

# BATTLES

*I finally found the courage to put my large scale battle rules into HTML format and in English. I am looking forward to see what Chaosium new miniature combat rules will be, but these are really still role-playing rules, heavily centered on the actions/destiny of the players characters. I want to thank the members of the RuneQuest-Rules and Glorantha lists who have helped me at some point or another. I do not remember everyone, so thanks to David Cake, John Medway, Joerg Baumgartner, Robert McArthur, Sandy Petersen, and to all of you from which I did not print or record the messages. These rules have evolved from three main sources of inspiration: The Battle system in Pendragon (Chaosium), the Warhammer Armies game (Games Workshop) and, to a smaller extend, Bushido (FGU)*

## RuneQuest Battle system



*Angus McBride - Osprey Military #E9*

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## The Characteristics of a unit.

A military unit has 3 characteristics:

### Attack (A)

The Attack value represents the efficiency of the unit in attack. It is an abstraction of the weapon attack skills of the individual soldiers and the quality of its weapons. Each 5% attack of the best weapon, and each 2 points of average damage of the weapon (including strength bonus) give 1 point of attack: A group of soldiers with 50% attack armed with heavy maces doing 1D10 damages (5.5 averages) will have an attack value of  $10+2=12$ .

**Note:** every attack modifier of 5% adds 1 to the melee value (knights on horses have +2 melee against footmen. All the other RQ modifiers can also be transformed. Ex: Higher ground gives +2,...

A unit charging on horses gets the strength bonus of the mount. For example, a unit of Loskalmi knights charging with their lance (1D10+1) on heavy warhorses (strength bonus +5D6) have a damage value of  $(5.5+17.5)/2=11$ . If the knights charge a unit armed with pikes, then the foot soldiers also get the horse strength bonus in their damage value.

In the case of missile units, the attack value is calculating by adding 1 per 5% chance of attack with the missile and 2 per point of potential damage **during a round**: For example, a unit of bowmen using longbow can shoot two arrows (1d8+1) per round for an average damage per round of  $(2 \times 5.5=11$  HP): their weapon attack bonus is +5. If they attack at 50%, the attack value of the unit is  $10+5=15$ . So a unit of bowmen will often have a higher attack value than a unit of crossbowmen, since the crossbow does more damages, but fires only every two or three rounds.

In the case of a spell-casting unit, the attack value is calculated by adding 1 per 5% chance of casting the spell to the average damage of the spell per round divided by two (so a priest unit attacking with Sunspears blast would have 95% chance of casting the spell for an average of 10.5 points of damage (3D6): Its attack value would be  $19+5=24$  !!!

This is Regimental Magic points available to the unit's wyter to attack and defend against other unit's regimental magic. It represents large-scale magic points, not the normal individual points. Magic-users do not contribute to the full extend of their MP, because they need some to heal themselves and cast individual spirit spells. When a regimental spell is cast on a unit, all the members of the unit are affected at the same time. Only magicians and priest units can cast regimental magic spells.

if the missiles or spells are fired into a unite in close battle formation, the attack has a bonus of +2. If the enemies are dispersed, this bonus does not apply.

## Defence (D)

The Defence value represents the efficiency of the unit in defence. It is an abstraction of the parry skills of the individual soldiers and the quality of its armour. Each 5% parry of the best weapon or shield, and each 2 points of AP of the average body armour gives 1 point of defence: A group of soldiers with 50% shield parry equipped with full chain mail (AP 7) and heater shields has a defence value of  $10+(7+4)/2=15$

*Armour:*

the armour points of the various location are simply multiplied by the % of the surface protected (leg=20%, Arm=10%, Abdomen=10%, Chest=20% and head=20%). The sum of all the locations gives the average AP of the unit. For example, a complete chain mail gives an AP of  $100\% \times 7 = 7$ , and a helmet  $8 \times 10\% = 0.8$ .

*Shield:*

The protective value of a shield is equal to its AP times the % of the surface protected.

