The Battle of Lepanto

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Strategy & Tactics 272’s Lepanto After Action Report

The game begins with the two enemy fleets across from one another. Each game turn represents approximately 10 minutes of ‘real time,’ and the ship counters represent two vessels each (thankfully).

Turn One
The battle begins with the wind blowing toward the east. The Christian-Coalition player is the first player. Don Juan is the overall commander of the Coalition fleet. He decides to hold back and let the Ottoman fleet to make the first move. A die is rolled to determine the fate of Doria’s galleasses. They remain intact. (They were cut loose too soon from their tow ropes historically.)

Though the wind is blowing directly into the Ottoman fleet, those ships can still move one hex. Ali Pasha orders the men to row. That allows the Ottoman fleet to advance three hexes or thereabouts. As a consequence of all of that rowing, the Ottoman main fleet becomes exhausted.

The fleet is moving west while keeping its starting formation, which Pasha selected to match up with the Coalition fleet positions. Pasha is commanding the ships in the center, and he’s flanked to the right by Mahomet Sirocco’s fleet and to the left by Uluch Ali’s fleet.

Turn Two
The wind changes to calm, and the current changes direction to the southwest, which helps the Turks in their effort to make contact with the Coalition ships. Doria’s galleasses remain in position. Again Don Juan decides to wait and watch as the Ottoman fleet moves west. With the aid of the wind, the Ottoman fleet pushes forward. Since all the oarsman are now exhausted, they’re unable to help the ships along this time, but they do manage to recover.

Turn Three
The wind changes direction again, this time to the northwest. That still favors the Ottoman fleet’s movement. Pasha orders the fleet to move into contact with the Coalition. Again the oarsmen row and become exhausted.

Turn Four
The wind shifts to the southwest. That still allows the Ottoman fleet excellent maneuverability. Don Juan continues to wait. The longer he holds back from contact, the sooner the Ottoman’s will tire and lose small arms effectiveness. The Ottoman fleet relies on the wind to push the ships along as the oarsmen again rest from their relentless efforts at rowing.

Turn Five
This turn the reserve ships on either side are released for action. The wind is now blowing toward the west and
into the Coalition ships. Again Don Juan holds back his ships, but the galleasses are rotated to get a good shot at the encroaching ships. Doria’s galleys cut loose the galleasses, and they begin to drift back into the rest of his fleet, due to the westerly wind direction. Meanwhile, the tow ships use the reorientation phase to turn toward the southeast.

Again the Ottoman fleet uses the wind to its advantage and moves forward. All the oarsmen are ordered to row, which leaves them exhausted; however, that also works to maximize the forward movement of the Turkish fleet. Now that the reserves can move, Reis’s fleet also advances and becomes exhausted due to excessive rowing. There’s still no contact as the Coalition holds back.

**Turn Six**

There is no change in the wind this time. The Coalition fleet remains motionless, as it awaits the enemy fleet. The galleasses are in position to fire their cannon and to exact a toll on the Turkish fleet. The Ottoman fleet moves ever closer, but there’s still no contact. The oarsmen recover from their prior exhaustion.

**Turn Seven**

The wind changes to the northeast. That will slow down the Turkish fleet. The Coalition fleet cuts loose their galleasses, allowing the tow ships to be free to gain a good position and to brace for the Ottoman attack. Pasha orders all three positions to press forward, though they’re cautious, as they’re attempting to set up high-acceleration ramming attacks. That leaves them in range of the Coalition galleasses.

**Turn Eight**

The wind shifts to the northwest. That will aid the Ottoman fleet in its efforts to inflict heavy damage on the Coalition’s fleet. Don Juan still remains in place but the galleasses do fire on the enemy ships. Not much damage is incurred. The Ottoman fleet takes advantage of the wind speed and rams the lead elements to the Coalition’s fleet. Both Doria and Barbarigo lose several ships. A two of the galleasses are sunk.

**Turn Nine**

There is no change in the wind direction. The Coalition fleets begin to fire at the enemy. The Ottoman fleet loses 10 ships (five counters). The small-arms fire proves to be deadly to both sides. Pasha’s fleet attempts further attacks.
Scirocco’s ships fire on the Coalition right flank. Two of the galleasses are sunk. Then Pasha’s fleet takes out two more of Don Juan’s ships. Several of the Ottoman ships are repulsed, and a number of ships are destroyed on both sides. At this time the Coalition has lost 11 galleys and five galleasses while the Ottoman fleet has lost seven galleys.

