
Drive on Washington

by SPI Games

Replay by Keith Meadows

Drive on Washington – July 9, 1864

(Background comments provided by Russ Gifford)

This is the second volume of the Great Battles of the American Civil War series, which is far different than any of the other games in the system. It covers the late war Confederate push to take Washington.

The action is small for this system. In this collision near Monocacy Junction the Confederate forces are really a depleted Corps. The three CSA Divisions have Brigades with barely half to a quarter of the men they would have had a year or two before. Most of the Brigades are a scant 800 men on average. They are hardened troops but their leadership has been riddled with injuries and deaths. Their Divisions are limited in their willingness to display initiative. But to reach Washington, Early needs to cross the Monocacy River. They have to capture a bridge, and time is not on their side.

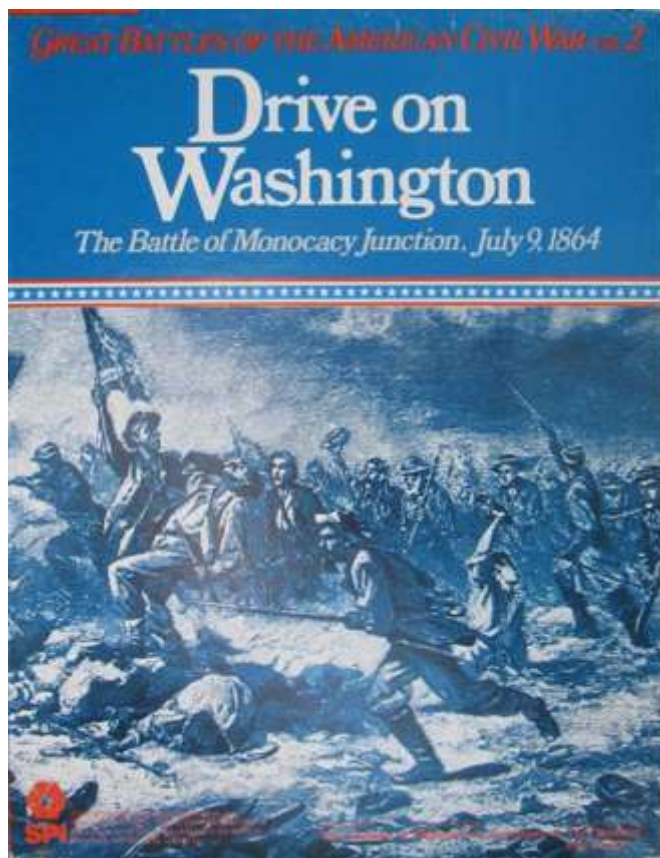
But the ticking clock works against the Union as well -- they have no time to gather more troops as Early's forces are upon them. They have too few commands to cover too many crossings, and thus must operate as a handful of independent brigades under Lew Wallace. Will it be enough? It has to be if Washington, D.C. is to stand.

The key factor is the Wooden Bridge at the left-center of the map. Wallace has to position most of his troops there. Another bridge to the far right is also under threat, and Crum's Ford in between, but few Union troops are available for that. So the difficulty for the Union is how to cover everything. It is a balancing act.

There is an additional threat, though. The locals have told the rebels there is a ford where they can cross WITHOUT a bridge! Except – the rebels don't know WHERE, exactly. Neither do the Union troops. It will be a surprise for everyone.

A portion of each turn is checking if a perceived ford is actually real. This adds a time pressure to the Union, as well, since finding a ford could allow the Confederates to flank the well defended Wooden Bridge positions, and cause the rout of the Union defenders. This would almost certainly allow the rebels to fall upon the Union capitol with no warning!

Below is a look at the focus of the battle, without the troops, so you can see what the situation is – and where the battle gets its name. –



North ->



To the center, and the right, (North) there is a known ford, (Crum's) and a stone bridge on the Baltimore Pike. Rode's Division will be at these quickly, but not as quickly as Ramseur can hit the center. Those northern bridges are also further from the real objective – Washington – so the Union can only hope to delay the enemy with their ad hoc forces.



Below: The Setup.

Picture 1: The South end of the map. (The Union Left.) Wallace (blue) has his troops in the center, arrayed around the most important target – the Wooden bridge, which serves the Washington Pike – and the Railroad bridge of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad. The turnpike would offer the Rebels their fastest route into the city, so this must be defended. As the map above shows there are entrenchments dug on the Union side, and hills on the Union side also

offer great locations for cannon and defenders. Too bad the Union does not have much in the way of artillery! Now on to the game, thanks to **Keith Meadows**, who provides the pictures and play by play comments!



