



THE BATTLE OF HELL PASS

A Battle Report By Andy Meechan

Having recently swapped to a Chaos army I had scored only defeats and a couple of near misses. After discussion with my gaming group and a foray onto the Internet (gw-warmaster@yahoo.com) I had formulated a new plan. With this knowledge I would pursue the opponent who had meted out my most recent kicking – the stoic men of the Empire.

The fledgling army was now under scrutiny from its patrons, who were less than pleased by its performance so far; they were likely warming up the mutation vats for a weekend of fun and ganglions. The mortals of the Empire had inflicted their most recent defeats, but word had come of complacency in their guard.

Gathering together the warhost once more, the Chaos band made their move upon the town of Middleton, however they ran into Empire troops in the mountain pass overlooking the town.

Here then is a tale of revenge.

CHAOS vs. EMPIRE (2,000 points per side).



FORCES OF CHAOS

I started by grabbing all the heroes that I could as my plans usually involve sprawling battle lines – not always recommended for a Chaos army, but it's my style of play (I'm eagerly awaiting the Dark Elves you see!). For my command I chose a General, Hero on Dragon with the *Sword of Destruction*, a second Hero, and two Sorcerers with the *Rod of Repetition* and *Wand of Power* respectively. Two Sorcerers suit the

Tzeentchian colour scheme of my troops and the Dragon choice was due to my recently painting up a Greater Daemon of Tzeentch from the Epic range (still an impressive size in 10mm). You'll notice that I didn't take the *Orb of Majesty*. That'll be due to me having terrible Command rolls whenever I do include it – must be superstitious!

The core to my army would be formed from the stoic Marauders and Chaos Warriors: two units of Warriors and four of Marauders to be exact. I like using Marauders to bulk out my army as the second layer to my theme is more akin to a barbarian horde (I'm currently building a Marauder stockade fortress as opposed to the traditional Chaos citadel). I shouldn't forget to mention the Dragon Ogres as they might get miffed. They may be lots of points to buy, but when they hit they leave only bloodstained grass in their wake!

Finally, the mobile element: two units of Marauder cavalry, a unit of Chaos Knights with a *Standard of Shielding*, a unit of Chariots, a unit of Chaos Hounds, and a unit of Harpies. The Chariots tend to draw more fire than the Marauders, but that's fine by me as long as the Knights get to charge! Harpies are a must-have in the army, harassing rear ranks and terrorising artillery. The Hounds are great for two reasons: cheap ablative protection for the rest of the cavalry and an extra +1 on the breakpoint for only 30 points!

DEFENDERS OF THE EMPIRE

The Command consisted of the General, a Hero on Griffin, a second Hero, and two Wizards. The army core ranked up as follows: four units of Crossbowmen, four units of Halberdiers, two units of Flagellants, four units of Knights, and a unit of Knights Panther (no House Rules, just nice models!). Ubiquitous artillery support

The Battle of Hell Pass

was provided by two Cannon batteries, and two Steam Tanks (our next game saw Theo taking Pistoliers and Handgunners instead of the Steam Tanks. A much scarier prospect to play against!). Oh, and and some magic items.

FIELD OF BATTLE

As we were playing in a mountain pass, terrain was going to be sparse and space constricted. We toyed with playing along the board, but found two 4' long hills and decided a 5x4' board was going to be a challenge. Here's the scenery and deployment from the Chaos point of view then (from left to right):

