**Naivety, Inexperience,**

**or Overconfidence:**

**The First Battle of Bull Run**

**HIS1210N1 Civil War Battle**

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After years of increasing tensions and escalating threats between the Southern states and the federal government, the confrontation at Fort Sumter made it clear to the nation that a greater conflict was on the horizon. Occurring on July 21, 1861, only 3 months after initial shots were fired at Fort Sumter, the First Battle of Bull Run was the first formal conflict of the Civil War between armies ostensibly ready for legitimate war. Located just under 30 miles from Washington, DC, this was the Union Army’s failed attempt to dislodge Confederate forces from the literal doorstep of the nation’s capital. Due to a series of tactical errors, Union forces failed to capitalize on strategic advantages and what might have been the first of a series of battles suppressing the Southern rebellion turned into a disastrous, embarrassing retreat for Lincoln’s new Army of the Potomac. While many on both sides expected a quick victory in this battle and the larger conflict, the results of this evenly matched, equally fatal encounter signaled a deadlier, prolonged struggle to the entire nation.

Prior to this first major battle, civilian and military expectations for what would become the Civil War were inarguably unrealistic in both the North and South. During these opening days of the conflict, misinformation and rumors surrounding events such as a troop/mob altercation in Baltimore and concern of a naval bombardment of Richmond caused panic on both sides (Furgurson 2011). After these imaginary situations failed to materialize, resolve and confidence seemed to redouble. The Confederacy even had the initial audacity, at least among some of its members, to suggest declaring Washington, DC as its capital (Furgurson 2011). Perhaps it was fond remembrance of Jackson’s success at the close of the War of 1812 or simply a new generation without the experience of war feeling brash and cocky, but the armies of both sides were seemingly enthusiastic, or perhaps at least curious, at showcasing their military might and felt confident they could vanquish their opponent within three months (Koman 1993, 48).

Likely influenced by this hollow military confidence, the media, at least in the North, fed the civilian populace highly skewed reporting in those first days of the Civil War. The *New York Herald* newspaper expected famed General Winfield Scott to lead a quick and easy campaign to end the Confederate rebellion and exaggerated early skirmishes in western Virginia and Missouri as major routs against the Confederacy in its coverage (Crouthamel 1989, 122). As discussed in more detail later, this irresponsible reporting, combined with a consensus of inevitable Northern victory, led to the tragically comedic situation perhaps never seen before nor since of civilian battlefield “spectators”.



https://www.digitalcommonwealth.org/search/commonwealth:xg94j213m

When Union forces preemptively crossed the Potomac River into Virginia and seized Arlington Heights and Alexandria as a protective buffer for the nation’s capital a month after Fort Sumter, Confederate generals foresaw the impending invasion and eventual Union march to the Confederate capital of Richmond. With two main paths to defend, they decided to make the primary defensive bulwark near the critical Manassas Railroad Junction with a smaller force defending the northern Shenandoah Valley. Located across the Bull Run River from the town of Centreville, roughly 30 miles southwest of Washington, DC, Confederate forces reinforced the area they would refer to as the Battle of Manassas with trenches, earthen ramparts, wooden forts, and cannon emplacements lining the river at every major crossing within eight miles of the rail station (Koman 1993, 51).

The Confederacy had foreseen much of what was about to occur and set up a rudimentary network of spies and informants in Washington, DC prior to the breakout of hostilities proper. Rose Greenhow was a Southern socialite who entertained politicians and Army officers at her home near the White House. Through her contact Thomas Jordan, a former officer who had resigned his Union Army position and had become an assistant to the leader of the Confederate Army, General Pierre Beauregard, she passed encrypted messages detailing any pertinent information she overheard. Greenhow and other spies informed Beauregard in early July that a Union campaign would take place mid-July and on July 16, another message confirmed to Confederate forces that the Union Army was indeed on the move (Furgurson 2011).

