
Chariot (SPI)

The Delta – Hyskos vs. Egyptians, 1675 BCE

from the PRESTAGS system

Replay by Michael Wintz

Historical notes ...

Weaponsandwarfare.com/2016/08/28/hyskos-in-egypt/ gives an excellent summation of how this particular scenario could play out ...

"A formation of Hyskos chariots falls upon a (Middle) Egyptian force patrolling the eastern frontier. The Egyptian army at this time was composed of infantry brigaded into units differentiated by their arms: spearmen, axemen and bowmen; there were no chariots in the army of the Middle Kingdom. Most of the infantry would be massed by unit into close order formations for battle. In the absence of rough terrain or some such to anchor their flanks, the Egyptian units are fully exposed in the open.

"The primary arm of the Hyksos army was the chariotry, comprised of 2-horse light chariots, bearing a driver and an archer, either or both of whom may be armored; for simplicity's sake, throughout the following text the chariot archer bears the designation, *maryannu*, which term is less generic than this use would imply.

"The Hyksos would be expected to maneuver around the Egyptian battleline, focusing their attention on the flanks. One would observe squadrons of chariots setting up mere yards from the Egyptians, and methodically pumping aimed shots with their very powerful composite bows, at near point-blank range, into targets of choice — file leaders, standard bearers and rank closers. The best Egyptian countertactics would be twofold: counterfire by massed bowmen, and ad hoc counterattacks (rushes) by groups of (elite) warriors. In the first case, success would be fleeting at best, primarily because (i) it is assumed the Egyptian bowmen were not trained to shoot as individual marksmen, and (ii) the Egyptian bowmen would be unable to bring volleys to bear upon their tormentors, who would be expected to utilize their mobility to maneuver out of, or better yet, under the firing arcs."

Player notes ...

Ever since I bought the PRESTAGS game when it first came out, there has always been a discussion between gamers who have played **Armageddon** (S&T 34) and **Chariot (PRESTAGS)** about chariot units, their abilities, and how SPI rushed the production of **PRESTAGS**, transposing the "Armageddon" scenarios over to the **PRESTAGS** rules, creating situations, such as in this scenario, where there are more chariots than units available to transport them.

In the **Armageddon** rules, chariots are quite the formidable units, able to carry Militia Spearmen and Axmen, who can mount and dismount (think mounted infantry), and whose combat can be increased two columns when charging the enemy. Personally, I felt that this rule would better fit with the later battles of Assyria and Babylon, but not with the earlier Egyptian and Hittite battles (lighter 2-man chariots).

In the **Chariot PRESTAGS** game, chariots may only carry fire units – no infantry allowed. "Chariots have no direct effect upon combat; they are modes of transportation for BW, IB, SK and Leader units." Chariots are not combat units, but are used more as mobile skirmishers – fitting for the early ancient battles, but a bit too weak for the later battles.

House rule ...

Again, as I mentioned above, this is one of those scenarios where the Hyskos player is given 10 chariots and only 2 BW units that can be transported – according to the “Chariot” rules, then, these 8 extra chariots are of no use (no combat value or able to transport infantry).

Now, since the Hyskos were the first to introduce the Egyptians to the use of chariots, for this scenario the Hyskos ought to be given some sort of combat advantage, but not to the extent of using the “Armageddon” rules. I will reduce the Hyskos chariot units allotted in the original scenario from 10 to 6, but increase the Hyskos army with 4 improved bowmen (IB) – so there will be 6 chariot (CH) units, carrying 4 IB and 2 BW.

Scenario introduction ...

