

LPD Games

Battle of Gettysburg

Reviewed by David Gray
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In the autumn of 2007 a new wargame company, LPD Games, published its first games, three different titles dealing with the American Civil War entitled appropriately enough the "Battles of the American Civil War series." The games were Battle of Gettysburg, Grant's Early Battles, and Across the Wide Missouri. Additionally they have made available The Battle of Honey Springs as a downloadable PDF game to introduce their new ACW system. Grant's Early Battles covers the battles of Belmont, Fort Donelson, and Shiloh while Across the Wide Missouri covers Wilson's Creek, Pea Ridge, and Prairie Grove. This effort is very much an in-house affair as Lawrence Duffield is LPD games and is both designer and developer for these titles. LPD games plans to also produce two other series; Battles of the Napoleonic Empire and Campaigns of the Second World War.

My first exposure to these games was at Consimworld Expo in 2006 when I saw Lawrence Duffield at a table with a series of ACW maps and counters. Mr. Duffield was kind enough to talk me through his system and it looked interesting. I was struck by the small footprint required by the games and filed it in the back of my mind as something to keep an eye on once it was published.

Unlike any systems I'm familiar with this system is both a brigade and a regimental series, depending on which battle is being simulated. I suppose one might argue that the Gamers Civil War Brigade System and Regimental Sub Series are the same system and in a way they are but there are still a number of different rules to observe when moving from one system to the other. With the LPD ACW system the rules are nearly interchangeable with the same charts. The scale for units and maps are different but play out much the same.

There is not a series rulebook, per se, but rather each game has its own rulebook but represents the same system with special rules for the different battles. One advantage of this approach is the examples provided in the rulebooks are based on the game itself rather than being generic in nature. This review will primarily focus on the Battle of Gettysburg game but much of the commentary can easily be applied to the whole system.

The Battle of Gettysburg provides a 22" x 35" map which includes a turn track and a unit fa-

tigue display. Counters are 9/16", double-sided, and number 324. Leader counters include a portrait of the leader and an efficiency rating which can vary between zero and two. (In Grant's Early Battles Pillow manages a -1 rating) Infantry and cavalry units feature combat and movement ratings. Artillery combat, movement, and long range fire ratings. Some artillery have very long range capability. There are also Train and Headquarters units as well as markers for various game functions. The map is relatively light in color and on one side the units are white with Confederate and Federal units being distinguished by unit symbol and rating colors. I was concerned that these would be difficult to distinguish when set on this map but in practice I did not find I had any difficulties. I think I would have preferred a bit of tint but the units are highly functional. Excepting the long range fire ratings on artillery units all other numbers are quite large and easily distinguished. Color bands are utilized to distinguish different formations.

There are four setup cards for various scenarios, two order of appearance cards for the respective armies and two game reference cards with a combat results table and a terrain effects chart. The setup charts are in color and include a miniature of the map illustrating deployment guidelines for the scenario in question. The terrain effects chart is also in color and provides examples of the different forms of terrain as part of the chart.

Other Games in the Series

Across the Wide Missouri covers Wilson's Creek, Pea Ridge, and Prairie Grove and has some of the most unique rules in the series so far with dummy units at play in Pea Ridge allowing the Confederate player to try and reproduce some of the surprise Van Dorn achieved. All the battles in this game are at the battalion to regimental level.

Grant's Early Battles covers Belmont, Fort Donelson, and Shiloh. These games include rules for gunboats and are at the battalion to brigade level depending on the battle.

