ALTERNATIVE DEPLOYMENT

By Matt Keefe

Matt Keefe offers up some updated rules for Siege engines and artillery in Warmaster. Look out for a rather cool scenario at the end of the article.

Back at the dawn of WarMag (this magazine's long since passed predecessor), we published rules for a number of specialised pieces of Siege Artillery, and released accompanying models. That was really some years ago, and back then the initial iteration of every set of rules were known as 'experimental' and had to go through a vigorous system of argument and counter-argument amongst the playing community before being gifted the deified title of 'official new rules'.

We never got around to making the rules for these pieces of Siege Artillery official (oops) and also managed to miss them out of not one, but two Warmaster annuals (oops, oops), so we thought it was high time these pieces of Siege Equipment got their own official rules (not least so that we could tidy up some of the slightly ropier aspects of their original experimental rules). It also seems that these rules are rather rarely used – perhaps because putting on a siege always seems like so much effort. With that in mind, we've also included a couple of new scenarios ideally suited to the use of Siege Artillery.

LARGE BASES

Many of the machines or pieces of artillery involved in sieges (and other battles for that matter, but predominantly sieges) are so massive in size that they require a larger, 60mm x 40mm base – a base with as big an area as an entire unit of infantry or cavalry!

In most respects, base size is unimportant, and you should find that units on these larger bases follow all the normal rules and won't cause any problems in games. Unless the following rules state otherwise, treat these large based units in exactly the same manner as their counterparts on 40mm x 20mm bases.

However, given that these units represent astonishingly huge artillery pieces and other arcane constructions, there are a few special rules which apply in order to account for their massive size, as well as a few considerations for dealing with tricky situations brought about by their larger bases.

Modelling Large Bases

The easiest way to make large bases for your siege machines is to take three normal sized, plastic Warmaster bases and glue them together along the long edges. This is quick and simple, but the bases are somewhat prone to wonkiness when stuck together, what with their bevelled edges and all, and might not lie too flat on the table.

More confident modellers would be well advised to cut appropriately sized bases from thick card or plasticard, available from most modelling shops.

Finally, yes, yes we know the Trebuchet doesn't quite fit on a 60mm x 20mm base (in fact, when the model was originally released, we advised players to base it on a 60mm x 60mm base). However, on a 60mm x 40mm it's only two slight protuberances on the sides of the Trebuchet which exceed the base size which isn't really any different to the normal levelled lances, outstretched swords and flailing horses' heads which normally stick off the edge of bases anyway.

Keeping the Trebuchet on a 60mm x 40mm base is much more convenient when it comes to using it in a game, since it allows units to be arranged around or against it in combat much more neatly.

If you want to brigade multiple Trebuchets together, just be sure to stick them to the base at different points so that their edges don't impede each other – brigades actually look more characterful this way anyway!

Units

Models on larger bases are arranged into units as normal, though obviously their extreme size means that ordinarily such units will consist of just a single stand, therefore having a unit size of one. The army lists indicate the unit's size in the normal manner.

Basing

As is normally the case for artillery, monsters and machines units on large bases should be oriented so that they are facing the short (in this case, 40mm wide) edge of the base.

It's also worth stating that large bases are a special provision for a few specific units – the large base isn't an alternative method of basing, or a way of basing multiple stands together or anything like that. The special rules for a unit will indicate whether a large base is needed – other units never use these larger bases for any reason.

Brigades

Units on large bases can be brigaded with other units in the normal manner. Up to four units may be brigaded in this way, and a brigade may consist of any mix of units on large bases, or the smaller, normal sized bases.

Orders may be issued to the brigade as a whole, but any succesful orders can only be used for actions which all the units in the brigade are capable of. So, artillery on large bases (which are so large they cannot normally move) could not use a successful order to pivot (turning to face the target) if the rest of the brigade was composed of infantry (since infantry don't pivot). If the brigade was composed of multiple pieces of artillery on large bases it could use the order to pivot some or all of the units in the brigade – not all units have to take the same action following a successful order, they must merely be capable of it. Likewise, if a brigade consisted of a machine on a large base plus three units of infantry, a single order could be used to move all the units (since both machines, even ones on large bases, and infantry are allowed to move following a successful order).
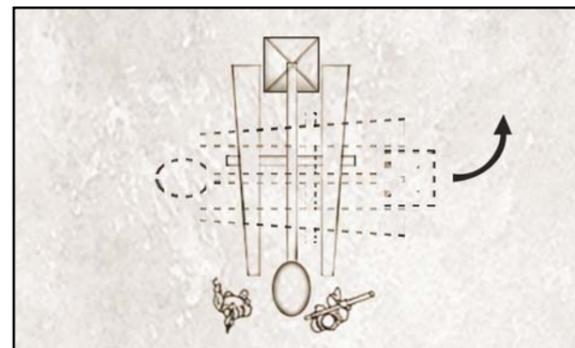
ARTILLERY ON LARGE BASES

