

## The Wilderness, 5-7 May, 1864

### **Background**

By early 1864, Abraham Lincoln summoned Major-General Ulysses S. Grant to Washington and promoted him to Lieutenant-General, a position last held in the United States army by George Washington. Lincoln wanted Grant, who had been so successful in the western theater, to do what no other Union general seemed capable of: destroy Robert E. Lee's army of Northern Virginia. Grant immediately set out a strategy that would bring an end to the war. As newly appointed overall commander of all Union forces, he ordered General Benjamin Butler to move up the James River and threaten Richmond and Lee from the South. General Franz Sigel was to wreak havoc in the Shenandoah Valley and deprive Lee's army of much needed supplies. Grant himself would accompany General George Gordon Meade and the Army of the Potomac to oversee Lee's eventual destruction, for he knew that not Richmond, but Lee's army was the key to final victory.

In a move that resembled the Federal advance preceding the battle of Chancellorsville almost exactly a year before, Grant ordered his 118,000 man strong army to cross the Rapidan River. He intended to move his four corps through the Wilderness, a huge tract of dense forest just west of the old Chancellorsville battlefield, shielding his army from prying eyes. Warren's V corps and Sedgewick's VI corps were ordered to move along the Germanna Plank Road, running from North West to South East and from there, take the Brock Road towards Spotsylvania Courthouse. Hancock's II corps and Burnside's IX were situated farther to the east.

Upon learning of the Federal's advance, Lee quickly ordered his three army corps to advance onto the Wilderness. Within the tickets of the forest, Lee could offset the Federal's numerical advantage and crush each section in detail. Ewell's II corps advanced along the northern main road running from west to east; the Orange Court House Turnpike. A. P. Hill's III corps moved on a parallel road farther to the south; the Orange Plank Road. Longstreet and his I corps were roughly 40 miles removed from the Wilderness and had to make a forced march in order to link up with the rest of the army in time.

Between May 5<sup>th</sup> and May 7<sup>th</sup>, some of the worst fighting of the Civil War raged within the smothering woods of the Wilderness. Troops on occasion encountered the skeletal remains of the year's previous battle. Roughly 29,000 casualties were sustained in total and the battle ended in a stalemate. Instead of turning back north as the previous commanders of the Army of the Potomac had done, Grant ordered his troops south, much to the delight of his soldiers. Lee outpaced Grant and cut off his advance at Spotsylvania Courthouse on May 9, where for the next several weeks, the carnage continued. Although the battle of the Wilderness is not the bloodiest battle of the war, the late historian Ed Bears described it as "the most terrible battle of the war", because many of the wounded soldiers either burned to death or suffocated in the thick smoke clouds covering the Wilderness as a blanket.

### **Scenario:**

The battle of the Wilderness can be roughly divided into two engagements. Early in the morning of May 5, Warren's V corps was moving south through the Wilderness. Word got out that a large body of Confederates was moving in from the west. Grant, through Meade, ordered Warren to engage any enemy he might encounter. The Confederates in Warren's front were of Ewell's entire II corps. Fighting broke out around 12.30 and raged across the Orange Turnpike for the rest of the day, with Sedgewick's VI corps arriving piecemeal at 15.00, slowly moving south along a dusty off road called the Spottswood Road. There he strengthened Warren's right flank which had been in peril for much of the fighting. Both sides would hammer away at each other for the next 24 hours.

Several miles of near impenetrable undergrowth and trees separated the fighting along the Orange plank Road and that at the Orange Plank Road and Brock Road crossroads. Here a major fight was developing between Union general Winfield Hancock's II corps and Confederate general A.P. Hill's III corps. Hill's men would eventually be pushed back until relieved in the nick of time by Longstreet's I corps on May 6.

This scenario however will focus on the fight between Ewell, Warren and Sedgewick farther north on May 5.

