Battle of Prairie Grove

December 7, 1862

By Doug Lange and Rich Hasenauer

After the battle of Pea Ridge, the Confederate Army of the Trans-Mississippi was ordered east. Many Missourians refused to cross the Mississippi River and returned home to wage a guerilla war against the Federal forces occupying the state. Brig. Gen. John M. Schofield, commander of the Federal Army of the Frontier, was able to break up most of these partisan bands and drive them south into Arkansas, where they joined a new Confederate army being raised by Maj. Gen. Thomas C. Hindman.

Schofield, believing the approaching winter was too harsh for campaigning, left Brig. Gen. James G. Blunt in northwest Arkansas with 5,000 men of the Kansas Division, and ordered Brig. Gen. Francis. J. Herron to march the two Missouri divisions, totaling 6,000 men, back to Springfield. In ill health, Schofield returned to St. Louis to recover, and he appointed Blunt as overall commander of the two widely separated forces in his absence.

In late November, the ever-aggressive Blunt advanced deeper into Arkansas. At Caine Hill he attacked and defeated a Rebel cavalry force under Brig. Gen. John S. Marmaduke. Instead of falling back after his victory, Blunt ordered Herron to be prepared to march on short notice, and he waited to see what Hindman, only 30 miles away, would do.

Hindman had assembled a large force of 11,000 men, but his Arkansas conscripts were of doubtful loyalty, food and forage was scarce, and there were shortages of horses, wagons, arms and ammunition. He planned to invade Missouri in the spring, but Blunt's isolated force presented an opportunity. Hindman marched through the Boston Mountains and reached Prairie Grove Arkansas on Dec. 7, placing his army squarely between Blunt and Herron. The two Union forces, however, were now only a few miles apart, after Herron completed an epic 100-mile force march in just three days.

Herron, believing he faced only enemy cavalry on the wooded ridge of Prairie Grove, launched an attack which was met by a wall of Rebel infantry. Outnumbered and beaten, Herron's troops were forced back to the protection of their artillery.

Blunt, after taking a detour around the Confederate army, came to the aide of Herron late in the day. Attacking a mile to the west of Herron's position, Blunt also ran into superior numbers as Hindman turned his forces around to face him. Night brought an end to the heavy fighting. The Union suffered 1,200 casualties. The Confederates lost 1,300 men. Blunt wanted to renew the fight the next morning, but Hindman, who was nearly out of ammunition, decided to quit the field. Dispirited and hungry, many of his troops deserted during the retreat.

The Scenario

The Prairie Grove scenario is designed to simulate the battle fought in Arkansas on December 7th, 1862, between the Union Army of the West and the Confederate Army of the Trans-Mississippi. Players can recreate the historical Union assault on Prairie Grove Ridge, or carry out the original Confederate plan to attack an isolated Union command before the Union Army could unite. The scenario allows for both possibilities.

This is an introductory game using a small number of brigades. It can be played by two Union and two or three Confederate players, takes about five hours to play, and requires a 5-ft. deep by 7-ft. wide gaming area when using 15mm figures. The scenario is played at the 150-scale.

Terrain

Terrain should be laid out as shown in the scenario map below. Terrain effects for the scenario are as follows:

Elevations. Three elevations are shown on the map. The large, wooded, two-level plateau in the center of the battlefield is called Prairie Grove. Crawford Hill is a single-level elevation along the north table edge, and a small, single-level elevation knoll lies between Prairie Grove and the Illinois River.

All elevations do not have a crest line. An elevation only block line of sight when it lies between two units on lower ground. Only the first 3" of each level is considered a slope. The top surface beyond the 3" slope is treated as flat ground. Artillery located on an elevation may fire over intervening troops and woods located on lower ground. In charge combat, a defending unit only receives a +1 modifier for favorable ground against an attacker charging up the slope of Prairie Grove or Crawford Hill. The knoll is too minor a terrain feature to warrant a favorable ground modifier.

The Bench The lower-elevation level on its northern face of Prairie Grove Ridge is called *The Bench* for its step-like contour. The Bench has a steep slope that affects movement, line of sight, and combat. A unit or leader moving off road and up or down the lower-level slope must move at the broken-ground rate. Artillery located on the steep slope cannot fire. The second-level of Prairie Grove Ridge, does not affect movement.

