

# Nauta

**Ancient Naval Wargames Rules  
700 B.C. - 400 A.D.**

**Daniele Polemicus Varelli**

## 1. Game Preparation.

The minimum playing area for two 300 points fleets (1/1200 scale galleys) is 60x60 cm (2x2 ft). Of course, bigger fleets (350-500 points) and/or bigger models will need wider areas, for example 120 x 60 cm (3x2 ft). With 1/200 scale galleys, movement distances are measured in 20mm segments. You can use 1" segments if you prefer, maybe enlarging the playing area.

Each model represents one real galley (Size 1-6) or two-three small rowing vessels (Size 0). Anyway, for bigger battles, it is possible to consider one model representing five or maybe even ten galleys: see "optional rules".

All ships are glued on rectangular bases, using the same basing convention for both players. Here one example of basing system for 1/1200 models:

- ◆ Size 0: 15mm x 20mm
- ◆ Size 1: 15mm x 20mm
- ◆ Size 2: 15mm x 25mm
- ◆ Size 3: 15mm x 30mm
- ◆ Size 4: 15mm x 30mm
- ◆ Size 5: 15mm x 35mm
- ◆ Size 6: 20mm x 40mm

The depth of the bases can be modified, adding 0,5 cm or multiples, to fit with the length of the 1/1200 scale model.

It is useful to write or label each base with the Size of the ship and a number, or letter, or both, in order to recognize each ship during the game. It can be also useful to paint the sails of the two fleets, when present, with different colours: for example, red and white.

You can also use 1/3600 models if you want to fight big and cheap battles! In this case, all ships are glued on 15x20mm bases; Size 0 ships are glued two on each base, but for the game purposes are considered as one model. Distances are halved, i.e. one segment = 10mm (or 1/2 inch).

These rules can also be played with 1/600 or 1/650, doubling the distances and the playing area.

Whatever model scale you choose, each player needs a six sided die (d6); coloured counters to indicate those ships that have already moved, those boarding/boarded and those damaged. Paper and pencil for writing down the ship's maximum speed, the number of soldiers units embarked and the current speed of each ship are also required.

## 2. Ships Data.

Ship Category	Size	Soldiers	Speed max	<u>Acceleration</u> <u>Deceleration</u> (x game turn)	Point Value
Moneris (1 rank)	0	-	6	3/ 4 max	15
Biremis (2 ranks)	1	-	5	2/ 3 max	20
Triremis (3 ranks)	2	1	5	2/ 3 max	30
Quadrirremis (4 ranks)	3	2	5	2/ 3 max	45
Quinqueremis (5 ranks)	4	4	5	1/ 2 max	65
Hexeris or Hepteris (6-7 ranks)	5	6	4	1/ 2 max	80
Deceris (10 ranks)	6	8	4	1/ 2 max	100

### 3. Crew Quality.

A fleet with Skilled crews adds +1 to the initiative die roll, but subtracts - 10% to the fleet's total points. A Fleet with Green crews subtracts -1 to the initiative die roll, but adds +10% to the fleet's total points.

### 4. Extra Soldiers.

Size 1-3 ships can add one soldiers unit (Greek heavy Triremis, Roman Quadrirremis, Imperial Liburna). Size 4-6 ships can add one or two soldiers unit (Roman Quinquiremis, Hellenistic Hexeris, Hepteris, Deceris). Each extra unit costs 5 pts.

### 5. Fleets Composition.

- ◆ Greeks and Persians can't buy ships bigger than Size 2. Only the Siracusans can buy one Size 3 ship. Athenians can't have Green crews, Spartans and Suracusans can't have Skilled Crews.
- ◆ Romans and Carthaginians (Punic Wars) can buy max. two Size 1, two Size 2, one Size 5 ship, can't buy Size 0 and Size 6 ships. Carthaginians can't have Green crews, Romans can't have Skilled crews.
- ◆ Hellenistic Kingdoms can buy ships of every Size, but at least one must be a Size 5 or 6.
- ◆ Romans (Civil Wars and Empire) can buy ships of every Size.
- ◆ Pirates can't buy Size 5 or 6 ships. Crews are always Skilled.

### 6. Coastlines and Islands.

At the beginning of the game, if both players agree, they can add one or more islands and/or coastlines to the gaming area. If a ship contacts a coastline or an island, it is automatically eliminated. These terrain features and the base edges of the two players, can be determined and deployment by mutual agreement, rolling a die, or with whatever else method.

### 7. Deployment.

Place a screen across the playing area and deploy the two fleets, within 15 cm (6") from their base edge. One alternative to this method, can be drawing a map of the initial deployment, or rolling a d6 (possibly modified the Initiative of the fleet, or the number of Size 0 ships, or both) to decide who deploys first.