The troops sallying forth from the capital to quell the Southern secession were not the cohesive, well-trained military we think of today. They were also a far cry from the deadly, hardened fighting force they would become four years later by the end of the Civil War. They were mainly men from Northern state militias who had answered President Abraham Lincoln’s initial call for 75,000 troops after the clash at Fort Sumter roughly 3 months prior. Inspired by the constant headline “Forward to Richmond!” in newspapers like the *New York Tribune*, most Northerners, including Lincoln, expected a short and decisive conflict (Furgurson 2011).

As further evidence of the expectations of both the military and civilian populace alike, these first state militia volunteers arrived in Washington, DC and signed on under ninety-day enlistments as early as April, and by early July many of their contracts were set to expire while still awaiting action in the capital. While he would make another call for troops on July 4, now with 3-year enlistments, this timing complication combined with media and public pressure for action left Lincoln with little choice but to act quickly (Furgurson 2011). Gen. Winfield Scott, head of the Army and an anti-war proponent, had served since the War of 1812 and by that time was too old to lead field operations at the age of 75. This led him to resign field command to Brigadier General Irvin McDowell, an apparently unlucky, unimpressive 43-year-old subordinate with no previous field combat experience (Koman 1993, 49).

A map with pictures of men

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https://www.battlefields.org/learn/maps/first-manassas-animated-map

These first, volunteer state troops commanded by this inexperienced commander were themselves equally unproven in combat. McDowell led a main force of roughly 30,000 and a reserve force of 10,000 poorly trained soldiers with mismatched uniforms and inconsistent and insufficient support attachments such as engineers, medics, and wagons (Koman 1993, 52). As noted by Union artilleryman Captain John C. Tidball in his memoir, Lincoln’s call for troops had brought forth militiamen from organizations across the nation and they took to the battlefield in various “gay uniforms” used in their holiday parades or other local events (Tidball 1998, 7). On that topic, artillery was one thing both sides deployed with wide and deadly effect in this battle, but of note the Union brought the newest and best available, the 30-pound Parrott Rifle. In addition to the primary force headed for Bull Run, another roughly 15,000 Union troops under the command of 69-year-old Major General Robert Patterson, another War of 1812 veteran turned businessman, were in Maryland along the Upper Potomac near Harper’s Ferry. Union strategy called for this detachment to prevent Confederate troops in the area from reinforcing those in Bull Run in the upcoming battle (Koman 1993, 49, 51-52). Patterson’s inability to do so would play a key, but not sole, role in the outcome days later and miles away.

Aligned against McDowell was the Confederate’s newest war hero, 43-year-old Pierre Beauregard of recent Fort Sumter fame. A talented general with limited combat experience, he was given command of roughly 22,000 men in defense of Manassas Junction. Supporting his flank in Northern Virginia with roughly 12,000 troops was General Joseph Johnston, a man in his 50’s and the US Army’s quartermaster-general prior to secession (Koman 1993, 50-51). McDowell’s military intelligence on Confederate forces in the area had revealed mostly accurate data, including the location of fortifications as well as slightly elevated troop numbers and that they were no more veteran than Union soldiers (Koman 1993, 52).

At a distance of roughly 25 miles, well-trained soldiers should’ve been able to march to the town of Centreville just across Bull Run from Manassas in a single day. McDowell was only able to make it a little over half that on July 16, to Fairfax Courthouse (Koman 1993, 52). When advance Union troops skirmished with Confederate forces near Centreville on July 17, Beauregard ordered his men back to defensive positions along the Bull Run River and wrote to Confederate President Jefferson Davis urgently requesting reinforcements from Johnston. Davis quickly relayed this request that same night and midday July 18 Johnston deftly used a cavalry screen to allow the bulk of his force to sneak out of northern Virginia from under the watch of Patterson (Furgurson 2011). Although it had occurred during the prior two decades in Europe, this would be the first use of railway to transport troops during a conflict on American soil (Historians’ 2011). As such, Johnston was able to move over 10,000 soldiers roughly 55 miles in half the time McDowell took to travel the 25-30 miles from Washington, DC to Manassas.