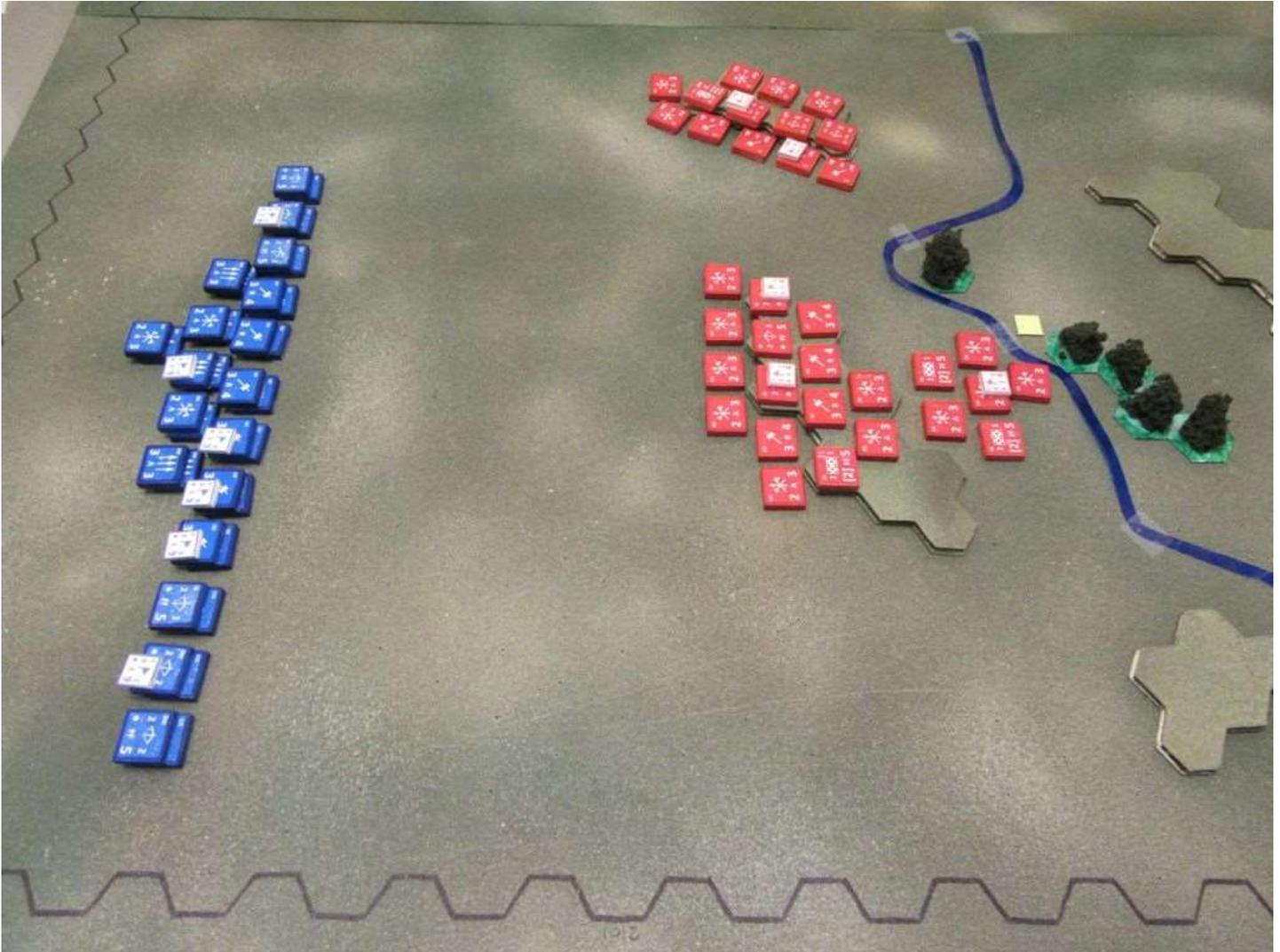
“The Hyskos domination of Egypt began during the 17th century BCE. Bringing horses and chariots with them, the Hyskos managed to overwhelm less mobile Egyptian forces time after time. This scenario illustrates a hypothetical battle fought between the Hyskos and rebellious Egyptians somewhere in the Delta region on the edge of the desert. The Hyskos army is attempting to capture the oasis before nightfall, after a long desert march.” – *Note from the **Chariot** game*

This was always one of my favorites of the **Chariot** scenario in that there are terrain features (hills, woods, stream) that will come to play in battlefield tactics, while many other battles are fought on clear terrain. It is also a quick play in that both armies can quickly reach the panic level once the battle is ensued. And while being able to make use of the terrain features, the Egyptian player is at a great disadvantage in that he/she has a stacking limit of 1, while the Hyskos player may stack 2 units.

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Game play ...

The Egyptians are deployed in the hills, with the bowmen (IB) on the hilltops (extending their range) and the Militia Infantry (MI) and Axmen (AX) before them. The Hyskos front line consists of AX, backed by a second line of MI and Militia Spearmen (MS), with the fire units (IB and BW) riding the chariots on the flanks.

