Julian's guide for ADLG beginners

<u>Why ADLG?</u>

I have played Ancients since 7th Edition and found most rule sets disappointing or downright frustrating as certain armies and troops types were clearly better than others and made for unbalanced games. I finally gave up on Ancients in 2011 and didn't play again until 2015 when I tried a game of ADLG with a friend who explained the basic rules to me in 10 minutes. I was initially put off by the small size of the table and the army. It didn't look like much. However the game was significantly quicker to play and I could reach the other side of the table without standing up and leaning over the table. Any rule set that could allow me to play a game to a conclusion in a couple of hours without reading the rules and without leaving me with a bad back couldn't be bad.

I have since played the game pretty intensively and found it to be like chess: simple to play and deceptively hard to play well. The rules have been extensively play-tested and all troop types are well balanced. I can genuinely say that for the first time, I can take pretty much any army to a competition and have every confidence of success. No longer do I have to watch my legions crawl their way across a table with no hope of ever bringing the game to a conclusion unless my opponent cooperates. Large armies of mediocre and average troops have as much chance of winning a battle as elite armies.

The only real criticism I often hear is that the luck factor plays too big a part in the game. This is true to a certain extent but not enough to alter a simple fact: the better players still win most of their games. One significant advantage of ADLG over previous rule sets is that for the first time, a lucky beginner following a few simple tactics and rules can beat an experienced player.

The purpose of this document is to detail these tactics and rules to give beginners a better chance of winning and make life harder for the more experienced players. This guide is based on my own personal experience and is obviously not <u>the</u> definitive guide but I hope players will find it useful.

Lastly, I would like to thank Tim Porter for reviewing this document.

Army design

1. ## Troop types

   a. Light units:
   Light horse and light infantry. These units have only five purposes in the game:
   - Take the enemy camp and prevent enemy light units from taking yours
   - Screen your main battle line from taking cohesion losses from enemy shooters
   - Inflict cohesion losses by shooting at your opponent's main battle line.
   - Provide overlaps to other units
   - Prevent enemy light units (or in the case of LH, any enemy unit) from evading so battle units can engage them.

   Any other use of light units is a waste of initiative points and will cause you to unnecessarily lose army cohesion points. Light units only have two cohesion points and are very fragile. Do not commit them to melee unless you have no other choice.

   b. Support units:
   LMI (javelinmen, bowmen, and crossbowmen), artillery, and levy. These units exist to support your battle units in combat by inflicting cohesion losses on enemy battle units at a distance and where possible to provide overlaps. Javelinmen are also the answer to elephants. Levy can also be used as cheap second line units to replace losses to the front line. They will likely not win but they will deny two overlap factors to your opponent and prevent flank charges.

   c. Battle units:
   All other units. These are the units which will win the battle. Support and light units can NEVER win the game on their own, only battle units can achieve this.

2. ## Generals

   a. Ordinary:
   They generate 2 to 4 initiative points and have a 4 MU command radius (8 MU for lights). An ordinary general's command should be designed to work with a maximum of two groups: two battle/support unit groups or a battle/support unit and a light unit group. Any more and you will inevitably lose control of part of your command through a shortage of initiative points. Typically, you would use an ordinary general in command of a delaying command on a flank with cavalry and light units or in the centre with a block of HI with some support units and LI.

   b. Competent:
   They generate 2 to 5 initiative points and have a 6 MU command radius (12 MU for lights). Thanks to their increased command radius they can be used to command a flank command intended to fight the enemy. However, like the ordinary general you should design the command to work on the assumption of 2 initiative points per turn. He should never participate in a melee unless victory is almost assured and for the express purpose of speeding up the victory of that melee.

   c. Brilliant:

They generate 3 to 5 initiative points and have a 8 MU command radius (16 MU for lights). This is the preferred commander to lead your battle winning command as he can effectively move three separate groups every turn. He should never participate in a melee unless victory is almost assured and for the express purpose of speeding up the victory. Even then he should not be committed to a melee until the army victory is in sight.

d. Strategist:
They generate 3 to 6 initiative points and have a 8 MU command radius (16 MU for lights). Same as a brilliant general except they give you an extra initiative point and terrain roll for deployment, as well as an additional Ambush Marker, both of which can be important for terrain dependent armies. Never commit him to a melee unless the army is about to rout that turn.

