

Alexander the Great's Northern Campaigns | Notes

Free Thracians

Alexander went to mount Haemus in Thrace. He took 10 days to travel there.

The free thracians had occupied high ground of a narrow pass with mountains either side. They tried to throw down carts at Alexander's army.

Alexander's plan:

The infantry that could went and broke formation. The others lay face down with shields locked above their bodies so carts bounced over them.

Counter attack:

The archers moved from right to the centre and shot at the thracians. The personal guard, Agrianes and regiments went left.

Result:

1500 of the enemy were killed. There were no casualties on the Macedonian side according to Arrian.

Triballians

At the river Lyginus, king Syrmus fled to the pine tree islands along with women, children, Thracians and entourage.

Phase 1 of Alexander's plan:

Alexander heard the triballians were behind him. He caught them off guard whilst they were napping at their camp. The triballians retreated into the woods. The infantry formed a column. The archers and slingers attacked causing the tribesmen to come forward. Alexander attacked the centre, Philotas attacked the right and the cavalry went left.

Result:

3,000 killed. Macedonian losses were 51.

Phase 2 of Alexander's plan:

He attacked the pine tree island. Alexander had ships waiting at the Danube but did not attack because the opposition had 10,000 infantry and 4,000 cavalry. The Macedonian ships were not well armed and the current was very strong. Instead, he attacked the Getae on the other side of the river.

The Triballians surrendered. King Syrmus heard of the Getae defeat and sent messengers to Alexander expressing a desire for friendship.

Getae

Alexander had a force of 1,500 cavalry and 4,000 infantry. He crossed the river using ships, tents filled with hay as rafts and native boats. The enemy did not confront because he crossed at night and the river bank was concealed by high grain.

Alexander's plan:

The infantry held their spears parallel with the ground to flatten the grain. The cavalry followed. When they reached clear ground, Alexander led the cavalry and general Nicanor led the infantry. Alexander made an example of the Getae. He had clearly "shaken them profoundly." (Arrian)

Result:

The Getae fled to their town. They saw Alexander approach the town so they took women, children, tools and other possessions and fled. Alexander took the town along with leftover possessions.

Illyrians

There were 3 subdivisions of Illyria that revolted;

King Pleuris- Autariates

King Glaucias- Taulantians

King Cleitus- Dardanians.

Paul And Gerry Took Care of Darla

(I find it helpful to use this mnemonic to remember them)

King Langaros of Agrianes wants to remain on Alexander's good side so he attacked and subdued the Autariates on his behalf. Cleitus occupied Pelium and Glaucias supported. Alexander arrived before Glaucias and blocked Cleitus within the city walls. Alexander sent Philotas on a foraging expedition. Glaucias attacked and Alexander "at once marched to their rescue." (Arrian) Alexander left some troops behind to keep an eye on Cleitus. Alexander was caught between Cleitus in Pelium and Glaucias occupying steep hills around.

Alexander's Plan:

Alexander made a tactical retreat to the river. He had to go through a narrow pass with the river on one side and the hills on the other. The enemy "already shaken" by Alexander's clever tactics abandoned their position on the hill allowing Alexander to occupy them.

When the natives saw Alexander crossing the river they moved from high ground and tried to attack the rear of Alexander's army. He made a counter attack and they fled. He ordered his men to use every sort of missile they have and throw them long range at the enemy. Archers shot mid-stream. Glaucias' men refused to come too close to Alexander and his men were able to cross safely.

Glaucias and Cleitus troops were camped opposite the river:

They had no regular watchmen, no fence and their line was perilously extended. Alexander attacked at night with the Agrianes and archers. Many were killed in their beds and others fled in panic.

Cleitus went to the town and burnt it. Cleitus fled to the Taulantians where he sought refuge with Glaucias.