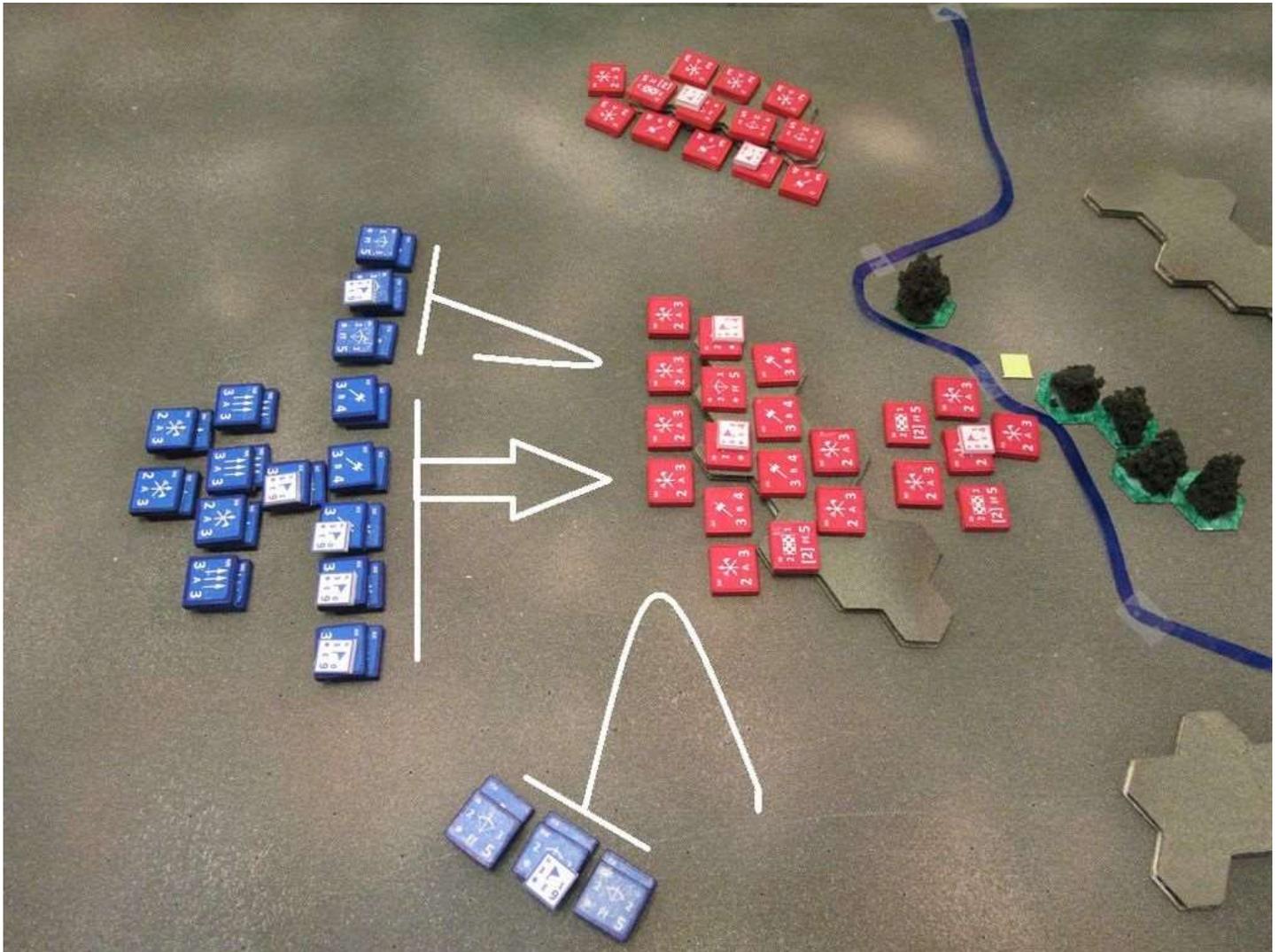


(initial setup)

(Hyskos must control hex denoted by yellow marker near the woods by turn 10)

Turn 1: Hyskos (blue), then Egyptians (red) ...

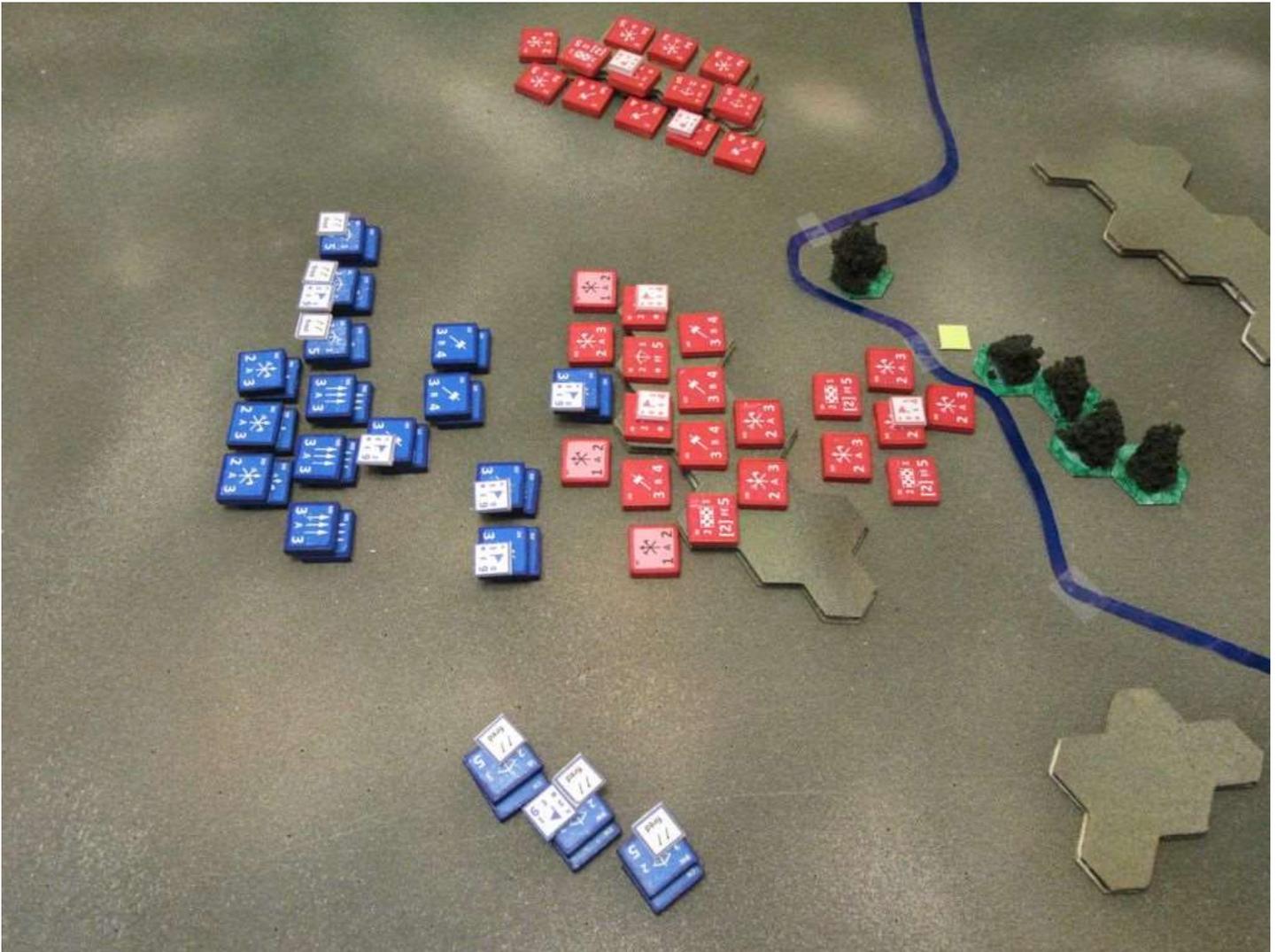
As the Hyskos chariots swing out on the wings, ready to rush in, fire and then rush back out, softening the defenses, the infantry advances, ready to charge the enemy positions. The Egyptians nervously await the Hyskos assault, hoping the terrain will give them an even chance in preventing the Hyskos capture of the oasis.