Below: Turn 3 Action, Union Right Rodes and his troops arrive! Target: The Stone Bridge, only lightly defended!



Turn? On the Union Left the CSA under McCausland has found the ford and is across! So Truex leads the Union troops to confront them while McClennan takes over the trench line.



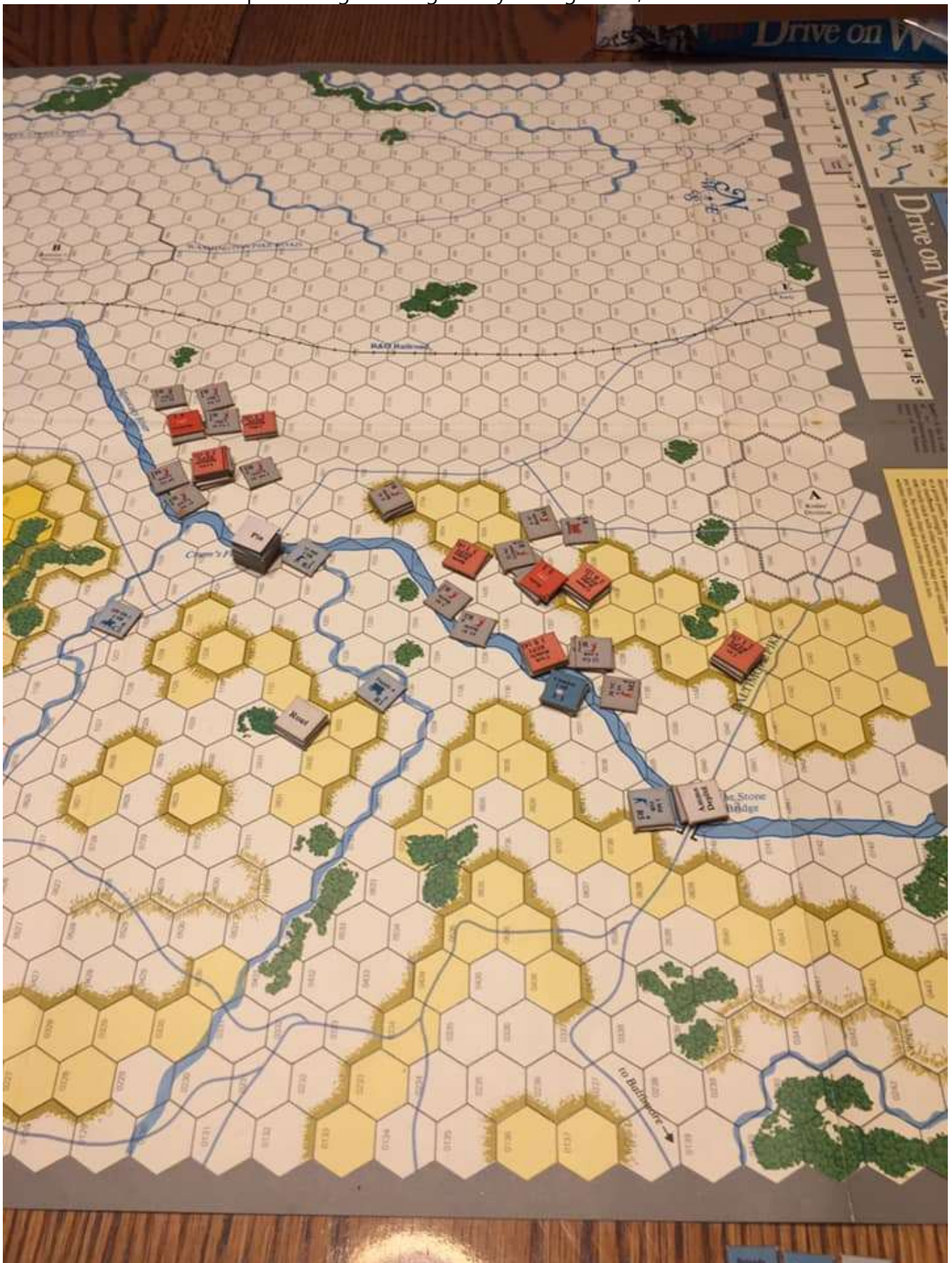
Turn?: The First Separate Brigade takes a pounding from Rodes and Ramseur.



