

Yellow Tavern: a scenario for Honour Games' Longstreet

Introduction

This scenario covers the first stage of the Battle of Yellow Tavern, the day the Confederacy lost its finest cavalry commander, Jeb Stuart. It took place on 11 May 1864 during the Spotsylvania campaign. The Union cavalry under Sheridan had marched around the side of the Confederate army and seemed to be heading for Richmond. Stuart, outnumbered by more than two to one, shadowed the Union Horse, hoping to trap them against the defences of Richmond. At Yellow Tavern, Stuart drew up to one side of the Richmond road, expecting Sheridan to pass him on his way South. Instead, Sheridan turned East to confront Stuart. His target all along had been the Confederate cavalry.

The battle had two main stages. In the first, the Union vanguard assaulted Lomax's Virginian brigade on high ground East of the Pike. Lomax eventually withdrew northwards and in the second stage, the Union Horse assaulted the whole Confederate line from the South. It was during this stage that Stuart was mortally wounded.

This scenario is about the first stage of the battle, for two reasons. The first, practical reason is that I don't have enough painted cavalry to cover the whole battle (10,000 Union versus around 4,000 Rebels). The second is that Federal numerical superiority in the first stage was not so pronounced.

This scenario is small even for Longstreet. It is a real challenge for the Confederacy but by no means a lost cause.

The Map

The map is 36BW square. The Confederates set up first anywhere on the Eastern half of the table. The Federals then deploy Devin's Brigade anywhere up to 8BW in from the Western table edge. Custer's two regiments arrive on the Mountain Road in the first Union turn.

Place one Union objective in the middle of the high ground East of Telegraph Road.

As the break points in this scenario are so low, only start testing for victory when one side reaches 8 losses. Also, victory and objective die rolls should count as D3s not D6, so halve and round up D6 results.



Union. Break point 11
Wesley Merritt's First Division

1st Brigade
BG George A. Custer

5th Michigan 4 seasoned veterans, repeaters
6th Michigan 4 seasoned veterans, repeaters

2nd Brigade
Col Thomas C. Devin

4th New York 4 seasoned veterans, repeaters
6th New York 4 seasoned veterans, repeaters
9th New York 4 seasoned veterans, repeaters
17th Pennsylvania 4 seasoned veterans, repeaters

1st United States, Battery E, 2 stands smoothbore

NB. There were other Union troops arriving on the field during the action but they are not represented because the account I drew on suggests only Devin and two of Custer's regiments were actually engaged in the main assault on Lomax.

Confederate Break point 11
Fitzhugh Lee's Division

Lomax' Brigade
BG Lunsford L. Lomax 1500 men,

5th Virginia 6 seasoned veterans
6th Virginia 6 seasoned veterans
15th Virginia 6 seasoned veterans

Captain William Griffin's Baltimore Light Artillery, 3 stands smoothbores

NB the 1st Maryland didn't join the brigade until after Yellow Tavern.

Sources:

Shelby Foote, The Civil War, volume 3

Online:

https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Spotsylvania_Court_House_Confederate_order_of_battle

https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Spotsylvania_Court_House_Union_order_of_battle

<http://www.historynet.com/battle-of-yellow-tavern.htm>