(end of turn 1)

Turn 2: Hyskos (blue) ...

The chariots sweep in and fire [2 red MI are disrupted] and then back off, making room for the Hyskos AX to close in [1 red MI is disrupted, 1 red MI is eliminated].



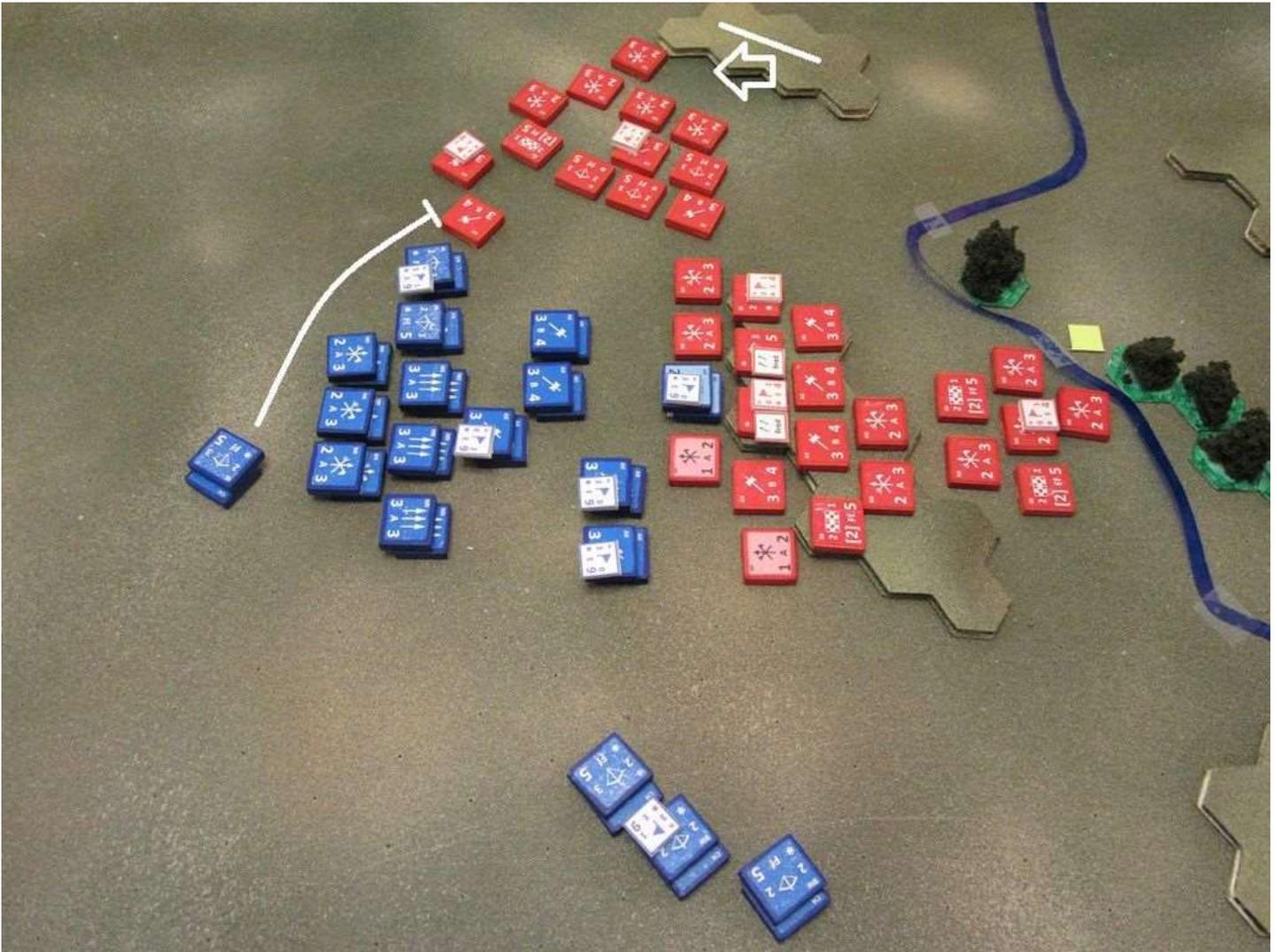
(turn 2: Hyskos-blue)

Panic levels: Hyskos (blue) – 0/20; Egyptians (red) – 1/15.

Victory Points: Hyskos – 64; Egyptians – 56.

Turn 2: Egyptians (red) ...

The Egyptian commander decides to be bold. The Hyskos attack appears to be focusing its main force on the center hill, so as his archers pin down the forward AX to his front [2 blue AX are disordered; 1 red disordered MI rallied], the commander sends word to his lieutenant on the other hill to abandon his position there and attack! Scattering the Hyskos chariots on the far enemy left (retreat before melee), though outmanned, this Egyptian maneuver may distract enough of the Hyskos army for the Egyptian commander to hold on to the possession of the oasis.