Below – Turn 6: Ricketts redeploys Truex into the wheat field to face Gordon and the Confederate cavalry.



Turn 6: The Union's 1st Separate Brigade hangs on by its fingernails,



Turn 7: Wallace goes to aid the 1st Sep, and parts of Rodes and Ramseur pressure Crum's Ford. (posted Aug 14 / 5:35 PM)



Truex bloodies the CSA cavalry.



Turn? Gordon prepares to cross the first stone fence in the face of Truex.
Early keeps one of Ramseur's brigades to threaten the Railroad Bridge.



The Union 1st Maryland gets routed away from the Stone Bridge, opening the floodgates for Rodes. Ramseur pressures Crum's Ford. Wallace is thinking some chariots might come in handy, about now.



The 1st Separate Battalion struggles to regroup as the rebels surge across the stone bridge and bring pressure to bear against the artillery at Crum's Ford. Wallace is on hand, and the cavalry and Clenden form up on him atop the hill.



Neutral Comments: Note there are a LOT of CSA regiments from two or three brigades coming down on the lone Union regiment and the unsung replacement Brigade leader holding the Ford!

But not many men are left in all those regiments. It does not look like combined this CSA Division has the real strength of one normal brigade left under Ramseur!

Still, it looks like enough to take the ford! (It will be interesting to see how this plays out!)

Truex holds firm on the fence line for the Union facing Gordon's division.
Meanwhile, McClennen's brigade moves to support at the second fence line.



Next turn – back to the North / Center.

Rodes advances across the Baltimore Turnpike bridge, as Wallace recoils.

Ramseur moves south with his depleted force, threatening to swamp the Railroad bridge. Why? The 11th Maryland has rallied, and moved to the aid of Tyler's replacement. Crum's Ford holds!



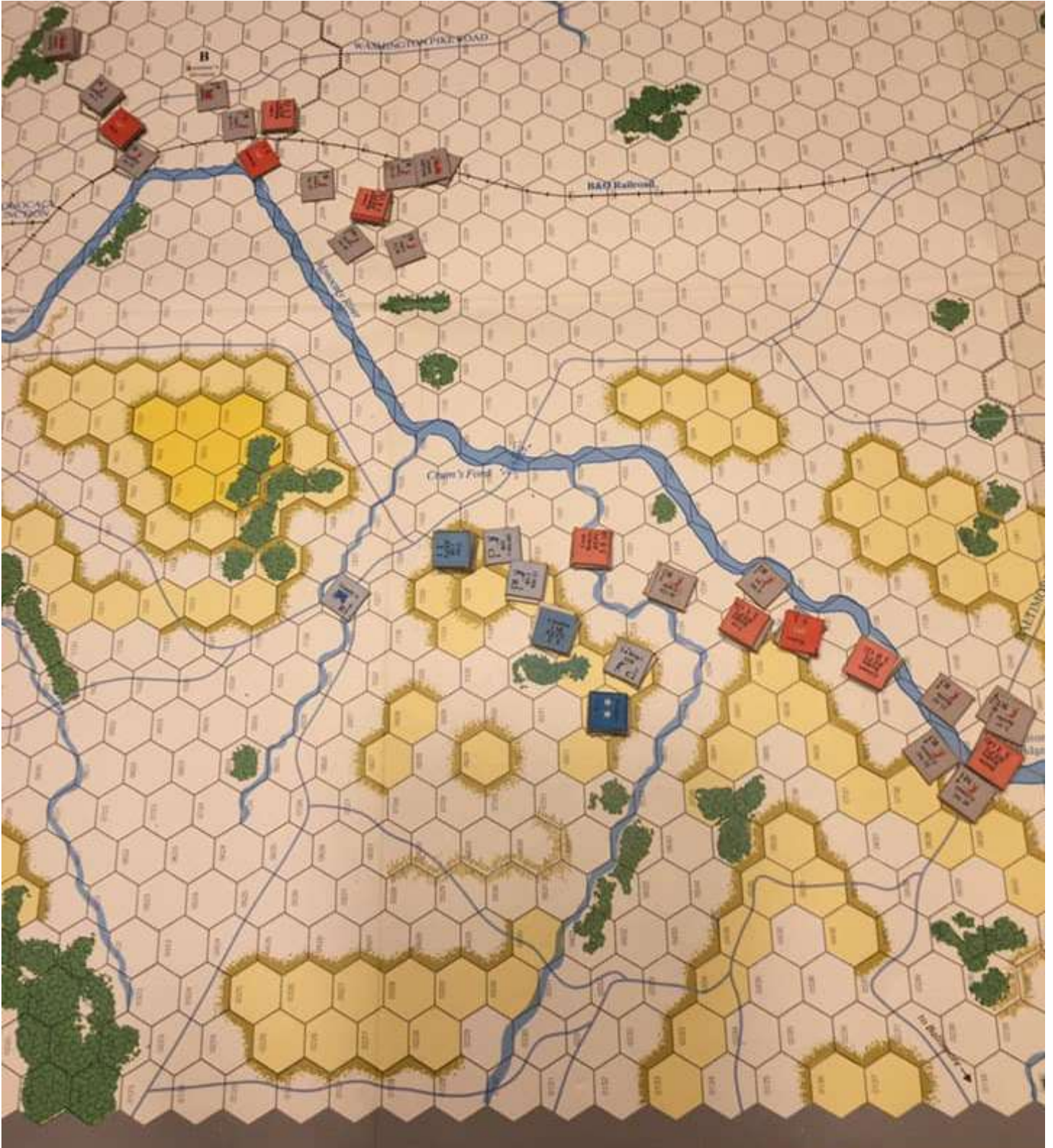
But in the South...