The cautious, unexperienced McDowell advanced slowly, likely unsure exactly how and where to attack an enemy with both months of preparation and the real experience of Fort Sumter. After taking two days to reach Centreville, on July 18 he orders a subordinate, Brigadier General Daniel Tyler, to subtly probe crossings along Bull Run in the direction of Manassas Junction. Exceeding orders as a battle-hungry young commander may often do, Tyler’s division swapped artillery with Confederate forces at Blackburn’s Ford and attempted an infantry probe of the crossing before being repelled by a volley of musket fire (Furgurson 2011).

This minor skirmish was overhyped later that day and claimed as a victory by both sides, with a Union general reporting defeat to a British reporter while a Senator simultaneously predicted the fall of Richmond just two days later. This caused dozens of thrill-seeking civilians, complete with picnic baskets and champagne, to make the trip from Washington, DC to the battlefield to witness the spectacle of battle and cheer on a surefire victory. Instead, some early travelers encountered the daily occurrence of regiments literally abandoning the battlefield on the eve of combat because their 90-day enlistments had just expired (Furgurson 2011). The rabble of the crowd added to the general confusion and congestion, while important politicians demanded an audience with McDowell and caused further time delays (Tidball 1998, 14).

For the next two days, July 18-20, McDowell remained in Centreville to resupply and plan his point of attack. According to Tidball, in his haste or inexperience, McDowell had apparently failed to account for the most fundamental aspects of even a 2-day military supply chain. Requests for provisions went unfulfilled, locating rations for men and animals was haphazard, and troops suffered from hunger and low morale (Tidball 1998, 12). In addition to the slow initial timeframe to reach Centreville, these two extra days would combine to form another crucial mistake by Union forces: squandering the tactical advantage of surprise and numbers; by the end of July 20, most of Johnston’s force had arrived in Manassas by railroad.

While Union forces had arguably committed two crucial mistakes already, McDowell’s 2-day hiatus in Centreville did give him time to enact an attack plan that in hindsight seems to be tactically sound. His army engineers had located the northern edge of Confederate fortifications and identified a suitable crossing of the Bull Run at Sudley Springs that would allow a flanking maneuver to bypass the heavy defensive emplacements between Stone Bridge and Blackburn’s Ford (Tidball 1998, 14). McDowell set this plan in motion before dawn on July 21.

Ironically, on the other side of the river, Beauregard had a similar thought. He also planned to flank the Union’s left, from the south of Centreville, to isolate McDowell from Washington, DC. By chance, his orders were uncoordinated and too late to be enacted before Union troops made contact with their maneuver (Furgurson 2011). There was to be a coordinated distraction at Stone Bridge to cover the pre-dawn crossing at Sudley Springs to the north, but difficult terrain disrupted timing and delayed the main force by hours. Tyler’s distraction at Stone Bridge was ineffective, so when Confederate lookouts spotted the glimmer of bayonets in the midmorning sun at Sudley Springs, the Confederate commander on that flank was able to quickly turn his defenses and slow what should’ve been a surprise attack (Tidball 1998, 18).

A map of a battle

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https://www.emersonkent.com/map\_archive/first\_battle\_of\_bull\_run.htm

Owing partly to the fact that Beauregard had committed a large portion of his force to a southern attack and partly that it was a generally sound plan with superior forces, McDowell’s flanking maneuver made slow, but eventual progress. As the operation pushed south towards Stone Bridge, more Union brigades crossed Bull Run and joined the battle. At the same time, Confederate Generals Beauregard and Johnston were on the southern side of the region near Mitchell’s Ford anticipating their own offensive, but by roughly 10:30 that morning they realized the battle had begun without them on their flank (Furgurson 2011).