What combination of generals to use is difficult to give advice on but generally speaking it is better to have as many good generals as possible. You will rarely have more initiative points than you need. You can run small armies with three ordinary generals but you will need a very simple battle plan. Equally, large armies will need at least two, preferably three competent generals just to get the whole army moving.

Including generals in units to save points is generally a bad idea unless

a. they are commanding a small delaying command and are included in a cavalry unit that can evade. These generals can also be made unreliable as with this type of command it is often not a problem if the general does turn out unreliable.

b. they are ordinary and with a hard hitting combat unit (Elephants, Knights) usually as part of a small command. This also means your plan needs to be able to account for them being killed - usually because the rest of the command is likely also to have been destroyed too by this point.

3. **Commands**

Commands can be organised as either simple or complex commands.

A simple command (see appendix C) has one purpose: to fight, shoot or delay. A simple fighting command will consist of a monolithic block of battle troops with light units as a screen and maybe one support unit. A simple shooting command will have two or three LMI bowmen/javelinmen with one or two lights and enough cavalry to effectively protect the LMI from enemy mounted. A simple delaying command will have one or two lights, two cavalry units and maybe one LMI. An ordinary or competent general can command these.

A complex command (see appendix B) is like a Swiss knife: it has every kind of unit. It is usually commanded by a Strategist or a Brilliant general and deployed late in the deployment sequence so you can deploy the units in it in the right place. The decisive units (javelinmen if facing elephants or knight facing infantry for example) only number one or two units and can be deployed in a second line. As the battle progresses, the front line will use 'shifts' to open gaps where the decisive units can be inserted for maximum effect. This is hard to achieve hence the need for better generals.

Small armies with two or even three complex commands can makes it very difficult for larger enemy armies to find an obvious weak spot to exploit. This is particularly useful with low initiative armies that are likely to defend and deploy first. Conversely large armies can be set up with two simple commands on the flanks and one complex command in the centre that can support either of the flank commands as required.

4. **Terrain**

Terrain usually falls in the flanks and you should design your commands with this in mind. However, don't obsess about it. If your army doesn't have terrain troops then don't go near it and let your opponent come to you. This is why you should not rely on terrain to win the battle and you should design your army accordingly.

5. **Deployment**

Keep it tight. If you deploy your three commands in a solid line you have just two exposed flanks. As soon as you start breaking up that line you create additional flanks. An experienced player will exploit these to his benefit much better than whatever advantage you think you will gain by creating these extra flanks.

If you maintain a solid line throughout the game you are taking away a lot of advantages from an experienced player. You are forcing them to play your game and forcing them into a frontal assault where dice will be more important than skill.

Don't worry too much about bad match-ups. These are preferable than giving extra overlap factors and openings to your opponent.

6. **Battle**

a. Do not be too aggressive with your light troops. They have only two cohesion points and experienced players will try to kill those units before they try to attack heavier and more resistant units. A very simple rule to follow systematically with light troops is to place a marker where you want to move your light units. If an enemy unit can be placed behind them to prevent an evade move then you DO NOT want to move your light units there. This also applies to non-light units that can evade. When you use LI to screen your battle troops, keep them as the front rank of the group. If you detach them, you run the risk of their retreat being cut off and if they are charged their evade move will likely place them in the death zone of the battle units they are screening. This is bad on two counts: you will have to spend initiative points to move them away and if you don't and your battle units die they will take a cohesion point loss or will be automatically eliminated if the enemy unit pursues into them.

b. Secure your flanks with flank guards. An experienced player will almost always be able to out manoeuvre you on the flanks and concentrate more units there. Until you have acquired sufficient experience to counter them, the best flank guard is a HI, spearmen in a second line behind the flank unit (see appendix C). When the enemy units threaten the flank, the HI spearmen need only turn 90 degrees and wheel towards the flank to stop a flank charge. It will now take your opponent another two turns before he can attack the flank of the HI spearmen and with four cohesion points it will take him two turns to kill it. Normally, the main battle in the centre will be over in the four turns it takes to kill the HI spearmen protecting your flank. These spearmen can be mediocre so you can successfully protect your two flanks with 12 points and potentially sacrificing only 4 army cohesion points for a chance of victory!

c. Protect your baggage. Unless you are playing with a large army, you may be best to fortify your baggage (if allowed by your list, see appendix B and C) until you gain more experience. With a small to medium sized army you can easily spend a lot of initiative points and detach valuable units to protect enemy moves against the camp. For 6 points you will effectively discourage most players as light units cannot take fortified camps. You will also gain 1 army cohesion point.

