

The Setup

As this was my hundredth battle with 6mm figures I decided to make it a big one. All my completed Romans would be pitched against my nine Greek armies. So, somehow nearly 2,600 figures had to squeeze on to the battlefield.

The battlefield was a mix of Granicus and Issos with a valley running from the coast on the left to a wood on the right. The far slope was steep and the near slope was gentle. Another ridge of high ground ran down the right flank, starting as heath and finishing in another wood. A couple of crags, flat topped hills and open woods were scattered around. Both sides had a fort but the Romans was larger and better.



The Teams and Their Plans

The Roman Imperium Proconsulare, Hipponari, had mobilised just under 54,000 men.

Seven legions providing 21,000 good quality legionaries. They were supported by 13,000 auxiliary infantry, organised into 2 large and 3 small wings, and 8,500 cavalry in 1 large and 2 smaller wings. The Proconsulare had a reserve of 7,000 men with a further 3,000 in the Explorates command and 1,000 more acting as camp guards.

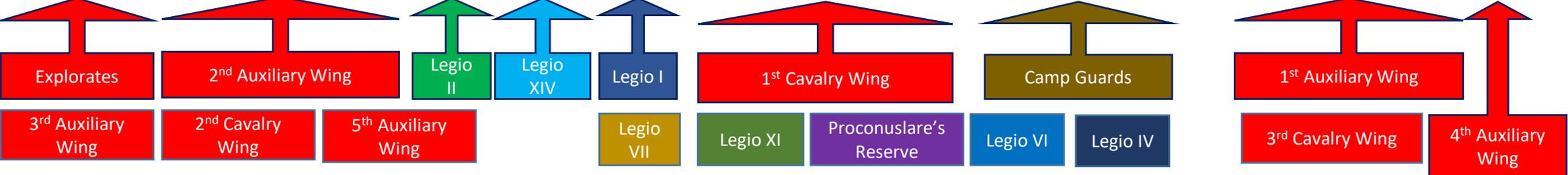
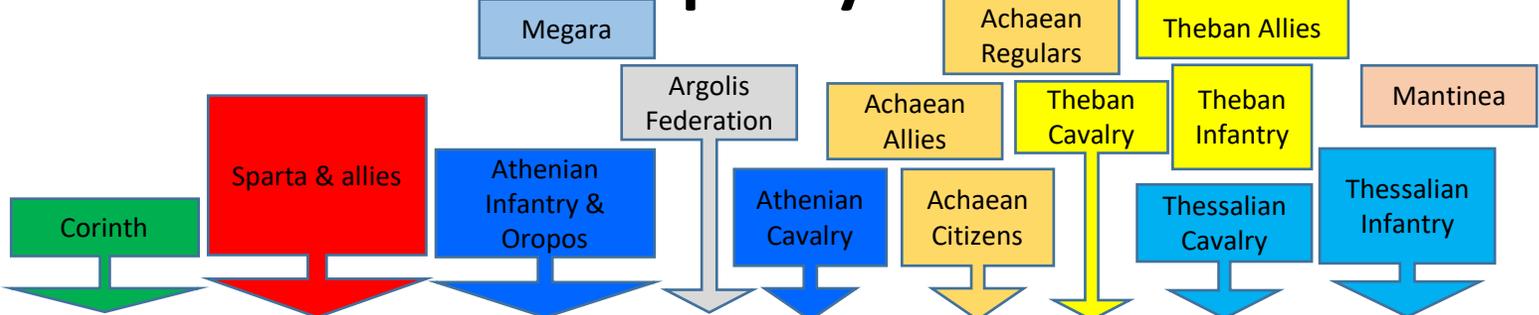
The Proconsulare decided to try to pin the Greeks to the high ground on his right by using his strongest cavalry and auxiliary wings. This would give time for his legions to deploy and to carve their way through the enemy facing him above the valley slopes. Several auxiliary wings would cover the left flank and a smaller force of auxiliaries and cavalry would cover on the right. His reserve and other troops would move forward in the centre behind the legions, ready to cover any gaps.

