

The Spanish Campaign, 218 BC to 205 BC

A possible account of the Spanish Campaign, based on the history of Livy and Polybius

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The Second Punic War must rank as Ancient version of a World War. From the straits of Gibraltar to the coast of Asia the armies and fleets of the two mighty alliances fought each other. History was to prove that the victor of this war would become the master of the known world.

One of the most significant campaigns of the Second Punic Wars was the Spanish Campaign. It was here that the Roman victory was forged. The victor of the Spanish Campaign would be the victor of the 2nd Punic War.

If the Carthaginians had won then Hannibal would of been able to gain a steady supply of manpower and armies from this theatre providing him with almost certain victory. Instead the Roman victory cut off any hope of major reinforcements to Hannibal and freed up Roman armies for the invasion of Africa. Without Spain, Carthages second major source of manpower, only Africa was left to face the full might of Roman forces, and history was to prove this was a hopeless struggle.

Assumptions

This account of the Spanish Campaign is based on Livy's and Polybius's history of the campaign. Many assumptions and guesses have been made in attempt to provide a full, complete and understandable account of this campaign. Reasons for my guesses and assumptions are not included in this article, as they would simply make the reading of this difficult and boring. Instead what I consider the most highly probably events and course of the campaign is reported here in this history, my version of this mighty campaign.

Certain key assumptions are made in order to come to this account. The most important is the time it takes to march and sail. The Roman army would commonly march 30 kilometres per day, construction a camp at the end of each day. For short bursts this could be greatly increased, but at the cost of constructing a camp and with all siege and transports left behind. For the purposes of this article we have assumed the greatest speed an army could achieve for a sustained period is 30 kilometres. This figure can drop if the army is foraging, Hannibal average a bit under 10 kilometres per day during his march to Italy. When moving in areas with no supply we have assumed an army will average 15 kilometres per day. Finally terrain will have an effect, crossing major rivers may take a day, crossing difficult terrain will slow a march down, etc.

As for a fleet, under oars a quinquereme can average 60 kilometres per day over a sustained period of time. Without getting any more complex than this we have assumed naval movement at this rate. Normally transports had warships accompanying them, and if there was any chance of enemy ships in the area this was normally done under oars.

We have to make some assumptions of the campaign year. When there was no urgency May seemed to be the average start to the campaign season. November normally the end, although there were exceptions. In times of vicious fighting the start of the season was normally April in the north of Spain and March in the South. The key factor seems to be availability of forage and water, with the effect bad weather had on the troops as a secondary consideration. Based on this we can have activity from April (in the north) and March (in the south) to the end of November. The main reason why some campaigns did not start until May was the assembly of armies and allies. When Hannibal left in May he would spend a few months assembling his army. If it was already ready he could have left far earlier. In Spain this was normally not possible, as most Spanish allied troops dispersed home during winter, which meant time was needed to assemble them the following year. In some rare cases the Spanish were kept in the winter quarters of the main army which allowed almost immediate campaigning.

The Romans gain their tow hold in Hispania - 218 BC

Hannibal left Nova Carthago with his army about the middle of May. He reached the Rhone about the end of August. By the end of October Hannibal had reached the summit of the Alps. Now about the time Hannibal was at the Rhone, possibly after he had crossed it, a Roman army under Publius and Gnaeus Scipio arrived. After a bit of skirmishing the commander, Publius Scipio, made the decision to send his brother with the army into Spain, while he himself went back to Rome to take command of another Roman army there.

Gnaeus arrived at Emporiae about mid October with his army of **2 legions**. This comprised 17,600 infantry and 1,800 cavalry. Gnaeus army transported itself by sea and to escort this transport fleet Gnaeus had a fleet of 35 quinqueremes and 20 triremes from Messalla. He travelled a distance of about 260 kilometres, which would have taken about a week.

