

Stato da Mar PBEM Campaign Summary

By Simon Stokes

Introduction

This is a summary of the first 10 turns of a play by email naval campaign set in the 16th Century Eastern Med, the full rules for which will appear in the next issue of Battlefleet. My plan is to post a summary of the events in the campaign every 10 turns. To get a good sense of the historical background to the campaign you can do no better than picking up a copy of “Empires of the Sea” by Roger Crowley.

Players

Naples/Genoa	Jon Keeling
Venice	David Manley
Knights of St John	Simon Dunsterville
Barbary Corsairs	Terry Catton
Mamluks	Rob Hutton
Ottomans	Adrian Calendar

Starting Positions

The campaign starts in the year 1503 and runs through to 1573. Due to their limited endurance at sea, strategy for Galley warfare is all about control of ports. The major ports in the eastern Med are marked on the map, those with a dotted line pointing to them are ports with shipyards. The galley squadrons available at the start of the campaign were based at one of these ports. The players post their orders to me by Friday and resolve the outcome of those orders be they sea battles, sieges or general piracy and send out returns over the weekend. Diplomacy between the players is entirely down to them and to facilitate this I set up a closed facebook group which has worked well for dissemination of events, files, photos and as a discussion group for diplomacy and propaganda.



The goal in the campaign for each player is to increase their power. Power is expressed as a numerical value which encompasses money in the nation's treasury, the mercantile strength of the ports they control and the build cost of their respective fleets. Not all nations start on an equal footing however so ranking was based on percentage increase from the players starting power.

Turn 1 (1503)

Whilst most players were content to build up their galley fleets, a mailed gauntlet was thrown down in a sea battle between the Ottomans and the Knights of St John in the Aegean. Both sides fielded pretty much all of their available galleys and both had their c in c present i.e. 6 Gallia Sotttil and 2 Galliot sqdns for Ottomans and 1 Bastarda, 2 Gallia Sotttil and 4 Galliot squadrons for the Knights.



It was a catastrophe for the Ottomans, their whole force was captured by the Knights along with Sultan Selim who became the "guest" of the Knights of Rhodes. The only positive from the Ottoman perspective was that he was captured not killed. The decisive moment was when the Grand Master's squadron of Bastarda engaged, boarded and quickly overcame the 2 Ottoman centre squadrons, capturing Selim who'd just been fished out of the drink. They then re-formed just in time to crash into the flank of the next Ottoman squadron in the line who were busy trying to re-form after winning their boarding action against the Knights Galia Sotttil squadron. It was a massacre. From the Knights perspective this was a heaven sent victory and left the Ottoman ports in the Aegean open to merciless plundering.

The Knights reassured the world that *"The Sultan is safe and being treated with the honour and courtesy due his rank; he does, however, have a hankering for the comforts of home that our monastic lifestyle cannot accommodate so we are open to approaches from any who may wish to change his circumstances."*

The Ottomans riposte *"The person you have is a common imposter the late sultan's son has taken control of the state and swears revenge on the cowardly murderer of his father."*

Turn 2 (1504)

It became apparent that the formation of a Holy League had occurred as Tunis, Salonika and Smyrnia were all besieged. Tunis held and repelled the Genoese fleet. Salonika held and repelled the Knights of St John. Smyrnia fell to Knights of St John supported by the Venetians.