**Turn Ten**
The wind direction remains the same. The Coalition right flank, led by Giandrea Doria, fires on Uluch Ali’s ships. Two galleys are sunk; then six more are eliminated by small arms fire. In the center, Don Juan’s ships continue to engage the Ottoman fleet led by Pasha. None of the gunfire manages a hit. Then the Coalition ships engage in small-arms fire. Though four of Don Juan’s galleys are repulsed, he manages to take out 10 of Ali Pasha’s ships. Lastly, Barbarigo’s ships fire on the Ottoman right flank. Gunfire
manages to get a couple ships, and then small-arms fire destroys several more.

The Ottoman player becomes aggressive and attempts to ram. Uluch Ali’s ships drive into the Coalition right. Four of Doria’s galleys are eliminated by ramming, while four Ottoman ships are immobilized. Pasha’s fleet takes out eight of Don Juan’s ships by ramming, but four of Pasha’s ships are immobilized. Then Scirocco crashes into the Coalition left. That’s covered by Barbarigo’s ships. The Coalition loses six units due to ramming. The Coalition should have closed with the enemy a bit more.

The losses stand at 34 Christian galleys (plus five galleasses) to 21 Ottoman Galleys.
Turn 11
The wind shifts and is now blowing directly west, into the front of the Coalition formation. The Coalition can barely move under these wind conditions; however, they are already in close quarters with the enemy. Doria’s ships use their gunfire to knock out four of Uluch’s galleys. Then, with small-arms fire, Doria eliminates four more units.

In the center, Don Juan’s ships also engage. There Ali Pasha is in close contact. Two of his ships are eliminated by gunfire. Small-arms fire erupts in the center. Six more of Pasha’s ships are sunk, and a number of Don Juan’s ships are repulsed.

On the Coalition left, Barbarigo’s fleet fires on Scirocco’s ships. Their gunnery knocks out two ship counters, and small-arms fire gets five more. A few of Barbarigo’s ships are repulsed.
Altogether 22 Ottoman galleys have been sunk along with two galliots.

At this time the Coalition has scored 88 VP, and the Turks have 73.

The Ottoman portion of the turn begins. Uluch’s ships ram into the ships on the Coalition right. Two galleys are sunk. Then Uluch orders gunfire that hits another Coalition galley. No small-arms fire is conducted, as there’s too much disadvantage, but there’s a boarding attempt that successfully destroys a Coalition galley counter. Uluch gets three galleys and the galleass.

Next, Pasha’s ships in the center resume their attack. Between ramming and gunfire, Pasha’s ships knock out four of Don Juan’s ships. Pasha doesn’t attempt any small-arms fire.

On the Ottoman right, Scirocco’s ships attack Barbarigo’s ships. Ramming manages to eliminate two of those Coalition ships, and gunnery gets three more. There’s no small-arms fire, but attempts are made to board Coalition ships. That effort largely fails and leaves one Ottoman ship immobilized.

Tally: Ottoman 98 VP, Coalition 88.

**Turn 12**
The wind remains the same, blowing toward the west, which favors the Ottomans. Doria, on the Coalition right, resumes his attack. Gunfire sinks three of Uluch’s galleys. Small-arms fire gets three more, but leaves a couple of Doria’s galleys repulsed. In the center, Don Juan’s ships again attack Pasha’s. Using gunfire, three galleys are hit and a galliot sinks. On the left, Barbarigo’s fleets uses gunnery and small-arms fire to sink four of Scirocco’s galleys. The Coalition has now collected 115 VP.

With the wind in his favor, the Ottoman player continues to use ramming. Uluch’s ramming takes out three more Coalition galleys. Two more are lost to gunfire. Again the Ottoman’s choose to avoid small-arms fire. In the center, Don Juan loses five more galleys to ramming by the enemy. On the Coalition left, Scirocco’s ships attempt to destroy more ships but only manage to sink one galley. The Ottomans have 120 VP.

**Turn 13**
The wind remains the same. Doria attacks Uluch’s fleet with gunnery, managing to sink two galleys and two galliots. Another immobilized Ottoman galley is eliminated using small-arms fire. A galliot is also destroyed in small
arms exchanges. Meanwhile, Santa Cruz is attempting to slip to the right.

In the center, Don Juan’s fleet attacks what remains of Pasha’s ships. A galliot, that had been immobilized earlier is sunk by gunnery. Pasha’s fleet doesn’t fare too well during the small-arms fire exchange. Three more galley’s are sunk as well as two galliots.