Artillery on large bases represent the largest and most destructive kinds of war machine, often used to batter castle walls and other fortifications, such as trebuchets, mangonels and bombards. Despite their size, these units still follow all the normal rules for artillery, so may shoot overhead, cannot pursue, and will be destroyed if forced to retreat. In addition, these exceptionally large pieces of artillery follow a few special rules of their own:

Cannot Move

While artillery is cumbersome and difficult to move at the best of times, these colossal weapons are simply rooted to the spot once deployed. They must be built or assembled on the spot and it may take many hours or even days to get them ready for use. Therefore, these weapons have no move, and cannot use their initiative. They may not be given orders, except to pivot, as described below.

Pivot

During the battle, large artillery cannot be moved, except that it can be issued an order to 'pivot'. This allows the weapon to turn on the spot by up to 90 degrees to face a new target. This order cannot be a brigade order, unless several such weapons are brigaded together, in which case a single order will suffice for up to four weapons. If an order to pivot is failed, the weapon remains facing the original target and cannot shoot that turn.

Line of Fire

Artillery on large bases must always shoot 'straight ahead'. This is defined as directly forward of a line drawn from the centre of the base front edge. When first deployed the player must align the weapon so that it is facing the target. It is useful if the player declares exactly where the weapon is pointing when it is deployed, as this prevents any uncertainty should the model be accidentally knocked or picked up and admired.
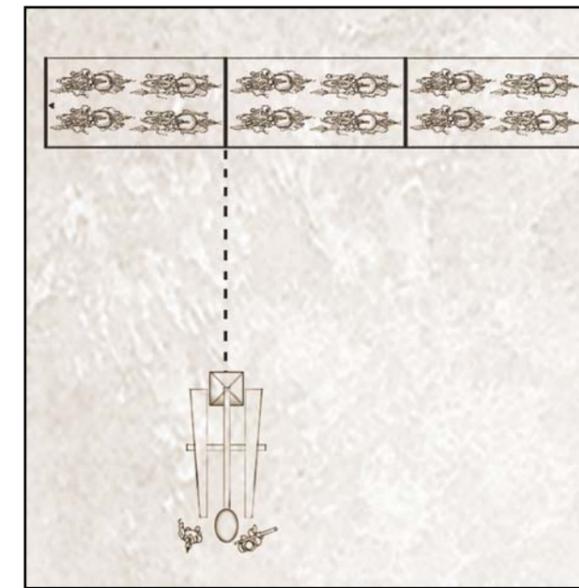
Finding Range

When firing at fortifications such as walls, towers and gateways a 6 is normally required to score a hit with artillery. This is also the case for artillery on large bases, unless a hit has already been scored against the same target in a previous turn. Once a hit has been scored against a fortification target the weapon is assumed to have 'got the range' and any further shots against the same target in subsequent turns will hit on a 4+. This benefit is lost if the artillery pivots (and later pivots back) – only weapons which hit, and then remain continuously facing their target hit on a 4+ though they are able to shoot at different targets in the meantime (we can assume that the crew simply recall the necessary weight, amount of shot, elevation or whatever in order to return to their original range). In addition, any weapons in a brigade with a piece of artillery which has found its range are also able to hit the same target on a 4+.

Stand & Shoot

Artillery on large bases cannot shoot at an enemy that charges them. Such weapons are simply too big and cumbersome to stand their ground and shoot at rapidly approaching enemy.

Armour Saves

The incredible destructive force of artillery on large bases means that units never receive an Armour Saving throw when hit by a shot from such artillery – they and their armour alike are simply crushed, torn apart or otherwise gruesomely mangled by the ferocious shot.

SIEGE ARTILLERY

The following units represent Siege Artillery – units so preposterously massive that they could only practically be used in a siege or for some other highly specific purpose. In a siege, the defender may purchase the following pieces of Siege Artillery from their army's points allocation.

BOMBARD

The Bombard is a primitive cannon, massive in size, firing shot several metres across, or else blasting out several dozen tightly packed cannon balls in a destructive spray of grapeshot.

