

CRASSUS IN AQUITANIA

Scenario 4 from Caesar in Gaul

Play by Play:

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This short gamete is only 12 turns long, the later half of the typical Roman campaigning season. This scenario represents a sub-story in Julius Caesar's third campaigning season in 56BC against the Gallic maritime tribes. Caesar's 8 year campaign against the Gauls was well documented by Caesar himself in his commentaries: sort of the propaganda news reel of the time. A clip of Caesar's commentaries pertaining to this part of the campaign is included in the game files.

Caesar sent Publius Crassus with a single legion and some reinforcements, allies, and recruited levies south to discover the intent of the Aquitanian tribes living in the south west, against the Pyrenees mountains and the Atlantic.

Publius was the eldest son of Marcus Licinius Crassus, still listed today as the eighth richest man of all time. He had defeated Spartacus in 71BC, and ambition and avarice would drive him to lead six legions against the Parthians in Syria with Publius in 53BC. He was ambushed at Carrhae and wiped out.

Publius proved, in his Aquitanian campaign, to be an able leader. His battles late that summer, are considered to be his finest.

The game begins with the Roman forces on a single hex (P7, O8, N8) which is randomly determined. The Allied and Auxiliary forces are determined randomly, but the VII legion and a spare 20-4 legionary infantry are always provided.

There are six Aquitanian tribes, denoted by the green dotted lines on the hex-sides. You can also right click on a hex and it will highlight the tribes territory. Some tribes may not be in revolt when the game starts, the Aquitanian leader may attempt to incite these tribes to revolt against Rome by entering their territory (indicated with a question mark) and clicking the options button.

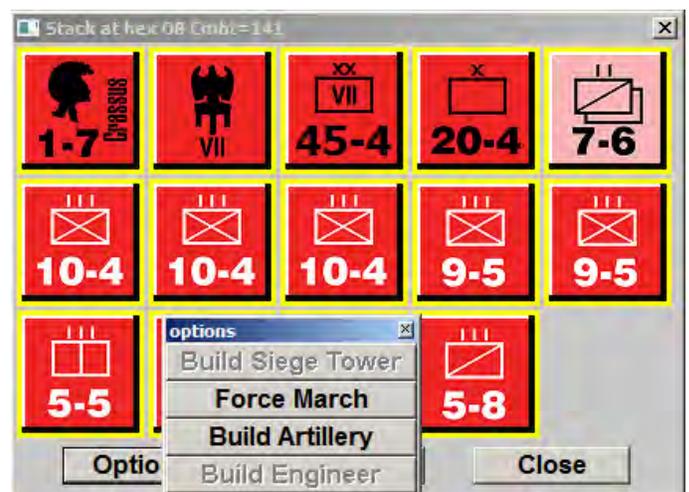


It is essential for the Aquitanian leader to enter Hispania as soon as possible to recruit Iberian tribes to assist them. If you wait past the second turn to enter Hispania, you run the risk of being captured in the attempt by Roman units.

The Romans move first, and in this example, there are two tribes who's intentions are unknown:



I always begin the game with a Forced March, in this scenario it has no cost. In the actual board game, Force Marches essentially cost double supplies. Only Eagles and Leaders can Force March.

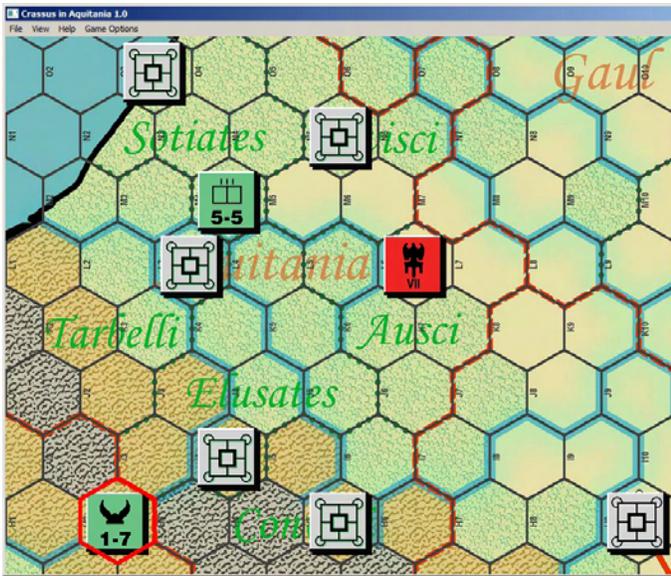


My attempt failed, but it is not a big deal with this start package. I intend to subjugate the Ausci by entering L6. A pop-up window confirms their submission. I can press on with my move if I want to divide my forces, but I don't want to do that right now. I have two options next turn, north to assault the Vivisci, or press south with a good Force March to invade the Conveni. This first turn is usually recon and maneuver, with the second turn starting the invasion of Aquitania. I like to begin at one end and roll up the forts one by one to the other end. Having several close together can be very useful at the start. Forts within the forest should be taken out first, because you do not want the Aquitanian Leader and his Spanish friends to set up an ambush at one in the forest later in the game.