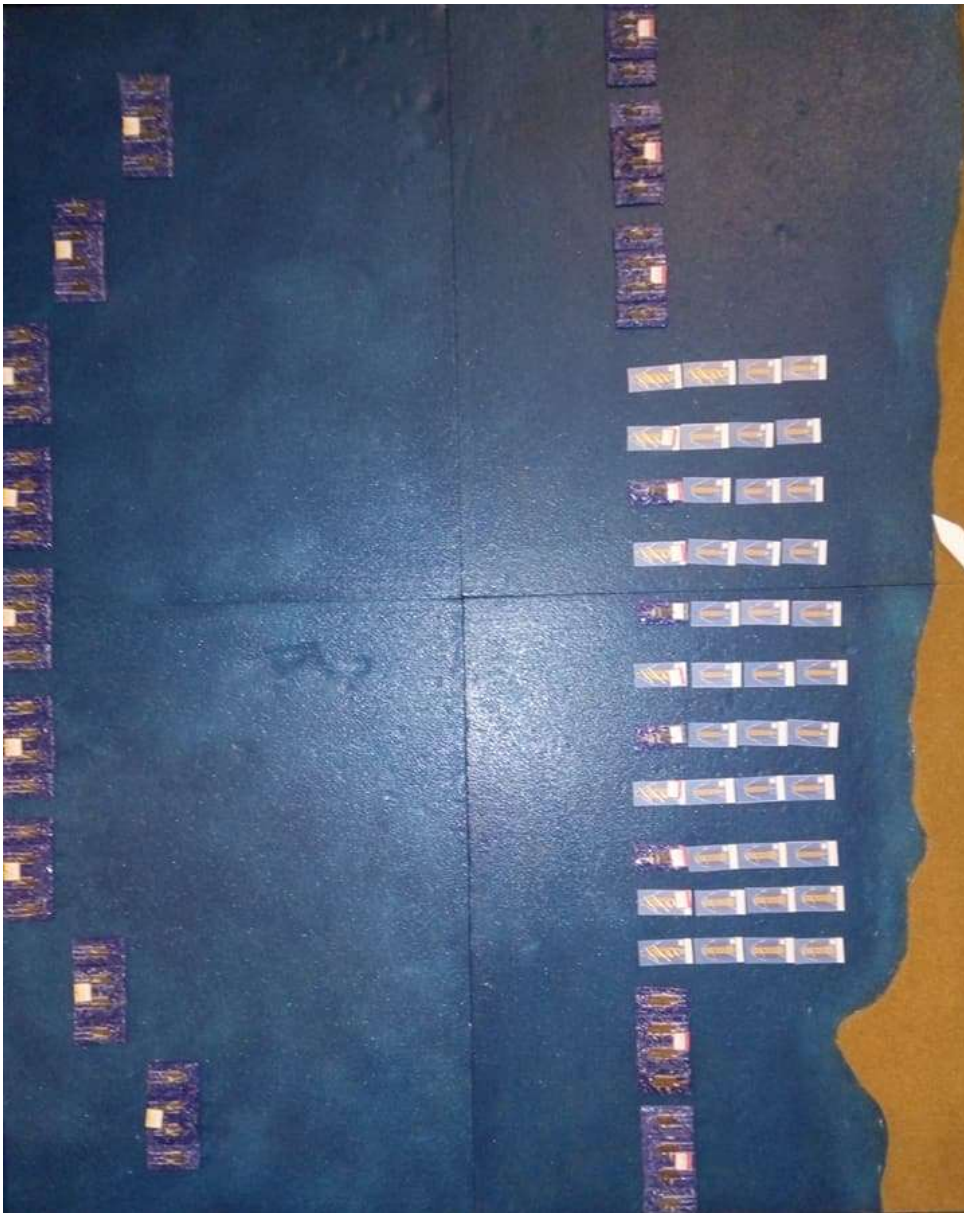
Turn 3 (1505)

Attacks on the ship building ports of the opposition was the main tactic being used at this stage. Tunis was besieged by Naples/Genoa but held. Alexandria was besieged by Venice but held. Rhodes was besieged by Ottomans and Mamluks but held. Gallipoli was besieged by Knights of St John but held. Salonika was besieged by the Knights of St John and fell.

Turn 4 (1506)

A very eventful turn that for once didn't involve the Ottomans. There were sieges at Alexandria, Djerba, Catania, Syracuse, Kephallonia, Trapani, Zante and Cerigo. Zante and Cerigo fell to the Barbary Corsairs. Djerba, Catania, Syracuse, Kephallonia, Trapani all held.

The siege of Alexandria hung in the balance as a Mamluk galley fleet attempted to relieve the siege. This turned into



something of a Mexican stand-off. The Venetian and Knights fleets stood between the Mamluk fleet and Alexandria. The large centre column in the photos are all Carracks (about a dozen squadrons).

Unsurprisingly the Mamluk galley captains were unwilling to tackle these head on in a futile gesture that would just result in them throwing away their fleet. The direction and strength of the wind was therefore all important. The spinner and dice in the shot show its strength and direction i.e. a light offshore breeze. This was not what the Mamluks needed to nullify the Christian Carracks so they decided to sit and wait for it to change.

It was now the turn of the Venetians to decide what they did in response. Their problem was that they did not want to get their Carracks out of position by going off in chase of the more manoeuvrable Mamluk galleys and risk not being able to get back into position should the wind change. Also they only had 5 galley squadrons of their own so not enough to send them off on their own against the 14

Mamluk galley squadrons. They too decided to stay put. Changes in wind strength and direction were then diced for the rest of the day. All that resulted was a strengthening of the wind and a slight veering of its direction so that it was parallel to the shore i.e. not what the Mamluks were looking for. The Mamluk galley fleet disappeared into the gathering gloom trusting to Alexandria's not insubstantial defences to throw back the infidel. The trust was misplaced however and despite a less than enthusiastic prosecution of the siege by the Venetians, Alexandria fell.

There was also a battle between Naples/Genoa and the Barbary Corsairs for control of the Ionian Sea. This one was a very close fought battle essentially pitting Christian firepower against Barbary manoeuvrability and boarding prowess. The battle ebbed and flowed with the Barbary Corsairs attempting to turn the seaward flank whilst drawing in the Christian centre. The Genoan fleet tried to use its Bastarda to Smash the Barbary centre by firepower and frontal assault. In the end the Christian fleet withdrew taking with them 2 Barbary Squadrons that they had captured but leaving behind 5 squadrons that the Corsairs had captured. They also left behind the shattered remains of 14 Barbary galleys that they had sunk by gunfire.

