November 11, 2012

While small in size, the Battle of Cowpens helped end the British control over the backwoods of South Carolina and ultimately led to the withdrawal of Cornwallis' force from the South after the Battle of Guilford Court House. It is one of the most interesting battles to play due to the variety of forces on both sides. This is a rough scenario for the battle.

**Game Orders of Battle:**

**British:**

**Tarleton's Column:** (count as 5 units for Army Morale calculation)
- LTC Banastre Tarleton (Skilled)
- Royal Artillery (2 x 3-pdr): 1 UI, Regular
- Flank Cavalry Detachments:
  - British Legion Dragoons (50): 1 UI*, Regular
  - Troop/17th Light Dragoons (50): 1 UI*, Crack
- British Light Infantry (150): 2 UI, Crack
- British Legion Infantry (200): 3 UI, Raw
- 7th Regiment of Foot (167-180): 3 UI, Regular
- 1st Bn/71st Highland Regiment (263): 4 UI, Regular
- British Legion Dragoons (200): 4 UI*, Regular

**Americans:**

**Light Division:** (count as 6 units for Army Morale calculation)
- BG Daniel Morgan (Superior)

**Continental Brigade:**
- LTC John Eager Howard (Skilled)
- Maryland/Delaware Light Battalion² (243): 4 UI, Crack
- State Troops Battalion³ (@100): 2 UI, Regular
- Triplett’s Virginia Militia (riflemen) Battalion⁴ (155): 3 UI*, Regulars

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¹ 4 Companies: 1st Bn/71st Highland (35), 2nd Bn/71st Highland (34), 16th ROF (41), Prince of Wales American Regiment (25-50).
² Composed of Kirkwood’s Delaware Company (63), Anderson’s Maryland Company (60), Dobson’s Maryland Company (60) and Manger’s Maryland Company (60).
³ Composed of Wallace’s Virginia Company (20), Lawson’s Virginia Company (40), Connelly’s North Carolina Company (20), and Buchanan’s Virginia Riflemen (20).
⁴ Composed of Combs Farquier Company (40), Tate’s Augusta Company (50), Gilmore’s Rockbridge Company (42) [all Virginia] and Clark’s North Carolina Company (25).
SC Militia Brigade:

Colonel Andrew Pickens (Average)
1st Spartan SC Militia Regiment\(^5\) (@200): 3 UI, Raw
Thomas’ 1st Battalion
Roebuck’s 2nd Battalion
2nd Spartan (Fair Forest), SC Militia Regiment\(^6\) (@100): 4 UI, Raw
+Hayes’ Little River, SC Militia Regiment\(^7\) (@150)
Advance Guard Riflemen (215): 4 UI*, Regulars
  McDowell’s NC Riflemen (@100)
  Cunningham’s Riflemen (@115)

Cavalry Brigade:

LTC Washington [3rd Dragoons] (Skilled)
1st/3rd Dragoons\(^8\) (82): 2 UI*, Crack
  McCall’s Light Dragoons\(^9\) (75): 2 UI*, Raw

Terrain (see map below, north is upper right corner of the map):

Wooded Areas: treat as Class II terrain for movement and visibility in them is limited to 4”.

Small Streams: treat as Class III terrain for movement and visibility within 2” of the streams is limited to 2” (there was a lot of undergrowth around the streams).

Hills (two levels): the hills have an impact on line of sight, but are not steep enough to have an impact on any unit’s movement (treat as Class I terrain for movement). I have omitted some of the contours on the southwestern edge of the map as they were a gradual down slope and would not impact line of sight or movement.

Map Size: Each square on the map equals 12” (300 yards x 300 yards using the normal Piquet Field of Battle ground scale of 1” = 25 yards. The overall map is 3’ x 5’. Yes, this was a small battle.

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\(^5\) Commanded by Colonel John Thomas Jr.
\(^6\) Commanded by Colonel Thomas Brandon
\(^7\) Commanded by LTC Joseph Hayes
\(^8\) Composed of Parson’s Troop/1st Dragoons (27), Jones’ Troop/3rd Dragoons (28), and Barrett’s Troop/3rd Dragoons (27).
\(^9\) Composed of Nelson’s Virginia State Dragoons (15), Clark’s North Carolina State Dragoons (15), McCall’s South Carolina State Dragoons (27), and Jolly’s South Carolina (Georgia?) Militia Cavalry (20).
**Game Information and Special Rules:**

1. **American Strengths:** How many Americans were involved in the battle and how they were organized is really unknown as there was no headcount on the day of the battle and some units seem to have been left out of the official reports. Babits and O’Kelley argue that there were far more Americans present than previously known. I'm not completely convinced of their arguments. In attempting to make a campaign game for this era, I realized that there was no way their numbers for the militia were accurate. Instead, I've based the militia numbers on what other primary sources indicated.

2. **British Strengths:** These are based on archival research and accurate.

3. **British Fatigue:** The British had undertaken a very early morning march to catch the American forces. For purposes of Army Morale Tests reduce Tarleton’s command die down 1 to reflect the British fatigue.

4. **Historical Size Units:** I think the actual size of the unit does matter so I use variable UI based on historical size (much like the original Piquet rules). See the order of battle for the UI of various units. The 1 UI cavalry units are always assumed to be in (close order) line formation. Here are the UI scales I use:

   **UI Scales:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>UI</th>
<th>Infantry</th>
<th>Cavalry &amp; Skirmish Infantry</th>
<th>Artillery</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>1-2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>90-164</td>
<td>60-109</td>
<td>3-4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>165-239</td>
<td>110-159</td>
<td>5-6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>240-360</td>
<td>160-240</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>360-435</td>
<td>241-290</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>436-510</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hits per UI</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5. **Two figure stands:** Unlike Piquet Field of Battle, I use 2 figure stands for cavalry and skirmish infantry (like in the old regular Piquet). These units take 2 hits per stand lost rather than 3. These units are marked with asterisks (*) right after their number of UI in the order of battle.

**Set Up (The upper right corner is north):**

1. **Americans:** The Americans set up within 36" of the northwestern portion (upper) of the board. The Americans set up first.

2. **British:** The British set up in the southeastern portion (lower) 18" of the board. (Yes, the forces start only 6" apart).
Optional Set Up Rules: Let the Americans set up in the upper (northwestern) 30" part of the board. Then allow the British to enter in march column along the road and deploy as part of the game, that is the game's normal movement.

Game Length:
The game continues for up to 8 turns (4 hours). The real battle was settled very quickly, but the longer game duration allows for some more imaginative tactics on the part of the British side. The actual battle began at 7 a.m., so you can go for more than 8 turns if you want, but the 8 turn limit makes the British player "rush" his attack as Tarleton did. The real battle was over in about an hour (2 turns).

Victory Conditions:
Field of Battle handles most battles well with its Army Morale rules. The winner of the game is the one that forces the other side to fail an Army Morale check by 4 (see page 56, 1st edition of the rules) or eliminates every enemy unit (destroyed or routed off the board).

Sources:
PRO 30/11/103 Cornwallis Papers Returns of Troops (British order of battle)


Moncure, John. The Cowpens Staff Ride and Battlefield Tour. Fort Leavenworth, Kansas: Combat Studies Institute, 1996. (a very good source for this battle)