Quickly pivoting his forces, Beauregard shifted troops to his left and the battle’s general front lines developed by early afternoon along an elevated road east of Stone Bridge near a building known as Henry House. It was over the next few hours, during a series of deadly artillery volleys, cavalry charges, and infantry counterattacks, that a Confederate Brigadier General named Thomas Jackson would earn the nickname “Stonewall” for both his valiant rallying of troops while wounded and the performance of his division during the battle (Furgurson 2011). McDowell deployed two companies of artillery, each with six “big guns,” to devastating effect, but in his inexperience left them unguarded and they were lost to cavalry and Jackson’s 33rd Virginia Infantry. The inexperienced soldiers, sounds of heavy artillery and musket fire, and widespread casualties led to bouts of chaos, fear, and confusion (Tidball 1998, 19).

Sustained Confederate reinforcements from Shenendoah throughout the day eventually turned the tide against McDowell and what began as a deliberate retreat turned into a panicked rout under cavalry harassment and cannon fire. Horses were taken from wagons, which were left to clog the road, and some “spectators” got more than they asked for, having to flee for their lives alongside wounded soldiers. Congressman Alfred Ely of New York was indeed captured and almost killed. Over the next day, thousands of wet, tired, hungry, and wounded soldiers would shamble back into the capital, horrifying citizens more prepared for a victory parade. Beauregard gave chase, capturing some 1,300, but was unable to do more than retake positions held prior to McDowell’s advance a week previously (Furgurson 2011). The “Forward to Richmond!” campaign was done, but DC was under no threat.

In a series of post-action reports on the battle, McDowell describes the engagement and immediate aftereffects. He conveys his surprise at Johnston’s reinforcement of Beauregard, describes the back-and-forth progression of the battle, and the sloppy retreat to Washington, DC. In another report on August 4, roughly two weeks later, he includes a much longer battle summary, which is, by nature, somewhat biased, incorrect, and misinformed (Official 2025). The *New York Herald* had a journalist named Villard embedded with McDowell’s army and reported on the initial “Brilliant Union Victory,” but the newspaper found subsequent telegraphs so troubling they refused to publish the full account, instead printing on July 23 simply of the “repulsion” of Union forces (Crouthamel 1989, 122).

Lincoln eagerly awaited these reports by McDowell and the war correspondents, and upon receiving word of the failure, an emergency cabinet meeting was called. After a brief debate, McDowell was replaced with 34-year-old Major General George B. McClellan, the victor in a recent string of battles in western Virginia (Furgurson 2011). Lessons learned from the strategic, tactical, logistic, and operational errors in this battle affected military and political decision making for the rest of the war and arguably to this day. Of note was the poor state of the standing peacetime army. William T. Sherman, a veteran of the First Battle of Bull Run, was commanding general of the US Army when the US Army Command and General Staff College was founded later, whose motto is “Ad Bellum Pace Parati – Prepared In Peace For War” (Historians’ 2011).

In the First Battle of Bull Run, close-range artillery would be used to brutal effect never seen previously on American soil. In a handful of hours, roughly 850 men died, with another 2,700 wounded. These numbers would be tragically overshadowed just a year later at the exact same spot when both sides would combine to lose more than 25,000 in the Second Battle of Bull Run, and even more in the largest battles of the war like Gettysburg (Furgurson 2011). Nonetheless, the civilian populace on both sides at this time, and certainly the day-tripping spectators from DC, were unprepared for this bloody result after the reports of the first skirmish at Blackburn’s Ford two days prior.

In this first true test of military might of the Civil War, despite numerous tactical errors, Union forces nearly defeated the primary Confederate defensive line standing between Washington, DC and Richmond. Had McDowell marched more rapidly to start or not waited two days from July 18-20, had Patterson held or pursued Johnston, or had McDowell committed more forces early at Henry Hill, the superior Union artillery and manpower could’ve possibly taken the victory and changed the course of the war, perhaps shortening the tragedy to come (Historians’ 2011).