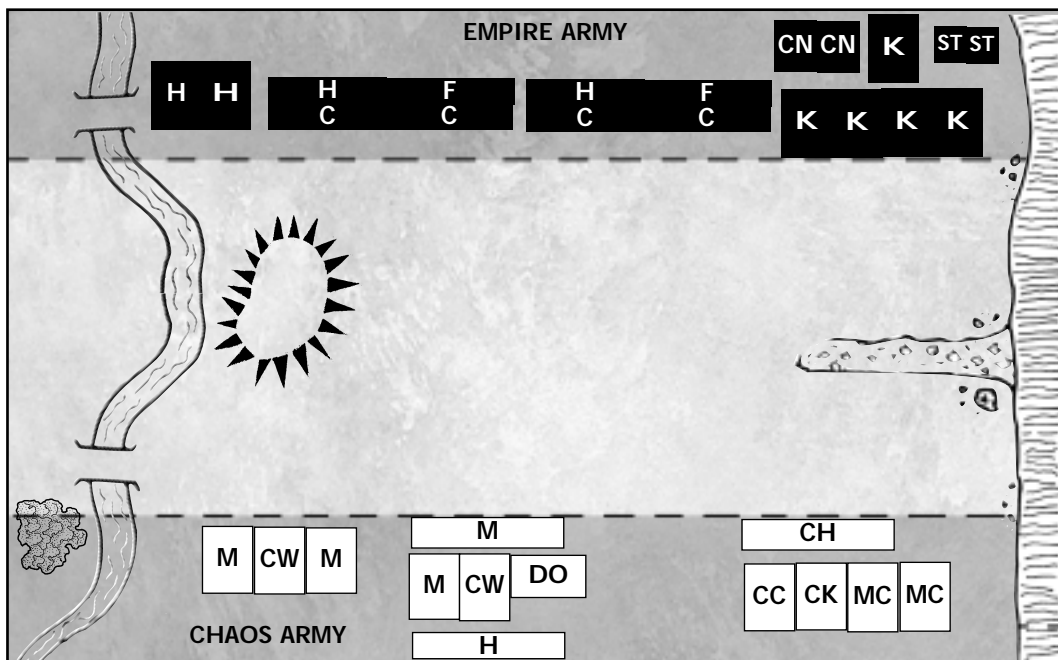
Impassable mountains running along the edge, river also running along the edge, but with a meander just past the halfway (and a couple of rock-bridges for a bit of tactical option). A hill next to the meander, lots of open ground and then a rockslide from the right flank mountains providing a bit of rough going.

DEPLOYMENT & CUNNING PLAN!

Two units of Marauders and a unit of Chaos Warriors would move to take the hill (their left anchored by the river), the Harpies deployed to their rear would occupy the meander to threaten the flanks (and spy out those Cannon). In the centre Marauders, Chaos Warriors and Dragon Ogres were to defend the flank of those on the hill, with a Marauder unit in front to run as ablative armour for, hopefully, both brigades. On the right flank were the Chariots, Knights, and two units of Marauder Cavalry, with Chaos Hounds in front as ablat... aw, you guessed.

The Empire reacted to this deployment by placing two units of Halberdiers on one flank, two units of Crossbowmen, a unit of Halberdiers and Flagellants on the other. On the flank facing-off against my Cavalry were two units of Cannon, the Knights, and four units of Knights with the Steam Tanks to the rear.

