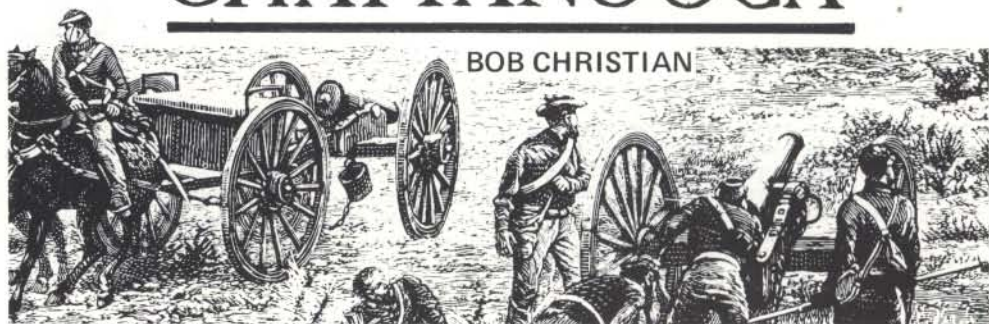


Bob has a particular interest in the American Civil War and has written a number of articles for other publications on both the history and the games. I hope this experience shows.

CHATTANOOGA

BOB CHRISTIAN



“ A better way ... or the best defence is a good offense.”

For those of you who have and enjoy the Blue and Gray Quad by SPI, I would like to offer a strategy for the “Gray” that offers excitement and a challenge.

Historically, the Confederate or “Gray” strategy at Chattanooga was a defensive one with containment of the “Blue” forces as its goal. The initiative that was gained by the Confederates at Chickamauga a few months previously was given up in favour of a siege. By digging in on the hills surrounding the strategic town of Chattanooga, General Bragg’s Army of Tennessee gave away a valuable military prize, the initiative. The Northern Army of Cumberland was allowed to “lick its wounds” and recover from the beating it had suffered at Chickamauga. General Thomas, the new Union commander, seized the initiative and broke the Confederate ring, inflicting upon the South one of its worst defeats of the war.

In SPI’s game, Chattanooga, the situation which I have just described can be rectified. Rather than allow the initiative to pass into the hands of the North, the Rebel player has the opportunity to strike a crippling blow to the superior Union forces.

A look at the game situation and forces involved is of importance because at first glance a bold Southern strategy seems dubious. The position as it presents itself to the Rebel player is a unique one. The enemy forces are divided into three separate groups of approximately equal size. In the centre are the Union forces besieged in Chattanooga which itself is located in the bend of the Tennessee River. The Confederate left flank is anchored on the highly defensible Lookout Mt. which separates the Union right wing from the forces in town. On the Confederate right a ridge provides excellent defensive positions and initial Confederate disposition separates this Union wing from the town as well. Also separating each wing of the Northern forces from the besieged units in Chattanooga are two creeks: the Chattanooga Creek with its strategic bridges and in the north the Citico Creek with its important bridges. The victory conditions compel the Union player to attack the Confederate forces in order to gain control of certain hexes. The destruction of enemy units also results in victory points but only two per unit to the North and three to the Rebel player for each Union unit destroyed. The rather “bloodless” CRT makes destruction of enemy units a difficult achievement and thus compels the Union player to attack.

The opposing forces also bear evaluating. The Confederates are outnumbered in units by 41 to 36; but more importantly in strength points by 203 to 124! How then can the Rebel player hope to stop a determined Union drive? The answer to this is built into the game in the form of a movement restriction. All Union artillery units less one are unable to move due to “lack of transport”. Also, the number of units the Yankee player can move per turn is restricted until he captures Lookout Mountain. With the above information the South must formulate its strategy.

The Southern commander has basically two options: either fight a delaying action using strong defensive positions and local counter attacks OR seize the initiative and strike a blow against the Union forces that both stuns them and cripples their ability to mount the overwhelming attack. In the following I would like to propose the latter.

The Rebel General has three main things going for him:

1. The division of the Union forces.
2. The Union movement restrictions.
3. The numerous mobile artillery units in the Confederate forces.

By taking advantage of what few advantages he does have, plus seizing the initiative, the Confederate player can fight an exciting offensive game. This is how it works.

You have all heard the ancient axiom, “divide and conquer”, and since the Union forces are already divided for you, you must strive to keep them separated. First of all you must reinforce the garrison on Lookout Mountain and counter-attack here when at all possible. Secondly, advance and capture the Citico Creek bridges and form a defensive screen of the Union northern wing. Thirdly, with the bulk of your forces, attack the entire Union centre at Chattanooga. Secure the Chattanooga Creek bridges in your advance so as to secure a strong flank on both sides of your advance. Attrition from exchanges, D-Elm’s and successful D-back results will eventually weaken the Union centre so that the capture of victory point hexes in the Chattanooga area is a definite possibility. The reinforcement of the centre by the Yankee commander is a very difficult undertaking.

An important result of the above outlined strategy is the drawing off of unit movement to the centre of the Union line. Normally, the Northern strategy is to drive in the Confederate flanks on the first day and then after linking your forces hit the Rebel centre on the second day. By attacking yourself in the centre on the first day you will not only surprise and possibly demoralise your opponent, you will also force him to use his small movement allowance on units in the centre that he would much rather use on the flanks. In Chattanooga one is forced to counter-attack and to do so at unfavourable odds leads to ineffective results and units that are unable to attack until the next day. The Union timetable will also be disrupted and he is under pressure to achieve the victory conditions in a ten turn game. Any pressure off the attack on Lookout Mountain is also a welcome sign as this position holds the key to Union movement restrictions.

Knowing the rules and a proper use of them to your advantage while applying heavy pressure to the area he least expects it will provide you with an interesting, challenging simulation. So, for those of you who can’t sit still while the other guy makes all the offensive (take that any way you want!) moves, try my strategy. Who knows, you may end up changing positions with your opponent at the end of the second day and eating your artillery horses too.