

# The Arkansas on the Yazoo!

By Mike Crane

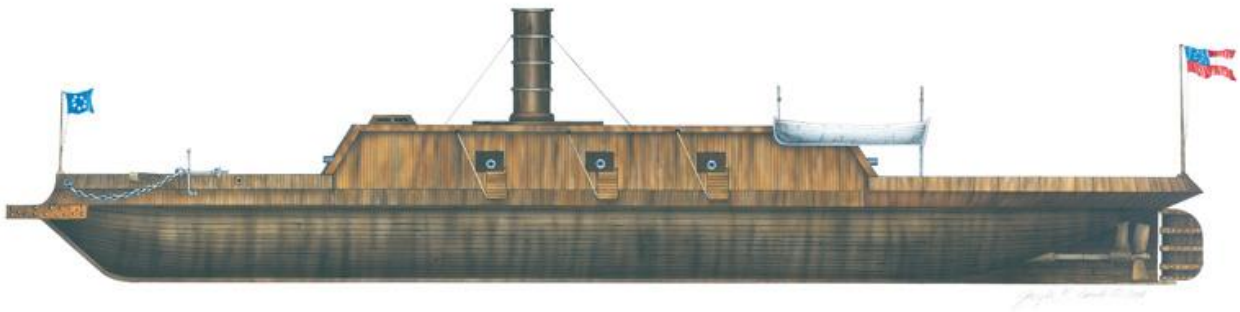
(Originally Published in Lone Warrior 166)

## The Objectives of the Game

You are the captain of the newly commissioned CSS Arkansas steaming down the Yazoo River toward the Mississippi River and Vicksburg. On the way you surprise three Union vessels sent to find and burn your ship before it can be launched. The CSS Arkansas must sink one Union vessel and exit on the western (left) side of the board to win a victory. If it sinks two Union ships it will win a “great” victory that will make the headlines in every Southern newspaper. The destruction of three Federal ships will gain a “glorious” victory which will be the subject of books and lectures for years to come.

The Union ships will win if they sink the Arkansas or the Arkansas is grounded in the shallow water three times.

The game will be a draw if the Arkansas exits the board without sinking a Federal ship.



## What You Will Need to Play

The playing board is made by taping the long sides of three 28”x 22” pieces of blue poster board together. (These are available at Wal-Mart for 52 cents each.) Use a pencil and yardstick to divide the light blue side into two-inch squares. Use thin acrylic paint to shade three rows along the top and bottom of the length of the board to represent shallow water with mud flats. (See Figure 1.)

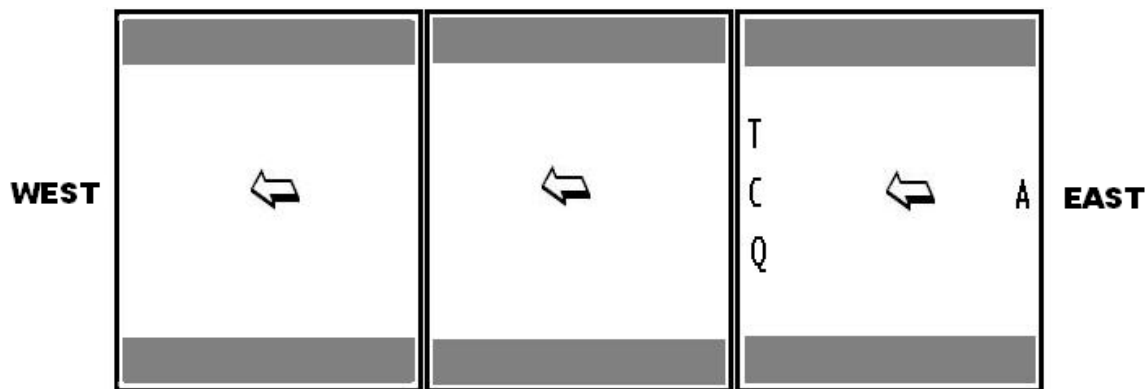


Figure 1. The playing board showing the shallows, the opening positions of the ships, and the direction of the Yazoo River current