### 8. Game sequence.

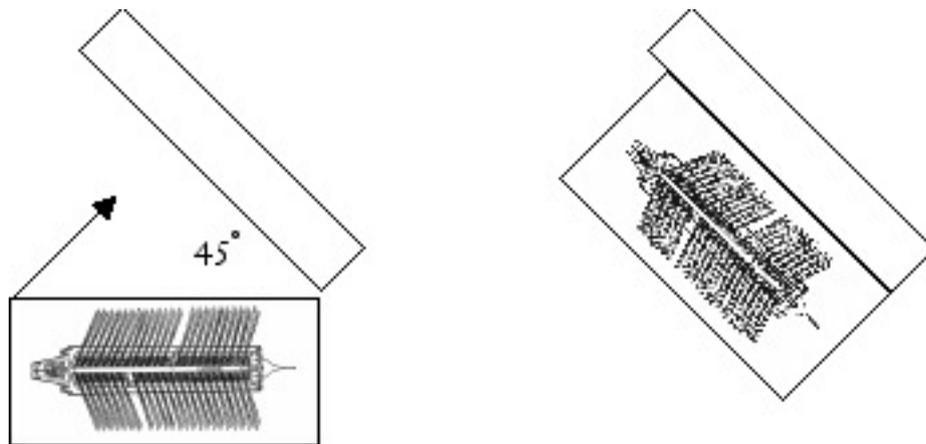
- ◆ Write down the speed of each ship (or formation of ships)
- ◆ Determine initiative and move the ships. Resolve rammings when they happen.

- ◆ Boarding attempts.
- ◆ Fighting aboard.

### 9. Initiative and Movement.

Roll for initiative: higher roll wins and may take the first or the second move. Players move their ships alternatively, one ship or formation of ships a time. To be considered in formation, ships must maintain at least one segment of distance from each other, and move by the same speed.

At the beginning of their movement, Size 0 and Size 1 ships can wheel a maximum of 90°, other ships a maximum of 45°. To measure the wheel angle, put the ruler near the rear corner of the base, as shown in the figure.



A 45° maximum wheel subtracts 1 segment from the move distance, a 90° maximum pivot subtracts 2 segments. The remaining movement must be done in a straight line, for all the distance written at the beginning of the turn. It is not allowed to measure any distance before pivoting and/or moving. Indicate with a counter the ships that have already moved, until the end of the moving phase.

A ship with zero speed can't pivot nor move. Instead of moving ahead, a ship with zero speed can move backwards, with a maximum speed of 2 segments. It is not possible to pivot and move backwards in the same turn. Only a ship with zero speed can begin a backwards movement. All movements end when in contact with another ship: in this case, both ships turn immediately to zero speed. In the following turn, one or both ships can move away from the other in contact, but only if they are not engaged in fighting aboard. If a ship exits the playing area, it is eliminated from the game.

### 10. "Dash" Speed.

Before moving a single ship (not a formation), the player can declare a "Dash" , i.e. an effort by the rowers to reach an extra-maximum speed. A "Dash" adds 2 segments to the distance already written for that turn, even if this causes it to exceed the maximum speed allowed for that category of ship. It is not possible to pivot before performing a "Dash". Each ship can perform only one "Dash" during the game. After having performed a "Dash" , the ship subtracts 1 segment from its maximum speed for the rest of the game. A ship with hull damage can't perform a "Dash".

### 11. Ramming.

A lateral or rear ramming happens when a ship contacts with any point of the front edge of its base, corners included, the lateral or rear edge of another ship. In other cases ramming is frontal, i.e. ships ram one each other.

Each ship rolls a die + adding its size class + 1 for the ship with the higher speed in that moment. If a ship is rammed while at zero speed, it subtracts another - 1 from its die roll. Ships that ram the enemy laterally or to the rear, ignore ties or negative results. The winner throws a die for the effect of its ramming; in case of ties, both ships throw a die (i.e. in case of frontal ramming, both ships can damage and even sink each other). Friendly ships that contact each other by mistake, roll a die as per normal ramming, but subtract -1 from the die roll for the effect.

◆ Effect: 1-3 the ship is damaged; 4-6 the ship sinks.

After rolling a 4-6, if the the sinking ship has a size of 3 or more then the size of the ramming ship, roll another die; 1 = the ramming ship sinks too.

### **12. Damage.**

A damaged ship has its speed reduced by 2 segment for the rest of the game and subtracts -2 to its die roll if rammed or ramming. If damaged two times, a ship is automatically sunk.

### **13. Boarding.**

If both players declare their intention to board one enemy ship in contact, boarding happens automatically. If only one player wants to make a boarding action, he makes a die roll: 1-3 = fails; 4-6= succeeds. Indicate the boarded/boarding ships with a counter. Boarded/boarding ships can't move and must go on fighting until one surrenders. Each ship can do only one boarding attempt each turn. A ship already engaged in fighting aboard, can't board other ships.

### **14. Fighting aboard.**

Each fighting aboard phase is divided in 3 consecutive assault sub-phases. During each assault, both players roll a die + the number of units of soldiers embarked. The winner of each assault eliminates 1 enemy unit of enemy soldiers. In the case of ties, no units are eliminated. In the case of multiple boardings, each ship can throw only 1 die and fights with the same result against all enemy ships. It is possible to inflict casualties to only one ship per turn. Archers and catapults shooting is included in the fighting aboard effect.