For a very small investment, you will be able to concentrate on fighting and winning the battle rather than worrying about and protecting your camp against enemy light troops.

d. As a general rule, the more combat dice you are rolling the better your chances of winning. A good player with roll up a flank or exploit a weakness in your line and will win the battle with as few combats as they can manage. All of them will be in their favour and with fewer committed units they minimize their potential losses. Your sole aim in the game is to engage as many of your battle units in combat as possible. It does not matter if the enemy units are better quality or one factor up, just throw as many units at them as possible and at the same time. Trust in the dice until you acquire experience.

e. The above point requires you to have a lot of battle units so play with armies that have at least 25 units (see appendix A and D). A good method of judging army size and resilience is to add up the cohesion points of all your units. Anything with a total of 75 or more is going to be quite resilient. Keep lights to a minimum, never more than 2 LH and 1 LI per command is enough. 2 LH will give you an additional scouting point as well, so 2 is almost a default. Big armies mean you don't have to worry about flanks and can pressure your opponent's. You can throw more battle units into combat and can last longer which means you are rolling more combat dice and for longer all of which is good for you and bad for the better player

f. Play aggressively with your battle units. The longer you take to get into combat, the more time you are giving to your opponent to manoeuvre into a position of advantage. Aggressive tactics can destabilize a more experienced opponent who often take victory for granted and bodge their deployment.

So, to summarise the above: Make it BIG, line it up, keep it tight, go for it and enjoy the game.

Appendix A

Late Carthaginian

This is the list I took to Rollcall 2018 where all lists had to be from 202 BC

Deployment order:

1. Delaying command:
   Ordinary general, included in 1 x HC, elite
   2 x MC, ordinary
   1 x LH, javelin, elite

2. Flank support command:
   Brilliant general
   1 x Elephant, mediocre
   1 x LI, javelin, ordinary
   2 x MI, impact, ordinary
   1 x LMI, javelin, ordinary
   3 x MC, elite
   1 x LH, javelin, elite

3. Centre command:
   Brilliant general
   2 x Elephant mediocre
   2 x LI, javelin, ordinary
   3 x MI, impetuous, ordinary
   4 x HI, spearmen, ordinary
   1 x LMI, javelinmen

   Total units: 25
   Army initiative: 3
   Army cohesion: 75

Army deployment:

The delaying simple command is designed to screen one flank and with 3 cavalry it has enough units to threaten a neglected flank. The included general adds punch to the one decent unit in the command in case I decide to fight. It is deployed first as it reveals little of the overall battle plan.

Next to be deployed is the other flank command which consists of an elephant/MI group with a LI escort for the elephant and a cavalry group. The elephant group can support the cavalry if it is facing better mounted or it can swing the other way to support the centre. The LMI javelinmen is there to face off enemy elephants or if none are present to support the cavalry.

The last command to deploy is the complex command in the centre. By this time, even if I defend, the enemy deployment should be obvious enough to deploy the various elements in the right place. The MI can deployed in between the elephants or a separate group to face the right target. The spearmen can face off enemy mounted or good HI that the elephant/MI will struggle against. The LMI javelinmen is there to face off enemy elephants or if none are present as a reserve or in support of the delaying command.

Of 25 units, 18 are battle units, 2 are support units and 5 are light units. With the LI screening the elephants it has a frontage of 22 MU (88cm) which covers the entire deployment area. It has the ability to manoeuvre and threaten the flanks and enough punch to attack frontally making for good, overall performance.

Appendix B

War of the Roses (Lancastrian)

This is the list I took to the 2017 Hendaye medieval themed competition in France.

Deployment order:

1. Left flank:
   Brilliant general
   1 x LMI, javelin, ordinary
   1 x LI, javelin, ordinary
   1 x MC, impact, ordinary
   1 x LMI, longbow, elite, stakes
   1 x HI, spearmen, mediocre
   2 x HI, 2HW, armour, ordinary

2. Centre:
   Ordinary general
   1 x LI, javelin, ordinary
   1 x HKN, impact, elite
   3 x HI, 2HW, heavy armour, ordinary
   1 x LMI, longbow, elite, stakes

