

Ben-Hur WAR GALLEY Scenario

By Mike Lemick

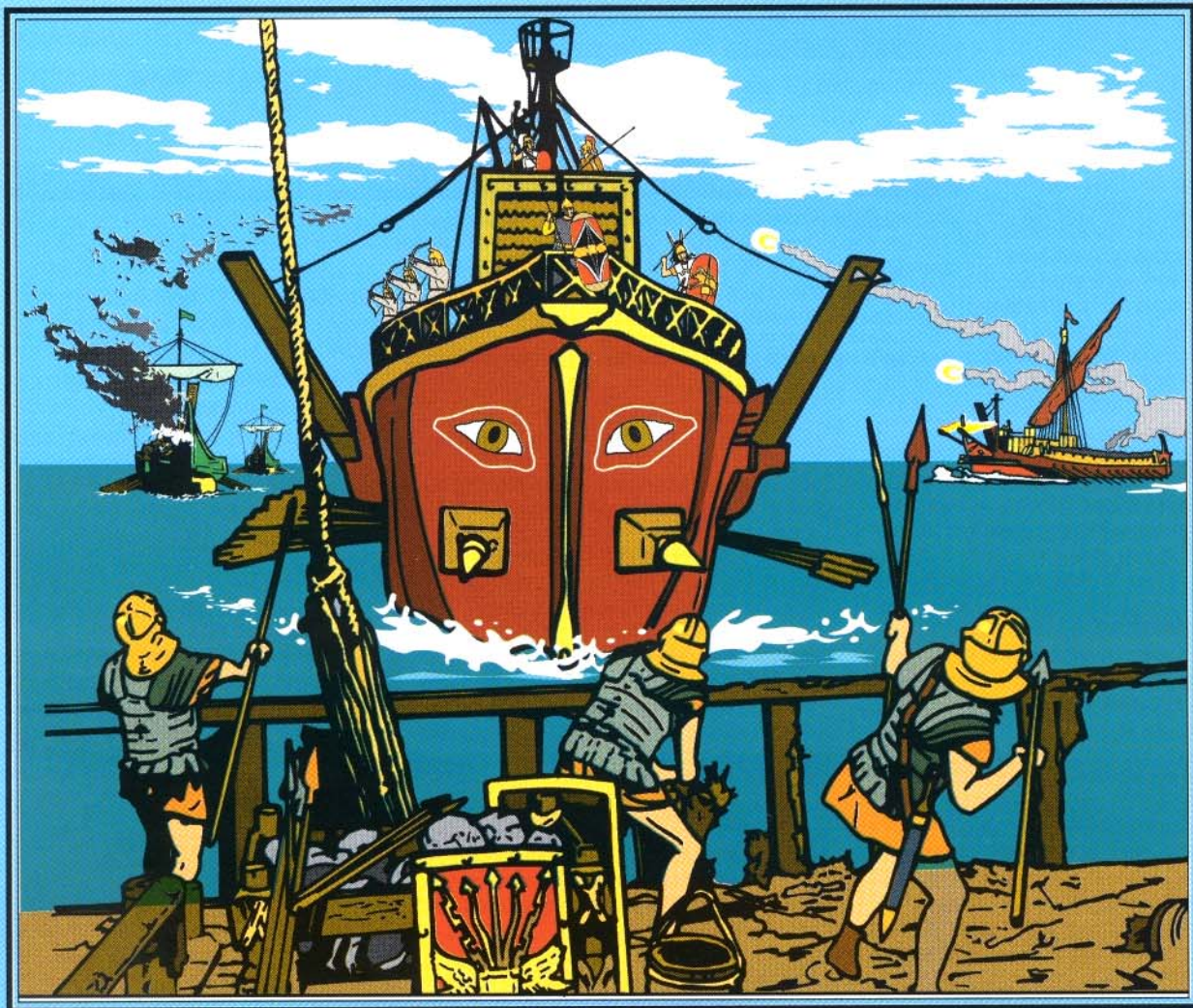
During the reign of the Emperor Tiberius, Macedonian pirates became a menace to Roman shipping in the Adriatic. The Emperor dispatched a fleet under Consul Quintus Arrius to deal

with them. Despite being heavily outnumbered, the fleet won a great victory, marred only by the loss of the consul's flagship and (or so it was thought) the consul himself. On the day after the battle, however, a Roman warship on patrol chanced upon a bit of floating wreckage. On it were Arrius and one of the galley slaves from the flagship. It transpired that the slave had saved the consul's life twice, once when he fell overboard during the fighting and again when he tried to commit suicide over what he thought was a battle lost. In gratitude, Arrius not only freed the slave but took him to Rome, presented him to the Emperor, and made him his adopted son.