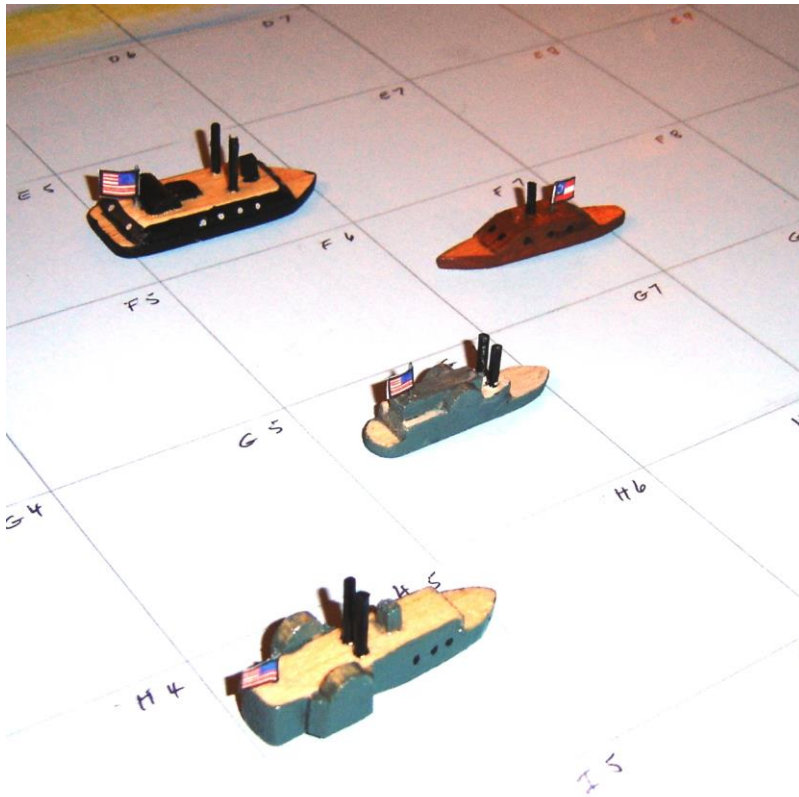
Paper models of the CSS Arkansas (10 guns), USS Carondelet (13 guns), USS Tyler (8 guns), and USS Queen of the West (0 guns) are provided, but heavier models will look and feel better if you have them. (I made my models of balsa, basswood, and toothpicks.) Larger models may require a larger playing board with larger squares.

Four six-sided dice are used: 1 red action die for the Arkansas, 1 blue action die for the Union ships; 1 white hit die; and 1 black damage die. A record sheet has been provided to record the damage to ships in several games.

### Setting Up the Game

The playing board is 14 squares deep and 33 squares wide. Place the CSS Arkansas (A) on the seventh square of the right edge of the right-hand poster board. It is facing west and will be moving with the current. The Union ships will be facing east and moving against the current. Place the USS Carondelet (C) on the seventh square of the left edge of the right hand poster board. Place the USS Tyler (T) two squares away on one side and the Queen of the West (Q) two squares away on the other side of the Carondelet. It doesn't matter which side. (See Figure 1.)

### How the Game Works



This game uses action points (AP's) for moving and firing. Each ship receives AP's by rolling a red or blue action die at the beginning of each turn and consulting the Action Point Chart. All of the AP's must be used before the end of the turn. AP's cannot be left unused and cannot be saved for the following turn.

#### **ACTION POINT CHART**

*Roll 1 red or blue d6*

6 = 4 Action Points

4,5 = 3 Action Points

1,2,3 = 2 Action Points

Modification: Any ship beginning its turn facing a westerly direction receives a river current bonus of +1 AP

### Moving and Firing

All of the AP's may be used for moving, or moving may be combined with firing. Moving 1 square or firing 1 volley will cost 1 AP each.

A ship may fire only at a target in an adjoining square.

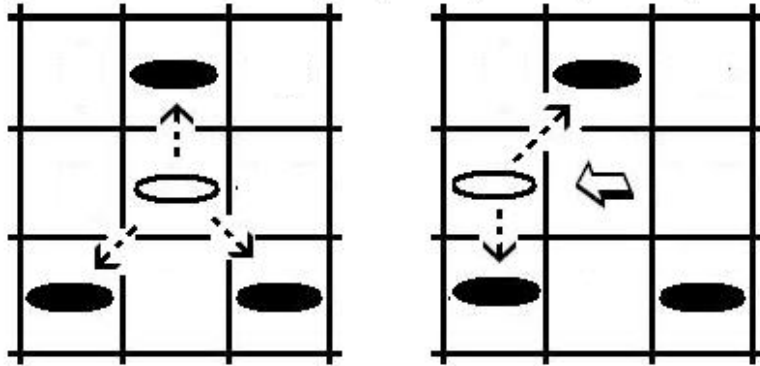
A ship may fire at a target only once before moving.