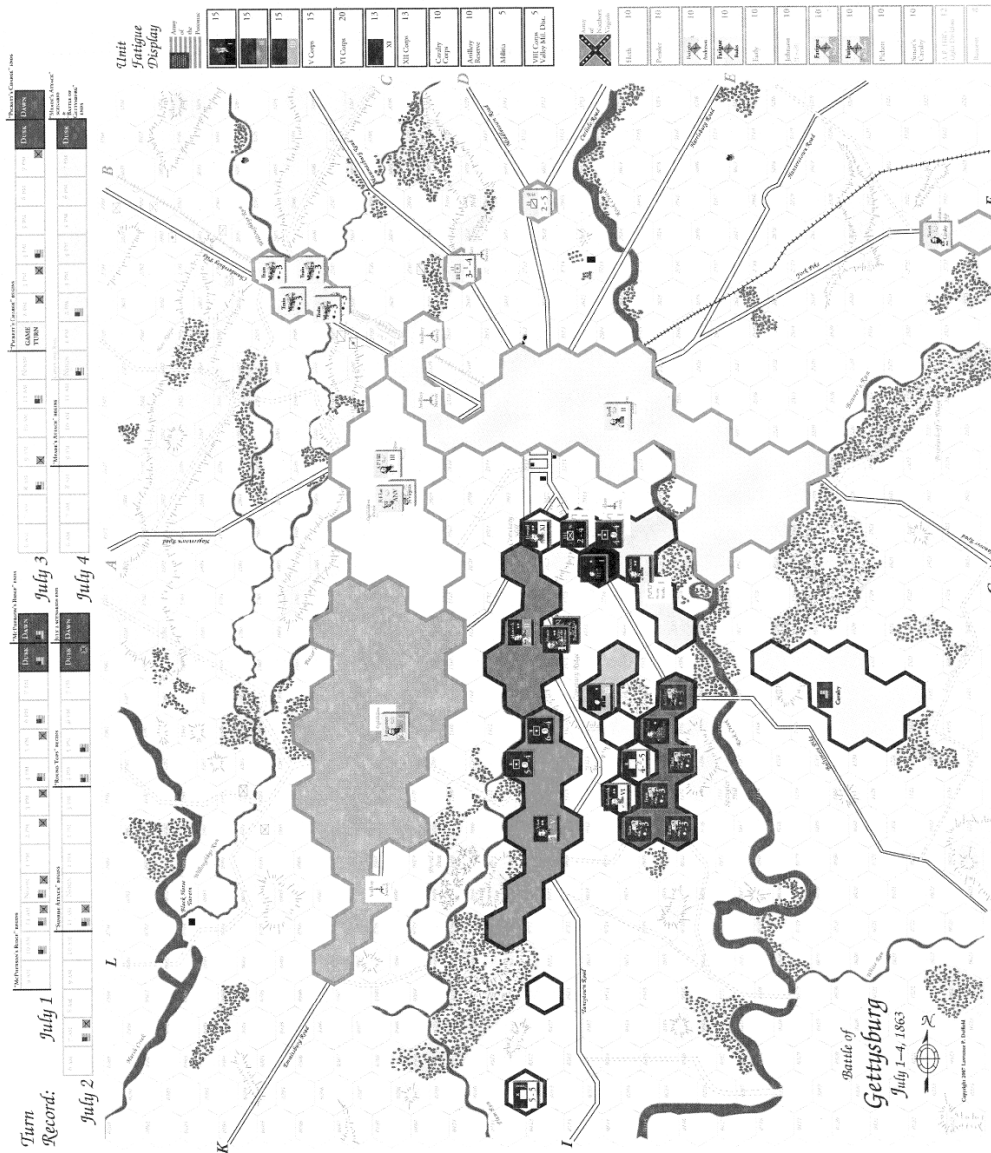
All of these games have special rules for the battles in question.

Upcoming LPD titles are Battles for the Heartland (Mill Springs, Perryville, and Stones River), Maryland, My Maryland 1862 (Antietam, South Mountain and Harper's Ferry) and Battles Before Westport

Battle of Gettysburg Scenario Map: "Pickett's Charge" 1:00 pm July 3

Units set up anywhere in their Corps areas, with the following exceptions:
Hasty Works & Survey markers set up as shown on the map.
 CSA – All Leaders have Operations Orders. McIntosh' Arty in 2710;
 35 VA Cav. sets up in 2912; Lee & HQ set up in 2108.

USA
 VI Corps in 0512, 1114 or 1314;
 3 Vol Arty in 1914; 2 WI Inf in 1913; 2 HA 1214;
 1 Reg Arty 1312, 1 Vol Arty 1211; other Res. Arty w/ wagons
 Farnsworth Cav. 0211; Meade & HQ set up in 1612.



Each infantry combat values are roughly equivalent to 400 Federal or 350 Confederate soldiers, with adjustments made for exceptional units, either good or bad. Cavalry combat values account for the traditional 25% percent of strength allocated to holding horses. Artillery combat values are based on number and type of pieces. Eight ten pound rifles generate one combat value point and one long range point. Twelve twelve pound Napoleon smooth-bore pieces generate two combat value points and one long range point. Artillery rated for very long range capability have either Whitworth or twenty pound Parrott guns. Leaders are at the army and corps level except cavalry. Henry Hunt is also represented in his role as Chief of Artillery for the Army of the Potomac. Hexes measure four hundred yards across. Turns represent one hour except dusk and dawn turns represent 5-6 hours.