Turn 5 (1507)

No battles this turn. Many small sieges and 2 major sieges at Djerba and Tunis. The Genoese fleet failed once more to take Tunis. The Venetians however did manage to take Djerba. Of the smaller sieges Naples re-took Zante, and the Mamluks took Tenos. The Barbary Corsairs retained Cerigo against the odds.

Turn 6 (1508)

We very nearly had what would have been a one sided sea battle off Kephallonia when Venetian Carracks descended upon the Barbary Corsairs besieging that port. However as the Venetians approached the wind dropped and the pirates quickly re-embarked their besieging forces in their galleys and rowed past the stranded Venetians just out of range of their cannon and taunted them mercilessly.

There were many other much more momentous sieges however. Naples/Genoa finally overcame the defences protecting Tunis to eject the Barbary Corsairs from their best protected port. Venice re-took Cerigo. Barbary Corsairs captured Catania. Mamluks are now in possession of Zante and Chios. The Ottomans finally came out to play and re-took Smyrnia from the Knights.

There were some stout defences mounted elsewhere. Tripoli's defenders repulsed a strong Venetian force. Messina's garrison sent a large force of Barbary Corsairs packing. Milos's garrison again repulsed a second concerted attempt by the Mamluk galleys to take that port and added to their growing collection of pyjamas and curly toed slippers when the winter storms came.

Turn 7 (1509)

Saw a major fleet battle in the Sea of Marmara off Istanbul as the Ottoman fleet tried to relieve the Knights siege of the city. With around 200 warships on each side this was set to be a deciding moment in the campaign.

In a titanic clash the Ottoman fleet managed to break through the Knights fleet to relieve the siege of Istanbul. Losses were heavy on both sides however. Much hinged on the Ottomans attempts to outflank the Knights Carracks. To do so they needed to engage and defeat the Knights galleys that were covering both flanks. Things were made harder for the knights in that they had also to hold enough galleys back to keep a smaller Ottoman force bottled up in Istanbul. Added to this there was a strong offshore wind meaning that their Carracks could only move away from Istanbul. In the end only the Ottoman right wing managed to achieve the break-through



but their added numbers then allowed the bottled up squadrons in Istanbul to break out as well. This was a much closer fight than expected as the Knights Carracks managed to interpose themselves between the Ottoman forward squadrons and their reserve squadrons so if the fight had gone against the Ottomans there would have been no hope of relief or escape. In the final reckoning the Ottomans lost 14 galleys sunk and 5 squadrons captured whilst the Knights lost just 2 Carracks sunk but 11 galley squadrons captured.



Elsewhere there were no other battles but again many sieges. Tripoli and Marsa Ibn Ghazi fell to Venice. Catania was re-taken by Naples. Trapani was captured by the Barbary Corsairs.

Turn 8 (1510)

Some momentous events this turn. The Pope ordered a week of celebrations as the Holy Land was once more under Catholic Christian rule. Antakiyyah, Beirut and Acre all fell to the Knights of Rhodes and Jerusalem. Tubruq also fell to the Venetians meaning the Mamluks have been ejected from North Africa.

The Ottoman and Mamluk fleets however combined forces in the Aegean and fell upon two separate Venetian and Knights fleets besieging Tenos and Chios respectively. Both were massively outnumbered by the huge Moslem fleet and were quickly overwhelmed. Unfortunately for the Knights the Grand Master of the order was with their force besieging Chios and was captured and taken back to Istanbul in chains. His fate was soon became apparent as the Ottomans announced *"The despicable pirate also known as the Grand Master of the Knights of St John has been ritually and publically executed. His head now sits on a pole outside the palace grounds. Death to all pirates!"*

Elsewhere Naples re-took Trapani and the Barbary Corsairs combined their fleet to defend Surt, their last remaining port on the North African coast. The Venetians attempt to capture Surt was thwarted by the Barbary Corsairs fleet which sallied to oppose them. The Venetians managed to extricate themselves without combat. Surt remained under control of the Barbary corsairs.

Turn 9 (1511)

Rumours, mis-information, mis-direction and double dealing were rife this turn. The much vaunted Ottoman attack on Rhodes did not materialise. Instead a combined Ottoman and Mamluk fleet besieged Alexandria which fell and reverted back to the Mamluks.

Naples/Genoa besieged the Barbary Corsairs last remaining port (Surt) which fell. Under the terms of the campaign rules next turn the Barbary corsairs became a vassal state of Venice with possession of their original North African ports that were under Venice's possession.

Turn 10 (1512)

No battles this turn but plenty of sieges, mostly of minor ports. The largest port to change hands was Salonika which came back under Ottoman rule. The Barbary Corsairs are now vassals of Venice and marked their change in master by taking Modon from the Ottomans. Naples took Zante back from the Mamluks and Valona from the Ottomans. Venice took Tenos from the Mamluks and Lesbos and Castel Rosso from the Ottomans. The Knights took Finike from the Ottomans.

The map at the end of turn 10 looked as follows:



The graphs below illustrate the relative positions of the nations from turn 1 to turn 10.