### **The armies:**

#### **Union:**

The Union Army was probably (next to the British and Prussian) the best equipped army in the world by 1864. The army which Grant now commanded in the eastern theater, the Army of the Potomac, consisted of the last remaining volunteers of the early war years, combined with thousands of new volunteer and conscripts. It was by all means, a hodgepodge of experienced, veteran and very green troops, the latter being pulled off of the forts surrounding Washington D.C. Even the famous Iron Brigade, the Union's most elite unit, which suffered heavily at Gettysburg, and now part of Brigadier General James S. Wadsworth's First Brigade of the Fourth Division, had lost most of its fighting prowess. Its depleted ranks were filled with relatively inexperienced troops.

Because of the scope of this battle, it is difficult to assign the different experience levels to individual fighting elements. We have therefore decided to designate the entire Army of the Potomac as 'regular.' We feel that this gives a best representation of the Union troops in May 1864, generally speaking. Of course, players are free to assign particular experience levels to their units where they feel they are most appropriate. All of the Union army specific rules may be used as described in 'The Armies' section in this book.

#### **Confederate:**

The Confederate army by 1864 consisted of mostly hardened veterans, save for the occasional new recruit. Therefore, every unit is considered 'veteran' in this scenario. All the rules for the Confederate army (found in the 'The Armies' section of this book) apply, except for one. At the start of the Spring 1864 campaign, the Army of Northern Virginia was relatively well equipped, rested and fed, therefore, the 'Worn Out' special rule does not apply in this scenario.

#### **Number of turns:**

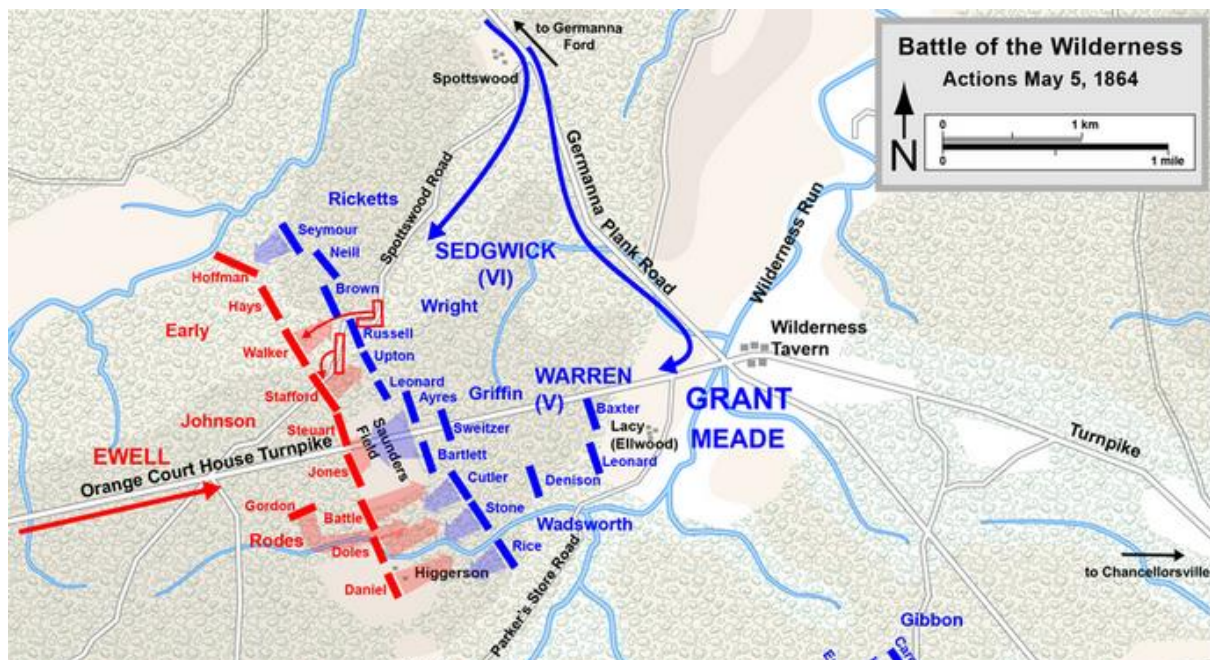
This is a big fight with three corps in total. The game length therefore will be a maximum of 12 turns.