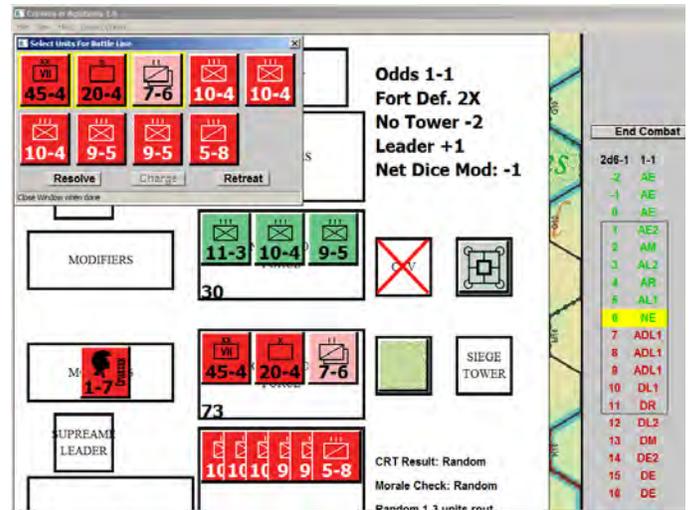


The Aquitanian leader incites the Elusates to revolt and continues into Hispania. I dispatched excess units from the rebelling tribes, sending 10-4 units by preference, to converge at the fort in Hex L3. I could also attempt to stop the Romans from Force Marching to H5 – but I would have to strip my only defender from the fort to do it. I try to leave three heavy infantry at each fort for defense.

I'm going to ignore the north and send them to the three southern forts. L3 has 4 units, I4 has two, and H5 has one. I send my remaining force to assault N5 – there are three defenders there.



Back to the Romans for turn two. I have three light infantry that can run thru the forest hexes and be my scouts. I find they have a 50% survival rate, and they show me the weakest forts to attack first. I can reach the remaining five tribes, but I can only send three scouts.



The Romans need only the 45-4 and 20-4 to get 1-1 odds on the fort, but a third unit is needed for losses. Crassus can break down the 7-6 cavalry, so it counts as two steps for losses. The red Allied units can't be broken down without an Allied leader, and we don't have one in this game – so they are all 1 step loss units.

One to one odds are not that good in this game, especially with a -1 on the die roll. The game rolls 2 dice for combat results, and each plus or minus is equivalent to an odds step on the chart. So its really 2-3 odds straight up. The -2 for not having a siege tower is a real killer. The combat results are shown on the right, and we need an AL1/DL1 result or

better. We have 15 chances in 36 of eliminating a unit on the first roll, with the dreaded NE result being one chance in six. That would effectively end the combat. We will probably need three rolls to clear the fort, so there is a 50% chance the NE will stop us from blitzing thru these defenders.

As it went, the first roll was for an Attacker Morale check. Two units got routed, the 20-4 and the 7-6. Subsequent rounds were two AL1/DL1's followed by a DR. The fort was cleared with the loss of two legionary 5-5 units from the legion itself. It reforms after combat, but this means that I've lost my 20-4 in the front line with the legion for future attacks. That can make a big difference in surviving the Aquitanian last stand with their Iberian friends.

Always select YES to raze the opidium, this forces a roll for desertion from the Aquitanian forces – the Iberians are immune to it. They lost one unit and it must have come from I4 because there is only one defender there now.

The Aquitanian turn 2 is pretty brief - I move the units in the forest at M4 into the fort at L3 and get an over run on the Roman light infantry scout. I don't dare attack the two other scouts, its too easy to get an AL1/DL1 even at higher odds, and I just can't afford any loss, all I have are single units here.

The Aquitanian Leader recruits Iberians – I have the settings fixed to “always one tribe”, which seems to have the best play balance.