The Bench can affect line of sight to or from a unit aligned along the base of its steep slope. The unit lies in a dead zone when conformed to the base of the elevation. It cannot see or be seen by units located above the steep slope. A unit located directly on the steep slope can see and be seen by a unit located on higher or lower ground.

In charge combat, a defending unit receives a +1 modifier for favorable ground against an attacker charging up the steep slope.

Woods are rated broken ground for movement. Line of sight through woods is reduced to 2". Firing stands suffer a -1 modifier for partial cover when firing through woods, or -2 if the target is dismounted cavalry. In charge combat, a defending unit in woods receives a +1 modifier for favorable ground.

Orchard are rated broken ground for movement. They do not affect line of sight or combat.

Streams. Streams are rated broken ground to cross. In charge combat, the defending unit receives a +1 modifier for favorable ground if the attacker charged across a stream. Units in march column, limbered batteries, and leaders on a road may cross a stream without penalty.
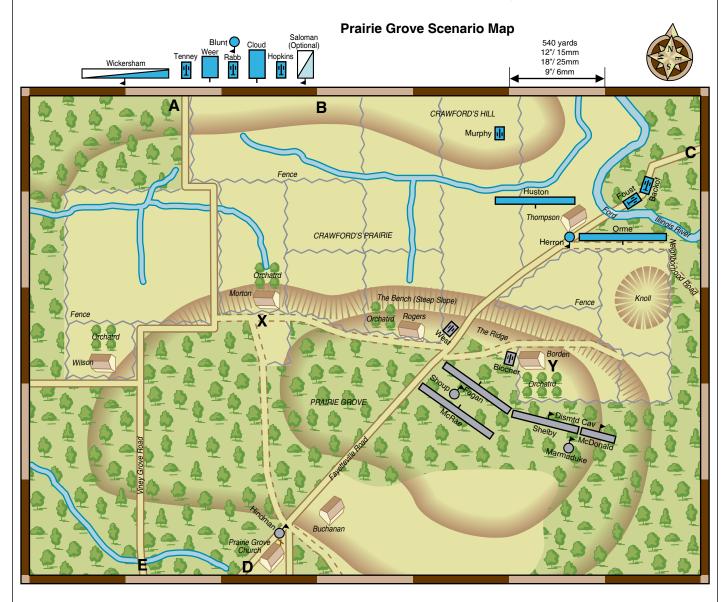
Illinois River. The Illinois River is impassable except at the ford. Units in march column, limbered batteries, and leaders on the road may cross the ford at the open-ground rate.

Roads. The Fayetteville, and Viney Grove roads are in good condition. Units in march column, limbered guns, and leaders may move at the prorated road-movement rate when moving along a good road. All unnamed roads are rated poor. Units moving along a poor road move at the open-ground rate.

Fences. Fences normally have no terrain affect at the brigade-scale, so they are not represented on the battlefield. As an option, fence lines are shown on the map for players who choose to include this added detail. A unit subtracts one from its movement rate to cross each fence line. Once crossed, that section of fence is removed and it no longer affects movement. Fences do not affect line of sight or combat.

Buildings. Buildings are placed just for their visual effect. They have no affect on line of sight, movement or combat.

Prairie Grove Scenario Map

Friendly Table Edge. Broken Union units must retreat toward the north table edge. Broken Confederate units must retreat toward the south table edge. If a broken unit at the table edge fails to reform in the following Maneuver Phase, its remaining stands are removed from play and count towards heavy casualties.

ORDER OF BATTLE

The following numbers of stands are needed:

STAND	UNION	CONFEDERATE
Infantry	29	52
Infantry command	4	5
Cavalry	13(17)	11
Cavalry command	2(3)	2
Dismounted cavalry	10(13)	7
Dismounted cavalry command	2(3)	2
Horse holder	3(4)	3
Artillery (gun with limber)	6	4
Army leader	1	1
Division leader	1	3
Exceptional brigade leader	0	1
Total	71(81)	146

The greater numbers listed in parentheses are the total stands needed when including the optional force.

Union Forces. Total Union stands represent a force of 8,100 (8,850) men and 36 guns. Reinforcements enter without a maneuver check and move at the double-quick rate.

1) Starting units and leaders: Division leader Herron with 2 infantry brigades (Huston and Orme) in line, 1 unlimbered battery (Murphy), and 2 limbered batteries (Backof and Foust).

2) Enter turn 6 west of **A**: Wickersham's Cavalry Brigade in line. Wickersham's horses are worn out (see special scenario rule).