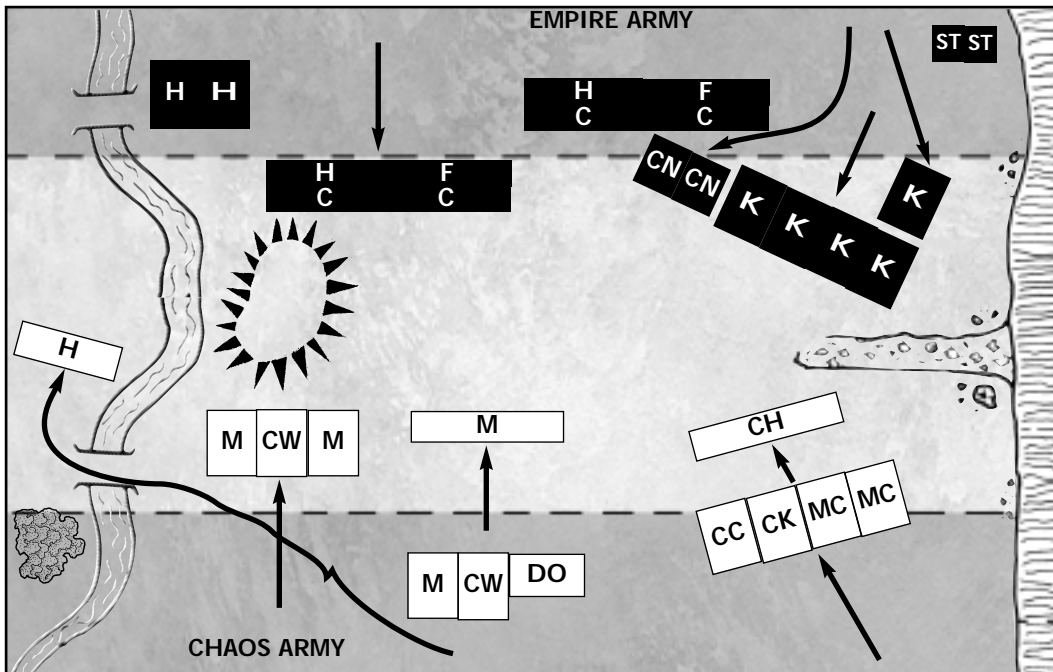
Empire		KEY		Chaos	
H Halberdiers	ST Steam Tank	DO Dragon Ogres	CK Chaos Knights	CH Chaos Hounds	
C Crossbowmen	CN Cannons	CC Chaos Chariots	MC Marauder Cavalry	H Harpies	
F Flagellants	K Knights			M Marauders	
				CW Chaos Warriors	