3. Right flank:
   Brilliant general
   1 x LMI, javelin, ordinary
   1 x LI, javelin, ordinary
   1 x MC, impact, ordinary
   1 x LMI, longbow, elite, stakes
   1 x HI, spearmen, mediocre
   2 x HI, 2HW, heavy armour, ordinary

   Fortified camp

   Army units: 21
   Army initiative: 2
   Army cohesion: 67

Army deployment:

This army consists of two flank complex commands each of which is capable of fighting independently and a simple command in the centre. Each flank command is built around a HI spearmen unit which is meant to slow down or give pause for thought to enemy mounted. In combination with the 2HW HI it can give space for the longbowmen to shoot at the enemy from a relatively secure position. The knight and to a lesser extent the MC provide the punch in support of the HI. The javelinmen provide security against elephants or support on the flanks.

Normally, I deploy the centre first as it doesn't give much away and allows me to deploy the flank commands with the units in the right place.

With 20 units it doesn't look like much but it is surprisingly flexible and a difficult challenge for most armies as it combines considerable firepower with good, battle units. With an army cohesion total of 67 it is a little on the brittle side and it needs to be handled carefully to avoid unnecessary losses.

Appendix C

This is the Republican Roman list I took to the 2016 Estella Ancients themed competition in Spain.

1. Left Flank:
   Brilliant general
   4 x HI, impact, ordinary
   1 x HI, spearman, armour, elite
   2 x LI, javelin, ordinary
   1 x MC, ordinary

2. Centre:
   Ordinary general
   4 x HI, impact, ordinary
   2 x LI, javelin, ordinary
   1 x HC, elite

3. Right flank:
   Brilliant general
   4 x HI, impact, ordinary
   1 x HI, spearman, armour, elite
   2 x LI, javelin, ordinary
   1 x MC, ordinary

   Fortified camp

   Army units: 24
   Army initiative: 2
   Army cohesion: 78

Army deployment:

Three simple commands forming of a wall of legionaries with a HI, spearmen to protect each flank and a screen of LI. Each command has a cavalry unit to threaten enemy mounted cavalry by moving behind them and preventing evade moves. The cavalry units are meant to be deployed either between commands or behind them to be committed at the right time. There is no point putting them on the flanks as they will in all likelihood become the only easy targets in the army. The cavalry unit in the centre is upgraded to armoured and elite as it is likely to be used to plug gaps appearing the front line. Another option is to replace it with a mediocre elephant to make life difficult for enemy mounted impact units. The flank command generals are brilliant as they are likely to need more initiative points to deal with flanking moves than the centre command.

The whole idea with this list is to force the opponent to take on the HI and grind him down as nothing else will be within reach. With 14 HI, this army has a lot of cohesion points and few weak points. In its period it is a tough proposition.

Appendix D

Arab Indian

This is the list I took to the Pamplona 2018 medieval themed (no elephants, no pikes) competition in Spain.

1. Left Flank:
   Competent general
   1 x LH, javelin, ordinary
   2 x MC, mediocre
   3 x MC, impact, mediocre
   2 x LMI, bowmen, ordinary
   1 x LI, bow, ordinary

2. Centre:
   Competent general
   4 x MI, impetuous, ordinary
   4 x HI, spearmen, support, ordinary
   1 x LMI, bowmen, ordinary
   2 x HC, impact, ordinary

3. Right Flank:
   Competent general
   1 x LH, javelin, ordinary
   2 x MC, mediocre
   3 x MC, impact, mediocre
   2 x LMI, bowmen, ordinary
   1 x LI, bow, ordinary

   Army units: 29
   Army initiative: 2
   Army cohesion: 87

Army deployment:

The flank commands go down first usually with bowmen on the side of the table with the cavalry next to them. Although mediocre, the sheer number of cavalry units makes these commands a real threat particularly if the bowmen succeed in inflicting losses to opposing troops. The centre command is deployed last as it is important to place the impetuous infantry in the right place with the spearmen and cavalry in support.

At 29 units this army needs three competent generals just to keep everyone in command radius. Its size means that the cavalry wings are often able to envelop at least one if not both enemy flanks while the centre command fixes the attention of the bulk of the enemy's units. With five bowmen it can afford to sit back and shoot a defensive enemy while the cavalry manoeuvres into position and the MI give it enough punch to keep enemy infantry worried. This list is also able to exploit any rough terrain features to its advantage thanks to its MI and LMI. Its sheer size makes it very resilient and you can afford to sacrifice a lot of units to obtain a decisive advantage in the right place.