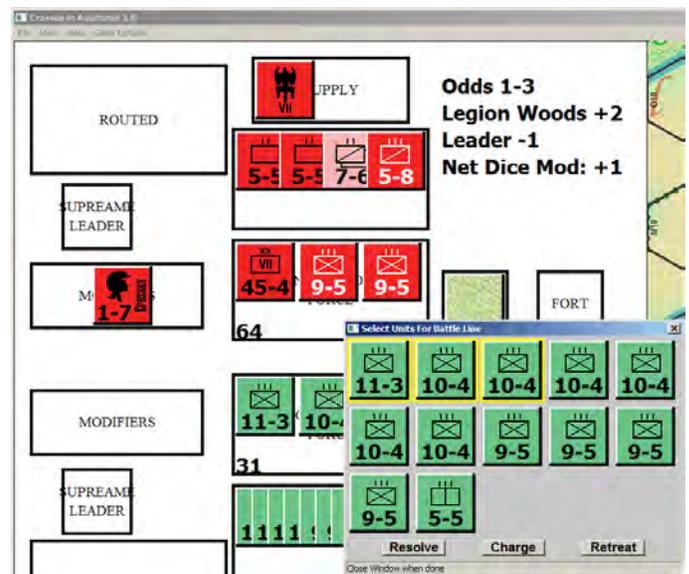


I got a very strong tribe here. I got three cavalry

units, a small tribe doesn't even have one. Having at least one is very useful because the Aquitanians can use the cavalry box in the forest and the Romans can't. Having two allows you to “Charge” one unit each combat round when you are attacking – doubling the units combat factors.

The Romans start turn 3 with a successful Forced March for +1. By deselecting the slower Allied units, we are able to reach the Tarbelli fort at L3. There are a dozen units defending this fort, we are not going to assault it like the last one. This one will get a siege. I send a scout to I3 to block the Spanish hoard for a turn, and the slower Allied infantry follows the legion with one unit breaking off to recon the northern fort. The Roman turn ends with no combat.

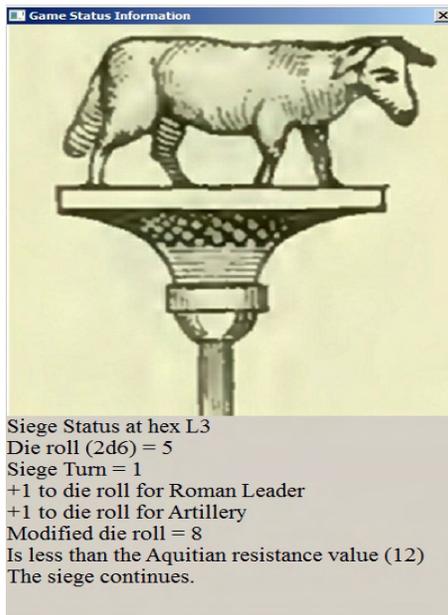
The Iberians over run the Roman scouts and the Tarbelli are forced to attack out of the fort:



It doesn't look good for the attack. The Aquitanians will have to get lucky, they have no leader or cavalry in this fight. Sometimes, for the Roman player, it is better to put the Allies in the front lines than the legionary units. There is a -2 for the legionary units in the forest, and a +2 bonus for infantry defending in the forest. This time though, there are not enough Allied infantry to make it work out. Aquitania got an AL2 followed by an NE, so the attack was ineffective.

Rome starts turn 4. I send the lone 10-4 Allied unit to O3 to discover the northern defenses. There are three strong units here, one is a heavy infantry. At

L3 I first build an artillery, and then a siege tower. I end the movement phase and the siege results for the turn are displayed:



Sometimes these forts surrender immediately. The calculation is based on rolling 2 dice, adding the turn of the siege, +1 for artillery, +1 for a leader. We had to roll a 9 or better to take the fort on the first turn. That's 10 chances in 36. In the board game, Caesar in Gaul, Gaul units surrender on a 15, Roman Auxiliary on an 18, and Legionary units on a 20. So those sieges can take several weeks, Aquitania is much shorter - we only have 12 turns so it balances out in the end.

Aquitanian turn 4:

I can't get any useful infantry units to L3 to relieve the siege this turn. They have to hang on another turn. I will send some units to wipe out the Roman scout at H5 though. All I need are 30 factors for an over run, and I'll continue on with them to the Roman fort at H9, confident in an Aquitanian victory. The remaining Iberian force is sent to K3. For combat, I wipe out the Roman Ally at O3 with a DL2 result and press the attack to get out at L3. The odds are 1-3 +3 and I need to get lucky to even damage the Roman forces. I get two AR's and two AL1's before an NE shows up. The AR's were for 2 units each. So the siege continues.

