



Legio VI Julia Augusta

Battles of the Late Roman Republic
and Early Empire for 6 mm figures

Pharsalus

48 BC

Background

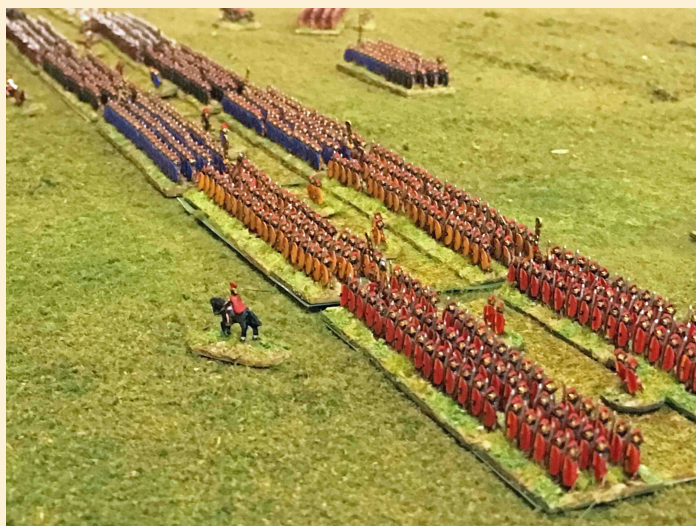
The showdown between Caesar and Pompey for mastery of the Roman world was fought at Pharsalus in Greece. Pompey vastly outnumbered Caesar, especially in cavalry. He had 11 full strength Legions and 6700 cavalry whereas Caesar had 9 Legions and only 1000 cavalry. Many of Caesar's Legions were woefully understrength, especially the VIII and IX Legions which had suffered serious casualties earlier in the campaign.

To balance the game and make it manageable I decided to scale the Legions down to 5 on each side with Pompey's being full or over-strength and Caesar's being under-strength. Caesar had thinned his Legions out in order to keep the same frontage as Pompey so this seems a reasonable way of representing things. Scaling the Legions down by half still gives the visual impact of a lot of troops but does not mean you have to paint up thousands of figures. Having scaled the legions down by half I then decided to use a scale of 1 stand representing a cohort of roughly 400 men, or 200 men in the case of understrength units. Caesar stripped out his third line to provide 6 cohorts to support his cavalry.

Caesar's legions were all hard-bitten veterans. Although Pompey had some experienced Legions, including 2000 *evocati* (re-enlisted veterans), his ranks were swelled by relatively untested non-Italian allies along with the survivors of Crassus' Syrian army.

Although Pompey was said to have 6700 cavalry only 3600 are named in the sources these are:

- 600 Gauls
- 500 Cappadocians
- 500 Thracians
- 500 Gauls and Germans from Egypt
- 800 'Shepherd Slaves'
- 300 Galatians
- 200 Syrians



Caesar's Legions in two lines.

In order to balance the game (and assuming that the victors may have exaggerated Pompey's numbers) I decided to represent only the named units using a scale of 1 stand representing 300 men. The 'Shepherd Slaves' are sometimes interpreted as Patrician cavalry, why I am not sure. Whatever they were I have interpreted them as raw troops given the overall poor performance of Pompey's cavalry.

Caesar had 1000 Gallic and German cavalry. The Germans may have had light infantry attached to them. To further bolster his cavalry, Caesar detached a number of his fittest Legionaries and re-equipped them as light infantry (*antesignani*) to work alongside the cavalry. I also chose to give Caesar a completely unattested unit of light cavalry on his left flank, simply to balance the game.

The orders of battle that follow are designed for Legio VI Julia Augusta. They can easily be adapted to other rules.

Orders of Battle *Numbers are for Legio VI bases with a single base representing a cohort.*

Pompey

Right Wing, Afranius

Pontic cavalry, 4 light cavalry, C Grade
Spanish caetrati, 4 light infantry, C Grade
Cilician Legion, 10 legionaries, B Grade
Spanish Cohorts, 8 medium infantry, B Grade
Evocati, 2 legionaries, A Grade

Centre Right, Scipio

1st Syrian Legion, 11 legionaries, C Grade
2nd Syrian Legion, 11 legionaries, C Grade

Centre Left, Ahenobarbus

1st Italian Legion, 11 legionaries, B Grade
2nd Italian Legion, 11 legionaries, B Grade

Left Wing, Labienus

Macedonians, 2 medium cavalry B Grade
Gallic Auxiliaries, 5 medium cavalry, C Grade
Shepherd Slaves, 8 medium cavalry, D Grade
Syrians, 4 light cavalry, D Grade
Thracians, 5 medium cavalry, C Grade
Galatians, 9 medium cavalry, B Grade
Cappadocians, 5 medium cavalry, C Grade
Skirmishers, 4 light infantry, D Grade
Cretans, 4 light infantry, C Grade.