1400 hours. Gordon keeps the pressure on Truex, while McClennen tries to move up, leaving the 122nd Ohio out of command to cover the Railroad Bridge. Ricketts keeps the supply lines moving.

(We can see Gordon's troops bending Truex's right flank, while his left looks VERY thin. This Is ... a STRETCH!)



Beaten away from the river, the 1st Separate rallies on the heights.
Rodes teeters at CLI but pushes across the river!
Ramseur moves south.



McCausland routs the 10th Vermont, threatening Truex's left flank, while McClennan moves to stabilize the right, inflicting casualties on the Stonewall Brigade. Gordon continues to press forward.



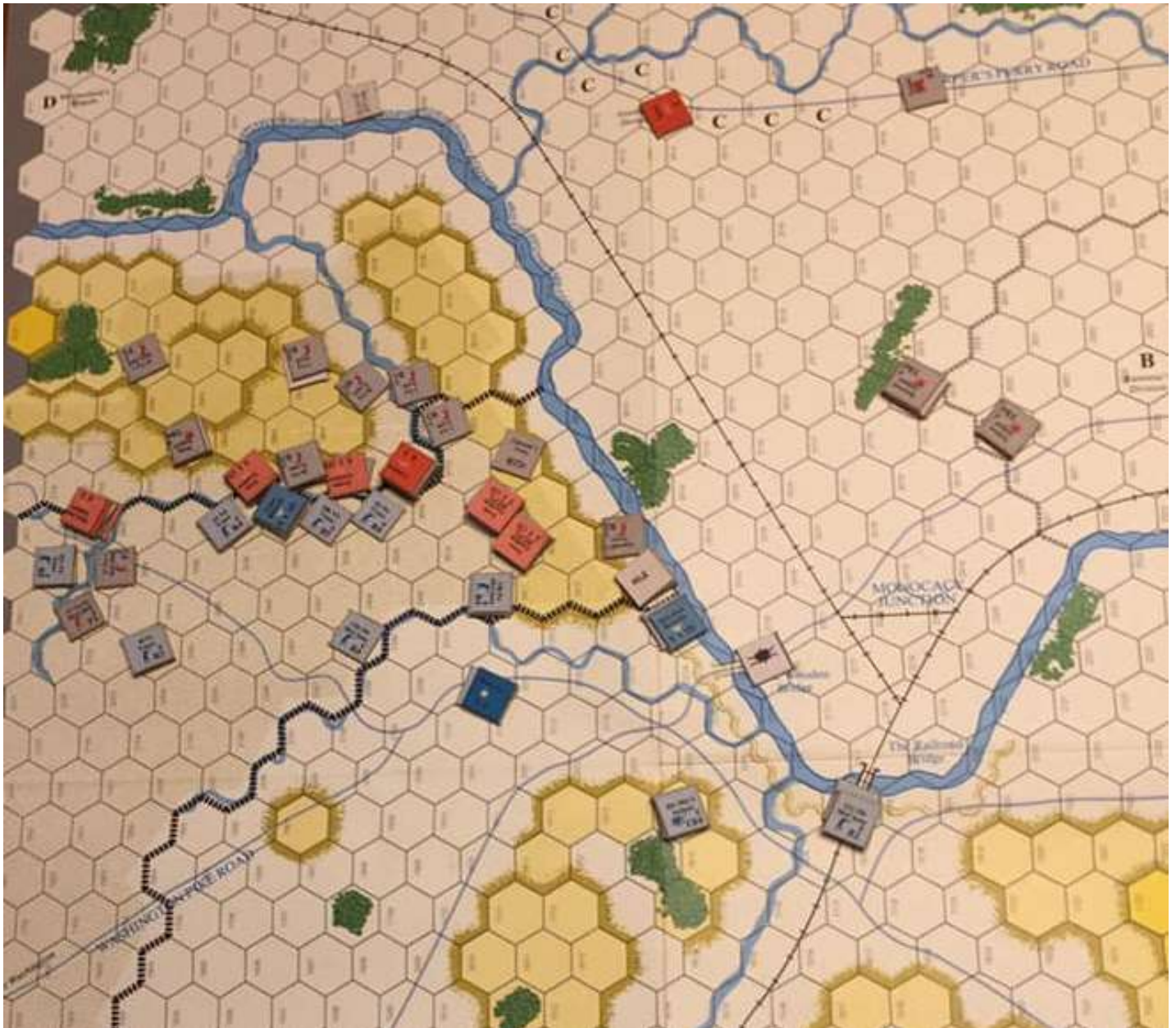
The road to DC is looking dangerously open!!!