Troop	Type	Attack	Hits	Armour	Command	Unit Size	Points	Min/max	Special
Bombard	A	0/4+ bounce	3	0	-	1	90	-/1	*1

1. Bombard. The Bombard is a hefy construction, and must be based on a larger (60mm x 40mm) base. Consequently, it follows all the rules for artillery units on large bases, as explained on page 68.

Bombards are particularly large weapons, and hence have a range of 90cm when shooting. If shooting at a fortification at a range of 30cm or less, the Bombard may add +1 to the dice roll in addition to any other bonuses. Bombards are ferociously destructive at short range, but also very vulnerable to enemy action or counter fire.

When shooting against troops the Bombard gets a bounce exactly like any other cannon. This does not apply when shooting at walls/towers as the stonework will obviously stop the cannon ball and prevent it bouncing.

MANGONEL

The Mangonel is a colossal stone thrower, similar in design to the catapults and rock lobbers used by various armies, but capable of hurling stones so large that they can smash castle walls asunder with a single blow.

Troop	Type	Attack	Hits	Armour	Command	Unit Size	Points	Min/max	Special
Mangonel	A	0/4	3	0	-	1	80	-/1	*1

1. Mangonel. The Mangonel is a hefty construction, and must be based on a larger (60mm x 40mm) base. Consequently, it follows all the rules for artillery units on large bases, as explained on page 68.

Mangonels are particularly large weapons, and hence have a range of 90cm when shooting. The Mangonel has a minimum range of 20cm as it is impossible to adjust its mechanism to shoot at closer targets. A target that is 20cm or closer cannot be shot at – units at less than this distance are also ignored for the purposes of firing at the closest target.

TREBUCHET

The Trebuchet is a very large weapon resmbling a gigantic catapult or stone thrower. The Trebuchet relies on a weighted counterbalance (rather than the torsion of its ropes and firing mechanisms) to propel its load forwards, meaning that Trebuchets can far exceed the Mangonel in size. Trebuchet are typically used only in prolonged sieges, 'cause they take days to construct.

Troop	Type	Attack	Hits	Armour	Command	Unit Size	Points	Min/max	Special
Trebuchet	A	1/6	4	0	-	1	120	-/1	*1

1. Trebuchet. The Trebuchet is a hefty construction, and must be based on a larger (60mm x 40mm) base. Consequently, it follows all the rules for artillery units on large bases, as explained on page 68.

Because of its immense size the Trebuchet has a range of 120cm. The Trebuchet has a minimum range of 20cm as the slingshot-like nature of the weapon makes it impossible to shoot at closer targets. A target that is closer than 20cm may not be shot at – units at less than this distance are also ignored for the purposes of firing at the closest target.

OTHER SIEGE EQUIPMENT

As well as the actually artillery and machines used to batter a castle's walls, besieging armies will also make use of a variety of novel means by which to get in where they shouldn't such as siege towers, ladders and so on. Sometimes more unique solutions to the problems of laying siege are found, such as employing Giants to bash the walls down or load heavy shot into the Siege Artillery at an inhuman rate! The following entry is a new piece of Siege Equipment which, like the other described in the Warmaster rulebook, can be purchased by the attacking player in a siege.

GIANT LOADERS

Chained and shackled Giants are sometimes employed as crew for the largest of siege engines and cannons, hoisting huge balls of iron around with the strength of a hundred men. Only machines or artillery on large bases can have Giant Loaders – smaller artillery is just too fiddly and the poor old Giant is liable to get his big clumsy fingers stuck in the workings or jammed in the barrel of the cannon.

If a machine has a Giant Loader, the Giant is added to the machine's stand, and a suitable model should be included on the same base to represent this, in just the same way as artillery or machine crew are displayed on the model's base. The Giant and the machine count as a single stand in all respects.

The Giant can fight, but his shackles obviously hinder him somewhat, making him a (slightly) less intimidating proposition than the raucous, rampaging Giants that might be found elsewhere on the battlefield. Having been shackled for some time, he is also likely to be considerably less drunk – a substantial bonus when operating heavy machinery. For this reason, the Giant simply adds the bonuses to the machine's profile.