#### **Table:**

Use the biggest table you can find. Most of the table is covered by woods and heavy underbrush. For the underbrush, we have found 'sea foam' very useful. Sea foam can be bought from most model stores or online. Of course players don't need to cover their entire table with it, just some patches here and there will be fine. Directly in the middle of the table is Saunders Field and should not be larger than 25% of the table. The Orange Turnpike runs across it as shown on the map.

## Deployment:

The Confederates are deployed as shown on the map provided with this scenario. The troops that are deployed on the western edge of Saunders Field have 'dug in' and can therefore claim a hard cover bonus (see the rules for 'digging in' in the 'Unit Special Rules' section). General Early arrives at the start of turn 2 moving along the Orange Turnpike. On the Union side, Warren sent two guns from Battery D, 1<sup>st</sup> New York artillery along with Griffin's First division. They start the game limbered on the Orange Turnpike. Warren's Fourth division, commanded by Wadsworth is positioned on the left flank but slightly to the rear. Warren's division will enter the table on turn two as shown on the map. Roll for orders as usual. General Sedgewick's VI corps starts to arrive at the start of turn 4. The regiments in Sedgewick's corps are deployed in marching column and move along the Spottswood Road. Roll for orders as normal, per division. The First division must be deployed first and must leave enough room for the Second division to be placed in any of the consecutive turns (and in turn for the Third division). The 1<sup>st</sup> North Carolina is positioned on the Spottswood Road to hold up Sedgewick's advance. They are dismounted at the start of the game.



## Special rules:

As already mentioned, the Wilderness was an immense forest. Previous generations of settlers had cut many of the trees to stoke their furnaces, resulting in secondary-growth trees and underbrush. The fighting itself covered an area of roughly 70 square miles. The Wilderness is a general's worst nightmare, as the terrain made maneuvering and ordering troops around extremely difficult. We have therefore come up with the following special rules for The Wilderness scenario:

- All orders receive a -1 penalty
- Vision within the Wilderness is restricted to 18" (not Saunders Field)
- Troops within the Wilderness count as being in soft cover
- No brigade formations may be formed

In addition, the smoke that started to envelop the battlefield after the first shots were fired had another huge impact on the visibility of troops. After each turn, the visibility of troops is

reduced by 1". Troops that occupy Saunders Field can see from tree line to tree line. However, the visibility also becomes worse as the battle progresses. After each turn, decrease the visibility, counting from the tree line, by 1". This effectively means that the smoke will drift from the trees towards the center of Saunders Field.

**Fire:** as the day progressed, the dried leaves of the previous Fall that covered the forest floor started to catch fire. This is presented as follows. From turn 8 onwards, whenever a unit within the Wilderness rolls at least one natural 1 during the Shooting phase, the leaves on the ground catch fire. Place a fire marker (which you will need to make yourself) within D10" in the direct center (front) of the firing unit. At the start of each subsequent turn, roll a D10 for that fire marker. On a roll of 1-5, nothing happens. On a roll of 6-10, the fire expands D5" in all directions. Units may not voluntarily move through a fire marker. When forced to move through a fire marker (because of a failed Morale test for example), that unit loses D5 points of Unit Coherency (with all consequences that entails).

### **Objectives:**

The objectives for this scenario are quite straightforward. Grant did not want to fight in the Wilderness. His two to one numerical advantage was lost and he could not bring his superior artillery to bear. Grant instructed Meade to engage any part of Lee's army whenever possible. Lee relished the thought of fighting in the Wilderness, as he knew Grant's army would be slow and his corps separated by quite some distance. If he could get in between two parts of Grant's army, there was a good chance he could deal a crippling blow to the Army of the Potomac

- 1 Victory Point for each destroyed enemy unit
- 5 additional Victory Points for each brigade in which each unit has suffered 50% casualties or more
- The Union players win automatically if the last Confederate unit withdraws at least 12" away from Saunders Field.
- The Confederate players win automatically if they can break the Union left flank and position a scoring brigade (see the Victory and Defeat section in the basic rules) between the Union army and the Union's left table side.