Instead, railroads were used to rapidly transport large numbers of troops so that evenly matched forces of poorly trained soldiers with close-range artillery could present a brief, bloody glimpse for the nation that the war to come would be both protracted and deadly. Both sides would learn valuable lessons from their mistakes for the war to come, but would gain a measure of confidence from this battle, knowing that their side wasn’t going to be simply swept over. On the same token, they knew their foe was just as formidable, and each side now had real sense of just how long, arduous, and stained with blood the road to victory would be.

Bibliography

**PRIMARY**

"Official Reports – USA." Bull Runnings. Accessed April 5, 2025. https://bullrunnings.wordpress.com/primary-data/official-reports-union/.

This is a collection of official battle reports from various officers in the Union army from just before and after the First Battle of Bull Run. Of particular interest is #6, a collection of status reports and correspondence from commanding officer General Irvin McDowell to a subordinate, Colonel Townsend on the days of the battle and just after. These entries establish a contemporary, if extremely short, summary of the events of the battle’s action and aftermath. It highlights the haphazard training, movements, and response of Union forces as well as the low morale and discipline of the troops after the loss. Also included is McDowell’s lengthier official report to his superiors Washington DC, which is a more detailed summary sent nearly two weeks after the battle. These real-time, first-hand accounts provide valuable insight into the emotions and motivations of key individuals in the Union army as well as some, perhaps biased, details of the battle itself.

Tidball, Eugene C. “The View from the Top of the Knoll: Capt. John C. Tidball’s Memoir of the First Battle at Bull Run.” *Civil War History* 44, no. 3 (September 1, 1998): 175. doi:10.1353/cwh.1998.0059.

John C. Tidball was an artilleryman in the Union Army with 41 years of service. This is his account of the leadup, battle, and aftermath of the First Battle of Bull Run. Written years after the event as he recorded his personal memoirs, it provides a gritty, unpolished account of a “boots-in-the-mud” soldier as opposed to the formal language and biased inclusions/omissions in the official battle reports of the generals and other commanders. A particularly enlightening portion contains details regarding northern civilian “tourists” who came to watch a picturesque routing of the “rebels” and their ridiculous expectations and questions regarding the happenings of the day. These ranged from commoners to Senators, and Tidball’s description of the contradictions between their desire to witness a proper battle, their fear upon actually encountering one, and their exasperation at Union soldiers’ performance in and retreat from said battle clearly illustrates the general naivety concerning the war shared by many northerners.

**SECONDARY**

Crouthamel, James L. “Covering the Civil War.” In *Bennett’s New York Herald and the Rise of the Popular Press*, 112–37. Syracuse University Press, 1989. https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv64h7cg.10.

This chapter discusses the New York Herald newspaper and its coverage of the Civil War. Of particular interest are pages 122-123, where the First Battle of Bull Run is discussed. The Herald had an embedded reporter with Gen. McDowell, and initially reported Union success, as most northerners had been expecting. To avoid embarrassment as the truth came to light, they helped scapegoat McDowell and others and supported McDowell’s replacement after Bull Run. In subsequent pages the relationship this newspaper had with Gen. McDowell’s replacement, Gen. McClellan, is explored. Apparently, McClellan was a bit of a pet project or golden boy for their news coverage. This article is helpful in exploring public expectations for the war and how media influences it. It also explores the effects of biased and inaccurate wartime media coverage, primarily regarding the First Battle of Bull Run and its aftermath.

Furgurson, Ernest B. “The End of Illusions: Confederates Thought They Would Quickly Capture Washington, D.C. President Lincoln Wanted the Confrontation to Be a ‘Short, and a Decisive One.’ The Battle of Bull Run Would Bury All Such Expectations.” *Smithsonian*, July 1, 2011. https://research-ebsco-com.ccco.idm.oclc.org/linkprocessor/plink?id=32589230-68b1-3c2d-b23c-0bff5eb80e49.