Troop	Type	Attack	Hits	Armour	Command	Unit Size	Points	Min/max	Special
Giant Loader	S	+2	+1	-	-	-	50	-/1	*1

1. Giant Loaders. Giants are capable of lifting the huge ammunition required for massive cannons, pulling even the thickest of ropes to tension, cranking earthward the mightiest of levers or even dragging along the great machine itself. This makes the operation of Siege Artillery rather easier with a Giant in tow, which allows Siege Artillery with a Giant Loader to re-roll any failed order for reloading or pivoting. If the second roll is successful, the order is sucessful and the Orders phase continues as normal (ie, the character issuing the order can go on to issue further orders, etc). Orders for other types of action cannot be re-rolled.

> **Modelling Giant Loaders:** Currently, we don't produce models of Giant Loaders so you'll have to convert one, should you wish to use it. There is, of course, a very fine Giant model in the Warmaster range (for the Orcs & Goblins and Chaos armies) which provides a perfectly suitable basis for conversion. Clipping the weapons from the model and sticking it onto the base of your chosen piece of Siege Artillery is easy enough, but additional detail can be added with chains, shackles or by repositioning the giant model, adding a cannonball to his hands and so on.
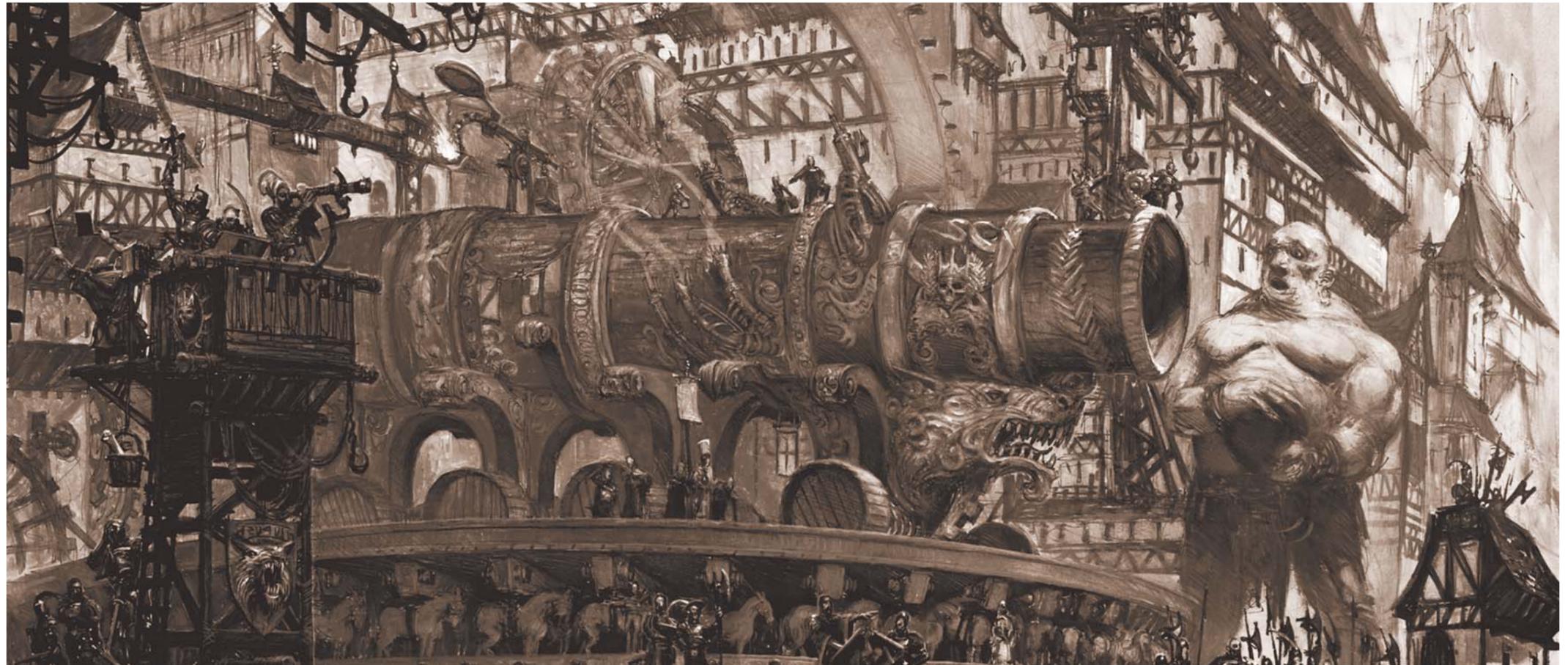
SCENARIO: SALLY OUT!

When attackers deploy siege artillery against a fortress, cannon and bowfire seldom possesses the range or power to repel it from the fortress walls. Instead, defending troops must sally out to strike at the enemy artillery and tear down the monstrous machines.