Shield	Surface protected	AP	Protection
Buckler	10%	8	+0 / +0
Heater / Round	35%	12	+4 / +5
Kite	55%	16	+8 / +10
Hoplite	55%	18	+9 / +11
Hoplite with 2H spear	55%	9	+4 / +5
Viking	55%	12	+6 / +7

When soldiers operate in close formation, the shield wall also protects the arm carrying the weapon, increasing the protection by 10% (second protection value). Only 1H spears or short swords can be used with that battle formation, and pikes requires the use of the "two-handed spear plus shield" tactic that divides by two the defensive value of the shield.

In order to simplify, I assume that all the soldiers within one unit have the same equipment.

## Spirit (S)

This represents the training and courage of the soldiers, their ability to resist panic when things go the wrong way and friends start dying around them, and finally their resistance to spells, their "Inner Power". A unit with a high spirit is very steady and can stay "cool" under fire. A unit with a low spirit is the opposite.

As an example, I use the following moral value, depending on the quality of the troop:

Unit Type	Moral	Example (Lunar army)
Elite	18	Red Guard of the Emperor
Excellent	14	Sundome templars
Superior	12	Sir Holburn Axebrothers
Standard	10	Silver Shields, Longspear Slayers...

Inferior	8	Zebra riders irregulars
Poor	4	Paysan militia
Non-combat	2	Baggage train Wagoner's...

A unit needs to do a moral check in the following situations:

- During the missile/spell phase if the unit lose more than 25% of its effective.
- During the combat phase if the unit is being charged by an opponent that radiates fear (undead...).
- During the combat phase if the unit is being charged by a cavalry unit and is in unfavourable situation (negative combat modifier...)
- During the book-keeping phase if the unit has lost the fight, if a friendly unit retreat nearby (less than 50 m) or if a friendly unit rout less than 200 m around.

A unit failing a moral check retreat or rout. Player's characters, even within a retreating unit are not affected by the moral check. A PC is always able to make his own decision, eventually choosing an honourable death in battle against the humiliation of a retreat. A PC can try to harangue a retreating unit by making an "Eloquence" skill check. A retreating unit requires a simple success, a routed unit a special. If the PC manage to succeed in is Eloquence, the unit can immediately re-roll a moral check, without the psychology modifiers. A success means that the unit rally around the PC, a failure that the soldiers keep fleeing. If the Eloquence roll is a critical, the unit automatically rally around the player character, without the need for a second moral check.

### **Battle Capacity (BC)**

Simply the average of the attack, parry and spirit value of each individual soldier, multiplied by the number of soldiers in the unit.

The characteristics of a unit of 50 Guards from Ockless are given in a small table as follow:

<b>Guard of Ockless (50)</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>S</b>	<b>BC</b>
<i>Mace + Shield</i>	18	15	11	730

This represents a unit of the following soldiers (in a more RuneQuest-like format):

**OCKLESS GUARD ONE**

armor	location	make	material	pr	pr
HP 13	r leg	01-04	01-03	2/5	_____
FP 09	l leg	05-08	04-06	2/5	_____
MP 11	abdom.	09-11	07-10	5/5	_____
	chest	12	11-15	5/6	_____
	r arm	13-15	16-17	5/4	_____
Shield 12	l arm	16-18	18-19	5/4	_____
	head	19-20	20	3/5	_____

weapon	SK	sw	damage	pr	pr
Shortspear @	7	45%	1d8+1+1d4	45%	10
Heavy Mace	7	50%	1d10+1d4	15%	10
Heater shield	8	15%	1d6+1D4	55%	12

**Skills:** Listen 40% Scan 50% Track +0% Dodge +0%  
**Spirit Magic** (55%). Heal 2, Protection 2, Bladesharp 2  
**Armor:** Beazinted hauberk with underpadding, stiff leather boots and pants, and a bronze plate helm.  
**Treasure:** 2D10 GP, Ransom: None

## The Battle

During a battle, the time is counted in battle rounds of 5 mn (25 combat rounds). One battle round represent a series of charges, combats, and movements between groups of soldiers in the middle of the dust, blood and noise of a battlefield. It is a very confused situation. A spirit magic spell last for one battle round and a divine magic spell for three.

The evolution of the battle is represented by a series of dice roll surrounding the individual combats of the PCs that are handled normally.

