INTRODUCTION

When the traditional signal to engage was sounded on both sides, a violent battle ensued. After a short exchange of missiles the Germans rushed forward, brandishing their weapons... Our men faced them stubbornly, protecting their heads with their shields and trying to strike fear into the foe with drawn swords or the deadly javelins that they brandished.

At the very crisis of battle, when our cavalry were bravely regrouping and the infantry were stoutly protecting their flanks with a wall of serried shields, thick clouds of dust arose and the fight swayed this way and that... The hail of darts and javelins and the volleys of iron tipped arrows did not slacken although blade was clashing on blade in hand to hand conflict.

Breastplates were split asunder by sword blows and wounded men who still had some blood left rose from the ground to attempt some further exploit.

Ammianus Marcellinus describing the Battle of Strasbourg AD 357.

Designer's Notes

Comitatus is a complete set of wargames rules designed to simulate warfare in Europe and the Mediterranean from about AD 200 to 1100. They have been primarily designed with Barbarian Migrations period in mind but the rules cover warfare from Imperial Rome through to the First Crusade. *Comitatus* is a fast moving game that is relatively easy to master. Full-scale battles representing tens of thousands of troops on each side can easily be fought to a conclusion in 3-4 hours.

My intention has been to develop a game, using miniature figures, which will look and feel like eyewitness accounts of ancient battles. The starting point, therefore, has not been to work out ground and figure scales or to compare the effects of various weapons against certain types of armour and formations, but rather to ensure that the game unfolds in the same way as the historical event it is simulating. I have not designed *Comitatus* with the competition wargamer in mind, nor with those who wish to recreate the minutiae of small-unit or individual action. I have designed *Comitatus* for people who are fascinated by the military events of the Dark Ages and who want to bring history to life with a game that represents the clash of armies while still being fun and relatively easy to play.

Ancient battle was, by modern standards, somewhat stylised. Because it is derived from descriptions of actual battles, like the quote from Ammianus Marcellinus above, a *Comitatus* game will have some of this stylised feel.

The game is played using alternate movement with turns broken down into phases which mirror the actions taken by troops in actual battles. After deployment into battle formation, troops move to within bow range of each other. They then halt and exchange missiles at long range, before closing to within javelin range. After another, more deadly missile exchange, troops will follow their leaders into hand to hand combat. A clear distinction is made between the initial clash of battle lines and the man to man combats that follow. Cavalry fights will be fast and fluid but when two infantry lines clash the combat may be more prolonged.

Dark Age warfare was characterised by bands of warriors attaching themselves to powerful warlords. The title of these wargames rules takes its name from a leader's personal following which was known as the Comitatus. Leadership was direct and personal, and many of the game mechanisms in *Comitatus* are designed to replicate this. Personal combat, special rules for a leader's personal following, and the requirement for commanders to lead from the front, being key features. The capabilities of various troop types have been summed up in numerical ratings that make it immediately obvious, even to the first time player, how good they are at certain jobs. The combat factors are a sum of many variables including weapons, armour, cohesion and élan. Thus a unit with high attack but low defence factors reflects troops with aggressive spirit but lacking in staying power. The numerical ratings of the various troop types may be adjusted to reflect personal interpretations or specific scenarios.

❧ COMITATUS ❧
Warfare in the Dark Ages

QUICK REFERENCE SHEET

Sequence of Play

Command Phase: Allocate CPs, move messengers and lone leaders, take control tests.

Approach Phase: Move units beyond bow range.

Long Range Missile Exchange: Shoot at targets beyond javelin range.

Tactical Move Phase: Move up to javelin range.

Short Range Missile Exchange: Shoot at javelin range. Light horse archers and other units except artillery who did not move, may also shoot at long range.

Charge Phase: **1.** Declare and test for charges.
2. Resolve shooting prior to combat.
2. Make charge & response moves.
3. Resolve combat.
4. Make combat result moves.

Morale Phase: Remove DPs.

Command Point (CP) Allocation

- Control Units (1CP)
- Additional Leader Move (1CP)
- Direct Fire (1 CP)
- Rally Troops (3 CPs)
- Inspire Troops (3 CPs)
- Give or Receive Orders (2 CPs)
- Issue challenge (3CPs)

Control Test
1 AvD (A Grade) or 1 D6 (others):
+1 if charging, pursuing or looting;
+/-1 if Leader inspiring within 1 JT.

1-2 = Halt;
3-4 = Act as player wishes;
5+ = B&C Grade in cuneus and Armed Rabble must advance. Otherwise repeat last move.

Risk to Leaders
D6 roll of 1 = hit
2nd roll: **1** = Killed
2-3 = Serious Wound –2 CPs
4-6 = Light wound –1 CP

DP Removal
if stationary and not in combat:
- A Grade 1/turn +1 if not shot at & beyond 1 JT of enemy
- B Grade: 1/turn
- C Grade: 1/turn if not shot at & beyond 1 JT of enemy

Morale

- 2 DPs if Cav in 1 JT of elephants, 1 DP camels
- 1 DP if Surprised
- 2 DPs per CP leader killed/broken
- 1-2 DPs for fatigue and disorder
- 1-3 DPs for shooting and combat results
- 1 DP formed move in difficult terrain
- 1 DP if Evading
- 1 DP if lower grade or light unit broken.
- 2 DPs if non-light equal/higher unit broken
- 2 DPs if charging formed foot, charged by mounted
- 2 DPs if formed burst through or pushed back by Elephants
- 2 DPs if formed unit charged in flank/rear

Movement

March Move: Infantry up to 4, Cavalry up to 6 JTs. +1 column or unformed infantry, 6 for infantry on road.