When Hannibal has passed through this region he did not have time to secure all the towns and people. Instead he built a main camp close to the town of Cissis, close to Tarraco. In this town he left Hanno, with **10,000 infantry and 1,000 cavalry**. The entire region was basically unfriendly to the Carthaginians and Hanno's job was to secure the alliance of all the Spanish tribes in the region. The main tribal grouping being the Edetani on the South side of the Ebro and the Ilergetes, Ausetani and Laetani on the North side of the Ebro. Securing the alliance of a Spanish tribe consisted of intimidating it and demanding hostages in order to secure its loyalty. Hanno had about 4 months of this activity before the Romans arrived and had generally secured the tribes South of his position at Cissis, possibly the Edetani and part of the Ilergetes tribal grouping.

The region North of the Ebro also consisted of several Greek towns on the coast, the main ones being Tarraco and Emporiae. After the trouble Saguntum caused the previous year Hanno decided to concentrate on gaining the support of the Spanish tribes first and then moving against the Greek towns. As a result when the Romans arrived the Greek towns on the coast were not controlled by the Carthaginians and they quickly threw their lot in with the Romans. It was this secure base of loyal Greek towns which allowed the Romans to establish themselves so quickly in this region.

After landing at Emporiae, Gnaeus allowed his troops a few days to recover from the sea voyage and he then marched South. He would have ensured the loyalty of the main Greek towns of Barcino and Tarraco, but more importantly he would have wanted to secure the Spanish tribes in the rear. By the end of October the Roman armies had reached the main Carthaginian camp. The distance was about 180 kilometres, which would have taken about two weeks.

When the Romans first landed at Emporiae, messengers quickly informed the Carthaginian forces. Hanno was probably in the territory of the Ilergetes when this occurred and he quickly marched back to his main camp at Cissis, taking with him about 10,000 Spanish allied troops. He made every effort to prepare and reinforce his army to meet the Romans on equal terms, but the quickness of the Roman advance would have meant that Hanno could not assemble the forces required nor gain the support of Hasdrubal Barca. When the Romans arrived Hanno's army consisted of about 17,000 infantry and 3,000 cavalry. With this force he marched out and took up a good defensive position on top of a low hill, close to the Romans. This would have had the effect of restricting Gnaeus foraging, while Hanno could rely on the supplies in his camp. Gnaeus army had picked up some Spanish allies, giving him an army of 20,600 men and 2,800 cavalry. With this force he outnumbered Hanno and to make sure this advantage was not lost due to reinforcements for Hanno he acted quickly and after forming up his troops attacked.

The battle resulted in a quick and decisive victory for the Romans. Even though Hanno held a defensive position, the quality of his army was low and the large Spanish contingent would have been unwilling to make a supreme effort. Virtually Hanno's entire army was killed or captured, with the bulk of his Spanish allies breaking early. Hanno

himself was captured and Livy indicates **6,000 men were killed and 2,000 men captured**, as well as the garrison of the camp which was subsequently stormed.

What of Hasdrubal Barca down in Nova Carthago. Hannibal had left him with **11,850 African infantry, 300 Ligurian infantry, 500 Balearic infantry, 450 Libyphoenician cavalry, 1,800 Numidian/Moorish cavalry and 200 Ilergetes Cavalry. He also had 21 elephants and a fleet of 50 quinqueremes, 2 quadriremes, and 5 triremes. However of this fleet only 32 quinqueremes and 5 triremes were fitted out and manned.** By October Hasdrubal had already dispersed the bulk of his army into winter quarters. When he received the news the Romans had landed in Emporiae during the 3rd week of October he only had his core army in Nova Carthago. He reacted quickly and assembled a force of **9,000 men** and left Nova Carthago as soon as possible. His entire army would have been transported up North by sea, using whatever transports Hasdrubal had available. However all this was in vain, as he heard of Hanno's defeat just after he had crossed the Ebro at the beginning of November. The distance he travelled was about 400 kilometres, which would have taken a week to travel.