The battle begins by a single dice roll made by the commander of the PC's army, called the Tactical Roll of the army commander ("Battle" skill or "Tactic" skill). After that, each unit containing PCs must go through a series of rolls representing the events during that battle round.

And finally, at the end of the round, a book-keeping phase summarises the loss on both sides, evaluate moral of the units and decide if the battle ends. If the battle does not stop, a new battle round start and the all procedure start again.

I have separated the combat into 4 phases:

### The Observation Phase

During that phase I essentially describe to my players the initial conditions of the battle, the ratio between their forces and the enemy, the geographical location, and let them quickly decide how they intend to position their soldiers. During this phase we also evaluate what specific enemy will fight each unit. This is roughly equivalent to the declaration phase during an individual combat.

### The Missile/Spell Phase

During that phase takes place all ranged attacks. Each unit that does not plan to attack during the melee phase can either shoot once or use one spell. A unit can only target the enemy units that charge it or its neighbouring units (right and left, front if lower). Using missiles or spells count as one of the two actions that a unit can accomplish during a battle round. If a unit uses missiles or spells, it will not be able to counter-attack during the melee phase. Each PC unit also has a chance of being attacked by missile and/or spells during that phase.

Note: Unlike usual in RuneQuest, the use of spell here refers to Battle Magic (or Regimental Magic), a form of magic involving vast amount of power and which spells are able to target every soldiers in a unit. It is only practiced by sorcerer/priest units composed of many magicians, apprentices... It is highly unlikely that players ever belong to such a unit, and so they most probably will be on the "receiving" end of the magical spells.

### **The Melee Phase**

During that phase, the charging unit attack the defending unit and inflicts its damages. The defending unit can then return the blows and inflict its damages.

### **The Result Phase**

During that phase, the loss is calculated and the unit's moral checked. If the battle ends that turn, victory conditions are also evaluated.

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## **The observation phase**

The two armies are in position one in front of the other, and ready to charge. It is time to evaluate the strategic situation, and calculate the modifier to the Army Commander Tactical Roll. There are two possible approaches here:

1/ The game master involves his player in a battle for which the result is already known, only for the glory of "taking part in it". In that case, he may discard completely the random system for the observation phase and set himself the parameters of each turn of battle, leaving the PC to play within a fixed set of events. *For example, the GM may decide that at the third turn of the battle, the enemy general makes a huge tactical blunder, giving the PC's side a major advantage, or the opposite.*

2/ The Game master decides that the result and the conditions of the battle are unknown. He will have each of the players around the table roll the dices for the army general during one of the battle turn, and everyone must play within the situation generated by the dice. Or one of the PCs is the army commander and will roll the dice each turn.

Whether or not the course of the battle is set, the conditions under which both armies are fighting influence the army commander tactical roll. The situation modifiers are added to the Army Commander tactical skill value.

The following table gives some examples of such modifiers:

### Situation Modifiers

You have numeric superiority of 5 to 1	+50%
You have numeric superiority of 4 to 1	+40%
You have numeric superiority of 3 to 1	+30%
You have numeric superiority of 2 to 1	+20%
You have numeric inferiority of 2 to 1	-20%
You have numeric inferiority of 3 to 1	-30%
You have numeric inferiority of 4 to 1	-40%
You have numeric inferiority of 5 to 1	-50%
You are defending a fortified position	+20%
You have the advantage of higher ground	+10%
You are charging from the lower ground	-10%
Your troops are strongly motivated (defending their homes...)	+20%
Your troops lack motivation or discipline	-15%
Your troops are fighting under a well respected leader	+10%
Your troops lack confidence or respect for their leader	-15%
Quality of the enemy leader, intelligence (or lack of it)....	variable

### 1/ The Army Commander Tactical Roll

At some time, you're army commander gives the order to charge or counter charge.