This battle (rather unsurprisingly) takes place around a besieged castle or fortress. Set up a castle or fortress on the defender's side of the board, not more than 40cm from the board edge. The castle does not need to cover the entirety of the defender's side of the table or anything like that, but it will need to be big enough to house a good portion of the defending army, as noted later.
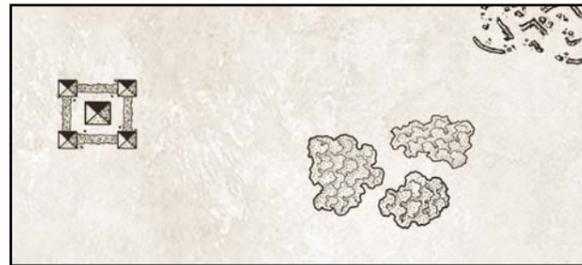
Decide upon army size and pick your forces in whatever manner you and your opponent find agreeable (but remember the defender should have only half as many points available as the attacker). The attacker must also have at least one piece of Siege Artillery per full thousand points of his army.

First, the defending player must deploy at least half of his starting number of units within the castle.

Next, the attacking player must deploy all his Siege Artillery. This may be deployed as far onto the table as necessary for it to be within range of the castle. Simply measure out the maximum range of the weapon/s and deploy at this distance. Normally, this will be well within the attacker's normal deployment zone, so the artillery may still be deployed up to 20cm onto the table if this is the case.

Next, the rest of the defending army may be deployed anywhere within 20cm of the defender's board edge as normal. We can imagine that these units represent forces left outside the castle to guard the hinterlands, defend farmland or prevent the castle becoming encircled, or perhaps represent reinforcements arriving from nearby friendly cities.

The attacking player then deploys his entire army within 20cm of his own table edge and the game begins.

The attackers take the first turn.

During the game, the defender must attempt to destroy the enemy Siege Artillery. Since they are well out of range of anything that can be fired from the walls, this will require a cunning counter-attack. The defender does have some troops already outside the castle, but these will be drastically outnumbered by the attacking army.

Instead, the defender will likely have to march out some of the units inside the castle to confront the attacking army. In addition, in this game, the defender has the option of a making a sally with any cavalry housed in the castle, as described below.

SALLY

Sometimes a group of mounted troops may ride out suddenly from their fortified position to make a lightning attack on the besieging forces in the hope of driving them off, or at least holding them back temporarily, perhaps with the aim of allowing reinforcements or supplies to find a way through in the meantime.

Any mounted units may sally forth from their fortification during the Command phase. A sally is made on Initiative, and it is the only time Initiative may be used during a siege. The sallying units may charge any enemy units within Initiative 20cm of any gateway on the fortress. Once outside the walls, the sallying units behave exactly as normal.

Sallying troops may return to their fortification either by means of an order, by evading on Initiative or by means of a fall back after combat. If the distance of any such move is enough for the unit to completely cross the line of the nearest gateway, they are returned to the fortress.

At any time when sallying units emerge from or return to a fortress, it is obviously necessary to open the gates for a time to allow them to pass, though this of course runs the risk of a speedy enemy attacking the open gateway.

Whenever units leave or return to a fortress as part of a sally, the defending player must roll three dice and add the scores together. As long as the total score is less than the distance (in centimetres) to the nearest enemy unit, the gate is safely opened and closed before any enemy units can really respond. However, if the score is equal to or more than the distance to the nearest enemy, there is some delay or the enemy reacts especially quickly and you must leave the gates open. They can be closed by a succesful order being given to any friendly unit on the gateway itself at any future point in the game.

Bonus Victory Points

The game continues until one army withdraws. Victory is then determined as normal, with the following special considerations.

Siege Artillery Still Standing — If any of the attacker's Siege Artillery is still standing, the attacker can do no worse than draw (and in fact will be victorious, regardless of Victory Points, if he also broke the defending army).

Siege Artillery Destroyed — If any of the attacker's Siege Artillery is destroyed at the end of the game, the defender can do no worse than draw (and in fact will be victorious, regardless of Victory Points, if he also broke the defending army).