As you've probably guessed by now, this is not an historical scenario. Rather, it's a recreation of the naval battle from the movie

"Ben-Hur." The scenario had an unusual genesis. Late in the development of *WAR GALLEY* it became necessary for cost effectiveness to add an additional 52 large ship counters to the print run of the game. In order to do so, GMT needed another scenario. I suggested a Ben-Hur scenario to Designer Richard Berg, but he preferred to include an historical battle in *War Galley* instead. Rodger MacGowan and I liked the Ben-Hur idea so much, though, that we decided to include the leader counters for it in *WAR GALLEY* itself, while worked up the scenario for C3i. To play this scenario use Liburnians 1-5 and the leaders from the *WAR GALLEY* counter mix; the rest of the ships are included on this issue's counter insert.

Lights, camera, action . .



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Map

The game uses the "sea" map. The xxOO hexrow is North.

Balance

The pirates have better crews, the wind at their backs, and a 3-2 advantage in numbers. The Romans have superior ramming and boarding capabilities, better leadership, and the "Hand of God". It all adds up to a scenario that, in playtesting, was fairly well balanced.

Playing Time and Difficulty

The battle should take 3-4 hours to play to a conclusion. The Difficulty Rating is 2.5, with much of that coming from the pirate player having to learn how best to use the special abilities of the Tremiolae.

Ship Scale

1 counter = 2 galleys

Initial Deployment: Pirates

The Pirate Player receives the following *Green ships*: 27 Tremiola (ID 4-30)

The Pirate Player receives the following **Squadron Commanders**: Golthar (Admiral [a]), Crixites, Drabo.

a = the name of the pirate admiral is never mentioned in the 1959 Charlton Heston movie. It is, however, in the 1926 silent film (and thanks go to Rodger MacGowan for coming up with that fact).

The Pirate Fleet deploys in a triple line astern, as follows. All ships face southeast.

Right Wing: 3115-1407. Place Crixites in 2914-2814.

Center: 3313-1605. Place Golthar in 3313-3213.

Left Wing: 3511-1803. Place Drabo in 3310-3210.

Initial Deployment: Romans

The Roman Player receives the following *Red ships*: 18 Liburnians (ID 1-18) [a]

The Roman Player receives the following **Squadron Commanders**: Q. Arrius,

*Drusus, *Agricola.

a = the Roman ships in the movie appear to be Cataphracted Triremes. I chose to use Liburnians instead for two reasons. First, the Liburnian was far and away the most common Roman war galley of the first century AD, especially for anti-pirate work. Secondly, the Cat's higher ram attack and defense ratings gave the Roman player too big an advantage in that aspect of the game. In any case, the movie can't be taken entirely at face value. If you look closely, you'll notice that all of the pirate galleys are equipped with the *corvus*!

The Roman Fleet deploys in a double line abreast, as follows. All ships face northwest. Place the bow of the ships in the indicated hexes.

First Line: 4524-5312, in alternate hexes.

Second Line: 4725-5513, in alternate hexes.

Place Drusus in 4623-4723, Agricola in 5314-5214, and Q. Arrius in 4918-5019.

Special Rules

Initiative

By die roll.

Fire

All ships on both sides have flame capability.

Wind

Place the wind marker in hex 1000 facing towards hex 1100. Do not roll for wind change on the first turn. After that, roll normally.

The "Hand of God"

It seems that in his eagerness to save you, your God has also saved the Roman fleet. -Quintus Arrius

At the beginning of the game the Roman Player receives the Ben Hur XLI counter. The Roman player may expend the counter at any point in the game immediately after either player

makes a die roll. Expending the counter allows the Roman player to change that roll to any other legal value he wishes.

Example: During the Initiative Phase the Roman player rolls a 2 and the Pirate player rolls a 5. The Roman would REALLY like to go first that turn, so he expends the Ben Hur counter and changes the Pirate's roll to a 1. (Note that, since in the Initiative Phase both players roll simultaneously, in this case the Roman could have changed either die roll.)

Victory

Either Player wins when he has at least 35 VP, and that number is at least twice that of the opposition. If neither of the above happens, and/or the players halt play by mutual agreement, a minor, indecisive victory goes to the player with the most VP.

Variants

The following variations can be used with this scenario. The first two favor the pirates, the latter two, the Romans.

1. Leave the wind constant throughout the scenario, i.e., do not roll for wind change at all.
2. Change the Roman VP number to 40.
3. Replace Quintus Arrius' flagship with Red Cataphracted Trireme 31 (this will bring the game more in line with the movie). Or, if you have the new *Salamis* module for *WAR GALLEY* and want to help the Romans even more replace it with one of the Imperial Triremes from that game.
4. Same as above, but replace all of the Roman flagships. Note that giving the Roman player all three imperial triremes will seriously tilt the balance of the scenario in their favor.