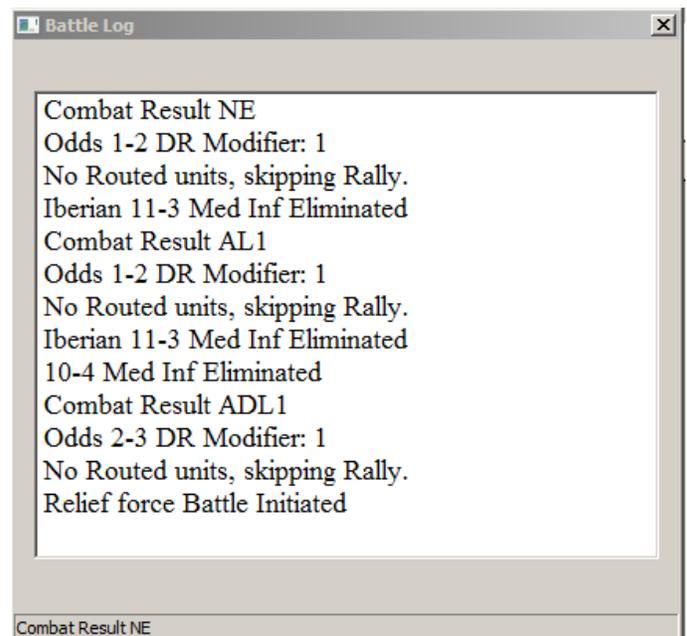
There is nothing to do for Roman turn 5 movement, so we skip straight to the siege results. The low roll indicates the the siege will continue. I could assault the fort, but I think I will let the burden of attack fall

on the Aquitilians next round. It seems to harm them more. Its looking like L3 is going to be the deciding battle for the game this time.

The Aquitilians move the southern Iberian force towards the Roman fort in the south, the lone cavalry unit arrives in advance of the infantry. The main force moves to L3 for the big battle, and the northern force remains garrisoned.



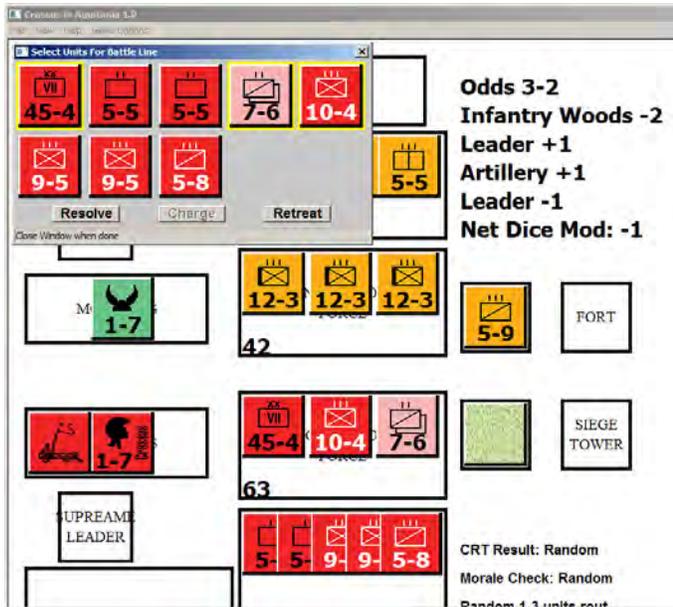
The odds are looking pretty good for this battle, here is where the loss of that 20-4 unit in the first battle is going to cost the Romans. We can charge a cavalry every round and that is going to help a lot, along with the legion in the woods penalty.



The combat log shows a summary of the battle. The

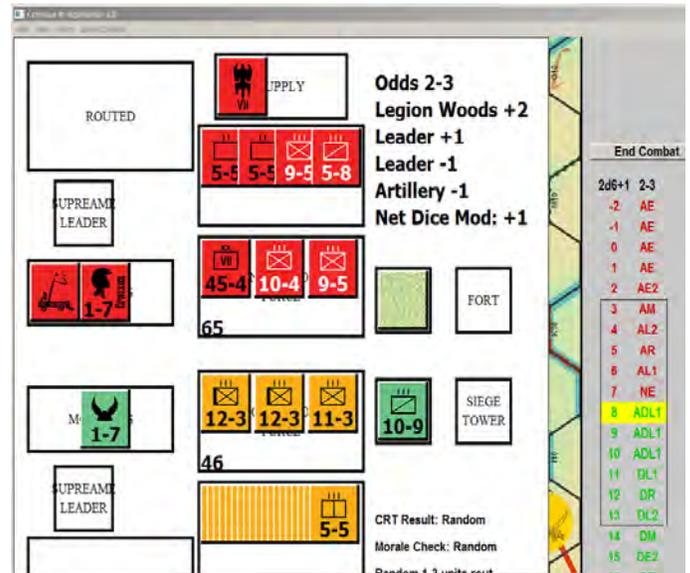
NE result ended the battle before a decisive outcome could be reached. This is unfortunate because the fort will likely capitulate next round, causing desertion throughout Aquitania.