Both Confederate and Federal players have three phases in their portions of the game turn; Command Activity, Movement and Combat. When both players have completed these phases there are a couple of administrative functions then it is on to the next turn. It is in the Command

The Gettysburg rulebook weighs in at 24 pages. Six pages of this are historical notes along with a substantial bibliography, a nice touch. The rules are nicely illustrated with period sketches and substantial examples from the game. The rules are generally very straightforward but have a couple of concepts which are different from what we are accustomed to in ACW games. The rules seem to have driven more Q&A than errata and I attribute that in part to the relative originality of some of the concepts. Battle of Gettysburg currently has two lines of errata on the LPD website and while preparing the review Mr. Duffield provided me with one change to the reinforcement track (Longstreet now arrives dusk on 1 July).

Activity phase that we find most of the novelties of this system.

Probably the most novel element of this series is the officer rules. They aren't utterly unprecedented but typically in an ACW game at this scale the officer units which are represented have their own movement capability and move about the map in a manner not dissimilar to that of combat units. Here the impact of officers and their placement is more abstract. Essentially commanders are not guaranteed (except in a mathematical sense in certain specialized circumstances) to be present and functional in any given game turn. Their availability is determined by a die roll influenced by the quality of the leader and potentially their army leader or deployed

headquarters. A zero rated leader has a fifty percent chance of being available in the absence of other modifiers. If leaders are unavailable they are removed from the map for that turn. The first part of the Command Activity phase requires you to place officers on the map. There is a hierarchy of requirements as to where you must place them. The hierarchy for formation leaders (as distinct from army leaders) is as follows:

1. Up to nine hexes from his current location
2. Up to six hexes from any subordinate units
3. In the same hex as a deployed Army headquarters
4. Up to nine hexes from an LOC hex (entry hexes with a couple of game functions)

Rule one will be in effect on any game turn where the leader was available the previous turn (as the leader will have a current location). Generally if a leader was unavailable rule two will be in effect. Rules three and four rarely guide leader placement but cover specialized circumstances. The placement rules for army leaders are quite similar with a slightly different set of four rules. Once leaders are placed they remain there until the next Command Activity Phase unless they are a casualty or are overrun. Leader casualty checks occur when a leader commands an attack that suffers a combat loss or is in a hex that takes combat losses while defending. They are also

check if they are alone in an enemy zone of control.

Following leader placement you then check for availability for the turn for each leader you've placed on the map. You then place markers showing the action you want the officer to perform for the turn; Artillery Survey, Hasty Works, Rally, Reorganize or Replenish (Replenish is only performed by Hunt). If the turn is now a dusk or dawn turn the Confederates can have a Council of War in which Lee can give his corps commanders Operations Orders. Operations Orders are shown by a marker which goes with the leader until he decides to make use of it. A leader can only possess one for the day. Execution of an Operations Order is done in place of officer actions.

The Operations Order concept is to my mind a clever abstraction. When used it permits the officer to direct either a Grand Tactical Maneuver or a Prepared Assault. The Grand Tactical Maneuver allows units under the leader's command to move three times their printed movement allowance. The Prepared Assault enables a +1 combat odds shift in addition to any shift from the officer's efficiency rating.

Performing an Artillery Survey extends the ability of artillery to execute long range fire. Hasty Works improve a defensive position. Rally removes Disorder from units (more on that in a bit). Reorganize allows a unit to be brought back from the dead pile but requires the division to be out of action and undisturbed for an entire day. Additionally Army commander's can direct a Grand Battery. This will permit long range fire with normal combat values (a substantial step up) but which will place all army artillery on low ammunition.

I found that the officer placement rules took some getting used to. They are more abstract than what I'm accustomed to using. In practice though they seem to get the job done perfectly well and in some ways work more simply (once you digest the concept) than many alternatives. Good use of your officers is critical to success in this game. Lower level officers are abstracted by what amount to limited division cohesion rules on attacks.

When the Command Activity Phase is over you execute the movement phase and then combat phase.

Leaders are able to command subordinate units three hexes of their placement. Being in command impacts movement -- all units out of command are -1 for their movement allowance (unless moving entirely by road). Leaders can command one attack each turn and shift combat odds by their efficiency rating but then risk being a casualty. Committing a leader to an attack can make quite a difference but the risk is substantial

What Ifs

I always enjoy a game that gives me what if scenarios and Battle of Gettysburg provides a variety of them.

1. Stuart's Cavalry Rejoins—Stuart now joins Lee on 1 July
2. July 2nd Sunrise Attack—postulates Longstreet attacking earlier
3. Stuart & the "Sunrise Attack"—Scenario two plus Stuart
4. Maximum Confederate Effort—Davis sends Lee maximum reinforcements
5. Stonewall Jackson Lives—says it all, right?
6. Hooker Keeps Command—Meade is V Corps Commander and no Henry Hunt
7. Milroy's Division Escapes—This division is withdrawn early from Harper's Ferry
8. Federal Siege Artillery—Hunt gets his way and gets two batteries of twenty pound Parrotts

unless you are attacking at quite good odds and even then you can lose your leader.