The nine Greek states mustered 78,500 men. After the votes were counted Perikles of Athens emerged in overall command with Pelopidas of Thebes as his number two. This made Leonidas of Sparta a reluctant participant.

Athens provided 15,000 men, mostly hoplites. Sparta fielded 6,500 of its own troops plus a similar number from its allies. Thebes provided 7,000 men directly and a further 7,500 from its allies. Thessaly fielded 3,000 cavalry and 6,500 foot, mostly peltasts. The towns of the Argolis Federation combined to field 3,000 infantry. The Achaean League mustered 5,500 men plus a similar number from its allies. Corinth fielded 5,000 men, Megara 3,000 and Mantinea 4,000. Most of the last three consisted of low quality hoplites.

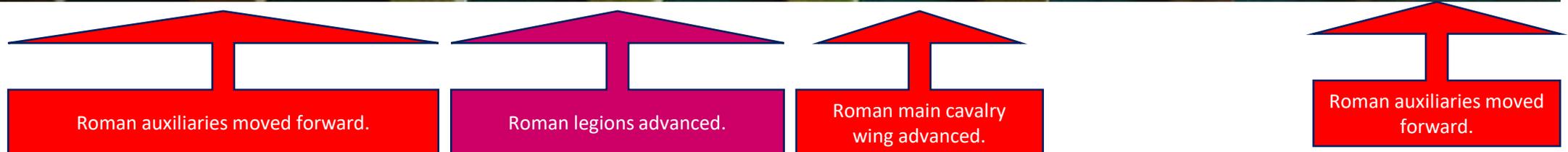
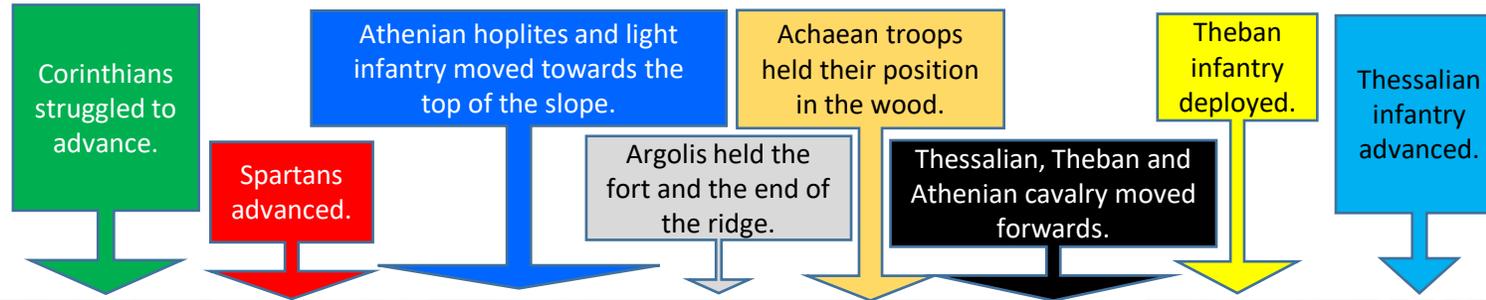
Perikles wanted to make use of his extra numbers and knew that the hoplites needed the advantage of the slopes to beat the legionaries. His Athenians and the Spartans would hold a line above valley and charge down when the enemy closed. The Corinthians, Megarans and the Argolis Federation would provide support. All the cavalry would ride out to delay the enemy approach so the Thebans and Thessalian infantry had time to advance down the left flank across the high ground before attacking. The Mantineans would support on the flank with the Achaean League covering on their inside.