Turn? Rodes is still stymied by Wallace and the 1st Sep. Battle's brigade crosses the river to complete the divisional concentration. Ramseur edges further toward the Railroad bridge.



Gordon reaches CLI as Peck BCE's, but Early is on the way!

The 151st New York fights desperately against the cavalry as the 10th Vermont comes to enfilade. Truex is close to being fought out, but needs to hold for another hour.



Psych! Ramseur crosses to the aid of Rodes as Wallace continues to hang on for dear promotion. This whole part of the battle has developed into a big skirmish, with two turns left to go. Note, however, Battle's column now moving around the Federal right.



Turn 13: The wheat field just keeps grinding. Early arrives to uplift Gordon's division, while McClennen and the 110th Ohio rout Terry's Stonewall Brigade.

Truex's Potomac veterans struggle to hold the fence line, and McCausland keeps up the pressure on the Union left.

{Breaking the fourth wall, both the Union and the Confederate player complained vociferously about their lousy die rolling during turn 13.}



In the wheat field, McCausland and the cavalry melee the ammo depleted 151st New York. A repulse sends three of the cav regiments routing back, and wounds McCausland! The Yankees also rout back but wind up within rally range of Truex, as his brigade falls back from the fence line. Ricketts brings the NY heavy battery to the Mesa on the pike.