Movement is quite straightforward but has a few nuances. There is a provision for forced marches but unlike many such rules it doesn't increase your movement allowance on the board. Rather it permits reinforcements to enter a turn early. A forced march requires the use of an appropriate leader and can result in disorder for the units entering and possible loss of a unit (representing a substantial number of stragglers). You can Attack From March in certain circumstances. This takes place during the movement phase but gives you a -1 combat odds penalty and has a movement cost.

Zones of Control are used in this game. Units must stop movement upon entering a ZOC and if leaving a ZOC cannot reenter one that turn. Combat in a ZOC is mandatory. Stacking limits are four and can result in a bit of high counter density on the map but nothing unmanageable.

Disorder, fatigue and demoralization are important concepts in this game. A unit can be disordered in three ways – participation in combat, moving during dusk or dawn and forced marches. Infantry stays disordered until rallied by an officer or at dawn. Cavalry and artillery self-rally each turn (if artillery has fired a Grand Battery and is low on ammunition then they can only be rallied by leader). Disorder is shown by flipping the unit over. A disordered unit cannot be commanded which has a deleterious effect both on movement and combat. Fatigue is tracked on the game map by division for the Confederates or by corps for the Federals. If a division/corps takes sufficient losses results in a -1 combat odds penalty for fatigued attackers. Demoralization is tracked at the army level and once casualties reach the required level all units become demoralized. Demoralized armies cannot conduct Councils of War, their units cannot enter enemy ZOC unless under officer command and get a -1 combat odds penalty when defending.

Notable things about combat include that the CRT includes 3:2 and 2:3 columns. Combats where one side is entirely cavalry will

produce more retreats and fewer losses. There also rules covering ranged attacks from Federal sharpshooters. Infantry and cavalry units may advance after combat when attacking. If partial losses are taken the strongest unit in combat is removed first.

I think that the artillery rules and function in this system bear some discussion. Artillery can support an attack at range within limits but the long range combat values are relatively low but artillery can also participate in an assault along with infantry and cavalry. In my mind's eye this seems more like Napoleonic warfare, rolling up the guns and blasting away at relatively close range. Additionally artillery is more likely to kill units if they are alone in a hex than if they are stacked four high. Mr. Duffield addresses his concept of artillery in a four page article in "Special Operations", issue one, an e-zine that is available free of charge from LPD Games' website. I would suggest anyone interested check out the article and read it in its entirety. Regarding the issue of participating in assaults he says this is a function of the scale of the game. At 400 yards per hex the artillery the battery could be engaging at upwards of 600 yards assuming the



Leader Ratings in Battle of Gettysburg

Confederates:		Federals:	
Lee	2	Meade	1
Longstreet	2	Reynolds	2
Hill	1	Hancock	2
Ewell	1	Sickles	1
Stuart	2	Sykes	1
		Sedgewick	1
		Howard	0
		Slocum	1
		Hunt	0

artillery is at the back of its hex. Additionally artillery can't advance after combat with the infantry so it will be in a poor position to fire the following turn or will remain disordered from combat if it chooses to move. Regarding the reduced lethality with increased size of target Mr. Duffield states that "the artillery are probably causing more casualties to the larger formation, but a much smaller percentage of the whole, so the visible effects on the game add up to Disorder and an occasional unit Loss." Key to this is the fact that all units in combat, be it ranged or otherwise, are in in disorder when combat is complete. Essentially if you stack four infantry brigades together all of them can now be put in disorder with one artillery battery. I think given the scale of the game and the level of abstraction at work these arguments work for me. Proper use of artillery is right up there with officer utilization as a key to good game play. Seek out good positions for your guns, both on offense and on defense. Their ability to hit brigades forming for an offensive and disorder them is no small matter.

Victory is based on relative casualties, including loss of Army Train units, with rules for army pursuit. You also get points for officer elimination (your enemy's, not yours as Pillow isn't at Gettysburg) and army demoralization. Victory points are tallied at game's end or when the Confederates hold three or more hexes of the Taneytown Pike at dawn. The latter mechanism at first left me wondering if it might not lead to gamey tactics but after consideration I don't think so.

There are five historical scenarios; the full battle (1-4 July), MacPherson Ridge (1 July), The Round Tops (2 July), Pickett's Charge (3 July) and Meade's Attack (4 July). Combining these with the what ifs that are available provide a lot of variety. Even the full battle scenario is not a monster by any means.