*...The entire line of battle rush toward the enemy lines. Sweat roll down your face, you're ears are filled with the battle cries, the rolling thunder of horses charging, the pleas of the wounded and the smell of blood... Before you dive into the fray, you're last thought is for your general, and the hope that he chose a wise strategy and a proper timing...*

The initial placement of the troops, the battle plan and the timing of the attack are all things represented into the Army commander tactical roll. It will affect the conditions under which each of the various units of the army fight, and the loss of the NPCs. Since this battle system revolves around the PCs, only one roll is made by the PC's army commander, with the modifiers coming from the battle conditions. **The army commander rolls 1D100 and compares it to the sum of its *Tactic* skill and the situation modifier.** This roll is done once per battle round, and represents the orders of the army general. They will directly affect the rate of casualties among the units from both sides that do not include at least one PC (usually the majority). The tactical skills of the enemy general are reflected in the situation modifiers: as a rule of thumb, I usually use the difference between the *Tactic* skills of the two generals. However, in certain

situations (ambush...) the difference can be multiplied by two or three to reflect the increased importance of proper initial placement of troops, deployment or strategy...

### Army Commander Tactical Roll

<i>Result</i>	<i>AC Mod.</i>	<i>Friend's Fate</i>	<i>Foe's Fate</i>
Critical Success	-20%	Marginal losses	40% losses (20% killed, 10% wounded, 10% captured)
Special Success	-10%	5% losses (5% Killed)	20% losses (10% killed, 5% wounded, 5% captured)
Success	-5%	10% losses (5% Killed, 5% wounded)	20% losses (10% killed, 5% wounded, 5% captured)
Failure	+10%	20% losses (10% killed, 5% wounded, 5% captured)	10% losses (5% Killed, 5% wounded)
Fumble	+25%	40% losses (20% killed, 10% wounded, 10% captured)	Marginal losses

### 2/ PC Unit situation roll

The random unit situation roll is used to simulate the multiple small fights taking place inside of the large battle. Each PC unit must determine the type and strength of the enemy that it will fight this turn.

*...Your unit is moving toward the enemy. Through the visor of your helm, you desperately try to assess the situation. Where you are in the attack line, where is the enemy and how powerful is it? The fighter line accelerates; you rush forward in a cloud of dust and emerge in full view of your opponents...*

**It is time for the commander of each unit containing PC to do its situation rolls.** Do not forget to **add the modifier from the the Army commander tactical roll to each of your dice rolls.** These rolls will set the situation immediately surrounding each PCs, and I usually have them rolled by each of my players unless two or more chose to stay together, in which case I make them roll in alternance.

### Encounter Table

<i>Result</i> <i>D100 + AC Mod.</i>	<i>Type of Foe</i>
01-05	The worst unit in the enemy army (Baggage train Wagoner's, slaves...)
06-25	Poor unit (serf militia...)
26-40	Inferior unit (small orcs scouts...)

41-60	Standard unit (infantry...)
61-75	Superior unit (great orcs...)
76-95	Excellent unit (heavy cavalry, orc boar riders...)
96-00	Bingo, the most powerful unit in the enemy army (Black Knights of Ockless...)

As you can see, if your army general makes a major blunder, you could actually be facing the most powerful enemy unit on a roll of 71-00, as Sir Storm discovered during the "Bloody Bridge Battle"! It is also impossible to fight the rear of the enemy (weakest units) unless your general succeeds in his tactical roll.

### Odds Ratio Table

<i>Result D100 + AC Mod.</i>	<i>Odd Ratio Mod.</i>	<i>Ratio of Forces</i>
01-05	-20%	Your unit completely surrounds the enemy's unit
06-25	-10%	Your unit greatly outnumbers your enemy's unit
26-40	-5%	Your unit outnumbers the enemy unit
41-60	0%	Your unit evenly matches the enemy unit
61-75	+5%	Your unit is outnumbered
76-95	+10%	Your unit is badly outnumbered
96-00	+20%	You are completely surrounded

You also have a much greater chance to fight outnumbered if your general goofed off... The conditions of the fight have now been set-up for each unit containing at least one PC. Let the battle start...

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## The missile/spell phase

The missile/spell rules are the least developed in this system. I did not want to be bothered spending twenty minutes figuring where missiles landed and inventing a new complex battle magic system. As a result, everything is handled by a few dice rolls:

1/ Each PC unit can be the target of enemy missiles or spells. **This roll is modified by the Army Commander Tactical Roll:** If your general made a wrong decision, you may be more exposed to the enemy's archers or magicians....