The Deployments



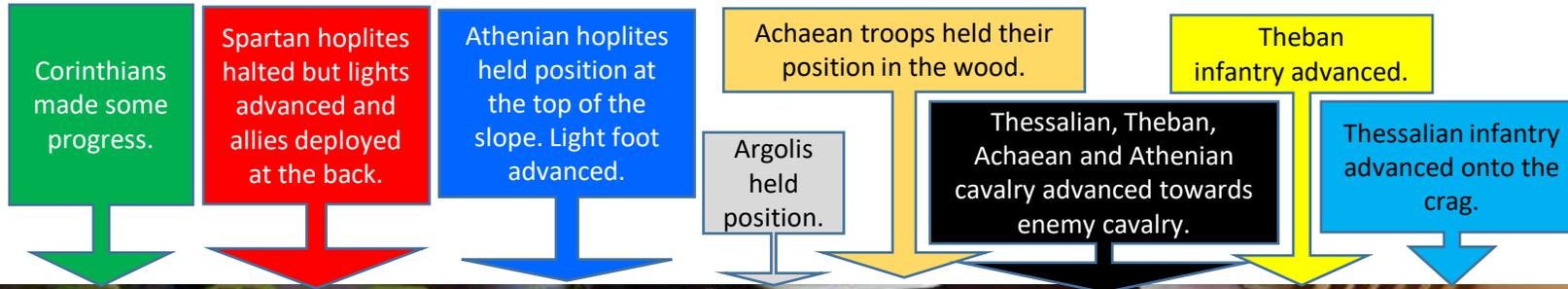
P1

Both sides started off in accordance with their orders. The various cavalry elements of the Greek Armies advanced on their left side whilst the main Roman cavalry thrust moved forward in the centre.



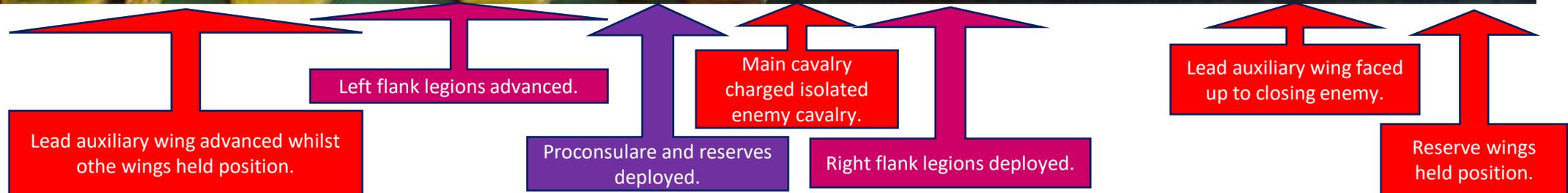
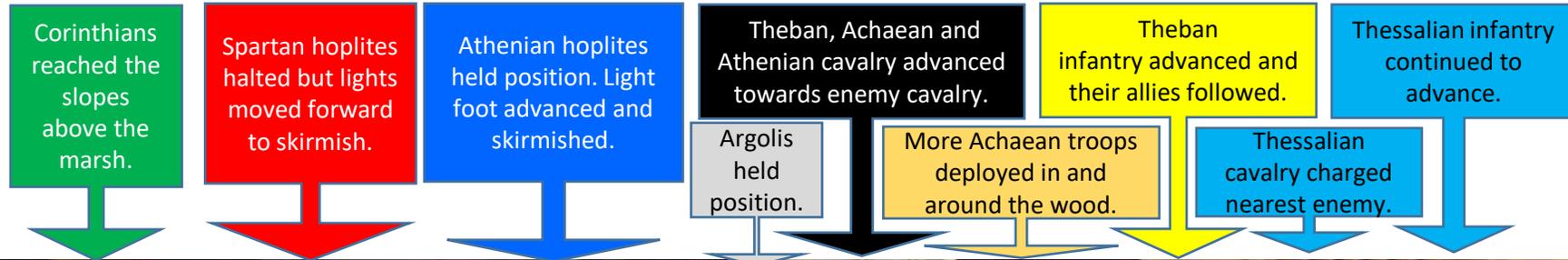
P2

The Athenian and Spartan hoplites halted at the top of the ridge, whilst their lighter foot continued advancing. The cavalry from both sides started to close. Skirmishing with missiles started across the battlefield.