Roman turn 6, skipping movement and going straight to the siege results. The fort surrendered and 3 units deserted. I will still have to fight the relieving force for one combat round, then I can move on to another fort in better terrain. Here's the battle setup:



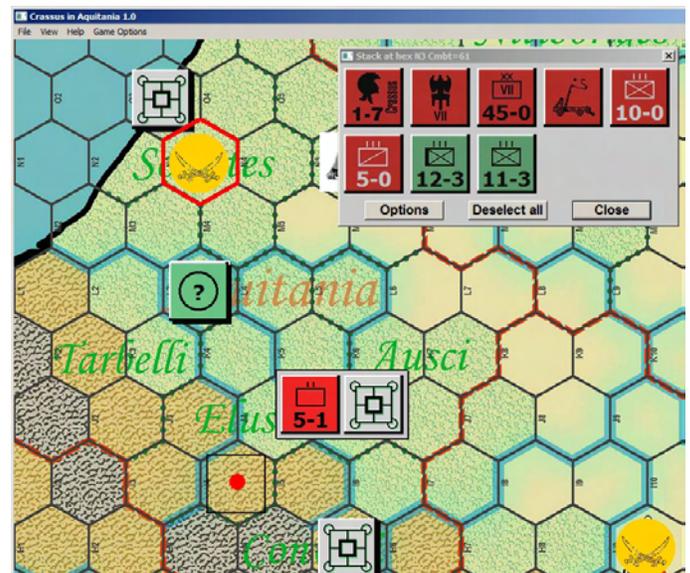
Since an AL1/DL1 result is pretty common, and the Iberians have fielded their heavy infantry, I put the 7-6 cavalry in the front lines because it can take two hits and will cost fewer points in the end. The Roman got an AL2 result and the unit was eliminated.

The turn 6 Aquitanian move is basic. I sent all the southern forces to the Roman fort and pulled the remaining northern forces out of their fort closer to the battle at L3. Next for the battle at L3. The Romans put their best units forward, with their leader and artillery adding to the battle. The Aquitanians put two heavy infantry in the front line and an 11-3 for losses. Its not wise to put three 12-3 units in an attack since their real value is in defense – requiring an extra AL1 on the attacker when the unit is eliminated or reduced. The battle stacks up pretty much the same with the charging cavalry making the difference between 1-2 and 2-3 odds. If the Aquitanian player can stay away from the dreaded NE result, they have the Romans where they want them. An ambush would be better though.



Aquitania got three AL1DL1's followed by an AL1 and then an NE. The Romans will slip away to the next fort, and they are all empty at this point. I'm saving the assault on the Roman fort for later, its a 1-1 attack, but the -2 for not having a siege tower is the problem.

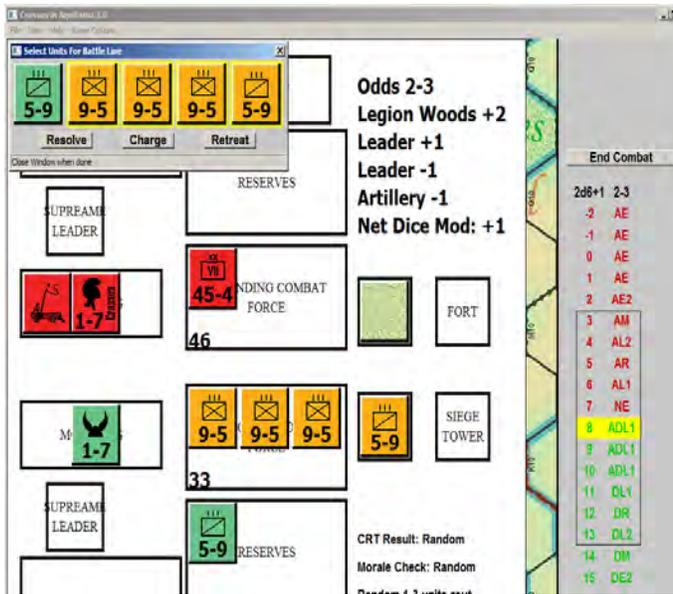
The Romans on turn 7 send a legionary cohort south after gaining a +1 on a Forced March to see what defenses are left in the two forts there, and the main force to intercept the units that left the northern fort. This is a desperate attempt to catch the northern fort undefended. If we have to lay siege to it the Iberians will eventually show up and spoil it.