(turn 2: Egyptians-red)

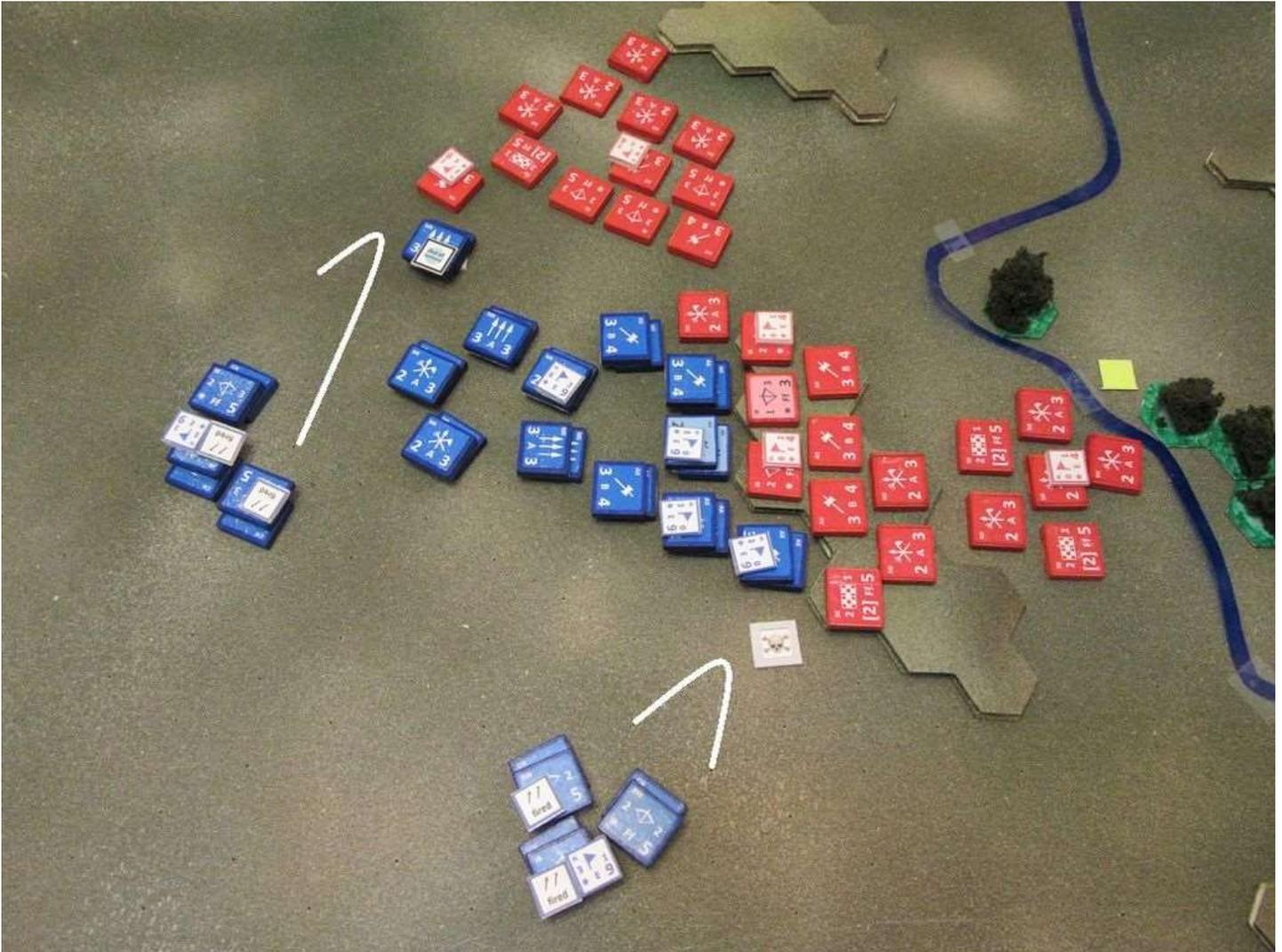
Panic levels: Hyskos (blue) – 0/20; Egyptians (red) – 1/15.

Victory Points: Hyskos – 64; Egyptians – 56.

Turn 3: Hyskos (blue) ...

Again, the Hyskos chariots dart in, fire and then back away for the infantry to advance - on the far left [1 red AX is disordered] and on the far right [1 red disordered MI is eliminated].

As his spearmen move up to deal with the new threat on his left [1 red disordered AX is eliminated], the Hyskos commander now brings his axemen forward, pushing away any resistance as they begin to reach a foothold on the enemy-occupied slopes [1 red disordered MI, 1 red MI and 1 red AX are eliminated].