Caesar

Right Wing, Sulla

Antesignani, 4 light infantry, A Grade
Gallic cavalry, 4 medium cavalry B Grade
German cavalry, 4 medium cavalry, B Grade
Veteran cavalry, 2 medium cavalry A Grade
Greek javelinmen, 3 light infantry, C Grade
Greek Archers, 2 light infantry, C Grade
Reserve Cohorts, 3 legionaries, A Grade

Centre, Calvinus

X Legion 8 legionaries, A Grade
XI & XII Legion, each 8 legionaries, B Grade
Reserve Line, 3 legionaries, A Grade.

Left Wing, Mark Anthony

IX Legion (2 lines), 8 legionaries*, A Grade
VIII Legion (2 Lines) 8 legionaries*, A Grade
Reserve Line, 2 legionaries*, A Grade
Aetolian cavalry, 3 light cavalry, C Grade
Balearic Slingers, 4 light infantry, C Grade

* *these legionary bases should count as understrength.*



Deployment

The armies deploy 24" apart on a plain bounded by a river on Pompey's right flank and high ground on the other.

Pompey's forces are on the left of photo, his Legions deployed in three lines. Caesar's on the right are deployed in two lines with some reserve cohorts behind.

Objectives

The objectives for both sides are simply to close with and defeat the enemy. I have played this scenario several times, including at the Society of Ancients Battle Day in 2009. Victory has been achieved by both sides on different occasions.

Caesar's Brief

“Caesar drew up his legionaries in three divisions. Over the centre he put Domitius Calvinus, while of the wings Antony had one and he himself the right, where he intended to fight with the tenth legion. But seeing that the enemy's cavalry were arraying themselves over against this point, and fearing their brilliant appearance and their numbers, he ordered six cohorts from the furthest lines to come round to him unobserved, and stationed them behind his right wing, teaching them what they were to do when the enemy's horsemen attacked. Pompey had one of his wings himself, and Domitius the left, while Scipio, Pompey's father-in-law, commanded the centre. But his horsemen all crowded to the left wing, intending to encircle Caesar's right and make a complete rout about the commander himself. For they thought that no legionary array, however deep, could resist them, but that when so many horsemen made an onset together the enemy would be utterly broken and crushed.”

So now it comes to battle. Your men are all veterans, your generals are the best Rome has produced and the auspices are favourable. Although the ranks of your legions are depleted and outnumbered almost 2:1 by Pompey's, many of his legionaries are raw recruits or raised in Asia. By deploying in 2 lines you can match his frontage and still keep a few cohorts as a reserve third line.

Your greatest problem is Pompey's overwhelming 7:1 cavalry superiority. To counter this you have selected men from the legions to fight as light infantry in support of your 1000 Gallic and German horsemen. You have also detailed 6 cohorts to hold the right flank, ready to intervene in the cavalry combat when, inevitably, Pompey's superior numbers drive back your cavalry.

Pompey's Brief

“But when both armies entered the plain of Pharsalus and encamped there, a vision befell Pompey in his sleep. He dreamed, namely, that he saw himself in his theatre applauded by the Romans... And most of all were his cavalry impatient for the battle, since they had a splendid array of shining armour, well-fed horses, and handsome persons, and were in high spirits too on account of their numbers, which were seven thousand to Caesar's one thousand. The numbers of the infantry also were unequal, since forty-five thousand were arrayed against twenty-two thousand.”



Pharsalus at the Society of Ancients Battle Day

The fate of the Republic is in your hands!

You defeated the tyrant at Dyrrhachium and each day he has deployed his forces for battle but you refused, knowing that with time he will run out of supplies and be forced to retreat. But as the defender of liberty you have to pay attention to the senators and allies who support republican virtues. They are clamouring for battle and so you have agreed to move down from your camp on the hills and meet the tyrannical Caesar on the plain below.

You have the numbers, you have a great cavalry superiority and you also have the gods of Rome on your side. They will not want to see the great republic fall into the hands of a man who would be king.