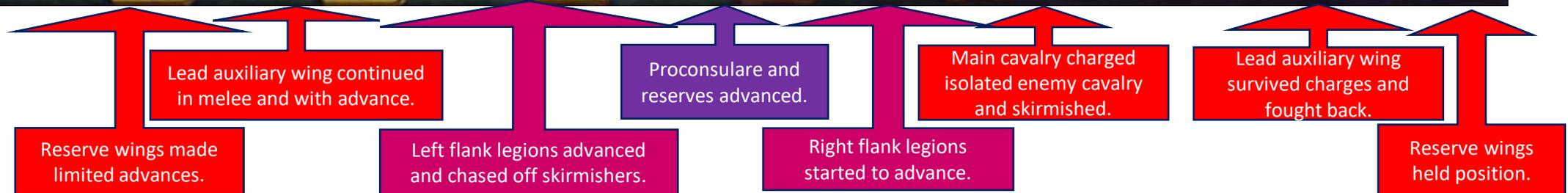
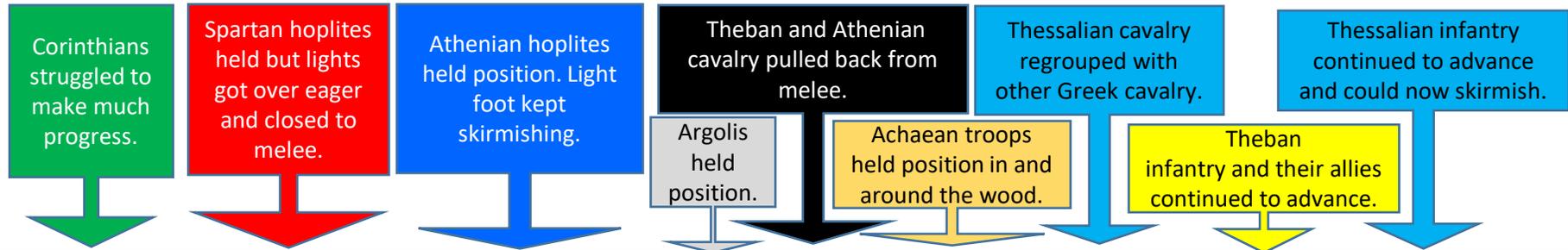
P3

The Thessalian cavalry engaged Roman right flank infantry and the Roman cavalry charged the other Greek cavalry in the centre. Pelopidas sent a message to Perikles to get him to order the Achaeans to advance. Skirmishing increased.



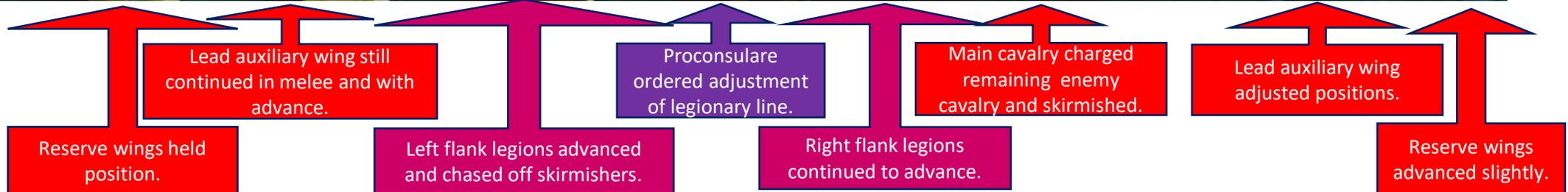
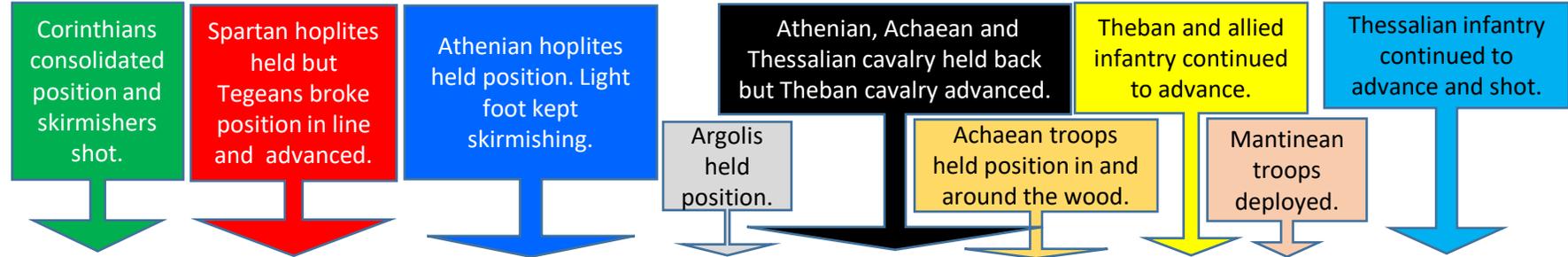
P4

