

AAR America's Olde West - Gunfights & Skirmish Actions In The Wild West

by Russ Lockwood

(Note: this game was played using 28mm minis but any scale from 10 to 30mm can be used)

Banditos, Injuns, and Cavalry, oh my.

So began my playtest of **America's Olde West** with a scenario based loosely on the movie *Major Dundee*. I arrived a wee bit late, so the skirmish flowed across the table without me for several turns, but one fellow had to leave soon enough, allowing me to take command of the Union and Confederate cavalymen. At the time, they were chasing the Indians from one patch of scrub to another.

America's Olde West is based on the *WWII Skirmish Action* rules and plays roughly the same: random draw of card activates a player, up to two actions per figure, single d6 firing and defense, and the similarly formatted chart with all the weapon statistics. However, AOW contains just enough 19th century changes to make it different.

Major Differences

First off, all second actions required a Quality Test: pass and you can perform a move, fire, reload (no automatic weapons here, although Gatling Guns are included). Fail and that's the end of that figure's actions. However, certain figure types got a second action without the need for a roll. For example, Indians moved without a QT and cavalymen reloaded without a QT.

Secondly, the Damage Chart was extended with figures taking up to four wounds before perishing. That meant the figures continued on longer than *WWII SA* as you chip away, assuming you hit. There seemed to be a lot of fall backs, but then again, a lot of Westerns featured gunplay a plenty and many near misses.

Thirdly, the 'Hero' mechanic embodied characteristics typical of heroes, everything from dead-eye shooting to additional shots (fanning in Old West speak) to additional wounds, and so on. I didn't Charlton Heston, or even the Frito Bandito, when I needed him, but the game went on. Heroes include Wyatt Earp, Bat Masterson, and many more, plus players can role up their own to add a RPG flavor.

Chasing Indians

When I took over, many of the Indians already sported a flesh wound or two, so I did the only thing you should do when you walk into a situation blind: CHARGE!

I took my nine Union Militia dismounted cavalry troopers and charged eight Indians, mostly because the Indians weren't Ready (otherwise known as Overwatch). In the melee that followed, I found out that the Apache warriors were considerably better than my Militia boys in blue, but I out-rolled them anyway. I didn't get a lot of KO's (Killed Off), but many a fall back and a smattering of additional wounds sent the Apaches packing to the next patch of rocky cover. Here they hunkered down, reloaded their guns, and made Ready. I spent the next couple turns pinging away, usually only hitting them once per turn.

In the nearby ruins of an adobe building, Indian Dum Bear cornered Bandito Bob and peppered the banditos with fire. Again, it's a fortuitous roll of 6, which adds another d6 roll to your score, that had any chance of killing anyone. Dum Bear charged up the stairs, struck a bandito knocking him out of the melee

and captured another one, but ultimately a counterattack by the remaining bandidos freed the prisoner (*yes, this game has prisoners, which generate extra VPs*) and drove the remaining Indians off.

Tried a Big Melee

With the game almost over, we fought the melee of eight Union cavalymen (the ninth had two wounds, but dragged himself along anyway) versus the eight dug-in and wounded Indians. Indian Dennis managed to roll a string of 6s, which did little other than chase half the troopers away, captured one, and dinged one. I managed to ding an Indian and chase a couple more away.

At this point, the six Confederate cavalymen charged. Dennis ran out of 6s and the Indians were wounded anew, one died, and the rest fled the battle. Most of the running braves had two wounds. When you inflict a third wound during melee, the wounded fellow surrenders. Dennis' Indians managed to grab a Union prisoner during the melee.

Post-Game Thoughts

The good news is that AOW is a deliberate style of game -- you don't get the auto-deaths from MG fire like in *WWII SA* -- so you can often recover from a bad die roll. On occasion, you do get a high roll-low die roll that means instant death, but chipping away with 'flesh wounds' is more likely -- mind you, based only on my playing half a game. For the Indians, the ebb and flow of advances and retreats is nicely done.

For those interested, Lee will be running AOW Major Dundee at NJ Con on Saturday June 9th.