3) Enter turn 8 between **A-B**: Army leader Blunt with 2 infantry brigades (Weer and Cloud) and 1 optional cavalry brigade (Saloman) in field column, and 3 limbered batteries (Tenney, Rabb, and Hopkins).

4) Saloman is an optional force (see special scenario rule).

5) Enter turn 9 at **C**: Bredett's Cavalry Brigade in march column on the road.

6) Batteries are assigned to divisional commands and can only be positioned within the command radius of their respective division leader or higher army leader, or by attaching to any brigade within that division.

7) Army leader Blunt has the same leader modifiers and command radius as a division leader.

8) Blunt and Herron are rated exceptional.

9) Alternate label for dismounted cavalry.

Confederate Forces. Total Confederate stands represent a force of 11,100 men and 24 guns. Reinforcements enter without a maneuver check and move at the double-quick rate.

a) Starting units and leaders:

Army leader Hindman

Division leader Shoup with 2 infantry brigades (Fagan and McRae), and 2 unlimbered batteries (Blocher and West)

Division leader Marmaduke with 2 dismounted cavalry brigades (Shelby and McDonald)

b) Enter turn 5 on the road at **D**: Shaver's Brigade in march column with 1 limbered battery (Roberts), from Frost's Division

c) Enter turn 7 on the road at **D** or **E**: Division leader Frost with Parson's Brigade in march column, and 1 limbered battery (Tilden)

d) Enter turn 7 on the road at **E**: Roane's Brigade in march column.

e) Batteries are assigned to divisional commands and can only be positioned within the command radius of their respective division leader or higher army leader, or by attaching to any brigade within that division.

f) Shelby is rated exceptional.

g) Alternate dismounted cavalry labels. Cavalry start the scenario dismounted. They may change formation to or from dismounted in any turn. Cavalry have the option to permanently dismount without substituting stands with horse holders (see special scenario rule).

GAME LENGTH

Each turn represents 20-minutes. The scenario is played in 15 turns, starting with the Union player turn at 1:00 PM, and ends after the Confederate player turn at 5:40 PM. The last three game turns (5:00-5:40 PM) are in twilight.

Twilight. The gradual fading of light after sunset is represented by reducing the maximum weapon range each turn, starting at 24" on turn 13, reduced to 12" on turn 14, and down to 6" on turn 15. In a maneuver check, a leader's command radius is reduced to 4" during twilight. Firing stands suffer a -2 modifier for full cover when firing during twilight if half or more of the fire points were fired from over 2".

VICTORY CONDITIONS

One side must acquire more victory points than its opponent to claim victory. Victory points are awarded by inflicting heavy casualties and greater losses on the enemy, and occupying the key positions, as follows:

Heavy Casualties. The Confederate player is awarded one victory point for inflicting heavy casualties after the Union army loses 10 (35%) troop and battery stands. The threshold increases to 19 stands lost after Blunt's command enters on turn 8. The Union player is awarded one victory point for inflicting heavy casualties after the Confederate army loses 18 (25%) stands. After an army reaches its threshold for heavy casualties, all brigades receive a -1 modifier in subsequent maneuver checks.

Greater Losses. A second victory condition is achieved and the

modifier increases to a -2 after an army reaches both its heavy casualties threshold and suffers greater losses than the enemy.