The Greek cavalry came off worse in the initial melees and rallied back and re-grouped. On the Roman left, the lead auxiliary wing was becoming exposed. On the Greek left the Theban and Thessalian infantry kept advancing.



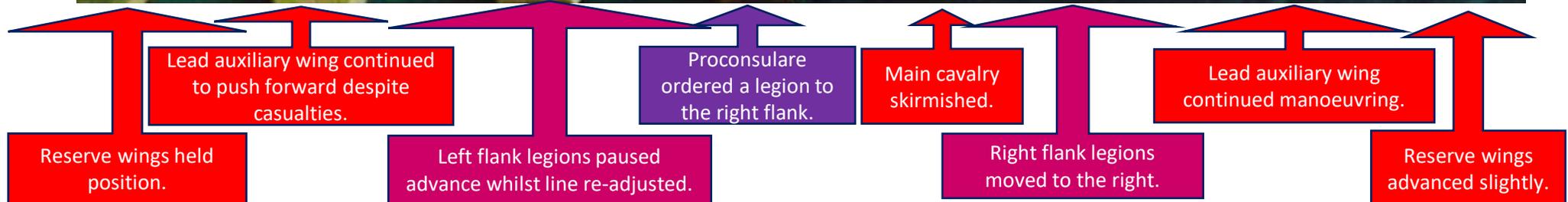
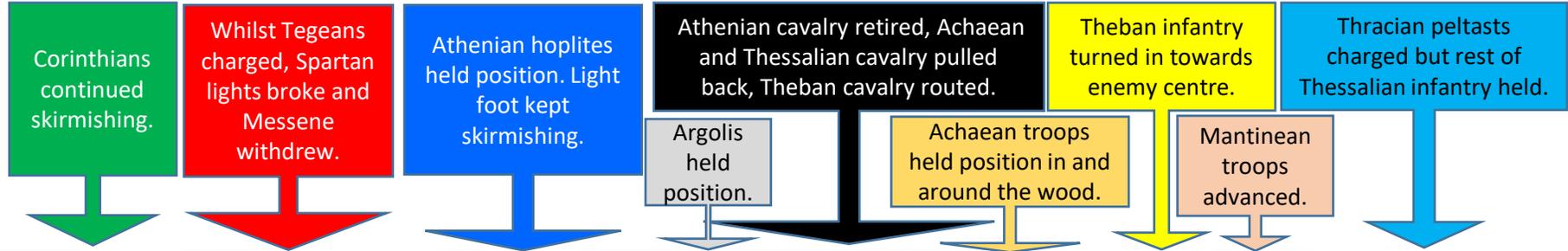
P5

The Roman wings were under pressure. The right flank commander requested legionary assistance whilst the left flank lead commander pressed on with his advance. The Greek cavalry continued to pull back and look for exit routes.