### **15. Captured ships.**

When losses to soldiers are over 50%, roll a die: 1-2 = the ship surrenders, otherwise it continues fighting to the last man. A ship with no soldiers automatically surrenders. The winning ship must remain one whole turn in contact with the captured ship. At the end of the following turn, the captured ship is removed and in the next turn, the winning ship can move normally.

### **16. Admirals.**

Each fleet has one Admiral's ship. The admiral's ship adds + 1 to its die roll for fighting aboard and +1 during the surrender test. Every time that it receives losses during the fighting aboard phase roll a die: with a 6 the Admiral is killed and the Admiral's ships loses both these bonuses.

In addition to this, a ship with an Admiral can perform one extra "Dash" after the first; but adding only 1 segment the movement distance, and subtracting another 1 segment to the maximum speed.

If the Admiral's ship is sunk or captured, the Admiral is considered killed or captured too.

## **17. Victory conditions.**

The game lasts a maximum of 12 turns, after that the rowers are considered "spent". If at the end of a turn, one fleet has lost at least 1/3 of its initial points (rounded up), counting all sunk, captured or eliminated ships, and adding + 50 points if the Admiral has been killed or captured, the other player wins the battle. All other results are a tie.

## **18. Optional Rules**

### **18 a. Fast Triremis**

Some players consider the Triremis being faster than other galleys. This is based on modern reconstructions and historical studies. Hence, if desired, Size 2 ships can have a maximum speed of 6, instead of 5, at a cost of +5 points.

### **18 b. Archer Towers**

Persian Size 2 ships can be provided of Archer Towers, with no additional cost. They add +1 to the first die roll during the Fighting Aboard phase, but subtract - 1 segment to their maximum speed. Note that ships with Archer Towers, can't be considered also "Fast Triremis".

### **18 c. Cathapract Triremis**

Greek, Roman, Carthaginian and Hellenistic Size 2 ships can be provided of additional protection for the rowers. They subtract - 1 to the first enemy die roll during the Fighting Aboard phase, at the cost of +1 point. Note that Cataphract Triremis, can't be considered also "Fast Triremis".

### **18 d. Reinforced Prow**

Syracusan Size 2 or 3 ships can be provided with reinforced prow. They add + 1 to their die roll when ramming another ship, at the cost of 3 points.

### **18 e. Corvus**

Roman Size 3, 4 or 5 ships can be provided of Corvus, the famous boarding bridge used during the 1st Punic War. They add +1 to their die roll during the Boarding Phase, at the cost of 3 points.

### **18 f. Balistae**

Hellenistic and Roman (Civil Wars and Imperial) Size 4, 5 or 6 ships, can be provided of Balistae (shooting engines), at the cost of 3 points. At the start or at the end of their movement, they can shoot to a maximum distance of 4 segment, with a shooting arc of +/- 45° forward, to the nearest target. It is not possible to shoot over other ships. With a die roll = 5,6 the target permanently subtracts -1 segment to its maximum speed, and it can't perform "Dash" movements for the rest of the game. This simulates disorder and losses between the rowers.

### **18 h. Harpax**

Hellenistic and Roman (Civil Wars and Imperial) Size 4, 5 or 6 ships with Balistae, can be additionally provided of Harpax (grappling device), at the cost of 1 point. They add +1 to their die roll during the Boarding Phase, but only if they rammed the enemy ships (i.e only in case of frontal contact).

### **18 i. Pirophoros**

Hellenistic and Roman (Civil Wars and Imperial) Size 4,5 or 6 ships can be provided of Pirophoros (incendiary device) at the cost of 3 points. After they rammed one enemy ship, and before the Boarding Phase, they can try to set fire to the enemy ship. With a die roll = 5,6 the ship is burning; it counts as sunk, but remains in place as an obstacle (use a little piece of cotton or a counter). Only one attack with Pirophoros is possible during the game.

### **18 l. Saving the Admiral**

Historically, it happened that one Admiral managed to escape from a captured ship and was able to take another time control over his fleet. If you want to simulate this possibility, when the Admiral's ship is captured, with a die roll = 5,6 the Admiral himself can escape to another friendly ship, within 4 segments. From the next turn, that ship will become the new Admiral's ship. This "saving roll" can be done only one time during the game.

### **19. Ideas for Big Battles**

While these rules are aimed for games in which one model represent one galleys, the majority of ancient naval encounters involved hundreds of ships. Anyway, it should be possible to represent even mighty battles, as multiplayer games, assuming that one model represents around 5 galleys (a possible compromise between playability and reality). Due to the simplicity of the rules, each player can manage around 12-20 ships, representing a "squadron" or "battleline" of 60-100 galleys. One of the players of each side will be the fleet Admiral; he decides the deployment, gives initial orders to the "squadron leaders" and can change them during the game, possibly using a system of written orders, or another system. This section of the rules will be developed better in the future.

**Questions? Comments? Ideas? Send a message to the Nauta Yahooogroup:**

**<http://games.groups.yahoo.com/group/nauta/>**

© *Daniele Polemicus Varelli, 2005. This copy is distributed for personal use only.*