DEPLOYMENT

The Battle of Hell Pass

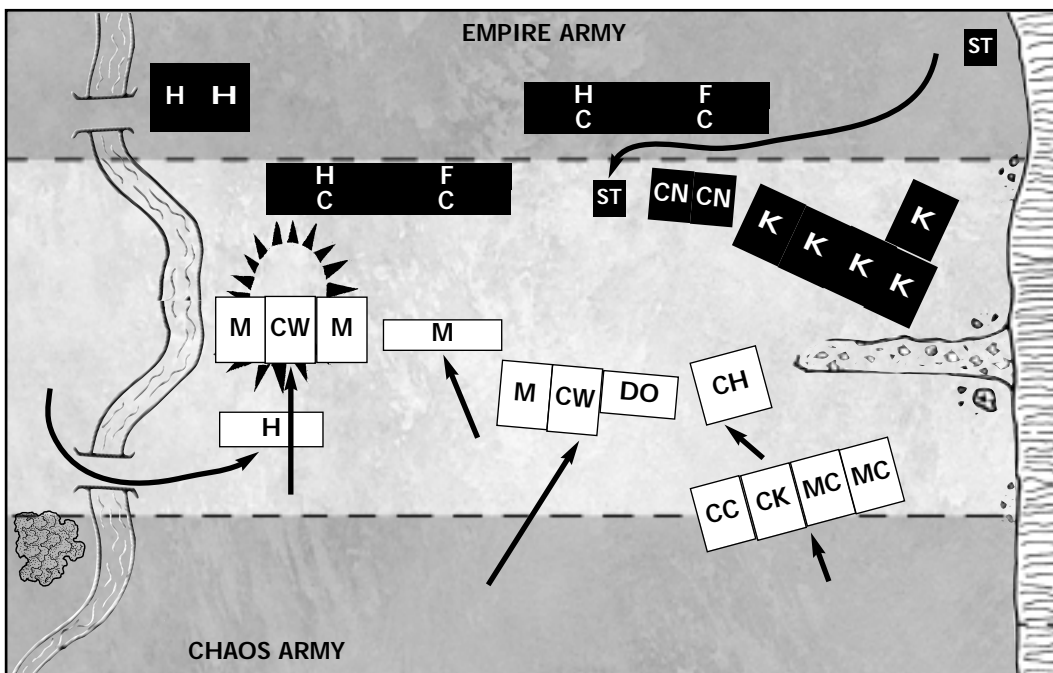
TURN 1



Turns 1 & 2

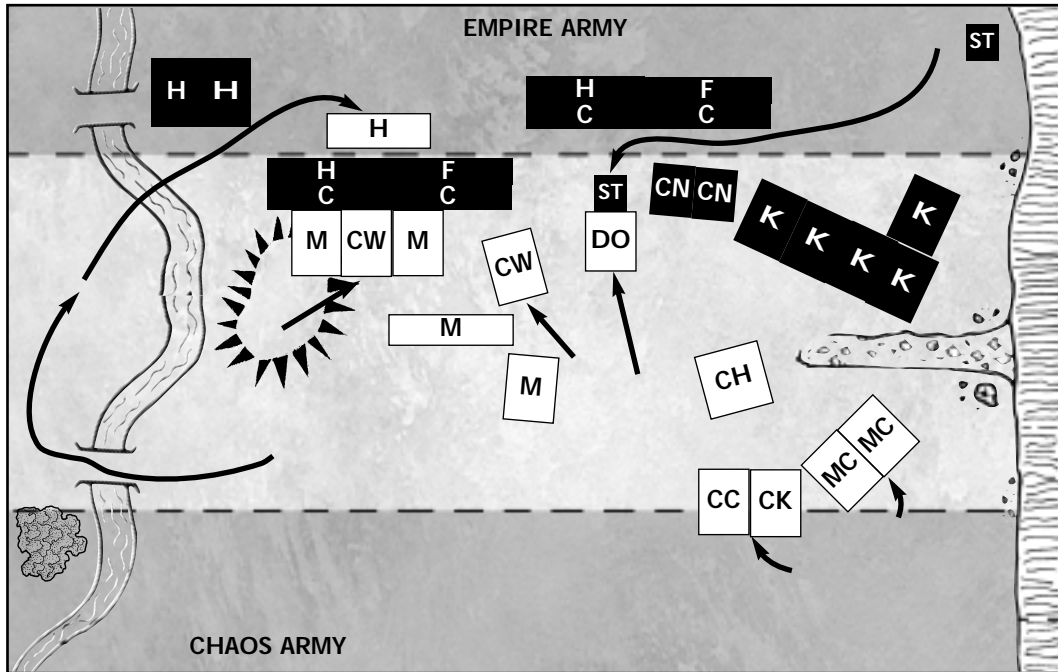
The Chaos infantry advanced and took the hill and the centre, the ablative units of Marauders weathering minor blustering provided by the Cannons. The Empire cavalry moved forward, as did the Cannon, with Crossbowmen-aided infantry brigades moving into range and disrupting one unit

of Marauders on the hill. The Harpies fled behind the hill (I rolled a Blunder! on the Command roll – pick the one whose ‘full pace move’ is the largest and ask them to get out of line of sight of the enemy...). The forces of Chaos were waiting for the Empire army to give them that opening.



TURN 2

CHAOS TURN 3



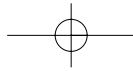
Chaos Turn 3

The expected attack didn't come, so my Chaos army had to force the Empire player's hand a little! The Dragon Ogres charged a Steam Tank that had pattered into the centre, the Chaos Warriors attached breaking left to support the attack on the Empire infantry (they didn't make it to combat, but their presence on the field provided good fodder for emergency planning). The left flank attack hit home and, backed by the Harpies to the enemy's rear, destroyed a brigade. However, the

fickle Chaos gods had seen to punish the dark horde for previous transgressions – saving throws were thrown away and a single stand from each attacking unit fell back to the hill.

