

# The Scenario

For the final battle of the year, I decided that the Sarmatians were really over due an outing. However, being a very small force they needed somebody to ally with but I had no obvious historical mates for them. I also wanted to test out the ability of Xavier, my most unreliable of Persian satraps, as the commander of a side to see if that affected his behaviour.

Xavier had a mix of infantry and cavalry, so could face the Sarmatians if I could find an additional small infantry force for the Sarmatians. In the end I chose the Mantineans to ally with the Sarmatians as this seemed to produce two balanced sides in terms of numbers of men and potential fighting power.

Whilst a bit of a kitchen sink solution, it did produce two different armies, each with a limited mix of strengths and plenty of weaknesses.

No particular scenario was planned – just a straight forward encounter battle.

# The Pitch



The battlefield started out as a representation of Cynoscephalae (197BCE) but finished off resembling the Lake District, but without the sheep. A large area of high ground, with a few gentle hills, covered the centre of the battlefield. On the left, the ground rose in a steep ridge into forest backed by some mountains – both impassable terrain. On the right the ground fell away, through a dense wood, across some heath and boggy ground before turning into marsh. A couple of small open woods were scattered around the battlefield. The Persians would deploy on the far side.

# The Teams

The alliance was commanded Podares, the strategos of Mantinea, with Gatalos, the Sarmatian king, as his willing ally. Their combined force came to just over 6,000 men.

Podares had about 2,500 hoplites in his army but most of these were of low quality and low armour. They were supported by nearly 800 lighter foot – again not of high quality – and a few hundred light cavalry.

Fortunately, Gatalos' Sarmatians could pack more of a punch. He led nearly 2,500 cavalry – all of good quality – and nearly all armoured cavalry equipped with lance and bow.

Xavier was the satrap of Longawayoff and had mustered his field army of about 6,700 men.

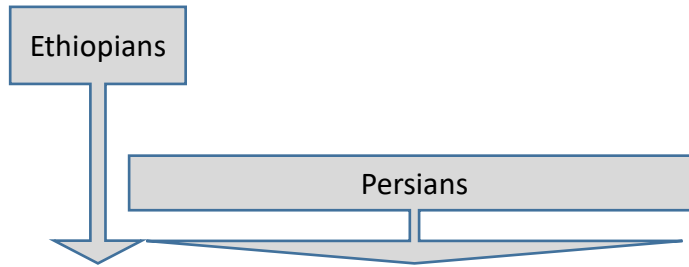
Xavier directly commanded the cavalry in the form of his guard, the militia cavalry and some local nobles. This gave him a mixed force of just over 1,000 troopers. He also had his regular infantry – almost 2,500 men armed with spear and bow. These were of reasonable quality and some had light armour.

Xavier supported his regulars with 2,300 Arab mercenaries. These were a mix of infantry, cavalry and camelry. Most of them were lighter types, some armed with bow, and of poor quality generally.

Xavier had mobilised his subject ally, Kashta of Ethiopia, who provided 800 foot archers of reasonable quality although this was tempered by Kashta's reluctance to be involved.

For more details on the compositions of both forces visit the armies page on this site.

# The Deployments



# The Tactics

Podares was concerned both about the amount of bow power the opposition might have and that the Sarmatians might go wandering off.

He decided to advance in a compact line with his hoplites in the centre and his own lighter troops on the left. The Sarmatians were on the right flank with orders to advance in line with his infantry until the enemy had closed to charge range.

Podares anticipated that the enemy would put most of their mobile troops and cavalry on the open ground to his right and make their main attack from there. If the Sarmatians could keep them busy and weaken them, then he felt his hoplites should be able to beat the enemy infantry and his weak left flank guard should just about hold.

Xavier was worried about the threat from the Sarmatians and knew he had to weaken the enemy hoplites before they closed to melee.

He decided to distract the Sarmatians by sending his Arab troops out wide on his left flank. Their cavalry and camelry would skirmish with them and draw them off. The Arab infantry would hide in the dense wood and jump out at the enemy as they passed.

He, with his cavalry and his regular infantry, would hold back in the centre and be ready to turn on the enemy cavalry if the opportunity was appropriate but otherwise concentrate on the enemy infantry.

Kashta and his Ethiopian archers would advance on the right, along the steep ridge, around the wood and then drop in behind the enemy flank in time to weaken them before they closed for melee.

# The Order of Battle

In my rules, each Corps takes its turn in being active and doing something. The order in which they become active is determined by a dice roll at the start of the battle. This sequence is set out below and may help to explain the battle report slides, each of which shows the actions for an individual Corps during a period when it is their turn to be active. Each Division normally occupies a single hex on the battlefield.

C1 – Ethiopians (Longawayoff ally) (1 Division)

C2 – Mantinea (3 Divisions)

C3 – Longawayoff Troops (5 Divisions)

C4 – Sarmatians (2 Divisions)

Each Corps commander is in the first Division in their Corps. All photographs are taken from the alliance edge.

P1/C1



On the Persian right flank, the Ethiopian archers advanced. Their chieftain, Kashta, sent some men forward into the wood and along the ridge.