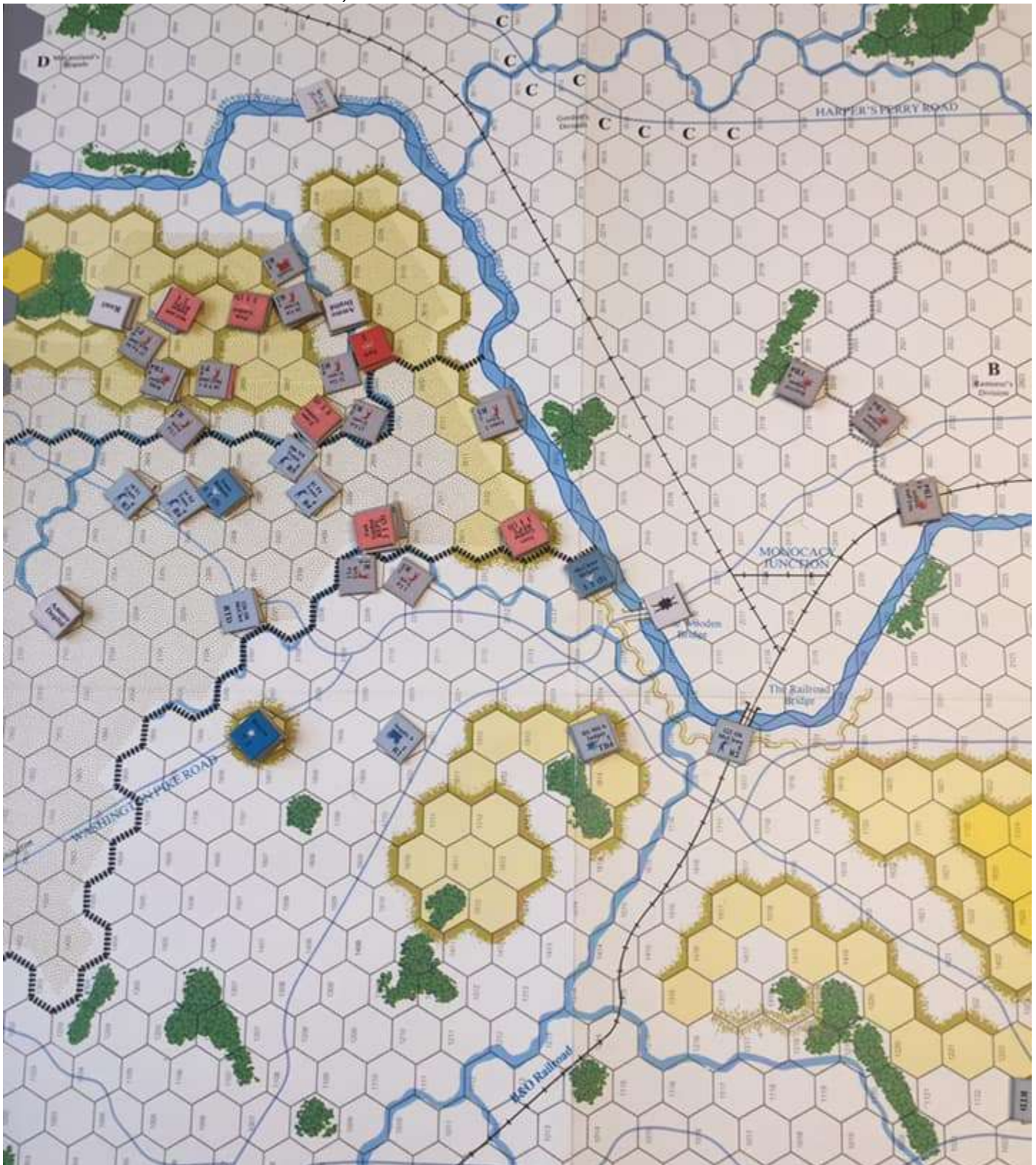
But back in the center of the battle, at Crum's Ford:
1520 hours. Wallace dies! The ridge fight drags on.
Lewis, of Ramseur's division, reaches BCE, which brings Ramseur to CLI.
The 1st Separate also reaches BCE.



The end of the game for Rodes, Ramseur, and the 1st Separate Brigade. The first is overrun, but Tyler's replacement, the 3rd Maryland, the Baltimore b battery, and the 159th Ohio Cav hang on to the bitter end.



End of the game. During the final turn, Truex's brigade halts Gordon's final push in it's tracks, preserving a Union victory. VP total for the Federals, 75-64. We counted the killing of Wallace as a Division commander, 5 Confederate points, due to 23.2 stating that Wallace and Ricketts function as brigade commanders in addition to division commanders. (It can be argued that Wallace is an Army commander, rather than a Division commander.)



Some after action notes:

A very close game. The Union got 13 points because Ramseur hit CLI, and couldn't get all his units across the river. That made the difference.

The unit holding the Rebel cav off Truex's rear has to be the heroic unit of the game.

Putting Truex on the western fence line was a new tactic for me. Worked well. Gordon CLI'd pretty quickly, thanks to those Colt repeaters and morale 5 regiments. Early committed to Gordon, which left Ramseur unable to move units across the River. If Early goes to Ramseur, that problem is solved, but more of Gordon's brigades get BCE Victory Points for the Feds.

The game was basically saved for the Union when four cav regiments meleed a morale 5 regiment and rolled a "repulse". Three cav regiments routed, McCausland was wounded, and the fed routed. If that cav had gotten behind the Federal line, it was an enfilade nightmare for Ricketts' boys, and the road to Washington probably comes uncovered for a Confederate extravaganza.

That close!