Hasdrubal Barca then sailed up to Tarraco where he used his cavalry and light troops to harass the Roman troops foraging for winter, causing heavy Roman casualties, before he withdrew south of the Ebro. His force was simply not powerful enough to face up to the entire Roman army, he needed to prepare. It was mid November by now so he prepared a winter camp south of the Ebro and settled in for the winter. For Hasdrubal the campaign was over, however for the Romans it would continue.

Gnaeus after his victory began to prepare for winter, this was disrupted by Hasdrubal's raid, but not seriously. After securing the main Greek towns and securing the alliance of most of the Spanish tribes North of the Ebro he settled the bulk of his army at Emporiae by the end of November. However no sooner than the Roman army had left several Spanish tribes revolted. The most pro Carthaginian tribal group, the Ilergetes revolted and began to harass the other Roman allies, as well as inciting the other Spanish tribes to rise up in revolt. The Spanish tribes north of the Ebro were not used to being subjugated, be they Carthaginian or Roman, and they now saw a possible chance to free themselves of these foreign influences.

Gnaeus marched his army out of Emporiae at the end of November and marched on the main Ilergetes city, Atanagrum. This was about 260 kilometres away and Gnaeus took just over a week to get there. It was only a few days after the Romans had surrounded the city that the Ilergetes surrendered, giving the Romans both hostages and money.

No soon had this occurred that the Ausetani and Laetani revolted, probably during the second week of November. Gnaeus now turned his army around and quickly marched to the main town of the Ausetani, where he managed to besiege their main army. He would have travelled about 160 kilometres and took less than a week to get there, arriving at the end of the third week of November.

The Laetani, an ally of the Ausetani, had an army of 15,000 men. They attempted to break through the Roman army and join up with the Ausetani army. The combined Ausetani/Laetani army would have numbered 30,000 men and would have been powerful enough to take on the Roman army in battle. In an effort to prevent this Gnaeus marched on the Laetani army when it got close to the siege and

defeated it before it before the Ausetani knew what was occurring. The Laetani lost 12,000 men in this battle and they surrendered soon after this. Gnaeus then quickly marched back on the Ausetani and continued their siege. After a 30 day siege the leader of the Ausetani, Amusicus, escaped from the siege and made his way over the Ebro the Hasdrubals camp. Almost immediately after this the Ausetani surrendered and after providing hostages and money Gnaeus marched back into winter quarters by the end of December.

By campaigning during the winter Gnaeus had managed to ensure the North of the Ebro remained loyal to the Romans. If they had failed to do this Hasdrubal would of been able to cross the Ebro with a large army at the same time a larger hostile Spanish army would of been operating against the Romans. It was a close thing, but the Romans had managed to secure their new base of operations in Spain.

Carthaginian Counter-Attack fails - 217 BC

After the disaster of the previous year Hasdrubal Barac was determined to strike a blow against the Romans before they could become too established. He assembled his army and navy at Nova Carthago and marched out reaching the Ebro at the beginning of May. His army consisted of 15,000 non-spanish infantry, 2,500 non-spanish cavalry, 21 elephants and 12,000 Spanish infantry and 2,500 Spanish Cavalry. Hasdrubal Barac commanded the army. The fleet, under command of Himilco, consisted of **40 quinqueremes**. The army march up the coast with the fleet matching its movement. This distance is about 400 km, so it would of taken Hasdrubal over two weeks to get there.

Gnaeus felt his army was not powerful enough to meet the Carthaginians, so he decided on a naval strategy. His army consisted of 17,600 Roman/Italian infantry and 1,800 Roman/Italian cavalry. In addition he had about 6,400 Spanish infantry and 2,200 Spanish Cavalry. His fleet consisted of **35 Quinqueremes and 20 triremes** from Massilia. His winter base was Emporiae, however he quickly assembled his force and marched on tarracco to wait for the Carthaginians.