For the combat phase I raze the southern fort first hoping to reduce the number of units the northern force has to fight. One unit deserted from the stack,

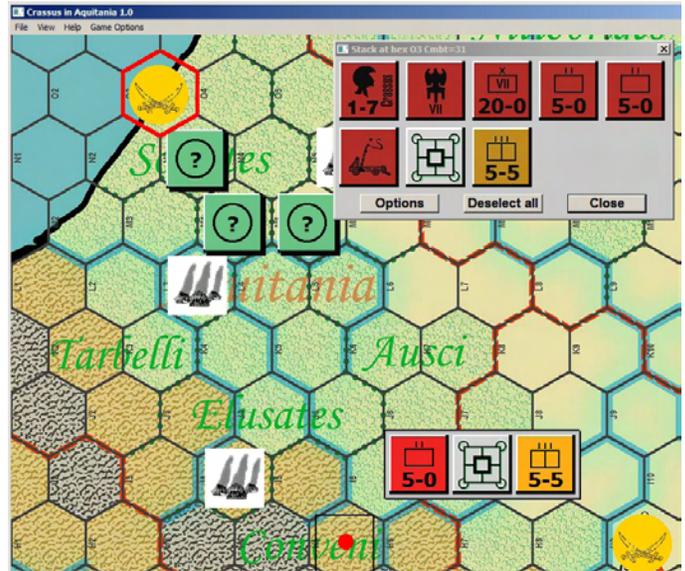
but I'm left to fight the 12-3 heavy infantry. I got an AL1/DL1 and that will cost my last two Allied units. The northern force is just a bare legion now.

The Aquitanian turn is desperate. Fortunately there are two 5-5 light infantry units that can be sent to each empty fort. Only the cavalry and 9-5 units can reach the legion. I split the remaining forces so that the 10-4's can be sent to attack the Roman fort if the northern battle is successful. Having a defender in the southern fort may be the only thing that saves Aquitania from enslavement to the Romans.



The results are AL1, then a DL1, the legion is cracked but I'm down to two 9-5's and two 5-9's. Its going to be a desperate fight. I have a choice of 1-1 odds +1 or a single round at 3-2 +1 and having to retire both cavalry. I'm hoping for the lucky roll and opt to charge both cavalry for the 3-2 +1. I get an AL1/DL1 and rather than lose a cavalry I lose a 9-5, forcing me break off the attack. I just don't have enough units in this battle to wipe out the legion. It may have some difficulty taking the fort though and I have more units coming. This would be a bad time to lose my leader in a desperate attack.

The Roman turn 8 is also getting desperate, the broken legion moves onto the northern fort. And the Southern unit sits outside the last Aquitanian stronghold waiting for reinforcements that may never come. The northern fight will have to be an assault since the Aquitanian forces will be upon them very quickly.



The assault was successful with an AL1/DL1, the razed fort caused desertions, but there were no Aquitanian counters left to remove. There are only a few things with victory points remaining in them – the southern fort, Roman fort, both leaders, and the eagle is worth the most. The Aquitanians press their attack on the eagle and send forces to the Roman fort.



Part of the strategy here is to force the Roman's broken legion to travel south along the shore to get to the southern fort. Its the only way the eagle can be intercepted with the slower Iberians.