Key Position. The high ground called The Ridge between points **X-Y** is a key position under Confederate control at the start of the scenario. The Union player achieves one victory condition if at least one friendly unit is located between and south of **X-Y** at the end of the game. The Confederate player achieves one victory condition if no enemy unit occupies the key position at the end of the game.
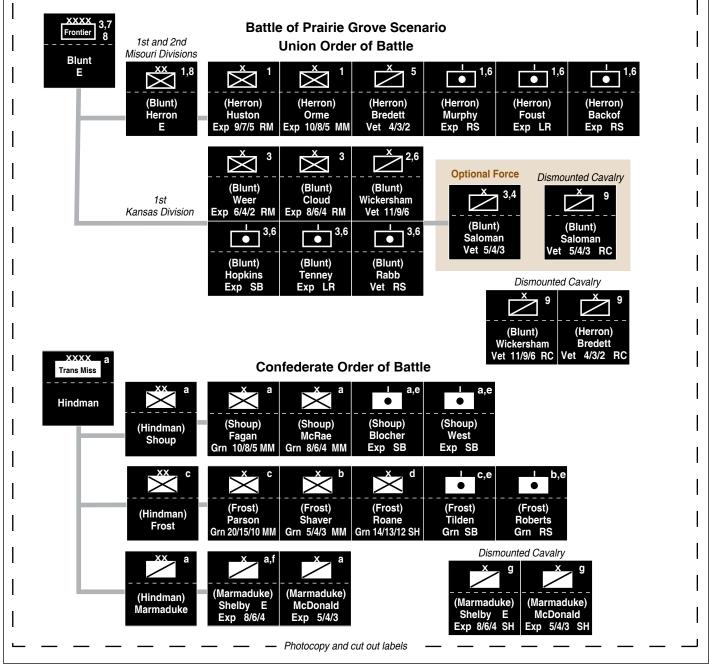
In addition to this victory condition, each turn after a Union unit occupies the key position, all Confederate units receive a -1 modifier in subsequent maneuver checks. If all Union units are pushed out of the key position in a later turn, the modifier is reversed and all Union units suffer the -1 in subsequent checks.

The -1 modifier always applies to the last side to lose the key position.

SPECIAL SCENARIO RULES

Ammunition Supply. The Confederates suffered from an acute shortage of ammunition even before the battle began. Confederate brigades and batteries have a greater chance of suffering a low on ammunition effect in fire combat. They are marked low on ammunition on a base 9 or 10 die result. They may replenish there ammunition.

Optional Force. Historically, Blunt left behind Saloman's Cavalry Brigade to guard the army supply train. Saloman is an optional unit that may enter with Blunt's command on turn 8, if

Battle of Prairie Grove Scenario
Union Order of Battle

1st and 2nd Misouri Divisions

Blunt E

(Blunt) Herron E

(Herron) Huston Exp 9/7/5 RM
(Herron) Orme Exp 10/8/5 MM
(Herron) Bredett Vet 4/3/2
(Herron) Murphy Exp RS
(Herron) Foust Exp LR
(Herron) Backof Exp RS

1st Kansas Division

(Blunt) Weer Exp 6/4/2 RM
(Blunt) Cloud Exp 8/6/4 RM
(Blunt) Wickersham Vet 11/9/6
(Blunt) Hopkins Exp SB
(Blunt) Tenney Exp LR
(Blunt) Rabb Vet RS

Optional Force
(Blunt) Saloman Vet 5/4/3

Dismounted Cavalry
(Blunt) Saloman Vet 5/4/3 RC

Dismounted Cavalry
(Blunt) Wickersham Vet 11/9/6 RC
(Herron) Bredett Vet 4/3/2 RC

Confederate Order of Battle

Hindman

(Hindman) Shoup

(Shoup) Fagan Grn 10/8/5 MM
(Shoup) McRae Grn 8/6/4 MM
(Shoup) Blocher Exp SB
(Shoup) West Exp SB

(Hindman) Frost

(Frost) Parson Grn 20/15/10 MM
(Frost) Shaver Grn 5/4/3 MM
(Frost) Roane Grn 14/13/12 SH
(Frost) Tilden Grn SB
(Frost) Roberts Grn RS

(Hindman) Marmaduke

(Marmaduke) Shelby E Exp 8/6/4
(Marmaduke) McDonald Exp 5/4/3

Dismounted Cavalry
(Marmaduke) Shelby E Exp 8/6/4 SH
(Marmaduke) McDonald Exp 5/4/3 SH

Photocopy and cut out labels

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both sides agree.

Worn Out Horses Wickersham's Cavalry Brigade is mounted on worn out horses. The unit cannot move at the double-quick rate. In charge combat, Wickersham does not receive a modifier for charging over open or broken ground.

Tethered Horses. Confederate cavalry start the scenario dismounted. They may change formation to or from dismounted in any turn. Normally, the combat strength of a cavalry unit is reduced when it dismounts, with every fourth stand in the unit replaced by a horse holder marker. The markers are placed behind the unit and later exchanged for an equal number of cavalry stands when the unit remounts.

As a field expediency rather than tactical doctrine, Confederate cavalry in the Western Theater would tether their horses to nearby trees and bushes. This enabled everyone to join the fight. Confederate cavalry do not have to substitute any troop stand for a horse holder marker, however, if they dismount without exchanging stands for horse holders, they must remain dismounted for the rest of the game.