In this nine-page article in the Smithsonian Institution’s self-titled, bi-monthly periodical *Smithsonian*, author Ernest B. Ferguson gives a thorough, multi-faceted summary of many aspects regarding the First Battle of Bull Run. This includes public and political sentiments in both the Union and Confederacy, military intelligence and troop details for both armies, and the political and military planning and decision-making that occurred in days and weeks prior to the actual battle, among other topics. Where other sources focus on more specific aspects such as military strategy or media coverage, or are personal accounts/correspondence or opinion pieces with inherent bias, this source will likely act as the most comprehensive single source for information on the battle. It provides a big-picture, researched examination and comes from arguably the most reputable resource on American history.

“Historians’ Forum: The First Battle of Bull Run.” *Civil War History* 57, no. 2 (June 1, 2011): 106–20. doi:10.1353/cwh.2011.0023.

The magazine *Civil War History* sent three Civil War specialists a series of questions in the leadup to the 150th anniversary of the First Battle of Bull Run in 2011. These included an author of two books on Manassas, a professor of military history at the US Army Command and General Staff College, and a writer for two Civil War magazines who also runs the Bull Runnings website used above as a primary source. These subject-matter experts were asked about the battle’s common misconceptions, its significance to the Civil War, and its overall legacy 150 years later. Their varied opinions on the issues provide highly informed analysis of many issues surrounding the battle, particularly those of command and troop inexperience, battle tactics, and its legacy/aftermath. Some of these counter old, widely held beliefs concerning the first major battle of the Civil War.

Koman, Rita G. “Mastermind Maneuvers at Manassas: A Study in Strategy Options.” *OAH Magazine of History* 8, no. 1 (1993): 48–53. http://www.jstor.org/stable/25162927.

This article from the Organization of American Historians’ *Magazine of History* presents as a both a history lesson on the battle and a thought experiment for a class, complete with activity directions for groups of students. The author, Rita Koman, taught American history and government for seventeen years and actually lived/lives in Manassas, Virginia. This article is useful in multiple ways. First, it provides the geographical and tactical details of the battle with multiple maps of the area and descriptive details of the region’s landscape. Second, it summarizes the military forces, with profiles of the leaders on both sides and the locations, composition, and disposition of the various forces under their command. Finally, as part of the thought experiment/activity, it presents the wartime intelligence and strategies available to the Union and Confederate generals.

**IMAGES**

https://www.battlefields.org/learn/maps/first-manassas-animated-map

https://www.digitalcommonwealth.org/search/commonwealth:xg94j213m

https://www.emersonkent.com/map\_archive/first\_battle\_of\_bull\_run.htm

Naivety, Inexperience, or Overconfidence:

The First Battle of Bull Run

Thesis:

The first Battle of Bull Run, also known as the Battle of First Manassas, took place on July 21, 1861 roughly 30 miles southwest of the US capital in Washington DC. Only 3 months after the first shots at Fort Sumter, this was the first major conflict between Union and Confederate armies ostensibly prepared for war.

While the poorly trained combatants may have been prepared for fratricide, Union General Irvin McDowell was either unprepared for 19th century combat or too inexperienced for command of such a vital operation. His incompetence resulted in a deadly, uncoordinated attempt to push back Confederate forces from the doorstep of the Union’s capital. Instead of a series of likely decisive victories over numerically inferior southern forces, delays and miscommunication resulted in an almost evenly matched conflict and McDowell’s defeat, a sloppy retreat, and his eventual replacement by General George McClellan.

The Union’s defeat and the hundreds killed on each side signaled to all that a quick or simple end to the south’s secession was not likely and that more bloodshed was to come. This came as a shock to many overconfident or naïve northerners and led to investigations and reform of military tactics and leadership that would be key to later success and eventual Union victory.