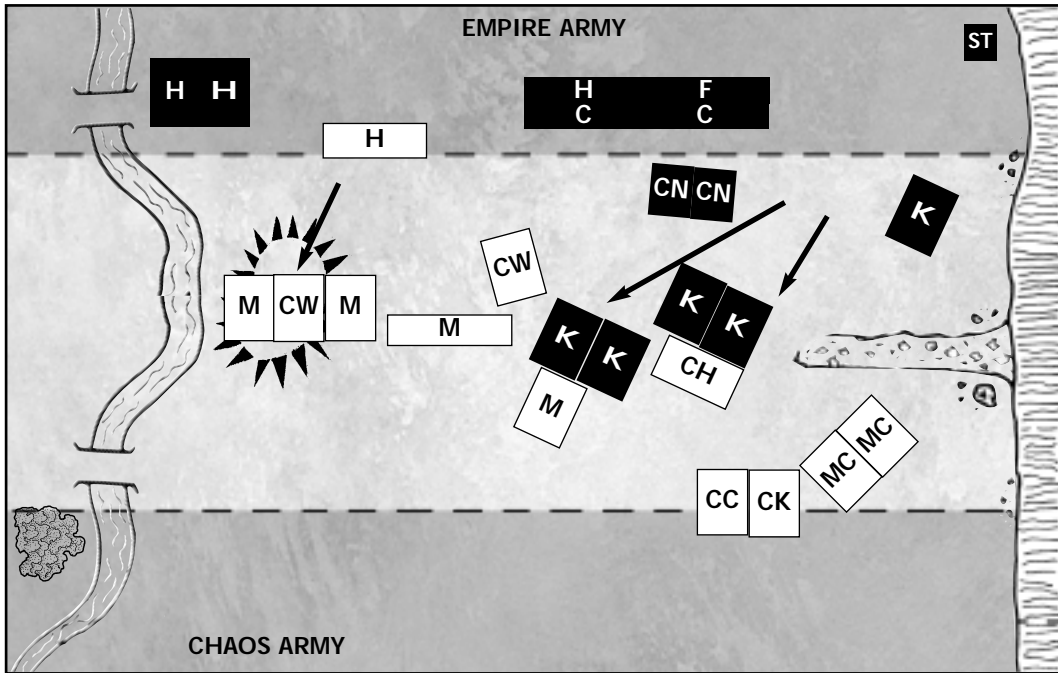
The Dragon Ogres made short work of one of the Empire's 'big tin cans' and flanked the Knights. Unfortunately their own flank clipped the Empire cannons and the combat was lost on a pile of bad luck with the Dragon Ogres dying later, stranded in front of Cannons and Crossbows. Ouch!