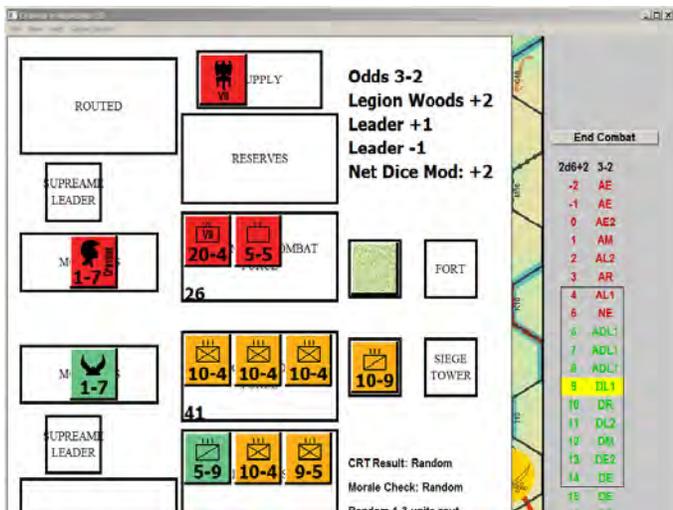
Aquitania charged both cavalry hoping to rout some units, but I got an NE at 1-1 +1 on the first roll. The Romans need to get away to the southern fort. Their Forced March fails just when they needed it most. They have several choices here. They could stand and attack the Aquitanian leader, but he could easily

get away. All the move options involve abandoning the artillery, which will benefit any units that attack them in the Aquitanian turn, but that choice is pretty much made. We could attack the units in N4 trying to punch out, but that will leave us open to a counter attack from all the remaining units. They could move east two hexes and face a limited number of units, or down the coast and face the forces there. Either east or south splits the enemy forces. The path closest to the southern fort will be the best choice. The coast route is 7 more moves, and the eastern forest route is 10. South it is then.

The Aquitanian turn 9 move:



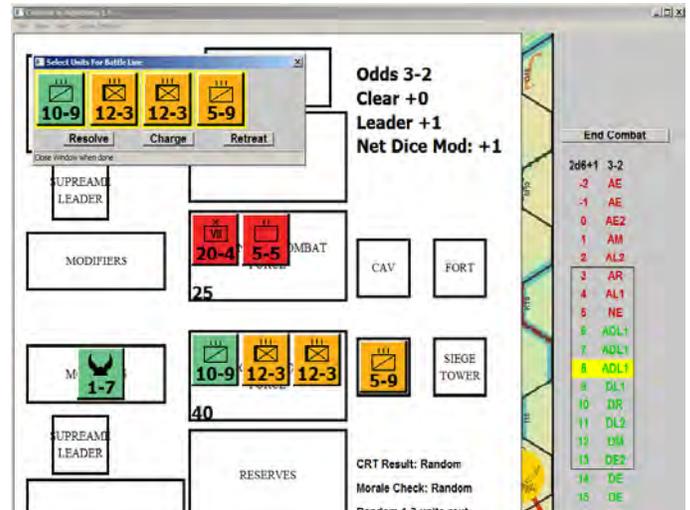
This may be the end for the VII legion. The attack begins:



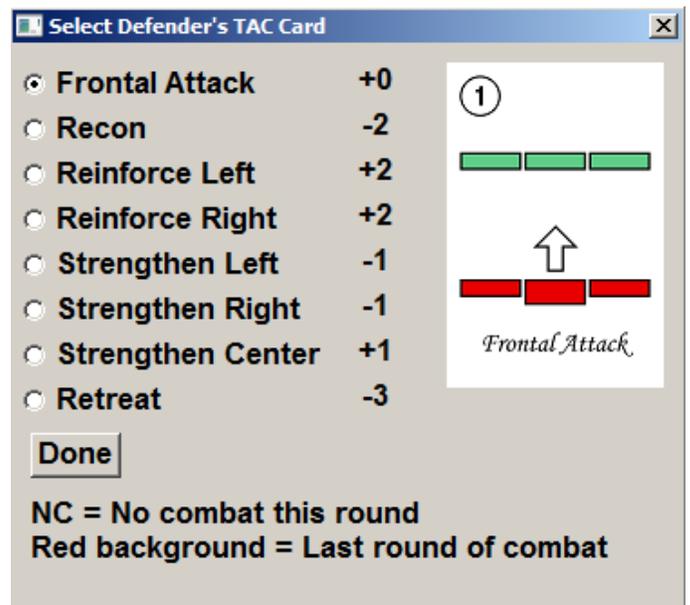
This isn't looking good for the Romans – 3-2 +2 and the NE result is going to be rare in this battle. The first roll was a DR and both units were routed, the eagle captured and Crassus killed. The rest of this game is going to be downhill for the Romans.

The routed units were moved to N3. Roman turn 10 move is to N6. Running away is about the only thing left. Recapturing the eagle would be difficult and then a counter attack would wipe the survivors out. With a 20-4 and a 5-5 and no leader, the Romans are good for only two battle losses.