I usually don't bother calculating various **Mi** values for individual enemy units, but

just globally assign an average **Mi** number for the entire enemy army (depending of the ratio of missile versus melee troops, the quality of training...) and uses the table below to modulate the strength of the attack on each PCs unit. This is basically a "luck" roll made by the Player whose character is in the unit.

<i>Result D100 + AC Mod.</i>	<i>Type of Missile/Spell Attack</i>
01-05	No enemy fire, you escape untouched from the fray...
06-25	A few scattered missiles fall on your ranks: - 15 % to the missile attack skill...
26-40	A poor missile unit is trying to aim at you: -5 % to the missile attack skill...
41-60	A standard unit is aiming at you: No modifier to the missile attack skill...
61-75	A good missile unit takes you for target: +5 % to the missile attack skill...
76-95	The enemy concentrates fire on your unit: +15 % to the casualty roll...
96-00	The most powerful missile/magic enemy unit's rain death on your men: + 25 % to the missile attack skill...

2/ Each PC unit, if it wishes so, can try to target an enemy unit. In the confusion of a battle, it is not always easy to aim at a specific unit, and most of the time, the arrows will be lost somewhere into the opponent's lines and the killed/wounded will be included in the result of the Army Commander Tactical Roll. In some case however, a unit will be able to specifically support another and some time it will even mistakenly fire at its own troops. Friendly fire did not start during the Gulf War...

This roll is also **modified by the Army Commander Tactical Roll**: If the tactic adopted by your army was poor, you will not be in a proper position to support each other's units.

Each PC unit wishing to use missiles during this phase of the battle must roll on the table to determine if his/her unit can safely aim at a specific target. If a PC unit was assigned to cover another specifically, but does not find an opening to do so. I usually offer the possibility of "hasty fire": Re-roll but add 20% to the dice. It still gives them a chance to fulfil their mission, but the risks taken are reflected by the now 25% chance of friendly fire. This is not advised if your general put his troops in a poor formation...

<i>Result D100 + AC Mod.</i>	<i>Type of Missile/Spell Attack</i>
01-05	You are in position to aim at any unit attacking you or the other PC's unit: Pick your target.

06-40	You can aim at any enemy unit charging you or at the enemy unit attacking another PC unit. Randomly select 1D3 PC unit and choose one of their opponent.
41-60	You can aim at any enemy unit charging you or at one enemy unit attacking another PC unit. Determined the other PC unit at random.
61-95	You can only aim at an enemy target directly charging you. If none does, you cannot fire this turn.
96-00	Friendly fire: Your men accidentally target another PC's unit at random.

3/ Evaluation of the damages done to and by the PC units. This is evaluated by **comparing the attacking unit's Missile (Mi) value to the defending unit's armour (A) value on the resistance table to determine the missile attack skill and rolling a D100.** The results are directly read on the casualties table.

### Missile Casualties table

<i>Missile attack roll</i>	<i>Casualties in target unit</i>
Critical Success	40% losses (20% killed, 20% wounded)
Special Success	20% losses (10% killed, 10% wounded)
Success	10% losses (5% Killed, 5% wounded)
Failure	None
Fumble	10% losses (5% Killed, 5% wounded) in the <b>ATTACKING</b> unit

Note: if the missile are fired into a unite in close battle formation, the missile value has a bonus of +1. If the enemies are dispersed, this bonus does not apply.

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## The melee phase

### 1/ Unit Commander Tactical Roll

Each unit including a PC has now an opponent, and the unit commander quickly try to put his men in position. This is the chance for the local commander to compensate the blunder of the headquarters, or for the troops to ruin the stroke of tactical genius from their general. The unit commander tactical roll his **not affected by any modifier**, but will only affect the fighting of the PCs and NPCs of this unit during the round of battle. Basically, it translates how well the local commander organises his men to fight within the specific situation.