## **Orders of Battle**

### **Union**

**Commanding generals:** Lieutenant General Ulysses S. Grant, General-in-Chief, Union Armies/ Major General George Gordon Meade

### **V Corps**

Major General Gouverneur K. Warren

### **\*First Division**

Brigadier General Charles Griffin

**1st Brigade: Brigadier General Ayres:** 140th New York (A),

146th New York (A), 91st Pennsylvania (A), 155th Pennsylvania (A), 2nd United States (A)  
11th United States (S), 12th United States (L) 14th United States (S) 17th United States (A)

**2nd Brigade: Colonel Sweitzer:** 9th Massachusetts (A),  
22nd Massachusetts (A), 32nd Massachusetts (A), 4th Michigan (A), 62nd Pennsylvania (A)

**3rd Brigade: Brigadier General Bartlett:** 20th Maine (S), 18th Massachusetts (A)  
1st Michigan (A), 16th Michigan (A), 44th New York (S), 83rd Pennsylvania (A), 118th  
Pennsylvania (A)

### **\*Second Division**

Brigadier General John C. Robinson

**1st Brigade Colonel Leonard:** 16th Maine (A), 13th Massachusetts (A), 39th Massachusetts  
(A), 104th New York (A)

**2nd Brigade: Brigadier Baxter:** 12th Massachusetts (A), 83rd New York (A), 97th New  
York (A), 11th Pennsylvania (A), 88th Pennsylvania (A), 90th Pennsylvania (A)

**3rd Brigade: Colonel Denison:** 1st Maryland (A), 4th Maryland (S), 7th Maryland (A), 8th  
Maryland (A)

### **\*Third Division**

Brigadier General Samuel W. Crawford

**1st Brigade: Colonel McCandless:** 1st Pennsylvania Reserves (A),  
2nd Pennsylvania Reserves (A), 6th Pennsylvania Reserves (A), 7th Pennsylvania Reserves  
(A), 11th Pennsylvania Reserves (A), 13th Pennsylvania Reserves

**3rd Brigade: Colonel Fisher:** 5th Pennsylvania Reserves (A), 8th Pennsylvania Reserves  
(A), 10th Pennsylvania Reserves (A), 12th Pennsylvania Reserves (A)

### **\*Fourth Division**

Brigadier General James S. Wadsworth

**1st Brigade: Brigadier General Cutler:** 7th Indiana (A), 19th Indiana (A),  
24th Michigan (A), 1st New York Battalion Sharpshooters (S)  
2nd Wisconsin (A), 6th Wisconsin (A), 7th Wisconsin (A)

**2nd Brigade: Brigadier General Rice:** 76th New York (A), 84th New York (A),  
95th New York (S), 147th New York (L), 56th Pennsylvania (A)

**3rd Brigade: Colonel Stone:** 121st Pennsylvania (A), 142nd Pennsylvania (A),  
143rd Pennsylvania (A), 149th Pennsylvania (S), 150th Pennsylvania (S)

## **VI Corps**

Major General John Sedgwick

**\*First Division**

Brigadier General Horatio Wright

**1st Brigade: Colonel Brown:** 1st New Jersey (A), 2nd New Jersey (A),  
3rd New Jersey (S), 4th New Jersey (A), 10th New Jersey (S), 15th New Jersey

**2nd Brigade: Colonel Upton:** 5th Maine (A), 121st New York (S), 95th Pennsylvania (L),  
96th Pennsylvania (A)

**3rd Brigade: Brigadier General: David A. Russell:** 6th Maine (A), 49th Pennsylvania (A),  
119th Pennsylvania (A), 5th Wisconsin (A)

**4th Brigade: Brigadier General Shaler:** 65th New York (A), 67th New York (S), 122nd  
New York (A), 82nd Pennsylvania (T)