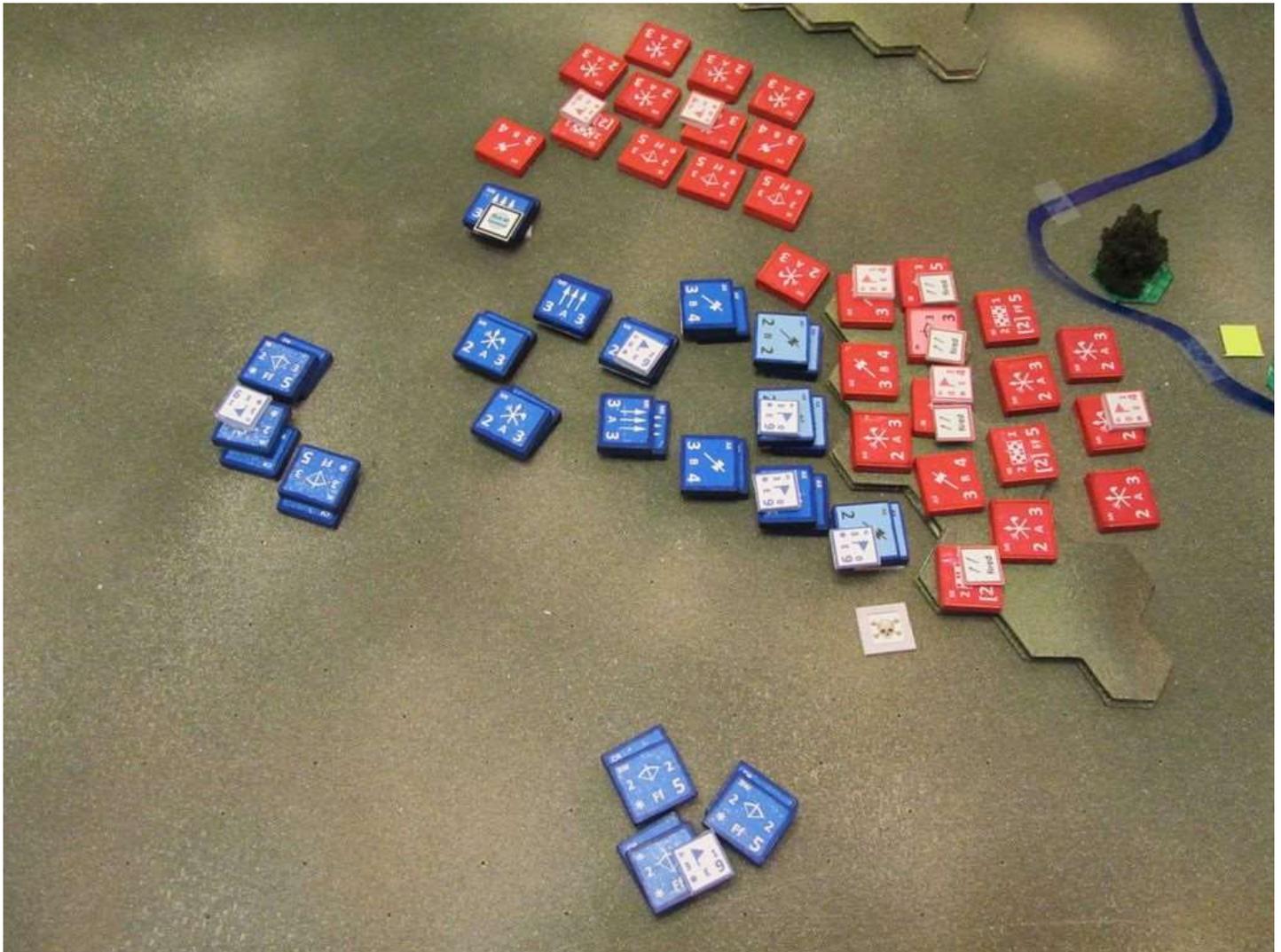
(turn 3: Hyskos-blue)

Panic levels: Hyskos (blue) – 0/20; Egyptians (red) – 8/15.

Victory Points: Hyskos – 64; Egyptians – 44.

Turn 3: Egyptians (red) ...

Faced now with the might of the Hyskos infantry, the Egyptian commander struggles to maintain control of the central hill. His archers fire point-blank at the enemy axemen [2 blue AX are *disordered*] and then move back, making room for the Egyptian infantry to replace their position on the slopes, able to stall the enemy's momentum [2 blue AX are *disordered* – *extremely lucky die roll!*]. In the rear, the reserves begin to move forward, ready to fill any holes in the Egyptian front. And on the right, the Egyptian lieutenant sets up his skirmisher line, ready to let loose their arrows at the approaching Hyskos spears.



*(turn 3: Egyptians-red)