Firing will be preceded or followed by a ship move. For example, a ship with 2 AP's could move and fire or fire and move; a ship with 3 AP's could move, fire, and move; or, fire, move, and fire; or move and fire at two different targets; or fire at two different targets and move, etc.

A ship may fire at more than one target once before moving. After moving, if the ship has sufficient AP's remaining and one or more targets are in adjacent squares, the ship may fire again.

Since there is only one Confederate ship to fire at and three Union ships to fire at in this game, only the Arkansas will be able to fire in succession at more than one target.

Consider this example. Examine Figure 2. The center oval represents the Arkansas and the black ovals represent the three Union ships. Imagine that the Arkansas has rolled a 6 on the action die and received 4 AP's. It also receives a bonus of +1 AP for moving with the river current, which gives it a total of 5 AP's. The left diagram shows that the Arkansas has three targets within firing range. Suppose that it fires at two targets and moves once using 3 AP's. The right diagram shows the position of the Arkansas after it has moved 1 square. It has 2 AP's remaining and is able to fire again into the two ships that are within range. Of course, there are many other options available including moving 5 squares without firing at all.



**Figure 2. A diagram illustrating shooting at more than one target**

To fire, roll the white d6, apply the modification if necessary and find the result on the To Hit Chart. The only modification is -2 for the heavy armor of the two ironclads. There are no tinclads (-1). The timberclad and the army ram are considered unarmored (-0), thus the firing roll is unmodified against them.

### TO HIT CHART

Roll 1 white d6

3,4,5,6 = Hit

1,2 = Miss

Modification: The target has heavy armor -2 from roll

When a hit is scored, roll the black d6 and consult the Effect of Hit Chart for the resulting damage.

### EFFECT OF HIT CHART

Roll 1 black d6

6 = 3 Damage Points

5 = 2 Damage Points

2,3,4 = 1 Damage Point

1 = No Effect

Modification: Subtract -2 from the effect roll of the Queen of the West.

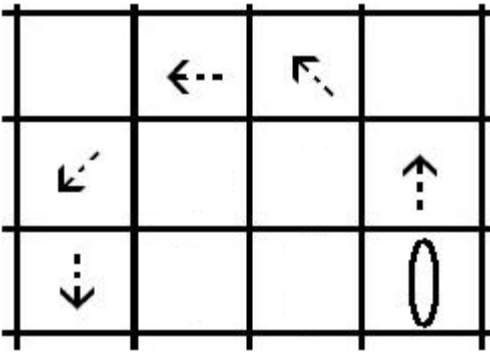
At the time of this engagement, the Queen of the West is an army ram being used to transport an infantry landing party. The Queen has no cannon, but the infantry act as sharpshooters aiming for cannon ports and officers on top of the Arkansas. The rifle fire is not as effective as cannon fire and the roll for the effect of a hit is reduced by -2.

Put a check in a box on the Record Sheet for each damage point a ship receives. When all of the boxes have been filled, the ship has been sunk.

The CSS Arkansas and the USS Carondelet have 7 boxes each; the USS Tyler and Queen of the West have 3 boxes each.

### Speed and Maneuvering Capabilities

In addition to the number rolled on the action die, ships that begin a turn moving with the river current (i.e., facing in a westerly direction) will receive a bonus of +1 AP. All ships make 45° turns. (See Figure 3.)



**Figure 3. Half the turning radius of a ship**

**Getting Stuck and Unstuck in the Mudflats**

The ships may try to maneuver their opponents into the mud banks on the edges of the board. Or, the captain may consider the chance for attack or escape to be worth the risk of entering shallow water. Three rows of squares on each side of the length of the board represent the shallows. (See Figure 1.) If a ship gets grounded in the shallow water three times it is eliminated from the game.

If a ship enters a shallow area, 1 AP must be spent to roll 1d6: 1-3 = the ship is stuck; 4-6 = the ship is not stuck and moves to another square in or, if possible, out of the shallow water. A ship will not fire while in shallow water.

If a ship becomes stuck, it may continue to use all of its remaining AP's to free itself. If it is stuck without AP's, it must wait until the next turn to try again.