When the Carthaginians arrived at the begining of May Gnaeus sailed his fleet to meet them. Gnaeus took the Carthaginians totally by surprise and after some initial resistance the Carthaginian fleet turned tail and sailed for the shore, where they beached their ships and made it to the beach. Only **2 Carthaginian quinqueremes** were lost at sea and the Roman fleet managed to drag **23 quinqueremes** off the beach. The Carthaginian fleet had lost **25 quinqueremes** and although only a few crew were lost the fleet was effectively eliminated for this season. The Carthaginians would of had their moral dashed by this lighting Roman victory and Hasdrubal Barac withdrew the army to the South bank of the Ebro. The Carthaginian offensive had ended.

After this great naval victory Gnaeus decided to raid the Carthaginian coast. He would of had a force of about 6,000 Roman/Italian infantry on the fleet and may have had some transports carrying other troops with him. He first sailed to a small town called Onusa, probably between Sagentum, and Nova Carthago. He took the town, sacked it and left immediatly. He then sailed to Nova Carthago, where he landed and started ravaging the countryside. The carthaginian garrison would not of numbered much

more than 2,000 men, which would of been too small to stop the Romans. After this Gnaeus sailed to Longuntica, which again was probably in between Nova Carthago and Sagentum, possibly close to Hemeroscopeum. There he raided the countryside causing damage to the crop. After this he sailed over to the island of Ebusus, where he tried to take the town of Ebusus but failed. After raiding the countryside he then sailed back to tarracco. The entire journey would of been about 1,000 kilometres, which would of taken over two week to sail. In addition he raided four spots, possibly one week a spot. He would of arrived back in Tarracco about the end of June.

Once back in Tarracco Gnaeus reassembled his army and crossed the Ebro, possibly advancing as far as Ilturgi before withdrawing to a place called Nova Classis, possibly a small spot on the Ebro.

What about Hasdrubal, what did he do while the Romans were sailing around in his rear. Hasdrubal probably retreated to Sagentum with both his army and fleet. Once the Romans were gone the fleet was given orders to sail back to Nova carthago. The trouble Gnaeus was causing in his rear would of forced him to dispatch forces to reinforce the garrison at Nova carthago and other Carthaginian towns on the coast. Once whipping his army back into shape he then advanced back to Ilturgi, once the Roman fleet was back at Tarracco. This was the situation about mid July.

Now the Carthaginian defeat had not gone unnoticed by the Spanish tribes around the Carthaginian area of influence. The Romans had made contact with a Spanish tribal grouping called the Celtiberi, who now decided to invade Carthaginian territory. The tribe is situated close to Numantia and they advanced down the modern river of Jiloca. This route is a wide and easy path to the Sucro River, which is behind Sagentum. The Celtiberi army of 30,000 men advanced down the Jiloco River until they reached carthaginian territory, about 180 kilometres. It would of taken them over a week to get there, which means they started very late in July. Here they began to assault the small towns in the reagon, taking three of them before Hasdrubal Barac arrived to stop them. Hasdrubal left a strong garrison in Sagentum and advanced with his main army to meet the Celtiberi, traveling about 120 kilometeres before meeting the enemy. Hasdrubal fought two minor battles with the celtiberi army, during which he lost 1,500 men killed and 4,000 captured. This initial setback would of forced Hasdrubal into a more cautious strategy, which effectivly left the road to Sagentum undefended.

After the initial engagement between Hasdrubal and the Celtiberi, Gnaeus brother arrived in Emporiae with 8,000 men and 20 qunqieremes. Publius Scipio landed at Emporiae in mid August and immediatly marched south to meet his brother, Gnaus. Here the combined Roman army went on the offensive, advancing down to Sagentum. The Roman army arrived at Sagentum at the end of August. The Romans attempted to take the town, but failed. Soon after this they withdrew as Hasdrubal Barac was advancing on them. After at least one month of manouvering Hasdryao inflicted a major defeat on the Celtiberi army, which forced them to retreat back to their country. Hasdrubal was unable to follow up this victory and had to immediatly march back to Sagentum, arriving there about the end of September. The Romans had withdrawn before Hasdrubal arrived, probably due to the defeat of the celtiberi army. The Romans withdrew to just over the Ebro, where they made winter quaters. Hasdrubal

followed them up, probably to Ilturgi, where he made winter quarters.

