; but he does not want to be the first to resort to the draft as then the South might choose to respond by only issuing further volunteer calls or by appealing for political rewards. Note that further volunteer calls only cost 2 Political points, while further drafts cost 5 Political points, so the South might be able to do 5 Volunteer calls for the North's 2 Drafts if the North is the first to resort to the draft.

Forced March

Forced marching can add 1 or 2 movement points to a moving unit. Given that regular infantry only has 3 movement points and cavalry has 4, this is a tremendous percentage increase. As Forrest is reported to have said, one is trying to "get there fustest with the mostest." Also, it is the only way that slower units can get to some places that cost more than 1 MP. One trick to try to reduce force march attrition is to march a faster (e. g., cavalry) unit to an enemy-controlled hex and convert it to friendly control before force marching a slower unit to that hex.

A way to help analyze the penalty for force marching is to evaluate all 6 die roll percentage costs in terms of the stack of units actually marching. This takes some time but can sometimes lead to insights. For example, when force marching a 4-2 militia unit: if it moves 3 hexes, it takes the hex needing to be taken, but if it moves 4, it can then also cut the railroad. If one does not analyze the table, perhaps one does not think of moving 4 and cutting the RR, but by looking at how the percentage costs translate into actual losses, one sees that

ANY percentage from 5% to 25% results in the loss of one strength point in this example, that is, this wide range of percentages is merely apparent, not actual.

Another subtle insight is that because of the activation scheme used in the game, units will often not move at all; once a stack or unit does actually get to move, you may want to consider moving them faster so they take less activations to get to where they need to be. For example, say an infantry division is 10 MP's away from where it needs to be and is commanded by a leader with an initiative value of 2 and all free initiatives need to be spent elsewhere. If I force march the division 2 extra hexes twice, the expectation is that it will take about 6 weeks to get there; if I do not force march at all, it may take twice as long.

Victory Point Hexes

The players need to closely examine the map to discern all hexes that can contribute victory points. Of course, the cities on each side need to be defended, (especially the 5 Confederate major cities) but it may not be as obvious that Ashton near St. Louis and the 2 rail line hexes between Washington and Baltimore need protection also as occupation of these hexes cuts off the rail connection of St. Louis or Washington from the Northern map edge.

Leaders

What is the use of a low quality leader like Butler (a 4 star 0-1-0) for the North or Huger (a 3 star 1-1-0) for the South? One key to the game is to try to use each resource as best as possible. Also, since 3 star leaders are untried until their first battle and use generic values, it is very possible to discover that your leader's actual values are much worse than desired.

Losing divisions

A division is the only unit that can be augmented at a cheaper personnel cost than outright production. This means that the reduction of a 3-3 infantry division to a 2-3 infantry brigade is worth a whopping 7 personnel points, as a 3-3 costs 9 but a 2-3 only costs 2 when split off after augmentation. Obviously, such a reduction is to be avoided if at all possible.

Militia

Militia has a big disadvantage in that it has the possibility of being demobilized and this might happen at the worst time possible. A way to mitigate this is to convert as much militia to infantry as feasible. Militia is very flexible during setup and in deployment for emergencies, using it in these ways are appropriate. If you are going to force march a supply train, they can be used as force march attrition fodder. Militia can be very useful in the short run, just do not depend on them to stay around for long or you may be sorry. Regarding the militia produced in Missouri and Kentucky, perhaps the best use of them is to put them on an active department in the state and convert them, but note that this is harder for the South to achieve than the North.

Union Advantages

- 1) Union Has More (Units in Force Pool, HQ, Leaders, Depts., Supply, Men)
- 2) Ocean-going ships
- 3) Ironclads can go around Florida
- 4) Faster Production of naval units
- 5) Siege Guns

Confederate Advantages

- 1) Default Initiative Chit Pick
- 2) Strategic Defensive
- 3) Later Start to Militia Demobilization Die Rolls
- 4) Garrison Replacements
- 5) Partisans
- 6) Cavalry is much cheaper to produce
- 7) South makes almost all Strategic turn decisions after North

Insights from Yearly Scenarios

There are four campaign game scenarios, starting in 1861, 1862, 1863 and 1864. They each provide a snapshot of the war when they each start with their respective setups and when these 4 snapshots are looked at in sequence provide a basic outline of the implementation of the Anaconda strategy that won the war for the Union.

One insight is that the Confederates in history really wanted for Kentucky to join their side, in game terms, making 3 Political Appeals. Another is that both sides committed their leaders to battle and accepted leader losses. Another is that neither side produced rail repair units (in game terms) until after the 1862 scenario starts and as expected, the North produced more.