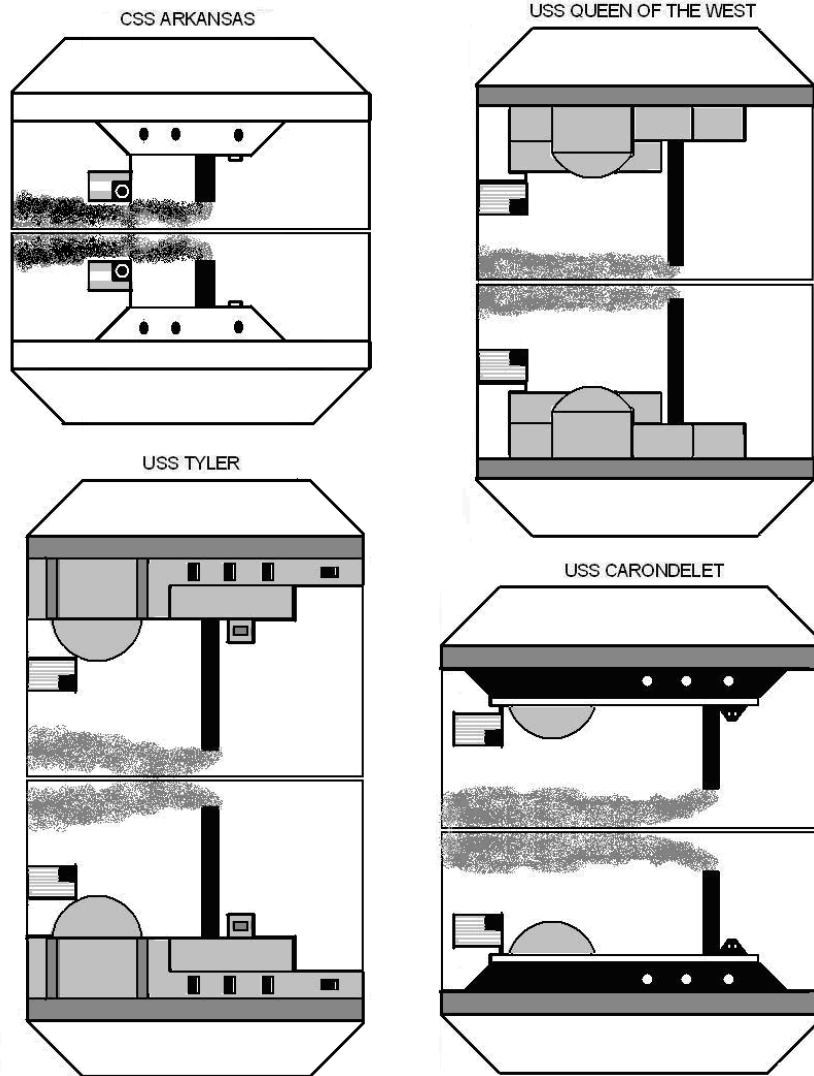
A ship may not fire while stuck. It may fire again after it has become unstuck and moved out of the shallow water.



**Planning Your Game**

As the captain of the Arkansas, you have several options: a simple victory, a “great” victory, or a “glorious” victory. Losing is not an option. Good luck, Captain!

## ARKANSAS ON THE YAZOO



Make a photocopy of the models and print them on card stock. Color the models with thin acrylic paint. Score each model where the bases will bend outward and the two halves will fold over in the middle. Bend the two sides of the base outward, fold the two halves of the ship together and glue with Elmer's Glue. When the glue has set, cut away the area over the front deck back to the smoke stack. Cut out the area between the flag and the deck and color the area left under the smoke sky blue; or, if you prefer, you can remove everything that is not part of the ship. Paint the white edges with acrylic paint.

### References

The historical encounter would probably make a good subject for *Ripley's Believe It or Not!* After leaving the Yazoo River the CSS Arkansas fought through two Union flotillas causing damage to many ships and great embarrassment to Admirals Davis and Farragut. The Arkansas finally fell victim to engine trouble and was scuttled; but, with a career of only 23 days, no other ship fought as many actions per day as the Arkansas. The entire story is told very well by R. Thomas Campbell in *Southern Thunder* and H. Allen Gosnell in *Guns on the Western Waters. A River Unvexed* by Jim Miles and two Osprey volumes by Angus Konstam, *Union River Ironclads* and *Mississippi River Gunboats of the American Civil War 1861-65* are very informative. The illustrations and information in *Warships and Naval Battles of the Civil War* by Tony Gibbons are especially helpful. Many illustrations can be found on the internet by going to Google with "CSS Arkansas."

# The Arkansas on the Yazoo Record Sheet