The Aquitanians press on. The closest units to the fort continue to it, and the slower heavy infantry turn back. The Aquitanian leader and cavalry catch up for a final battle in the open.



This battle calls for the maneuver cards:



The Aquitanian card is drawn at random, so the player has to pick the Roman card. Obviously they want to Retreat, but it could be a bad choice. Since the draw is random, I'll try retreat and see what happens. The Aquitanian card is Recon, so there is

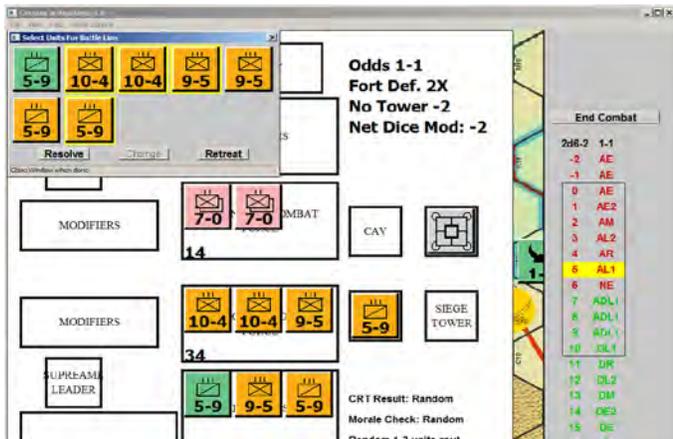
one round of combat at +2, making it 3-2 +1. The result is DE, the Romans are wiped out. Since the Gaul player can get 5 victory points per turn for winning early, I decide to press the attack on the Roman fort without a leader or a siege tower.



The Aquitanians will need to get lucky, but they have lots of units available to try. The assault gets an AL2, AL1, and an AR so I broke it off.

Roman turn 10 – its time to recall our lone legionary unit from the southern fort and help defend the Roman fort. Its going to take two turns for it to arrive, it may be too late.

The Aquitanian turn is a mad dash to get all available forces to the Roman fort and capture it. The next battle is also without a leader, but at least there is cavalry.

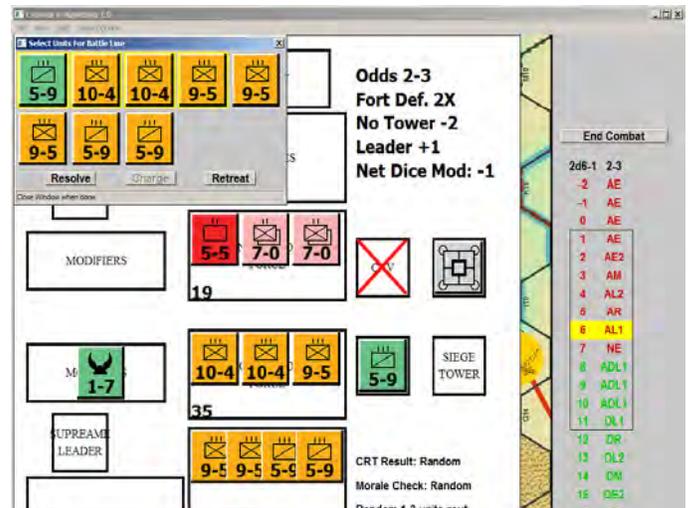


The first roll is an NE, so we have one more turn.

The last Roman move is to reinforce the fort, if the Roman player knew for sure that I10 was the lone Aquitanian leader they could make an attempt to

capture him. But we really don't know that, do we? Anyway, the fort is reinforced with the remnants of the VII legion.

The final battle at the end of turn 12 lays out like this:



Its pretty close to the previous battles, maybe they will have some luck this time.

AL1, AR - 2 units 9-5 and Aquitanian cavalry (because we have 3 cavalry and we can rally the Aquitanian), finally an AL1/DL1, Rome loses the legionary, Aquitania loses a cavalry (we don't really need 3 of them), another AL1/DL1, a garrison double cohort and half the rallied Aquitanian cavalry. A final AL1/DL1 ends the combat and the game. The Aquitanians attain a marginal victory with -25 points.

An overview of this game:

The good news is that the Romans never got ambushed. The two fateful problems were breaking the 20-4 in the first assault, and the extremely lucky roll for the one Iberian tribe. Sometimes this can be compensated for with a siege where forces like this are trapped inside a fort, but not this time. This game was decided in turn 9 when Crassus was killed and the eagle captured. There was little hope for recovery after that. Without recovering the eagle, there was not going to be any victory for Rome.