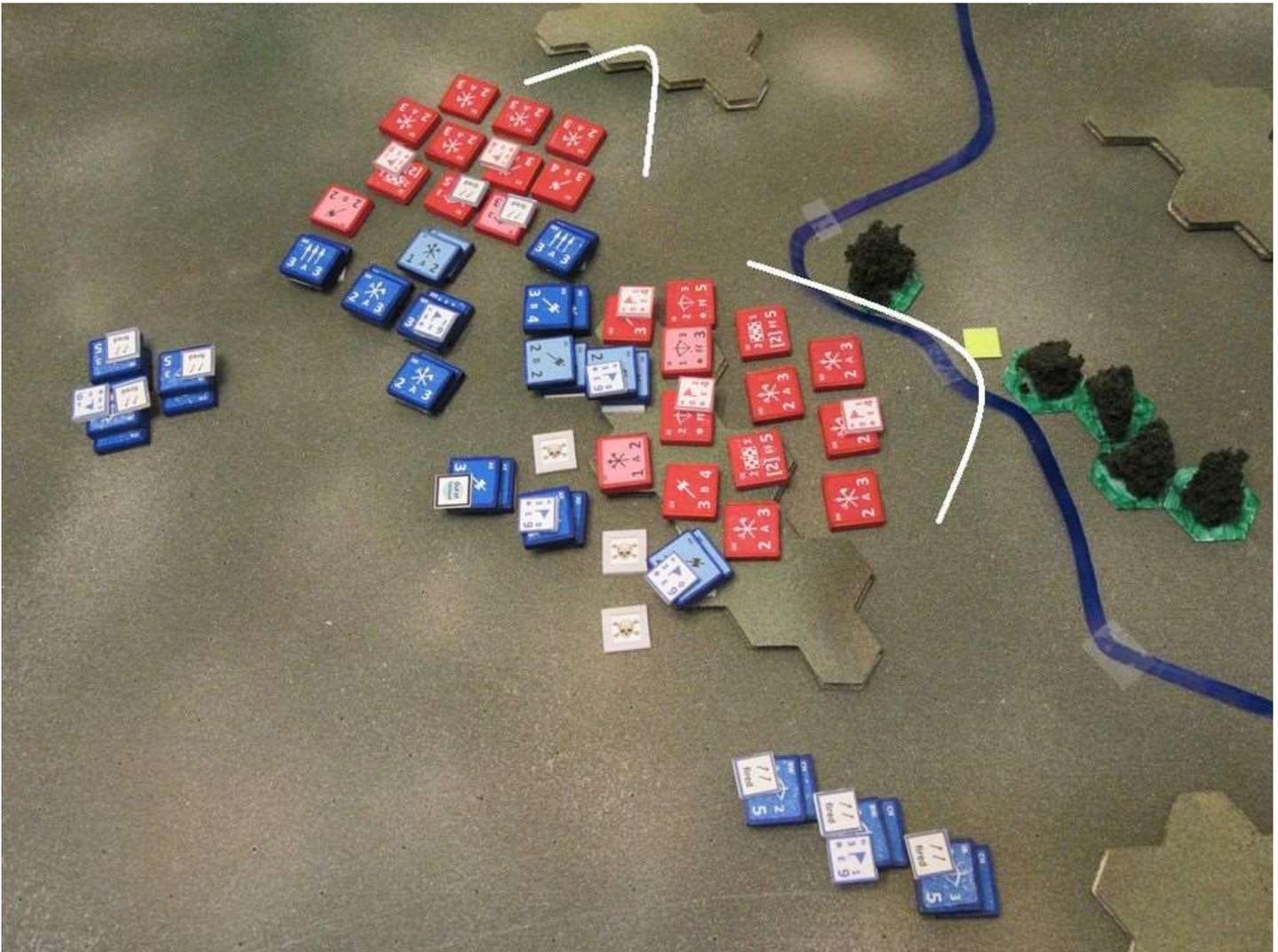
Panic levels: Hyskos (blue) – 0/20; Egyptians (red) – 8/15.

Victory Points: Hyskos – 64; Egyptians – 44.

Turn 4: Hyskos (blue) ...

Confidence has now turned to concern as the Hyskos leader sees half of his front-line axemen at half strength, engaged with the enemy and unable to rally. He sends several of his staff to communicate with his chariot commanders, encouraging the chariots on his left to continue to harass the enemy in the valley *[no effect]*, but giving new orders to the chariots on his right. They are to continue their harassment on the enemy *[1 red SK-skirmisher is disordered]*, but instead of retreating back, are to continue to ride around the hill and cause a bit of havoc in the enemy rear.

Although diminished, the Hyskos axemen continue to assault the Egyptian position and gain a foothold on the hilltop *[1 red MI is disordered, 1 red disordered SK is eliminated, 1 red MI and 1 AX is eliminated]*. The infantry on the left wing is now able to join in battle, and though suffering some casualties from enemy fire *[2 blue MI are disordered]*, begin to take the Egyptians there to task *[1 red IB and 1 AX are disordered, 1 red IB is eliminated]*.



*(turn 4: Hyskos-blue – before Egyptian Panic)