The Battle of Hell Pass

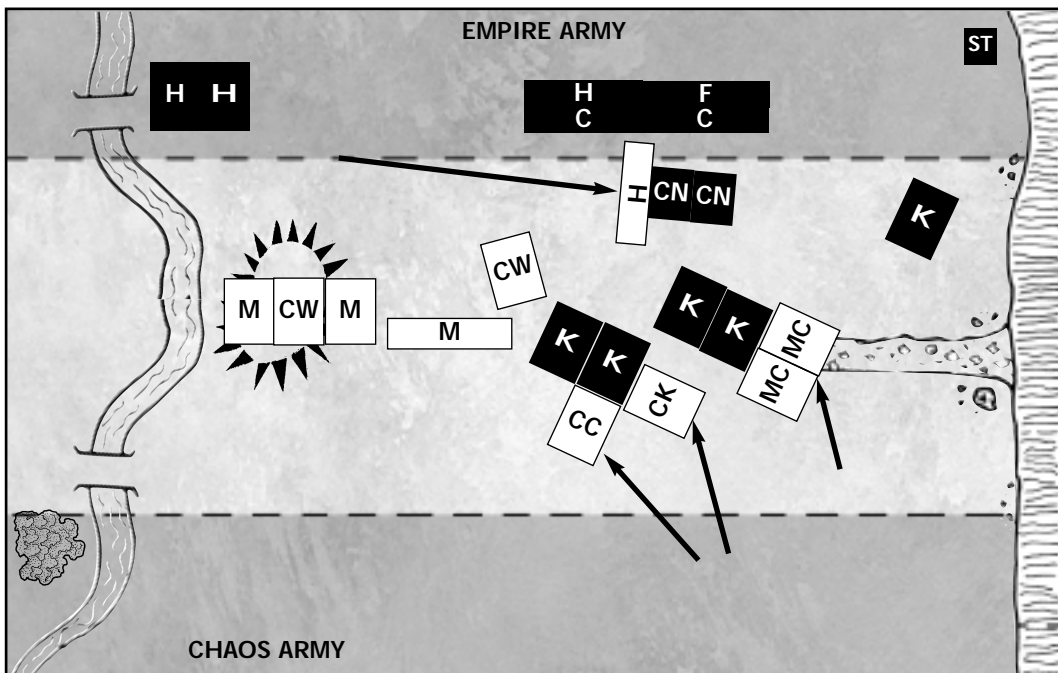
EMPIRE TURN 3



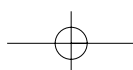
Empire Turn 3

With the lure of stranded units of Marauders and Chaos Hounds in the centre (well, not exactly stranded as I had placed them there deliberately - for once!), the Empire Knights

broke their line and inflicted the expected casualties. The Empire breakpoint sat at 5/10 and Chaos 3/7, but with Chaos having three units with one stand each, victory wasn't assured.



CHAOS TURN 4



Chaos Turn 4 & Victory

Then the Chaos Knights hit home. With some cunning (okay, and fortunate) manoeuvring (I had been watching distances carefully all game – a new one for me) the Chaos Chariots and Marauder cavalry hit one unit of the Empire's finest, the Chaos Knights and second Marauder cavalry hit another (yes I was getting flank hits). A Chaos sorcerer joined the Knights to cast (I later realised that I only had to be within 30cm to cast *Boon of Chaos* giving +6 attacks! and not actually attached to the unit. Still, Chaos lives with its choices and if the Wizard had failed he must be punished, so he'll likely get attached from now on!).



The Harpies, meantime, had taken a stand casualty to a brawl and then charged the Empire cannon in the flank. Fortunately they had taken the casualty as stand placement meant the cannon couldn't fire! Two units of 'Big annoying shooty things' went under the hammer...

The Chaos Knights did their job and advanced into another unit of Empire Knights, finishing them off quick smart too (thanks to *Boon of Chaos*) and taking only one stand as casualty (thanks to the *Standard of Shielding*). In the meantime the Marauder cavalry advanced into the same combat as the Chaos Chariots – that didn't last long (a new personal best: 36D6 in one round of combat! The Group record is currently 45 held by the High Elves). Before I could rampage elsewhere the game closed down as the Empire army withdrew.

Counting the Cost

The Chaos army got off lightly in terms of our

campaign with only three units fully destroyed to the Empire's ten. Unfortunately the Dragon Ogres were one of those felled, but I've now learned not to push an advantage too hard!

As the Harpies picked at the remnants of the Empire army, the Chaos Warmaster gazed past the edge of the mountain pass, a surge of pleasure coursing through him as he spied the now defenceless town lying in the path of his warhost. His gods would favour him tonight...

CONCLUSIONS

Well that was certainly one of 'those games' that brought tension, despair and pleasure in odd amounts. The Chaos army is limited in its tactics and so your opponent holds the cards as they can spot your weaknesses a mile off. Aside from the usual advice of picking an army whose units compliment each other I would suggest that timing seems to be the key to fielding a competitive force. Knowing not only where, but also when to strike is of utmost importance as this allows you to strike as hard as possible. Not many armies can come back from a sneaky Chaos kidney punch – and they have to live in the knowledge that it was a wrong move, or pair of failed Command rolls that did for them! (A low blow indeed).

CREDITS

Thanks to my opponent, Theo, for making me think all the way through this slugfest. Thanks also to Chuck & Lothaire (from the gw-warmaster Yahoo! group) for some grand advice prior to this game.