P1/C2



In the Greek centre, the army of Mantinea started to advance up the slope on to the higher ground. Podares, their strategos, was in the centre with the better hoplites.





# P1/C3



The troops from Longawayoff started to advance. Xavier, the satrap, kept his cavalry in line with his regular infantry on the right, whilst the Arab cavalry and camelry advanced towards the hills. On the left flank the Arab infantry started to make their way into the dense wood.



P1/C4



On the right flank of the alliance, the Sarmatians advanced.



P2/C1



On the right flank of the Persians, the Ethiopians advanced on to the steep ridge.



P2/C2



The Mantinean army continued to advance. Podares, their strategos, sent the skirmishers forward so they could report on enemy movements as the hill was blocking his own view.



P2/C3



On the Persian right, Xavier with his regular troops started to climb the slope on to the higher ground. On the left, the Arab cavalry reached the crest of the hill and their camel mounted archers were able to fire on the enemy cavalry. The Arab infantry continued to make their way through the wood.



# P2/C4



The sighting of the enemy was too much of a temptation for Gatalos, the Sarmatian king, and he ordered a general advance for his men and led his own guard in a wild charge towards the enemy cavalry. The enemy sensibly evaded and the Sarmatians had to content themselves with shooting at the retreating camel riders.



P3/C1



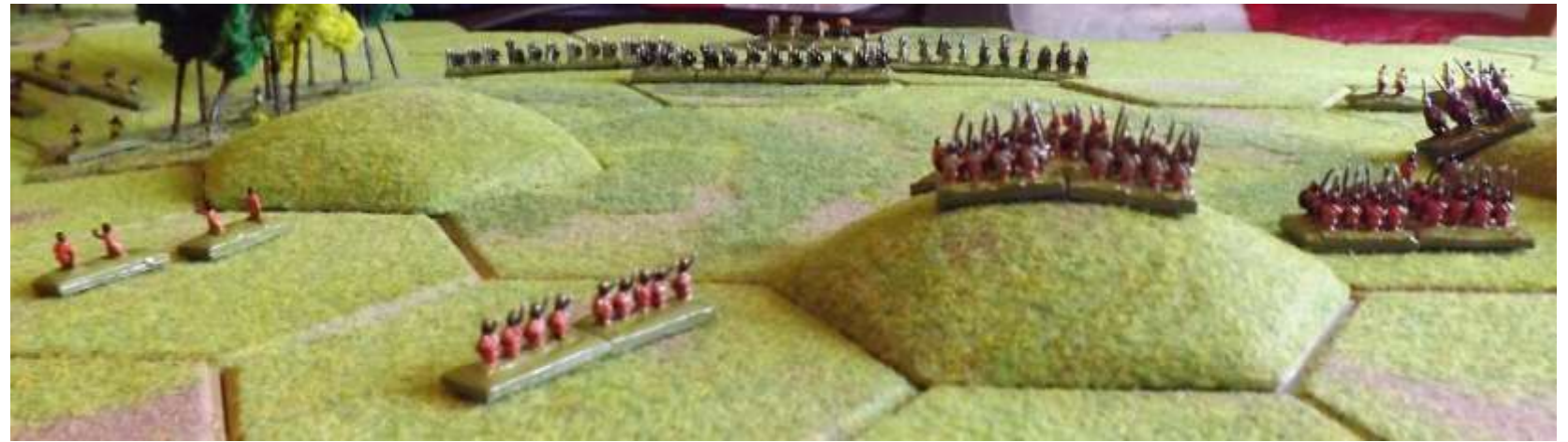
Kashta's Ethiopians advanced along the steep slope of the ridge. Some of their leading skirmishers were now within range of the enemy skirmishers and they opened fire.



P3/C2



The hoplites from Mantinea continued to advance. This meant that Podares, their strategos, reached the crest of the hill and was able to directly view the enemy. On his left, the Mantinean light troops held their position and faced up to the threat of the approaching enemy from behind the wood.





P3/C3



Xavier assessed the situation as good and ordered a general advance for all his troops. His regulars advanced on the right and turned to form a line facing the emerging enemy infantry and cavalry. Those armed with bows opened fire. On the left, despite losing all the camelry, the Arab cavalry were resolute enough to skirmish with the enemy cavalry. But in the wood, the Arab infantry failed to make much progress.



P3/C4



Gatalos also still considered the situation good and led his own cavalry in a charge against the enemy heavy cavalry, who stood and fought back. The second Division of Sarmatians rounded the base of the hill and skirmished with the enemy light cavalry.



P4/C1



The Ethiopians passed around the wood and turned to face the enemy flank. Kashta, their chieftain, sent forward some more of his men to shoot at the enemy skirmishers.



P4/C2



Podares, the strategos of Mantinea, was slightly concerned about the situation and the number of missile casualties his men were taking. Realising that he had to act positively whilst the Sarmatians were still enthusiastic, he advanced his men towards the enemy infantry.



