

Spanish - U.S. War Rules

By Prisco Hernandez and George Knapp

Originally Published in *Lone Warrior* 204

1. Historical Background: On 1 July 1898 the United States Army under the command of Major General William R. Shafter attacked the Spanish Army commanded by Lieutenant General Arsenio Linares defending the city of Santiago, Cuba. Shafter's objective was to quickly capture San Juan Heights overlooking Santiago and the town of El Caney which controlled water and transportation into Santiago. From these objectives he could then attack Santiago quickly and secure the city and its harbor.

Despite having a significant advantage in troop strength, the U.S. lost the advantage of surprise by taking too long to deploy into their attack positions. This allowed the Spanish to place troops into prepared positions to face the U.S. attacks. The two battles were fought at the same time and about three miles apart. Shafter's plan anticipated that the troops attacking El Caney would quickly take their objective and then move to support the main attack at San Juan Heights. The battle for El Caney was tougher and took longer than expected. The U.S. troops were not able to come to assist the main attack.

The U.S. attack at San Juan Heights was successful but the battle was more difficult than Shafter anticipated. The Spanish fought well and inflicted many U.S. casualties before giving way and retreating into the defenses of Santiago itself.

In the end, both attacks were successful and became the stuff of U.S. military legend.

2. The Game. These rules apply to the battles of El Caney and San Juan Heights fought on 1 July 1898 between the Spanish forces defending Santiago Cuba and the United States forces attempting to capture Santiago.



The game is two separate battlefields - El Caney and San Juan Hill - and can be played singly or at the same time accommodating two to six players.

Here, U.S. troops prepare to cross the river and assault the trenches in front of El Caney.

3. How to Win: The Spanish win if they eliminate six U.S. units on either battlefield. The U.S. win if they eliminate nine Spanish units on either battlefield and capture three areas on the San Juan Heights battlefield and either of the two blockhouses on the El Caney battlefield. It is possible for either side to win or lose on both battlefields or win on one and lose on the other.

4. How to Play: The game is played in alternating turns with the Spanish player being first in each turn. Players randomly draw chips numbered one through ten to activate their units to move, fire, charge, withdraw, turn, and rally. Players also draw chips to attempt saves when hit by enemy fire or melee. A player's turn continues until he fails to activate a unit. Play continues alternating between players until one side achieves its victory conditions at which time the game immediately ends.



5. Activation: The player designates a unit and then randomly draws a chip to activate it. If the activation is successful, then the unit may do the action that the player desires. The player now designates another unit to activate and repeats the process. The player's turn continues in this way until he fails to activate a unit thus ending his turn.

Normal Activations: Player draws a chip numbered two or better - three or better if the unit is disordered.

- Move or charge one box straight forward.
- Move or charge one box straight to rear facing front or rear.
- Shoot once.
- Change facing to left, right, or rear.
- Attempt to rally a disordered unit. Otherwise, no need to rally.

Difficult Activations: Player draws a chip numbered three or better - four or better if the unit is disordered.

- Move two boxes straight ahead. Some restrictions apply.
- Move or charge one box diagonally ahead.
- Move one box to the left or right side facing same direction.
- Shoot and then move one box directly to the rear facing front or rear.
- Move one box straight forward and then shoot.
- Exchange places with unit directly to front or rear. (Chip applies to both units.)
- Move or charge entrenched enemy, blockhouse, or fort.
- Move or charge across an obstacle such as a ravine, stream or river.

6. Firing.

Ranges:

- Artillery have unlimited range but must also have a clear line of sight.
- Artillery may not fire at enemy units within two boxes of friendly units. Measure two boxes as two lateral, or one lateral and one diagonal, but not two diagonal.

- Spanish artillery may fire at U.S. artillery but U.S. artillery may not fire at Spanish artillery.
- Spanish rifles and U.S. Gatling guns have a range of 3 boxes - 2 diagonally and one ahead.
- U.S. rifles have a range of two boxes - one diagonally and one ahead.

Units in a blockhouse or fort can fire in any direction!

Once activated, a unit may fire at any enemy within range and to which the firing unit has a line of sight. The player draws one chip and hits the target on a 6+.

- Gatling guns draw two hit chips if successfully activated.
- Firing unit draw two hit chips for enfilading or rear fire. Gatling guns draw four.

If hit, the targeted unit gets a chance to save itself by drawing one chip and needs a 6+ to ignore the hit. Save modifiers are added to or subtracted from the chip drawn:

- +2 for troops in blockhouses or forts hit by artillery, Gatling guns or rifle fire.
- +1 for troops in trenches hit by artillery, Gatling guns or rifle fire.
- 1 for troops hit from flank or rear.

It takes one hit to kill a Spanish unit and two hits to kill an U.S. unit. If a Spanish unit takes a hit and fails its save attempt, then remove it from play. If an U.S. unit takes a hit and fails its save attempt, then mark it disordered and continue play. If a disordered U.S. unit takes a second hit and fails its save attempt, then remove it from play. See also rules for rally in Section 8 below.

7. Melee. If a unit successfully activates to charge an enemy unit, the result is a melee which is resolved before moving on to another unit activation.

