

Design Notes

My approach to the Designer notes is to explain the reasoning behind some the concepts used. I want to convey why they are used, from both an historical and a gaming perspective. The overall effect I want to achieve is for the player to find it difficult to win (25%-30% success) but always feel a wish to try again and try something slightly different.

Confidence track

Prior to the battle there was considerable nervousness in the Boer camp, indeed Hlangwane had been abandoned on the 13th in panic due to the appearance of British forces on the horizon. Botha was preparing for a battle unlike any the Boer had fought before and there was a lot of uncertainty in the camp on the morning of the 15th December 1899. As the morning progressed confidence grew and the Boer's started to believe they could win. From this the elegance of the Confidence Track developed. As the player you do not have time to devise a perfect plan. Victory becomes harder to achieve with every passing hour. You need to make progress in order to lower Boer Morale otherwise the day will not be yours.

Variable Boer fire power

One the overriding points of this battle was that the British were totally clueless with respect to the Boer positions. Botha had deliberately hidden them and indeed had put in dummy positions higher up the hill to fool the British. The variable fire power markers both keep the British guessing and ensure that the game does not follow a predictable pattern. The starting strength of the Boer units and the permanent losses ensure this variability is within acceptable parameters.



THE BATTLE OF COLENZO—QUEEN'S (ROYAL WEST SURREY) REGIMENT LEADING THE CENTRAL ATTACK.

Drawing by J. Finnemore, R.I.

Command and Control

The British Army was a professional one which stood astride the world stage at the end of the 19th Century. However even for them there could be considerable confusion in the heat of battle; misinterpreted orders (the previous European campaign was the Crimea and Balaclava), lost orders (messenger never makes it) etc. In addition leaders are human beings and instances of panic are well document; on the flip side they nearly always quickly recovered their composure and this is reflected in the rules.

The different letters given to British leaders is a simplified way of reflecting the likely response of differing personalities to given battle and command situations.

Boer Release

At one point in the battle Botha wanted Fourie to attack the British. He failed to do so and Botha was furious. The release rolls are there to reflect this situation. The fact it is so difficult for the Boer units to be released in part reflects the nervousness mentioned above.

“Two Bob” Hart and that missing Ford

One of the biggest mistakes the British made was the confusion concerning the ford that Hart’s command was supposed to cross. It is now fairly obvious that in the heat of battle he tried to cross the wrong ford at the end of a bend in the river which resulted in murderous gunfire and a hasty retreat. The uncertainty of finding the intended ford is simply covered in the rules

Long and the Abandoned Guns

The other big mistake was Long’s headlong charge to a position from where he intended to pound the Boer position. It became very clear very quickly that the position could not be maintained and this led to the abandonment of guns. This was seen as a humiliation and hence the various attempts to recover them. The loss of guns is a negative when determining victory.

Lieutenant Roberts

Lieutenant Roberts was the son of Field Marshall Lord Roberts. Basically it is never a good idea to get the bosses son killed. If you do then to claim victory is all the harder.

Hlangwane

Geographically this is the most interesting position. Botha quite rightly feared the British would use it to pound the Boer positions across the river. He therefore insisted in it being occupied, inspite of the Boer leaders being reluctant to do. As you will quickly find out it is a near impossible position to take with cavalry.

Maybe an infantry formation will do better, but with the confidence track slipping away from you, have you the time to get them there and take the hill, will you get lucky and spook some Boer near a ford you find.

The choice is yours. Can you succeed where Redvers Buller failed? Play the game and find out.