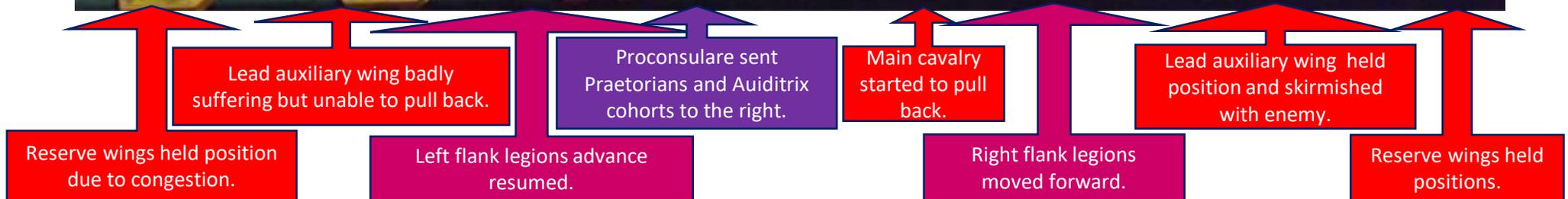
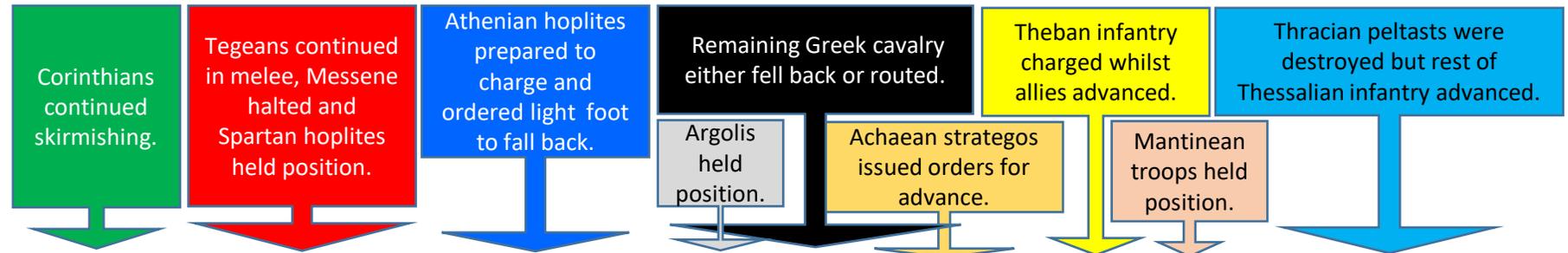
P6

All the Romans were now on the battlefield. Perikles sent an order for the Achaeans to advance and the Proconsulare sent some legions towards the right flank. On the Roman left, their auxiliaries were getting exposed as the Tegeans charged.



P7

In the centre the legions resumed their advance and were now closing on the Greek hoplite line. On the Greek left, Pelopidas charged his leading troops into melee. On the Roman left, their auxiliaries were on the point of buckling.



And Not Finally

At this point time had to be called and the battlefield cleared, no small task in itself.