The defender draws a save chip.

- If successful, the defender may choose to withdraw three boxes to its rear away from the attacker and facing away from the attacker.
- If successful, the defender may choose to stand and it gets the first chance to hit in the melee.
- If unsuccessful, then the defender must fight and the attacker gets first chance to hit in the melee.

Units take turns drawing hit chips and hit on a 6+ or 8+ if disordered. Units that get hit must make saves on a 6+. Attackers and defenders have the option of withdrawing instead of trying to hit the enemy. If so, then the unit withdraws one box directly to its rear facing the enemy. Victorious attacking units must occupy the vacated box and may change facing if desired.

The melee continues alternating back and forth until resolved.

Melee save modifiers:

- +2 for troops in blockhouses or forts.
- +1 for troops in trenches or uphill of their enemy.
- -1 for troops being attacked from flank or rear.



American troops facing Kettle Hill.

8. Disorder and Rally: Spanish units are removed after taking one hit and failing to save so disorder does not apply to the Spanish. U.S. units that have received one hit and fail to save are considered disordered. The effect of disorder is that everything the unit tries to do is just a little bit harder. Also, if a disordered unit takes a second hit and fails its save attempt, then it is removed from play. However, a unit may attempt to rally from disorder by successfully activating and then making a normal save. If the save is successful, then remove the disorder marker. There is no additional penalty for failing the rally attempt.

9. Leaders: Leaders represent the intangibles of command on the battlefield.

Leaders have a movement of three boxes laterally and/or diagonally and move first in every player turn. Leaders may then accompany any unit to which they are attached.

Leaders can do one and only one of five things each turn if attached to a unit. The leader allows the unit to redraw:

- Its activation chip.
- A firing hit chip (one or two if flank or enfilade fire). Infantry only.
- A melee hit chip (one or two if flank or rear attack). Infantry only.
- A save chip.
- A rally chip.



Leaders may not attach to artillery units. If attached to a Gatling Gun unit, the leader may not be used to replay hit chips.

Heroes are special characters organic to units. They have the same abilities as leaders but can be used only once per game.

At left the Americans have cleared Kettle Hill. Note the Hero (Teddy Roosevelt in buckskin) with the 1st U.S. Volunteer Cavalry.

How Leaders are Killed. If a leader is attached to a unit and that unit takes a hit from small arms fire (not from artillery fire) or from melee, then the leader must immediately draw one chip

and is dead if that chip is a one. There are no modifiers to this draw. Leaders must repeat this every time the unit they are attached to is hit - even if the unit is hit more than once in the turn.

Unused heroes can only be killed if the unit is killed. No saves allowed for the hero.

On the San Juan Heights map, Spanish leaders must be placed in the Spanish main line. They may not be placed in the two forward positions. One U.S. leader may be placed with the cavalry division on the right of the U.S. line and one may be placed with the infantry division on the left of the U.S. line. During the course of the game, either U.S. leader may be attached to the Gatling Gun unit.

Here, General Sumner is attached to the Third U.S. Cavalry Regiment.



On the El Caney battlefield, the U.S. leader may be placed with any U.S. unit at game start. It may move to other units during the course of the game. Likewise, the Spanish leader may be placed with any Spanish unit at game start and may move to any other Spanish unit during the course of the game.

10. Designer Notes: These rules are freely adopted from *To The Strongest* by Simon Miller, copyright 2015 by BigRedBat Ventures. The system of drawing chips, using a checkerboard grid on the game map, and firing and melee rules are all inspired by Simon's work.

In the historical battle, the U.S. had a large advantage in numbers and the outcome was not ever really in doubt on these two battlefields. However, to have good game, both sides need to have a chance to win. So, we did several things to give the Spanish an equal chance.

We created many Spanish units to man the trenches, blockhouses, and forts to increase the number of times the Spanish can fire weapons each turn. At the same time, we made these units small so that it only takes one hit to kill them. This also simulates the general advantage the Spanish had in rifles by giving these small units the same chance to hit as the larger U.S. units.

We gave artillery support to the Spanish defending El Caney. The two guns were available but did not fire in support for some unknown reason. Although artillery is not the decisive factor on either battlefield, it makes for a better game if both sides have it.

We gave the Spanish three more victory points to lose than the U.S. to make the battles last a little bit longer. Likewise, we require the U.S. player to capture key terrain features on both battlefields. It was for play balance. We encourage others to experiment with this arrangement to satisfy their game needs.

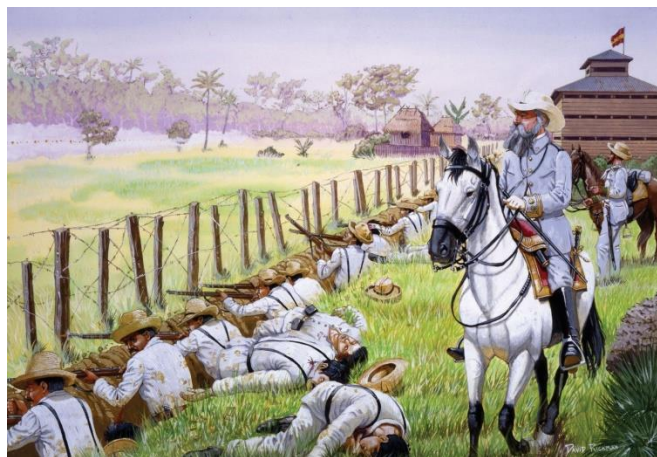
Leaders play a big role in these games. For play balance, we specified two leaders for each side on the San Juan Heights battle and one leader for each side on the El Caney battle. For the U.S., these leaders are division commanders. For the Spanish, these leaders are included simply to balance the games, but they are all historical figures that took part in the battles.