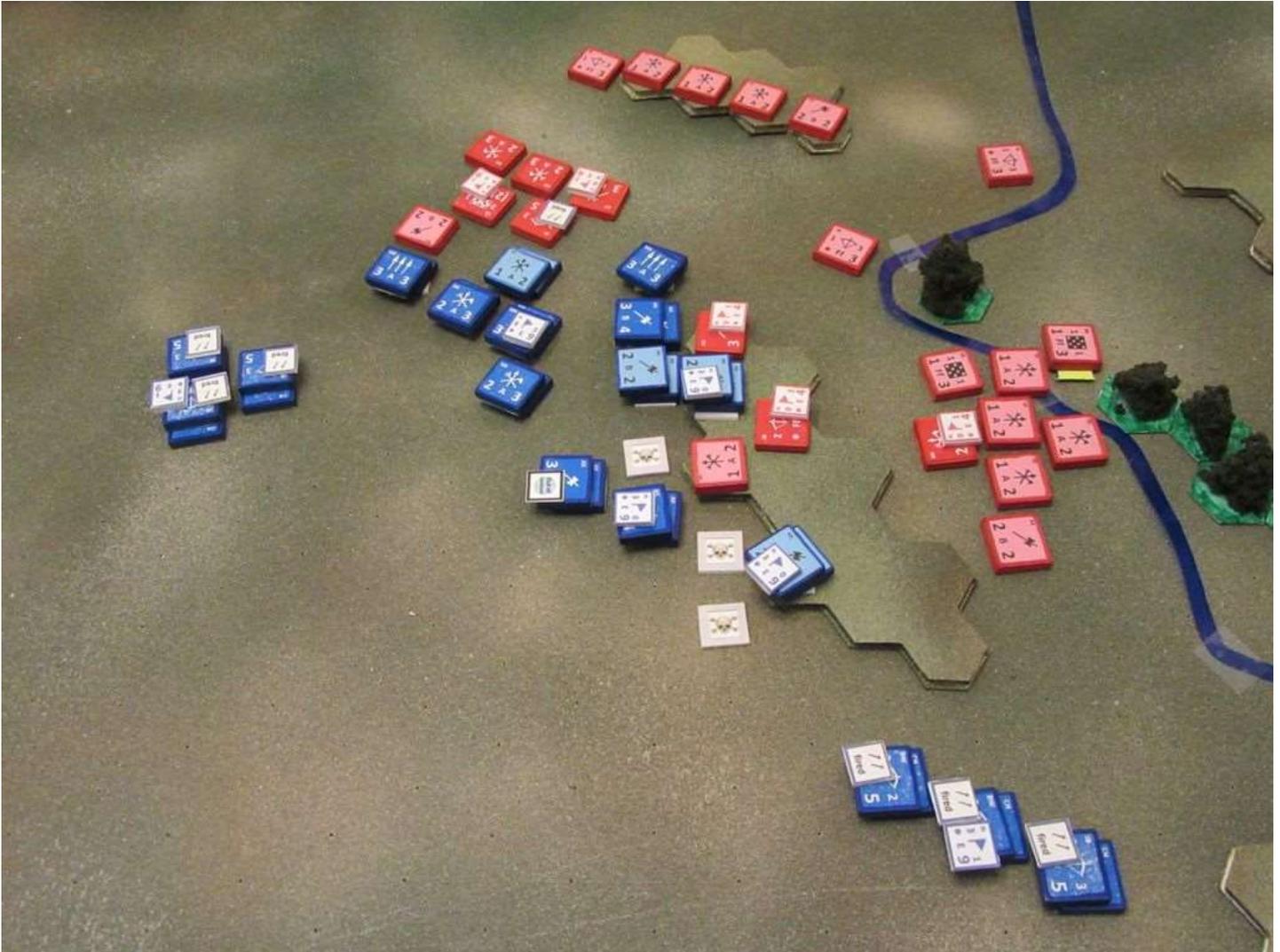
Panic levels: Hyskos (blue) – 0/20; **Egyptians (red) – 16/15.**

Victory Points: Hyskos – 64; Egyptians – 36.

And now panic breaks out through the Egyptian ranks. Seeing the many losses at the front, first couples, then dozens, then hundreds of the second-line troops begin to flee the field. Outnumbered

and lightly-armed, the Egyptians were no match to stop the power and the mobility of the Hyskos army.

Though there would remain sporadic fighting, those Egyptians left on the field would soon extricate themselves, retreating back into the wilderness. Later that night, encamped in the oasis, the Hyskos commander and his staff gathered around the campfire, aglow in their victory, telling their stories.



(turn 4: after the Egyptian Panic)

Player notes ...

Like I mentioned before, this was always one of my favorite scenarios in the **Chariot** game. The Egyptians really don't have much of a chance against the more powerful and organized Hyskos ... but there is that advantage of the terrain and how to best make use of it. Does one remain in the hills and try to exact as many enemy casualties possible before falling into panic (which one will)? Does one retreat back over the stream and woods, making use of the defensive advantages there, knowing that once the Hyskos cross the stream, the game is REALLY lost?

End notes from Weaponsandwarfare.com/2016/08/28/hyskos-in-egypt/ follows:

“Once they had passed under the firing arc of the foot bows, the Hyksos could quickly and ruthlessly outshoot the exposed front rankers still able to return fire and intrepid enough to do so. On a technical note, the phrase passing under the firing arc refers to the chariot warriors moving through the zone of optimal effectiveness of the foot bow’s indirect, plunging fire and into the direct fire zone immediately in front of the foot; this direct fire zone is deep enough to give the chariots the 15+ yards they need to maneuver. Most of the foot bows in a massed formation cannot fire directly at a target, rather they arch their shots over the heads of the comrades in the front rank(s); it is exceedingly difficult for a back-ranker to place a shot on a target 15 yards away via indirection. Wargamers have gotten used to the idea that bow fire is more effective at shorter range than long, but as noted wargamer and songmaster George Gershwin pointed out long ago, “it ain’t necessarily so”; for the direct fire of the heavily armored Hyksos maryannu, peppering the unarmored Egyptian foot bow at short range, it is; for the ineffective mixture of scattered direct and indirect volley fire returned by the latter, it ain’t.

“There is a remote possibility that the Egyptian foot bows could stand up to the maryannu, despite mounting casualties, and eventually bring their greater number of bows to bear, but the bet here is the Egyptian morale breaks as soon as the Hyksos move in for the kill.

“As for rushing the chariots, one would expect no more than an occasional (isolated) success, provided the Hyksos were careful about rotating their squadrons and resting their horses; besides, mounting casualties to Egyptian officers would soon make any organized action unlikely. It may be safely argued that the Egyptian infantry, cowering behind their shields (those who had them), unable to bear so much pressure, would soon skedaddle.”