**The unit commander rolls 1D100 and compares it to his *Tactic* skill.**

<i>Result</i>	<i>Combat Roll Modifier</i>
Critical Success	+20%
Special Success	+10%
Success	+5%
Failure	-10%
Fumble	-25%

This dice modifier will be added to the Combat Roll of the unit and to each skill used during the fight by the PCs. This reflects the conditions of the fighting (light, ground...)

## 1/ Combat of the Player Characters

Each PC present in the unit has to fight individually against one or more opponent. The combat is handled using the normal RuneQuest combat rules.

- If their unit is encircling the enemy, the PCs can chose to attack or not one opponent of their choice, and they can even attack him together.
- If their unit has numerical superiority, the PCs can choose to attack or not. If they attack, the opponent is randomly determined
- If their unit evenly matches the enemy unit, the PCs must fight one opponent randomly determined.
- If their unit is outnumbered, the PCs must fight 1D3 opponents determined randomly.
- If their unit is encircled, the PCs each have to fight 3 opponents determined randomly.

The possible opponents are:

Common Soldier	(1-5/D10)
Veteran Soldiers	(6-7/D10)
Standard Bearer	(8/D10)
Leader of the Unit	(9/D10)
Special Character	(10/D10)

Veterans are superior soldiers, usually stronger, more experienced and better armed. The standard Bearer is often the "champion" of the unit. He carries the flag/vexillum which is the symbol of the unit's honour, and its presence has a strong effect on the moral of the soldiers. A unit standard can only be captured in two ways:

- By killing the Standard Bearer in individual combat and grabbing it.
- By routing the unit.

The unit's leader can either be a young knight or a seasoned sergeant, but its presence is critical for the morale of the unit.

Special characters are NPCs that are not part of a specific unit, but may have joined it either accidentally or as unit commander. They have names and are integral part of the campaign. *King Skilful* from Indic, or *Euryptus the bold* are example of special characters. When a special character joins a unit, he automatically assumes command of it, unless the unit is already commanded by a PC or a special character of higher Honour.

The following table gives the probability to find a special character within a unit.

<i>Probability (D100)</i>	<i>Unit Type</i>
01-02	Poor
01-05	Inferior
01-10	Standard
01-20	Superior
01-30	Excellent
01-50	Elite

The PCs each fight their individual combat. **They must add the modifier resulting from the Unit Commander Tactical Roll to each skill used during the fight.** This represents the conditions of the combat around them. Even if they have to fight three opponents at once, as a result of poor tactical skill from their general, they may still manage to do it with a +20% bonus. If they are incapacitated, they can try an Honour roll for the enemy to recognize them and eventually capture them for ransom. During the battle round, PCs fighting within the same unit can assist each other, but not PCs from different units. The NPCs are not supporting PCs unless they are the leaders of the unit.

## **1/ Combat of the NPCs**

The fate of all the NPCs not members of a unit containing or commanded by PCs is fixed by the [Army Commander Tactical Roll](#).

For each unit containing PCs, the combat will be resolved by rolling two D100: an attack roll and then a damage roll.

### **The NPCs attack roll**

The NPCs attack roll is by opposing the unit's Melee (Me) value to the enemy's Melee value on the Resistance Table (RuneQuest p.37). This gives a percentage to which the **modifier resulting from the Unit Commander Tactical Roll must be added.** The player whose PC is commanding the unit roll the dice (D100) as for a normal attack. He then reads the results on the NPCs attack table.

<i>NPC attack result</i>	<i>Damage Value</i>	<i>Enemy Armour value</i>
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Critical Success	Critical Attack value	0
Special Success	Special Attack value	Normal Armour value
Success	Normal Attack value	Normal Armour value
Failure	None	None
Fumble	Enemy's damage value	Unit's Armour value

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## The result phase

Weapons that can impale double the attack value if the unit makes a special attack roll, but the unit must change weapons after that attack or the following attacks are at half the normal attack value. On a critical attack, the defending unit's defence value is 0 unless it is protected by spells like damage resistance and fend blow.

## To Be Continued Soon...



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*Last Updated 10/11/96*

*Please notify [Frederic Moulin](#) for additions, corrections, or changes.*