

## The Road to Carthage

From the histories and actions of the Legio XX

Across the barren plains of Zama marches the army of Scipio Africanus. Advancing towards the once mighty city of Carthage, determined that no more would barbarians threaten the gates of Rome.

There, in the low rolling hills, a small vanguard of the Legio XX sights the dust clouds of Carthaginians taking up position on the far side of a small wood.

Thus, two forces array themselves for battle.

The Roman commander placed himself and his praetorian cavalry, along with the bulk of his heavy legionnaires on his right flank. In the centre, occupying a small wood he places his artillery and elite auxiliaries and finally, to his left, a screening force of legionnaires and then the rest of his cavalry and a squadron of light horsemen.



Facing him, the Carthaginian commander places himself and his massed cavalry on his left flank to oppose the legionnaires and the enemy general. His centre, a mighty host of spears and a squadron of the fearsome war elephants that have made Carthage a mighty nation and to protect his right flank, a force of light horsemen. Finally, arrayed to his front, a skirmish line of slingers and bowmen.

Ever bold, the Roman commander made the first move, advancing his cavalry in a wide arc to his left, dashing forward to turn the enemy's flank, in the centre he sent forth his light horse to harass the skirmishers and disrupt their order, all this while, the solid block of legionnaires reformed themselves in a long, thin battle line, but one cohort deep, leaving a single cohort in reserve.

Seeing the Roman commander begin his manoeuvring the Carthaginian commander advanced his cavalry forward to take the summit of a low hill, while his skirmish line advanced down the centre and on the right his light horse cantered forward to block the path of the Roman cavalry.

From the cover of the woods, the Roman artillery found the range of the Carthaginian skirmishers to their front and began to shower volleys of heavy bolts onto them, forcing them to pause and take cover or give ground before those terrible engines of war.

Seeing them under such fire and their cohesion disrupted, the Romans own squadron of light horse advanced to threaten those skirmishers and not to be

outdone, the Roman cavalry, though outnumbered, went to test their mettle against the light horsemen of Carthage.

The Roman Cavalry and Carthaginian horsemen were evenly matched; those of Carthage had the numbers while those of Rome had the better discipline and so for some time the melee raged, neither side gaining a lasting advantage.

In the centre however the Romans own light horse found they had bitten off more they could chew, soon looking like they would be overwhelmed and outflanked by the Carthage skirmishers, to prevent the loss of these troops the Roman General dispatched a cohort of legionnaires and one of auxiliaries as support, all the while the Roman artillery continued to shower the enemy with heavy iron bolts.



The Carthaginian commander and his cavalry continued to watch the battle unfold from their hill, but slowly their spearmen and those Elephants began to rumble forward as the battle looked to close and become fiercely joined in the centre.

In the centre only the Heavier Roman infantry proved to be more than a match for the skirmishers they faced but were soon to find themselves matched by the arrival of the Carthaginian spearmen.

The battle though began to turn in the Romans favour.

In the wheeling cavalry melee discipline and endurance began to tell as the Carthaginian light horse were being slowly pushed backwards, worse though was to befall them.

As the elephants advanced they came under the aim of the Roman bolt throwers, with careful aim they loosed volley after volley, the heavy iron shafts finding their mark time after time and soon there was little left to do but to collect the ivory.

Seeing his precious war beasts mown down spurred the Carthaginian commander off his hill,, a swift dash that nearly turned the Romans right flank, but for the timely manoeuvring of the Roman reserves and the commander himself.

Now the battle reached its peak, the spearmen, legionnaires and cavalry crashed together on the Roman right flank and the two commanders fought each other in pitched battle

Backwards and forwards this battle raged, both sides taking casualties, giving and retaking ground but neither side getting the upper hand.

Now though, the pressure told, as at last the Roman cavalry broke the light horse, and sent them either to the afterlife, or to the hills, wheeling triumphant they thundered across the battle field, one squadron to sack the baggage train, another to try and smash into the back of the spearmen.

Knowing now that they had but the time it took for those cavalrymen to cross the blood soaked field before they were assaulted from all sides; the Carthaginians began to hesitate.

To hesitate in battle is to die and in this hesitation the Romans landed their killer blows, pressing forwards the Carthaginian general fell and the spear line broke, trampled into the earth by the wheeling melee.

Once more Legio XX had achieved victory, and now the Road to Carthage lay open to the army of Scipio Africanus.