On the left, Barbarigo’s fleet is engaged with Scirocco’s ships. Several more Ottoman ships are destroyed by small-arms fire. The Coalition now has 148 VP.

Uluch’s ships again attempt to ram. Only a couple galleys get into position, and they become immobilized as a result. None of the gunfire hits, and one galley attempts to flee. In the center, Pasha’s fleet sinks three of Don Juan’s galleys with ramming and gunnery. Scirocco is ineffective on the right. The Ottomans have 126 VP.

**Turn 14**
The wind continues to blow west. That gives the Ottomans an advantage with their ramming. The Coalition fleet renews its attack. Doria’s ships sink three galleys and two galliots. Don Juan’s ships also engage the Ottoman fleet. None of the gunnery hits, but the small-arms fire and boarding are successful, eliminating two more galleys and three galliots. Ali Pasha is killed in the exchange of small-arms fire. Barbarigo’s fleet also inflicts further damage against Scirocco’s ships on the left. The Coalition now has 169 VP.

The Ottoman fleet launches a number of ramming attacks, since the wind is blowing west. Some of their gunfire is also effective. Barbarigo loses three units; Doria loses two, and both Juan and Santa Cruz lose a galley. The Ottomans have 140 VP to the Coalition’s 169.

**Turn 15**
The wind blows west, giving Pasha’s fleet more opportunities to ram. Due to the wind and exhaustion, the Coalition fleet is essentially immobilized. So Don Juan orders gunfire, which sinks a couple of Uluch’s galleys. Uluch’s fleet gets one ramming attempt at full speed, but it fails and the ships become immobilized. Two of Don Juan’s ships are sunk in successful ramming efforts. One of Scirocco’s becomes immobilized. The Ottoman’s have risen to 144 VP while the Coalition has 172.

**Turn 16**
The wind shifts to the northwest. Again the Coalition fleet is unable to maneuver much, but small-arms fire takes out a couple Ottoman
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galliots. The Ottoman fleet has an excellent turn, ramming and then firing its guns. In the end, seven more Coalition ships are eliminated.

Totals: Coalition 174 VP, Ottoman 158

Turn 17

The wind changes direction. The Coalition fleet attempts to close to avoid Ottoman ramming and to take advantage of small-arms fire benefits. Two of Scirocco’s galleys are sunk by gunfire. Two galliots are also sunk. Then four of Uluch’s galleys are destroyed after exchanging small-arms fire. Two galliots are likewise eliminated. Two of Reis’s reserve galleys are destroyed. Scirocco also loses four galleys to small-arms fire. There are no boarding attempts made, as the ships are out of position.

During the Ottoman turn, two of Reis’s ships ram Don Juan’s galleys and two more are sunk. The tide is starting to swing fully toward the Coalition. The Coalition has 188 VP while the Ottoman side has 160.

Turn 18

The wind remains unchanged and blows northwest. That inhibits the Coalition’s ability to maneuver. Nonetheless, gunfire sinks two of Scirocco’s galleys and two of Reis’s galliots. Small-arms fire wipes out four more of Reis’s galliots and two of Scirocco’s galleys. There are no boarding attempts.

Reis attempts more ramming and sinks four of the Coalition’s galleys. Two of Reis’s ships are hung up and become immobilized. Pasha’s fleet also attempts ramming, but they become immobilized instead. The Coalition has 193 VP to the Ottoman total of 164.

Turn 19

The wind dies out. That allows the Coalition fleet some maneuverability. Gunfire sinks four of Reis’s galliots. Two of them had already been immobilized. Two of Reis’s galliots are destroyed after receiving small-arms fire, and two of Pasha’s galliots are likewise eliminated. Reis can see what’s happening, and he decides to escape. The Ottoman reserve fleet turns around and begins to head east.

Summary

In general, the wind generally favored the Ottomans. That enhanced their ability to ram. After turn 10, however, the Ottoman fleet began to run low on small-arms ammunition. That’s when they all should’ve attempted to escape. The Ottoman player reduced
his losses by not employing small-arms after the disparity came into effect, but that wasn't enough, even given the many ramming opportunities. The Coalition player couldn’t ram, and had poor maneuverability, but he utilized his fleet’s gunnery, small-arms and boarding abilities as often as possible to wear down the enemy fleet.

I called the game when the number of ships became limited and Reis decided to flee. The final tally is: Coalition 197 VP, Ottomans 164. Both sides lost a lot of ships, but the Coalition still has an effective fleet.