When I played the game I found my positions, at the end of day one, more often than not corresponded roughly to the famous position with

Cemetery Hill and Cemetery Ridge. The Federals will be hard pressed to be even on points at the end of day one. Given the structure of the victory conditions regarding Confederate possession of the Taneytown Pike the Federals will need to hold those positions and not yield them to late in the day attacks on turn one. On day two the Federals will need to maintain control of this ground until such a point where they have a VP lead over the Confederates. If the Confederates have a VP lead they have a strong incentive to try and break this line because if successful (providing they don't take losses that will reverse their lead) then they will have achieved game's end and victory. It makes this ground critical without just assigning certain hexes victory points which seems a more subtle solution. Depending on how the game develops it is possible to have the mechanic allow for other ground to assume importance; one game I played saw a substantial clash north of Culp's Hill. In general if the Confederates have the lead and the Federals hold the historic position the victory conditions will tend to drive the Confederates to take the initiative and try to grab control of part of the Taneytown Pike to assure their victory.

One factor that may alter the historical balance a bit on day two and afterwards particularly is how the game rates General Lee. As mentioned in the sidebar earlier the game appears to rate him on his general war performance. If he has an off performance in your game (bad die rolls for ap-

How To Rate Leaders?

Rating leaders and discussing their ratings (and second guessing game designers of course) is one of the fun parts of wargaming in general and ACW wargaming in particular. On games of this scale it seems to me there are two ways that you can approach this. The first way is to determine the leader's performance in the action covered by the game and rate him accordingly. This is the approach that seems to be taken by The Gamers in their CWB series so Lee can have different ratings in different games depending on how the designer viewed his performance. So in Thunder at the Crossroads Lee is rated a one, not up to par by normal Lee standards.

The alternative is to rate a leader's performance based on his performance across the war as a whole. Any given deviance from this rating in a given battle/game can be explained as cold/hot dice depending on the nature of the deviation. Is Lee generally excellent but poor at Gettysburg? He must have rolled a lot of sixes at that battle. This seems to be how LPD Games has approached the topic as in Battle of Gettysburg Lee is rated a two, the best rating available despite the common understanding of his performance at Gettysburg being rather sub-par. Personally I think I like this approach but it really is a matter of preference and can easily be adjusted whichever way you prefer it.

pearance) then that will match out to his historical performance but if he has an average set of die rolls then he will exceed his historical performance to the detriment of the Federals. If this causes discomfort it would be easy enough to treat him as a "1" or a zero which would be more likely to produce a performance in line with that particular battle.

There have been a number of ACW tactical/grand tactical systems over the years. I think probably the first brigade level Gettysburg simulation I can remember playing was SPI's old Blue & Gray quad, Cemetery Hill. Very playable but bearing only the vaguest resemblance to Gettysburg. Others I've played include Yaquinto's Pickett's Charge and the Gamer's Thunder at the Crossroads (2nd edition). Thunder at the Crossroads has been, in my opinion, very much the best of the lot. I must confess I was a bit concerned when I saw that the designer was also the developer, a practice which historically has produced spotty results. So where does this game fit in and for whom might it be ideally suited?

For what it is I think I'd rank it right up near Thunder at the Crossroads. Mind you they are very different animals in a variety of ways. Just in terms of sheer size Thunder has two 22" x 34" maps where Battle of Gettysburg has one 22" x 35" map and a significant bit of that has a time track and fatigue tracks. Battle of Gettysburg is a much more abstract affair. It is a bit like someone took the body of Blue and Gray and removed the original brain and put in a much superior brain. I keep coming back to the idea that this game and series is Blue and Gray done right, and that isn't meant as a slam on Blue and Gray. It was a product of a different era but this game has kept modest physical dimensions, relatively simple rules and squeezed a great deal more simulation value. Now if granularity is your thing this may not be your game but if you want a Gettysburg game that you can easily fit on your dining room table and won't have to be left setup interminably then LPD Games has just the product for you. If you have any question go to LPD Games' website and download their small DTP game Honey Springs and give it a try. Real ACW hounds should probably have both this and Thunder at the Crossroads. (MMP are you listening?)

The Battles of the American Civil War series are available only direct from LPD Games.

Addendum 2012.

I'd add one thing based on my experience with the game since I originally wrote this review in 2008. I've concluded that the Disorder condition is not sufficiently punitive. My solution, which I think is quite effective, is a one column shift for Disordered units that are attacking. That's an easy fix and I think provides more incentive to rest Disordered troops.