**Outline**

**I. Introduction**

**A. Eye-Opening First Battle:**Military and civilian populations in both the Union and Confederacy were woefully optimistic about the speed and overall ease of success for their side in the Civil War. The First Battle of Bull Run would quickly change these misconceptions.  
**B. Areas of Focus:** Public expectations/reactions/outlook, military leadership/training/performance  
**C. Key Places:**  Washington DC, Centreville, Blackburn’s Ford, Stone Bridge, Sudley Springs

**D. Key People:**  Confederacy: Gen. Beauregard, Gen. Johnston, Gen. “Stonewall” Jackson; Union: Gen. McDowell, Gen. Patterson, Gen. Tyler

**Thesis Statement:** In the first formal conflict of the Civil War, Union General McDowell squandered tactical advantages and failed to dislodge Confederate forces from the doorstep of the capital. Many on both sides expected a quick victory in this battle and the larger conflict, but the results of this evenly matched, equally fatal encounter signaled a deadlier, prolonged struggle for the entire nation.

**II. Background**

**A. Prior Battles in Civil War:** Occurring on July 21, 1861, only 3 months after the first shots were fired at Fort Sumter, it was the first major battle of the Civil War. Only a couple of small skirmishes had taken place between the two events.  
**B. Current State of Military Forces:** Inexperienced commanders led temporary, poorly trained volunteer troops of state militias (Historians’ 2011 Forum).  
**C. Current State of Public Sentiment:** Northern press, as seen through the *Herald*’s war reporting, expected Union armies to achieve quick and decisive victories and small, early skirmishes were exaggerated into major wins for the Confederacy (Crouthamel 1989).

**III. Major Point 1: Neither side was prepared for a modern, symmetric, bloody conflict**

**A. Minor Point 1:** Union soldiers were poorly trained and lacked experience. Volunteers from different states on 90-day enlistments would abandon the battlefield each day (Koman 1993 1993).   
**B. Minor Point 2:** Reports of the first day’s conflict led to such false confidence and enthusiasm that many northern civilians decided to come spectate the “inevitable” victory (Tidball 1998).

**IV. Major Point 2: Delays and tactical errors by McDowell and Patterson sealed the Union defeat**

**A. Minor Point 1:** Patterson failed to stop, or even notice and pursue, Johnston from leaving Winchester and reinforcing Beauregard at Bull Run. This caused an unpredicted imbalance of force (Official 2025).  
**B. Minor Point 2:** After the first skirmish at Blackburn’s Ford on July 18, McDowell waited two days before engaging his forces, allowing Johnston’s reinforcements to arrive by rail (Furgurson 2011).

**V. Major Point 3: Failed flanking maneuver leads to a disorganized, embarrassing retreat**

**A. Minor Point 1:**Despite tactical errors by commanders on both sides, those on the Union side proved more numerous and critical (Historians’ 2011 Forum).   
**B. Minor Point 2:** After a ferocious battle at Henry Hill, an exhausted Union army routed without any leadership coordination, fleeing towards Washington DC through terrified civilian spectators (Furgurson 2011).

**VI. Major Point 4: The battle revealed inadequacies in Army leadership and tactics and signaled to both sides a protracted, painful war ahead.**

**A. Minor Point 1:** The failures of Patterson and McDowell led to immediate changes in Army leadership by President Lincoln (Furgurson 2011).  
**B. Minor Point 2:** In addition to signaling a lengthy conflict, this battle showed modern, evenly matched forces with artillery could inflict massive casualties in a single day (Historians’ 2011 Forum).

**VII. Conclusion**

**A. Restatement of Thesis:**Poor military leadership squandered tactical advantages in the Union’s first attempt at confronting Confederate forces in the Civil War mere miles from Washington DC. The deadly confrontation that ensued between evenly matched forces of poorly trained soldiers with close-range artillery showed the nation that the war to come would be both lengthy and deadly.