

BATTLE REPORT

GETTYSBURG

1863



Gettysburg Battle Report

And so it came to pass that twelve intrepid members of the illustrious SODS wargames club faced the challenge of re-fighting the first day of the battle of Gettysburg. The first challenge of the day was definitely mine - as game organiser, I needed to find two 'volunteers' to become C in Cs for the day. Thankfully, Mike and Kevin stepped up to the plate with only a little persuasion. Mike took charge of the Union forces and Kevin the Southerners. Mike took possession of the gaming room so that he and rest of his generals could study the terrain, brigades available for immediate deployment, and plan their defence of the battlefield. Meanwhile, Kevin lead his merry men into the next door room to plan strategy and tactics, armed only with lists of available brigades of the army of Northern Virginia and Gettysburg book by Osprey - these boys were keen to re-write history!



Mike, knowing that his side would be out-numbered, delegated the defence of Mcphersons Ridge and farm to Dave and Trevor respectively, with Barry covering the centre-right with the veteran Cutlers brigade and supporting batteries. This was all fine and dandy, but this left the vital oak hill to the north still to be defended. It is at times like these that every commander-in-chief looks to a general with special, often unique, specialised qualities that set him aside from more ordinary generals. With Oak hills lonely, verdant slopes, standing alone, yet providing a vital bastion against the forthcoming southern onslaught, only one man could ever be up to such a daunting task.. this was a job for Chris! Mind you, for this great undertaking he was entrusted with the finest troops in the entire Union army - the dreaded Iron Brigade! I'm sure it was with a trembling hand that Mike passed these chaps to his star general?



And so to battle! Kevin launched Heth's 2nd division across the river under the generalship of Paul H, Dave and Karl to face the withering fire of Devlins carbine armed troopers. Meanwhile, to the north Roger West pushed the lead brigades of Penders 3rd division forward against the Iron Brigade. The Union small arms and artillery fire decimated the advancing southerners, but there were a hell of a lot of 'em and hordes more still trying to get onto the field. After a couple of punishing game turns the southern infantry were in a position to charge the defenders of Mcphersons ridge and Oak Hill. And so with a rebel yell they charged and succeeded in routing a number of union regiments defending Mcpherson ridge. Mcpherson farm and the Iron brigade defending Oak Hill were shaken a little but still held firm. At this point Trevor who was in charge of the defence of Mcpherson farm stood up and moved around to the rebel side of table and took a seat from which he could better orchestrate the farms defence. He certainly wasn't going to give up the farm without a very bloody fight!



With the first four game terms completed the Union brigades were still just about holding the forward positions with the help of very effective artillery support. Chris' Iron brigade were slowly giving ground on Oak Hill to the north. Trevor, in the centre, doggedly fought on in Mcpherson's farm with the support of Mike and Barry whose brigades were positioned either side of the railway cutting. To the south Dave had just started to withdraw from Mcpherson's ridge in the knowledge that the Union 3rd division had just arrived on Seminary Ridge to establish a second line of defence. With plenty of Union artillery at his disposal and open ground to fire down upon, it was a formidable defensive position. At this stage of the battle, despite heavy losses, Kevin's gallant crew were gradually squeezing the Union forces back on both flanks.



At midday, when Gary and Kevin lead the bulk of Rhodes Division onto the northern end of the battlefield, the last of the Union reserve brigades were thrown against them. Stones brigade was demolished by the southerners' onslaught, but its destruction bought time for Barry to re-deploy the veteran Cutler's brigade and launch a very successful counter attack. At the same time Barry established another line of defence with Stannards brigade forming behind a formidable line of artillery. The rapid southern advance with such concentrated forces limited their space to deploy and exposed their ranks to Union artillery fire from the northern end of Seminary Ridge.

On the south side of the battlefield Paul H advanced his southerners across the open ground towards Seminary Ridge only to be stalled by the withering artillery fire. The Union brigades in the centre made a final advance towards Mcphersons farm to support Trevor's stubborn defence. This was, alas, to no avail as Dave and Karl had sacrificed three brigades to capture it and now stood waist deep in the blood and gore but triumphant in their final occupation. To their left Roger West had all but captured Oak Hill, the remnants of the Iron Brigade just about hanging on thanks to Barry's support.





As the afternoons butchery drew to a close it was clear that Kevin's southerners had succeeded, or would succeed in capturing Mcpherson's farm and ridge as well as Oak wood. However, they had failed to secure a road into Gettysburg, and although the Union troops were gradually falling back towards Seminary Ridge they still held a very strong position. Union artillery could still control the open ground in front of the ridge and it would take a number of game turns for the southerners to re-organised their shattered brigades in order to undertake another major assault. This could not be achieved before nightfall. In the objectives captured points count, the south achieved a very marginal victory. Well done Kevin's crew! But Mike's Union forces had replicated the achievements of 1st July. They had stalled the southern advance, drawn Lee into battle and committed the rest of the Union army to advance on Gettysburg. The Army of Northern Virginia would again surely bleed to death in two more days of uphill assaults against strong Union defensive positions!

Paul K.