Normal Moves: AvD + optional AvD for A Grade, D6 Others. Non- Cataphracts Cavalry + another additional optional D6. ½ JT for each number rolled. Light troops +½ for each die (optional). Artillery 1 JT no dice required.

Fast Move: Rout, Pursuit, Retire, Evade. Move unformed. Dice as above, but all optional die and additions are obligatory.

Maximum Moves: Square 3; A & B Grade in line may move 1 without dicing

Manoeuvre

Fatigue: 1 DP each 5 thrown in line and cuneus. Also on a 6 if in line. Maximum 3 DPs

Difficult terrain: 1 DP for formed units

Light cover: 1 DP for formed mounted

Wheel: 1 DP for formed in bow range

Change Unit Formation: ½ move. 1 DP if in bow range

Change Command Formation. 1 DP if in bow range

Form-up unformed troops: ½ move.

Cross Minor Obstacle: 1 DP for formed units

Cross Major Obstacle: ½ move 1 DP, 2DPs on fast move

Cavalry Crossing Casualty Inflicting Obstacle: 1 DP each 4 thrown

About Face: 1 DP if mounted or C Grade

Mount/Dismount: ½ move for all units + 1 DP

Interpenetration: 1 DP unless one unit is stationary and one is unformed, not routing, one stand deep.

Double/ ½ Ranks: ½ move. 1 DP for C Grade

Pass a Gap: 1 DP for formed units + ½ move for infantry

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Rampaging Elephants

1 D6 for each DP from missile fire or combat:

1 = Rampage
2 = Killed

- Full fast move in random direction in every movement phase, until it passes a control test.
- Before each rampage move, D6 result 4-6= Elephant killed.

Shooting

1 D6 per stand: ½ number of dice for UnS stands; ½ number of dice if target is unformed LI or in cover; -1 die per DP on shooter. 6 or more = **'Hit'**

- +2 Artillery shooting at formed or elephant
- +1 for other at short range, except non-crossbows against armoured targets
- ½ number shooting if low on ammunition

Hit = DP, no casualties on shaken units. Max 3 DPs for non-armoured cavalry, 2 DPs for other in any one shooting phase.

Restrictions on Charging:

- Shaken and Column may not charge unless in spontaneous advance.
- Unless in pursuit or spontaneous advance, C Grade troops may only charge enemy facing in good order if leader inspiring.
- Artillery, foot archers and crossbowmen may not charge.
- Unless in pursuit; skirmishers and light cavalry may only initiate a charge against shaken or unformed enemy or an exposed flank or rear.
- Heavy horse archers and lance & bow cavalry who shot at short range from a front rank may not initiate a charge.

Charge Responses

Shaken light or poor morale break. Others respond as per unit type

LI (not armed rabble) may counter-charge or stand if:
- Formed in Line
- In difficult terrain or behind obstacle;
- charged by mounted or light
Otherwise LI must evade.

Armed Rabble D6: 5-6 = counter-charge, otherwise stand.

LC may counter-charge cavalry or light, otherwise must evade.

HC may counter-charge or stand. Heavy Horse Archers and Heavy Javelin may also evade.

Others must stand.

Combat Resolution

A roll 1 AvD, others D6

+	Combat Factor
+/-	Morale Value
+1	Advantage of Ground
+1	Defending fortification
+1	Deeper formation
+1	Pursuing or following-up
+1	Mounted in mêlée with foot
+1	Armoured or partially armoured in mêlée
+2	Cavalry charge unformed foot
+CPs	Leader inspiring a charge; +1 if a leader in combat in other circumstances
-1	Spearmen and Spear & Bow infantry in mêlée, who have previously fallen-back
-1	Each DP (max -4) or Casualty*
-5	Shaken*
-2	In column or Unformed unless LI vs El or Cataphracts*
-1	Outnumbered
-2	Outnumbered at least 2:1
-3	Outnumbered 4:1+

*Apply in charge combats only, not in mêlée.

Combat Results

5+ Victory. (0 DPs, 1 DP Cav who do not pursue). Any A Grade, and B Grade that did not charge or c-charge, may *halt*. Otherwise must *pursue*.

+2/4 Success. (1 DP each except HI in line)
- Infantry who faced a mounted charge must *halt*.
- Cavalry who charged good order infantry frontally must *retire*.
- A Grade infantry may *halt*, *follow-up*, or *pursue*.
- Others must *follow-up* or *pursue* except A or B Grade who did not charge or opposed by only lights may *halt*.

+1/-1 Inconclusive. (1 DP each)
- HI *halt* or *fall-back*; LI *halt*, *fall back* or *retire*.
- Cavalry who charged good order infantry frontally or fought in mêlée must *retire*. Elephants *halt* or *follow-up*; Other cavalry may *halt*, *follow-up* or *retire*;

-2/-4 Set-Back. Break if shaken otherwise 2 DPs
- Elephants, and HI who were charged by cavalry only, must *halt*.
- Unformed troops *retire*; Others must *fall-back*.

-5/-6 Defeat. Break if unformed or Elephants. Others become shaken and *retire*.

-7 or less Rout. Take 1 casualty and *break*.