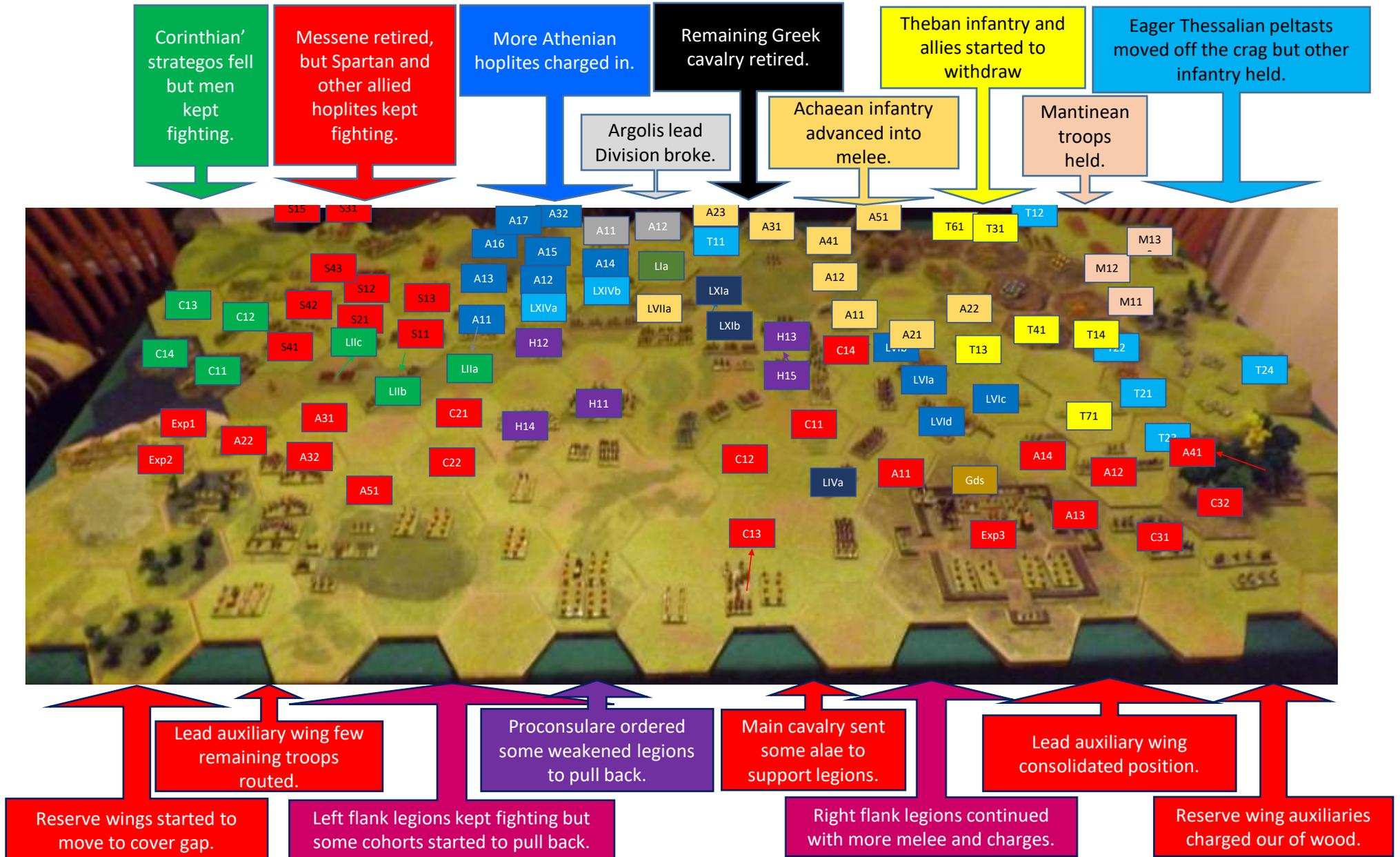
There was no clear winner or loser at this point and neither side seemed to have gained the upper hand.

The Greeks had suffered more casualties (or at least had more bases removed) and the morale algorithms indicated that the Romans were slightly more positive in their attitude, with several of the Greek commanders considering re-grouping their troops rather than continuing with the original plan.

Against this, the Romans had not yet taken on the major Greek forces on the ridge which was likely to be a big challenge and the Greeks still had a number of troops to deploy, especially on their left flank where the Roman auxiliaries might have some problems.