The campaign year was now over, however during the campaigning around Nova carthago Gnaeus had made contact with some Spanish tribes in the Baetis valley. Now we can't be sure what effect this was to have, but the following year Hasdrubal was faced with a major revolt in his rear, a revolt which was to end his second major offensive.

SUMMARY OF BATTLES IN SPAIN (218 - 205BC)

Battle	Date	Commanders	Forces	Infantry	Cavalry	Elephants	Total
Cissis	218BC	Hanno	Carthage	17,000	3,000	nil	20,000
		Gnaeus Scipio	Roman*	20,600	2,800	nil	23,400
Atanagrum	218BC	Unknown	Spanish	13,000	2,000	nil	15,000
		Gnaeus Scipio*	Roman	20,600	2,800	nil	23,400
Ebro (Sea)	217BC	Himilco	Carthage				40q
		Gnaeus Scipio	Roman*				35q 20t
Celtiberi (Salo Valley)	217BC	Hasdrubal Barca	Carthage*	30,000	5,000	21	35,000
		Unknown	Spanish	26,000	4,000	nil	30,000
Tartesii (Baetis Valley)	216BC	Hasdrubal Barca	Carthage*	22,000	3,000	21	25,000
		Chalbus	Spanish	26,000	4,000	nil	30,000
Ibera	215BC	Hasdrubal Barca	Carthage	31,000	5,000	21	36,000
		Publius/Gnaeus Scipio	Roman*	32,000	4,000	nil	36,000
Iliturgi	214BC	Hasdrubal/Mago Barca	Carthage*	44,000	7,500	20	51,500
		Gnaeus Scipio	Roman	28,000	4,000	nil	32,000
Intibili	214BC	Hasdrubal Barca	Carthage	40,000	7,000	13	47,000
		Publius/Gnaeus Scipio	Roman*	37,000	4,000	nil	41,000
Celtiberi (Salo Valley)	213BC	Hasdrubal/Mago Barca	Carthage*	35,000	5,000	50	40,000
		Unknown	Spanish	30,000	3,000	nil	33,000
Munda	213BC	Hasdrubal/Mago Barca	Carthage*	35,000	5,000	50	40,000
		Gnaeus Scipio	Roman	36,000	4,000	nil	40,000
Autinx	213BC	Hasdrubal/Mago Barca	Carthage	31,000	5,000	11	36,000
		Gnaeus Scipio	Roman*	32,000	4,000	nil	36,000
Orongis	212BC	Hasdrubal Gisgo/Mago Barca					
		Hasdrubal Gisgo/Indibilis	Carthage*	29,000	6,500	nil	35,500
		Publius Scipio	Roman	19,000	3,500	nil	22,500
Ilorci	212BC	Hasdrubal Barca/Mago Barca					
		Hasdrubal Gisgo	Carthage*	42,000	10,000	nil	52,000
		Gnaeus Scipio	Roman	10,000	1,500	nil	11,500

Battle	Nationality	Leaders	Rome/Carth Infantry	Rome/Carth Cavalry	Carthaginian Eleph	TOTAL
Baetis R (212BC)	Carthage	Hasdrubal Barca (*)				
	Roman	Publius Scipio				
Ilorci (212BC)	Carthage	Mago Barca (*)				
	Roman	Gnaeus Scipio				
Baetica (208BC)	Carthage	Hasdrubal Barca				
	Roman	Scpio (*)				
Celtiberi (207BC)	Carthage	Hanno/Mago Barca				
	Roman	Silanus (*)				
Ilipa (206BC)	Carthage	Hasdrubal Gisgo/Mago Barca				54,500
	Roman	Scpio (*)				47,000
Ilergetes (206BC)	Spanish	Mandonius/Indibilis				22,500
Ausentani (205BC)	Roman	Indibilis				20,000(est)
	Roman	L.Lentulus/L.Acidinus (*)				34,000
	Roman					30,000(est)