

THE BATTLE OF KNIDOS

AN Ω1 NAVAR<Ω1 SCENARIO

Historical background

The year is 394 b.c.. Hellas is under a grim Spartan hegemony since the Lacedemonians defeated Athens in the Peloponnesian war, inheriting much of its old empire.

However, it was not to last. Sparta, overcome by hubris, began intervening in Asia Minor, supporting the Ionian Greeks calls for freedom and the revolt of Cyrus the Younger against the Great King, Artaxerxes II. In 396 b.c., the Spartan king Agesilaus II himself started campaigning in Asia.

The Great King was not amused. He thus decided to finance Sparta's enemies in Greece (Thebe, Corinth, Argo and later Athens) and to cripple Sparta's seapower, thus making Agesilaus' efforts in Asia unsustainable.

In the summer of 394 b.c., therefore, a combined Persian-Greek fleet, led by the satrap Pharnabazus, sailed towards South-West Asia to search and destroy the Spartan fleet, led by Agesilaus' brother-in-law Peisander, which was based at the peninsula of Knidos to support Agesilaus' campaigning close to Sardis. That's where the fleets clashed.

Wargaming the battle

We do not have much information about Knidos, despite its significance. The main sources are a few lines from Xenophon and a little paragraph from Dio, so we really have go hypothetical here.

Numbers are quite uncertain, but the Persian-Athenian fleet appears to have had around 90 triremes, while the Spartans had roughly 85. The Persian side included a strong Phoenician contingent, along with an Athenian contingent under Konon's command. The Cypriot ruler Evagoras I also contributed quite a lot of the ships and sailors. Of the Spartans, we don't know much except Peisander being the overall commander.

Here's how I made the fleets for ON:

THE SPARTANS					
α	PEISANDROS	D	α	ARCHELAOS	
α	MENELAOS		α	MEGACLES	G
THE PERSIANS					
β	PHARNABAZUS	WT	β	ABDMELQUART	
β	KONON	WT	β	EVAGORAS	PM
			β	EUROTAS	PM

D = determined

G = green

WT = well trained

PM = poorly motivated

The table should be a 6x4 feet table. One of the short sides should be land and friendly to the Spartans. Use the terrain and deployment rules according to the scenario 3 under the rules, *Meeting engagement*, with the following differences:

- while the Spartans and Konon must deploy according to the normal rules, the rest of the Persian fleet will deploy no farther than 5" from their own table edge;
- both fleets can organize themselves in columns composed of only one squadron.



Historical outcome

Ancient sources give only a partial description of the battle, but the general outline is clear.

The Spartan fleet first encountered the forward elements of Konon's squadron – was he a bait or in reconnaissance? We don't know - and may initially have had some success. However, once the main Persian fleet under Pharnabazus arrived, the balance shifted dramatically. The Persian force overwhelmed the Spartans. Around 50 Spartan triremes were captured, while the survivors fled back toward Knidos. Peisander refused to retreat and was killed aboard his ship. The battle effectively annihilated Sparta's fleet, ultimately dooming the Lacedemonians' short-lived empire.