**\*Second Division**

Brigadier General George W. Getty

**1st Brigade: Brigadier General Wheaton:** 62nd New York (A), 93rd Pennsylvania (A),  
98th Pennsylvania (L), 102nd Pennsylvania (A), 139th Pennsylvania (A)

**2nd Brigade: Colonel Grant:** 2nd Vermont (A), 3rd Vermont (A), 4th Vermont (S), 5th  
Vermont (S), 6th Vermont (A)

**3rd Brigade: Brigadier General Neill:** 7th Maine (A), 43rd New York (A), 49th New York  
(A), 77th New York (A), 61st Pennsylvania

**4th Brigade: Brigadier General Eustis:** 7th Massachusetts (A), 10th Massachusetts (A),  
37th Massachusetts (A), 2nd Rhode Island (A)

**\*Third Division**

Brigadier General James B. Ricketts

**1st Brigade: Brigadier General Morris:** 14th New Jersey (A), 106th New York (A), 151st  
New York (S), 87th Pennsylvania (A), 10th Vermont (A)

**2nd Brigade: Brigadier General Seymour:** 6th Maryland (L), 110th Ohio (A), 122nd Ohio  
(A), 126th Ohio (A), 67th Pennsylvania (T), 138th Pennsylvania (A)

**Artillery:**

1<sup>st</sup> New York artillery Battery D (S)

## **Confederate**

**Commanding general:** General Robert E. Lee

### **Second Corps:**

Lieutenant General Richard S. Ewell

### **\*Early's Division**

Major General Jubal A. Early

**Hays' Brigade: Brigadier General Hays:** 5th Louisiana (A), 6th Louisiana (S), 7th Louisiana (A), 8th Louisiana (A), 9th Louisiana (S)

**Pegram's Brigade: Brigadier General Pegram:** 13th Virginia (A), 31st Virginia (L), 49th Virginia (L), 52nd Virginia (A), 58th Virginia (A)

**Gordon's Brigade: Brigadier General Gordon:** 13th Georgia (A), 26th Georgia (A), 31st Georgia (S), 38th Georgia (L), 60th Georgia (A), 61st Georgia (A)

### **\*Johnson's Division:**

Major General Edward Johnson

**Stonewall Brigade: Brigadier General James A. Walker:** 2nd Virginia (A), 4th Virginia (A), 5th Virginia (A), 27th Virginia (S), 33rd Virginia (A)

**Jones' Brigade: Brigadier General Jones:** 21st Virginia (A), 25th Virginia (A), 42nd Virginia (A), 44th Virginia (A), 48th Virginia (A), 50th Virginia (A)

**Steuart's Brigade: Brigadier General Steuart:** 1st North Carolina (A), 3rd North Carolina (S), 10th Virginia (A), 23rd Virginia (A), 37th Virginia (A)

**Stafford's Brigade: Brigadier General Stafford:** 1st Louisiana (A), 2nd Louisiana (A), 10th Louisiana (L), 14th Louisiana (S), 15th Louisiana (A)

### **\*Rodes' Division**

Major General Robert E. Rodes

**Daniel's Brigade: Brigadier General Daniel:** 32nd North Carolina (A), 45th North Carolina (A), 53rd North Carolina (A), 2nd North Carolina Battalion (S)

**Doles' Brigade: Brigadier General Doles:** 4th Georgia (L), 12th Georgia (L), 44th Georgia (A)

**Ramseur's Brigade: Brigadier General Ramseur:** 2nd North Carolina (L), 4th North Carolina (A), 14th North Carolina (L), 30th North Carolina (A)

**Battle's Brigade: Brigadier General Battle:** 3rd Alabama (A), 5th Alabama (A), 6th Alabama (L), 12th Alabama (A), 61st Alabama (S)

**Johnston's Brigade: Brigadier General Johnston:** 5th North Carolina (L),  
12th North Carolina (A), 20th North Carolina (A), 23rd North Carolina (A)

**Cavalry**

1<sup>st</sup> North Carolina (A)