# P4/C3



Xavier was also less enthusiastic about the situation. His cavalry had taken a battering in the melee and he rallied them back but continued to shoot. He moved his infantry battalions into position where they both could fire at the approaching enemy. On the left, his Arab cavalry had been destroyed but the Arab infantry still felt keen enough to emerge from the wood and skirmish with the enemy cavalry.



# P4/C4



Now it was Gatalos' turn to lose his enthusiasm. The melee and subsequent archery had badly reduced his own cavalry, so he rallied them back away from the foot archers but into a position where they could continue to fire on the enemy cavalry. Gatalos anticipated that his other cavalry Division would ride to his support but in their eagerness they charged the nearest enemy to them.



# P5/C1



Kashta's Ethiopians had problems descending the steep slope and made no substantial progress. Their advanced skirmishers continued to fire on the enemy infantry.



P5/C2



The situation from Podares' perspective had become worse. Both the levy hoplites and the last of the light troops in his army had been dispersed in rout as a result of the enemy archery. However, his men were still in good heart and he could see the Sarmatians approaching, so he charged them into the nearest enemy infantry block hoping to break them.





P5/C3



Xavier's problems were also increasing. All his Arab mercenaries along with one of his infantry battalions had been destroyed or routed. Whilst some of the enemy cavalry had been weakened they still had one strong block that would soon be riding over. Xavier decided he had to get rid of the enemy infantry first. So he sandwiched them between his remaining troops and shot at them.



P5/C4



Gatalos' Sarmatians were still in good spirits and he could sense a victory if he could support the last of Podares' infantry. He sent his second Division to shoot at the remaining enemy cavalry whilst he moved his own Division up to the flank of the last of the enemy infantry and shot at them.



P6/C1



Although his men were still eager for the fight, Kashta, the Ethiopian chieftain, was less optimistic about the overall situation and so ordered a withdrawal.



P6/C2



Being surrounded and shot at from front and rear, which had caused some casualties amongst his men, dropped their morale and his view of the situation. Therefore, Podares pulled his men back to a relatively safer position pending the arrival of the Sarmatians.



P6/C3



Xavier was now in danger of being surrounded himself. He too ordered a withdrawal and pulled back both his infantry and cavalry. As they passed the isolated enemy cavalry, both units fired at them.



P6/C4



The last volley of enemy missiles had felled Gatalos, the Sarmatian king, and his close followers. The noble now in charge decided to withdraw to link up with Podares' infantry. As they did so, they were able to shoot at the remaining enemy cavalry.



P7/C1



Kashta and the Ethiopian archers continued to withdraw.



P7/C2



With just some Sarmatian cavalry for company, Podares and his remaining hoplites held their position.





P7/C3



Xavier and the last of his cavalry had gone down with the last volley of arrows from the enemy cavalry. This left just one battalion of infantry from the Longawayoff field army. Their commander decided the situation was dire and they started to withdraw towards their baggage.



P7/C4



The noble now commanding the remaining Sarmatian cavalry withdrew his men back on to the hill.



P8/C1



The Ethiopians continued to withdraw, moving off the slope to link up with the last of the Longawayoff infantry.



P8/C2



Podares and the remaining hoplites from Mantinea held their position.



P8/C3



The commander of the remaining Longawayoff infantry halted his men by their baggage.



# The End

When the Sarmatians held their position on the hill by their baggage and next to Podares' hoplites, it was obvious that a stalemate had been reached.

Neither side would fall back any further unless threatened by advancing enemy and neither side had any enthusiasm for advancing. So they would just stand there staring at each other.



But the big question was who had won and who had lost?

The alliance side had the slightly better (or least worst) morale rating but had lost a higher percentage of their men, but were not in a position to claim the battlefield although they held a more advanced position.

So on that basis, both sides were awarded a losing draw and as Podares was the only Army general still standing he was given a rather dubious nod as not having lost so badly.

# The Conclusions

An interesting battle that swung in favour of both sides at different times. A combination of the small size of the armies and lack of high morale probably contributed most towards the end position of stalemate.

Xavier's plan might have worked better had he held back his regular troops in the early stages and deployed the Arab cavalry further to the flank. Either (or both) of these would probably have led to the Sarmatians going off to their right in their eagerness to engage the nearest enemy, rather than turning to their left. Without their early interference, Xavier would have had more cavalry available to help his infantry see off the enemy infantry and probably would have survived the battle.

Podares was right to be concerned about the power of enemy archery and that caused most of his problems. Once the casualties started to mount through the low armour of his men, their low morale meant they dispersed in rout fairly promptly. I was surprised his own hoplites held on, especially as they were approaching half-strength. A few more casualties and they too would probably have broken giving the battle to the Persians.

The most valuable Unit? If he had not been killed in the closing stages of the battle, the award would have gone to Gatalos and his cavalry. They took the battle to the enemy, shot down a lot with their archery, and almost took out the enemy general in the first melee. The only other unit grouping that stood out was Podares' hoplites, who very surprisingly hung around and even attacked after all their colleagues had vanished from the battlefield and so denied victory to the Persians.