SCENARIO: THE ARTILLERY TRAIN

Siege artillery pieces are massive constructions, tens or even hundreds of feets high, weighing in at several tonnes. Transporting such weapons is immensely difficult, slowing an army's march considerably, and often forcing it to take dangerous, open routes where the army becomes vulnerable to ambush since other, better guarded and less well seen routes, will simply be impassable with siege artillery in tow. Nonetheless, siege artillery must be transported in this way on ocassion, since not every commander can rely on finding the materials necessary to build his machineries at his destination, nor can he rely on having the time to bring up such vast weapons before the enemy is upon him. When artillery is taken on campaign in this manner, it is formed into great trains at the rear of the army – sluggish and often poorly defended, these artillery trains are prime targets for attack.

In this battle, the defending player is a campaigning general en route to besiege an old rival, quarrelsome neighbour or other suitable target. The entire defending army (including the artillery train) is marching in column when ambushed by the attacking player. The defending army must include at least one piece of Siege Artillery for every full 1,000 points in the army. The battle takes place in a wooded valley – perfect for an ambush. Set-up the terrain as shown on the following map or in any similar way which you and your opponent can agree upon.

The defending army deploys first, in column, facing one of the short board edges. No defending unit should be closer than 50cm to any table edge and should form a vague 'column' in the middle of the table.

The attacking army may follow its targets for many days before springing its ambush, waiting to pick the perfect spot. The attacking player can therefore choose which table edge to deploy on and then deploys his entire army within 20cm of this table edge.

The attacking player takes the first turn.

The attacker is trying to destroy the enemy Siege Artillery before it can reach its target, while the defender is frantically trying to escape the ambush! Unlike in normal games, the Siege Artillery in this game can be moved, but cannot fire. Siege Artillery moves like a siege tower (ie, must have a unit in base contact with it, may only move once per Command phase). If a unit towing (or pushing) Siege Artillery is destroyed, the artillery remains in place and may be pulled by another unit. Siege Artillery being pulled in this manner moves at the speed of the unit pulling it, so cavalry can be used to draw up the artillery faster. However, only infantry, cavalry and monsters may be used to tow the artillery – never chariots or other artillery.

The game continues until one side withdraws, or all the Siege Artillery is destroyed.
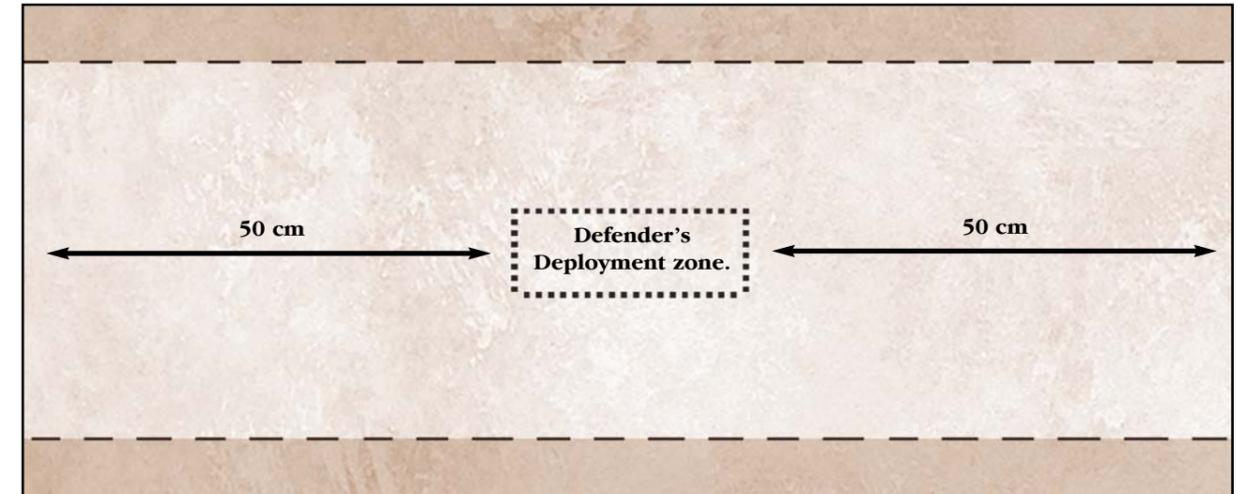
ATTACKER'S VICTORY POINTS BONUS

All Siege Artillery Destroyed	Win!
Siege Artillery Piece Destroyed	+100 V.P.

For each piece of Siege Artillery destroyed, the attacker receives an additional +100 Victory Points.

DEFENDER'S VICTORY POINTS BONUS

Siege Artillery Piece Escapes	+100 V.P.

For each piece of Siege Artillery which escapes via the short table edge indicated on the map, the defender receives an additional +100 Victory Points.