Having artillery off the table to each army's rear is simply a way to satisfy the historical reality that both side had artillery that played or could have played a role in the battles. The fact that they are so abstract is merely a way to simplify their effect on the games. U.S. artillery contributed little to either battle. Spanish artillery was marginally effective on the San Juan Heights battlefield primarily in suppressing U.S. artillery.

On both battlefields, limiting the U.S. advance to mostly frontal attacks is a reflection of the U.S.'s lack of maneuver options in the historical battle. The Americans did not try to outflank the Spanish on Kettle Hill or on San Juan Heights. Rather, they oriented their attacks on the Spanish forces and went right at them. They took heavy losses, but in the end, their numbers prevailed and the Spanish withdrew into the Santiago defenses.

On the El Caney battlefield, the U.S. attacked a prepared defensive position guarding the town. There's not much maneuver. Rather, they made straightforward advances under heavy Spanish fire. It took several hours longer than expected, but the Spanish defenders were too few to defeat the overwhelming number of Americans attacking the town. Still, the Spaniards prevented this U.S. force from moving to reinforce the San Juan Heights battle as planned. That, in itself, was a small victory of sorts.

Editor's Note: George and Prisco designed a convention game that was balanced. The Spanish win as often as the Americans. Often, the battles came right down to the wire; very exciting for the participants. However, as a soloist, you may not need the level of balance that George and Prisco have achieved. You can modify rules to make them more closely match your understanding of historical reality.



RULES SUMMARY

Normal Activations require a 2+ or 3+ if disordered.

Move one or two boxes straight forward. See restrictions.

Charge one box straight forward.

Move one box straight to rear facing front or rear.

Change facing to left, right, or rear.

Shoot once.

Attempt rally.

Difficult Activations: 3+ or 4+ if disordered.

Move or charge one box diagonally ahead.

Move one box sideways facing same direction.

Shoot, then move one box to the rear facing front or rear.

Move one box straight forward and then shoot.

Exchange places with unit directly to front or rear.

Move or charge entrenched enemy, blockhouse, or fort.

Move or charge across obstacle (example - woods or river).

Shooting:

6+ to hit any troops with artillery, Gatling guns, or rifles.

8+ to hit if disordered.

2 hit die for enfilading or rear fire (four for Gatling guns).

Melee: Hit on 6+ or 8+ if disordered. Defender takes morale check (save). Fall back if fail.

Strike first if successful. Continue until complete or until attacker withdraws

Save Modifiers: Unmodified save is 6+.

+2 Troops in blockhouses or forts.

+1 Troops in trenches or charged uphill.

-1 Troops hit from flank or rear.



The Battle of San Juan Heights

Spanish - General Arsenio Linares, Major General Jose Toral Vasquez	Units
Talavera Battalion	7
3 Companies, San Fernando Battalion	3
3 Companies, 1st Puerto Rico Battalion	3
2-gun Section, 4th Artillery Battalion (2 x 75mm Plancencia Guns)	1
U.S.	
First Division - Brigadier General Jacob F. Kent	
1st Brigade	
6th US Infantry	1
16th US Infantry	1
71st New York Volunteer Infantry	1
3d Brigade	
9th US Infantry	1
13th US Infantry	1
24th US Infantry	1
Cavalry Division - Brigadier General Samuel S. Sumner	
1st Brigade	
1st US Cavalry	1
10th US Cavalry	1
1st US Volunteer Cavalry	1
2d Brigade	
3d US Cavalry	1
6th US Cavalry	1
9th US Cavalry	1
Attached	
Grimes's Battery (4 x 3.2-inch guns)	1
Parker's Battery (4 x Gatling guns)	1

The Battle of El Caney

Spanish - General Joachim Vara del Rey	Units
3 Companies, 1st Battalion, Constitution Regiment	7
Cuban Loyalist Irregulars	2
Detachment, Simancas Regiment	1
Detachment, 1st Cavalry Regiment	1
2-gun Section, 4th Artillery Battalion (2 x 75mm Plancencia Guns)	1
U.S. - Major General Henry W. Lawton	
1st Brigade	
8th US Infantry	1
22 US Infantry	1
2d Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry	1
2nd Brigade	
1st US Infantry	1
4th US Infantry	1
25th US Infantry	1
3d Brigade	
7th US Infantry	1
12th US Infantry	1
17th US Infantry	1
Attached	
3d US Infantry	1
20th US Infantry	1
Capron's Battery (4 x 3.2-inch guns)	1