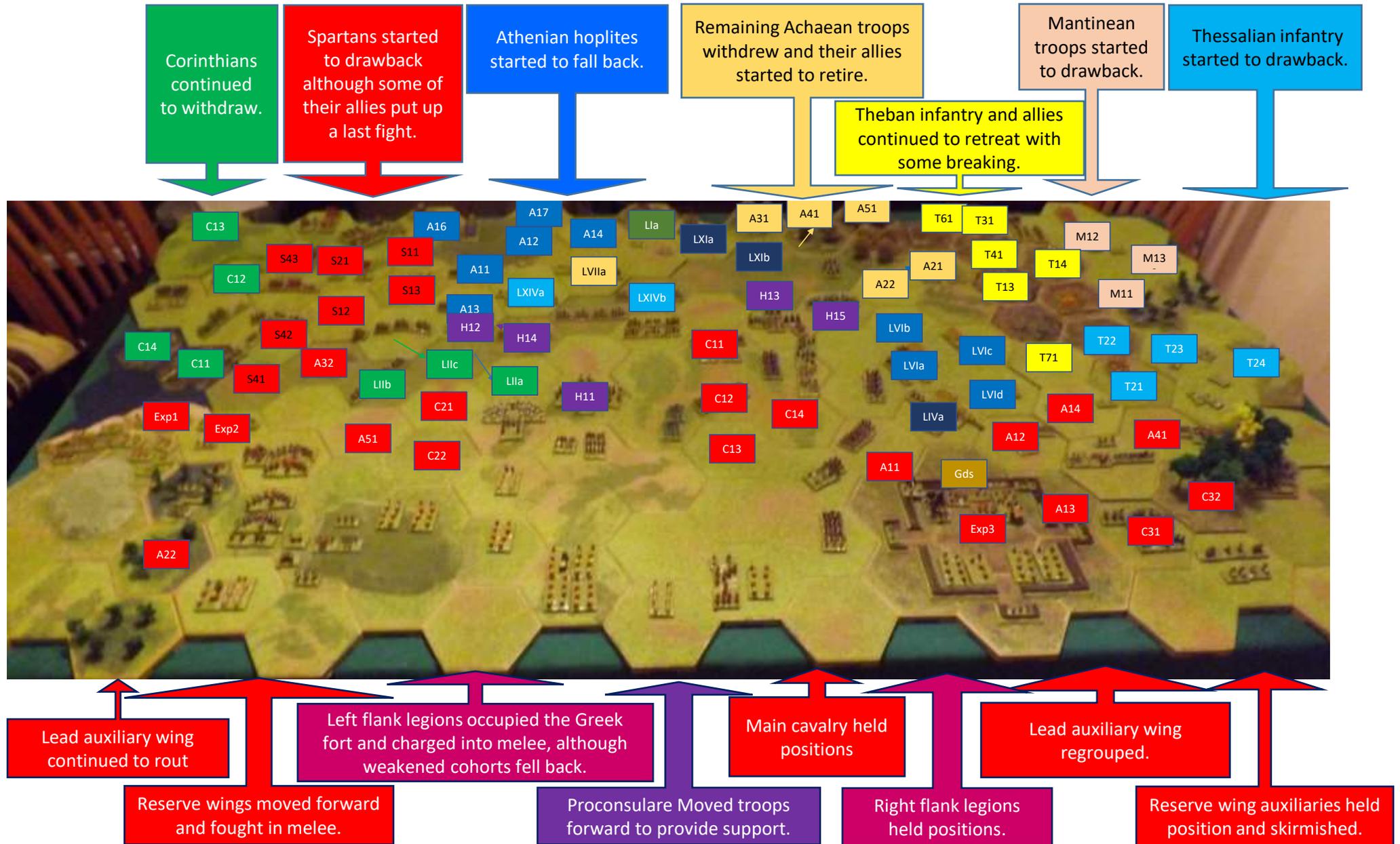
So, I decided to fight a few more periods virtually, just on the computer, to see how it might have turned out. The following slides summarise what happened.

Periander of Corinth was the second Greek strategos to fall, but his men kept fighting and along with the Spartan and Athenian hoplites seemed to be getting the upper hand on that flank. On the other flank, the Romans had the advantage.



P11

With Leonidas of Sparta being a reluctant participant and five of the states losing their commanders, morale across the Greeks was dropping and withdrawal orders were issued across the Greek forces.



And Now Finally

With the Greek morale falling and all their troops moving backwards, victory was awarded to the Romans who still had sufficient troops with enough eagerness to mount a harassment, if not a major attack, and see the Greeks off the battlefield.

It was a tough fight for the Romans especially on the left flank and up the steep slope where the legionaires faced the best of the Greek hoplites. The Greeks really did not get over the loss of most of their cavalry in the initial encounters and then the demise of five of the Army generals. Treating the Spartans as a reluctant ally, along with the high number of allied Corps in some Greek Armies, had an impact too.

Whether the overcrowding helped or hindered either side is not clear, but having the Greek main line of defence so near their baseline did as retiring troops had to leave the battlefield and so reduced morale. It probably was too big a battle for the size of the table and congestion prevented both sides from making best use of their troops. Concluding the battle by fighting it solely on the computer enabled a result to be achieved, but it lacked some of the precision as well as the spectacle of fighting with figures. I must try the battle again when I have more time, table and probably terrain for longer slopes!

The most valuable Unit? I was surprised at how well the Athenian Light Foot stuck to their task and their skirmishing was effective. The Roman cavalry may claim to have set the course for victory, but the legions – especially II Augusta who faced the best of the Greeks uphill – did most of the heavy lifting.