

BATTLE REPORT BELGRADE 1456



Belgrade Battle Report

It was on a snowy February Sunday morning that more than 190 stone of British manhood belonging to thirteen members of The Son's of Simon De Montfort wargames club (SODS), descended upon Quorn Hall in Leicestershire to re fight the Battle of Belgrade 1456.



The massive siege guns blasted three large breaches in the city walls which heralded the beginning of the mass Ottoman attack. Mike, Gary and Barry launched their azab archers and spearmen towards the walls. With battering rams, siege towers, scaling ladders and pavisses for protection; these boys meant business! At first the withering shooting from the Christian archers in the wall towers checked the advance, but slowly, as the azabs started to return fire, the Ottomans approached the walls. Apposing them, defending the walls, were three formidable Christian generals led by Paul H (Giovanni Capistrano). With Chris L to his left he was supported by arguably the greatest exponent of defensive warfare ever to grace the wargames table. In fact, it would be fair to say that Chris can turn the static hold of any defensive position into a relative work of art!

In contrast, Dave M, Paul's right hand man, immediately flung open the gate and launched an early counter-attack with his armoured infantry into the heart of Gary's assault troops and threatened the Ottoman siege guns. This ambitious gamble managed to disrupt the attackers for a number of game turns until Gary's spearmen and azabs eventually surrounded them.

In the centre Paul S (Mehmet II) steadily advanced his Janissaries and elite Qapikulu cavalry towards the retinue troops of Janos Hunyadi (Trevor B), the overall commander of the Christian forces. With the finest troops of both sides facing each other, this was always destined to become round after round of medieval butchery, with no side willing to give ground or quarter.

On the left flank under the command of Dave G and Roger W, the akinjis and sipahis of the massed Ottoman cavalry were launched towards the mixed troops of the Christian right under Mark B and Graeme S. It was fairly obvious by the grins on their faces that the Ottoman cavalry commanders fancied their chances of smashing through their 'inferior' opponents, with Graeme's command comprising mostly militia spearmen and mounted sergeants, plus only two units of heavy cavalry. However, Mark's warwagons and supporting infantry would prove a very tough nut to crack! And so it was that he did his impression of Stonewall Jackson as wave after wave of frustrated sipahis were bounced off his unbroken line of medieval tanks!

On the walls of Belgrade the Christian defenders held firm as the Ottomans surged through the breaches made by the massive siege guns, only to be confronted by a hastily constructed second barrier of wagons bravely defended by peasants and town militia. Thankfully for the Christians, the battering rams failed to smash open the gates, which would have given them even more holes to plug.



By lunchtime Graeme's cavalry had lost both ground and troops to the relentless advance of the sipahis, and were forced to seek refuge behind his militia spearmen occupying the slopes of the escarpment just in front of his own table edge. To their left the warwagons held firm as Paul S focussed his main attack upon Janos Hunyadi's forces in the centre. This proved decisive, because during this pivotal encounter Janos was killed, and by mid- afternoon his troops were retreating back to the walls of Belgrade. As a result the left wing of Mark's line of warwagons became exposed as the sipahis swarmed through the gap in the Christian lines.

Belgrade was still holding firm thanks to the herculean efforts of Paul H and his supporting generals. Then something surreal occurred; Chris L launched an attack! He sent two units 'forward' through one of the gates which caught Barry by surprise, in fact, this unusual occurrence left everyone stunned! This sortie fragmented the Ottoman assault along a large section of wall scattering the attackers. Great stuff Chris!

Unfortunately, by this stage of the game attrition had reduced the Christian numbers in the centre section of the wall and the Ottoman infantry began to gain a strong presence inside the city, and cause even greater losses to the defenders as they tried in vain to push them back. Mike C, who had been attacking relentlessly all day, now mustered enough Ottoman troops to attack both left and right inside the walls. As a direct result of this, Giovanni Caspirano was eventually killed and the Christians last hope of victory died with him. A great and very decisive Ottoman victory was thereby declared, and accepted by 4.15 on a Sunday afternoon.

And so it came to pass that with the fall of Belgrade, the whole of Western Europe was laid open for the Ottomans to conquer. Once more the SODS had created an alternative history in which Mehmet II's Ottomans armies can invade Britain at just the right time to play their part in the Wars Of The Roses!



Paul K.