

## IMPETUS

Rules for Ancient, Medieval, and Renaissance periods

Lorenzo Sartori

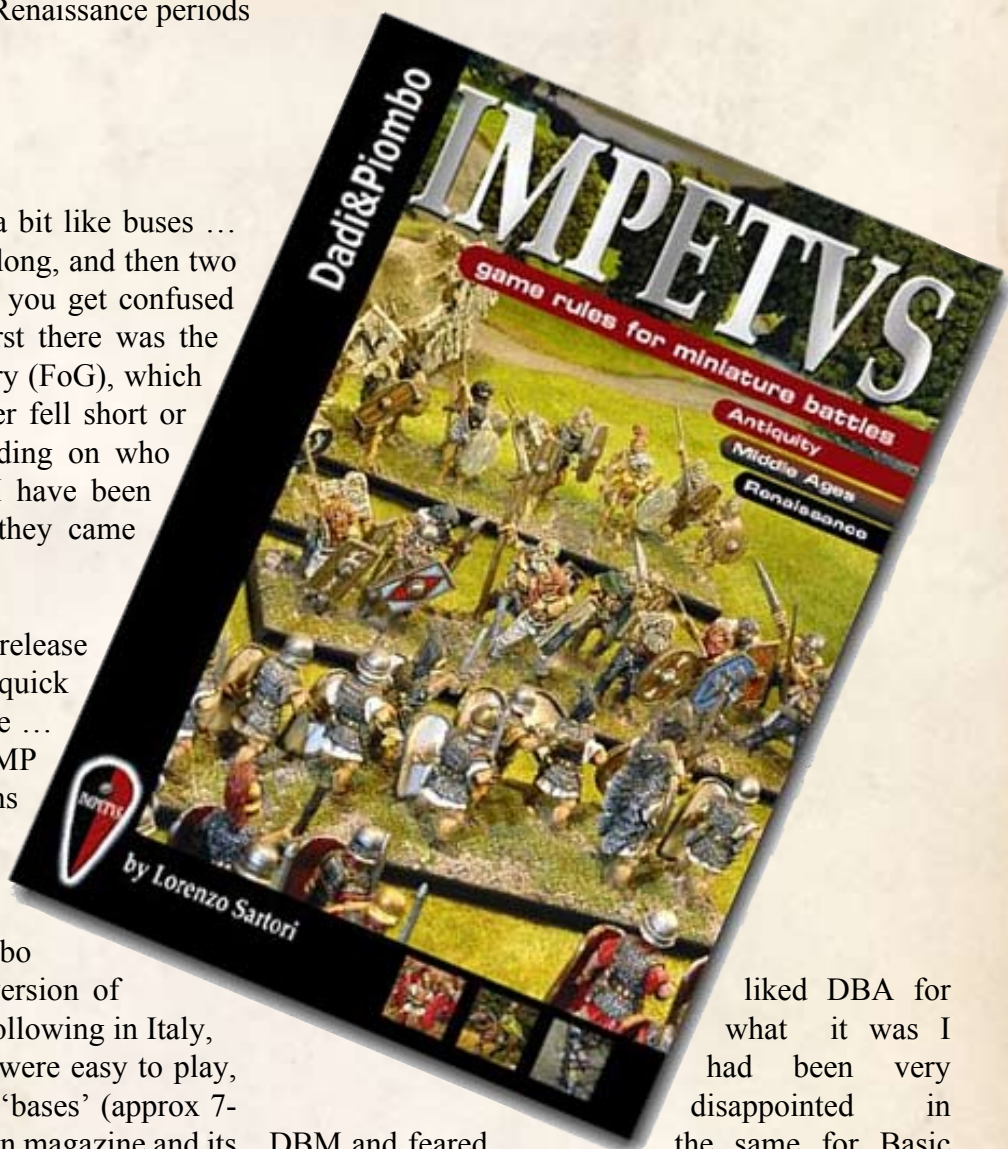
Dadi&Piombo

<http://www.dadipiombo.com>

Ancient Rules seem to be...well a bit like buses ... you wait ages for a one to come along, and then two come along at the same time and you get confused about which one to jump on! First there was the pre release hyped up Field of Glory (FoG), which promised so much, and then either fell short or exceeded all expectations, depending on who you are listening to. Personally I have been playing them every week since they came out.

Then close on the heels of the FoG release was the news that a new set of 'quick play' rules would be out for Salute ... IMPETUS. Abbreviating that to IMP seems to reek of fantasy connotations so much that at WJ they have become known as TIG (The Italian Game). They are written by Lorenzo Sartori of Dadi & Piombo magazine fame. The free basic version of rules have acquired quite a large following in Italy, Spain and France. Firstly as they were easy to play, fun and needed only a handful of 'bases' (approx 7-11) and secondly because the Italian magazine and its site supported them well.

The full rules promised to add to these solid foundations to give larger games, add some character to the Generals and introduce some advanced mechanisms. I must admit I had downloaded the free version and tinkered with it, promising to dig my 80mm x 40mm bases out and have a crack. Everything seemed to conspire against me though and I had never got round to it. So when Impetus made an appearance I was slightly worried that the whole thing sounded a bit DBA morphing to DBM for my liking. Having quite



liked DBA for what it was I had been very disappointed in the same for Basic DBM and feared Impetus – I need not have worried.

The big day for the English version of the rules is/was Salute where they were to be released. Lorenzo kindly sent the Italian version with an English translation so we could have a run through and give you this quick review before the big day – I would love to hear what you all think after Salute.

The rule book uses very good quality thick paper with a glossy card cover, the layout and presentation of the rules will be familiar to those who know the magazine





## 7.0 MISCHIE

### 7.1 IN GENERALE

Quando due o più Unità avversarie entrano in contatto si verifica una mischia. Due Unità nemiche entrano in contatto quando il fronte o uno dei due fianchi frontali di un'Unità tocca una parte qualsiasi di uno dei quattro lati o vertici di un'Unità nemica. Questo movimento è definito Carica a prescindere dalla velocità dell'Unità attaccante e può essere anche la conseguenza di un inseguimento o di un precedente mischia (7.6.4). Possono entrare solo Unità con Bonus di Impeto pari o superiore a 1. Fa fede il valore presente nella lista esecrice.

La mischia viene eseguita subito dopo il contatto, prima quindi dell'attivazione di eventuali successive Unità che ripresentano a entrare a mischia con essa.

E' ammessa anche la Carica di un Gruppo contro un'altra Gruppo unita.

### 7.2 DIREZIONI DI CARICA E EFFETTI

#### 7.2.1 Carica frontale

Si verifica quando l'Unità attaccante tocca con il fronte o con uno dei due vertici frontali il fronte di un'Unità nemica. Si ha una Carica frontale anche nella spalla, se un'Unità attacca con il

fronte di un'Unità arroccata sotto che durante le condizioni previste al paragrafo 7.2.2.

#### 7.2.2 Carica sul Fianco o sul Retro

In caso il contatto provenga da un'Unità che parte indistintamente da dietro la linea formata dalla proiezione del fronte dell'Unità caricata, si ha una Carica sul fianco o sul retro. L'Unità caricata sul fianco o sul retro subisce la seguente penalità:

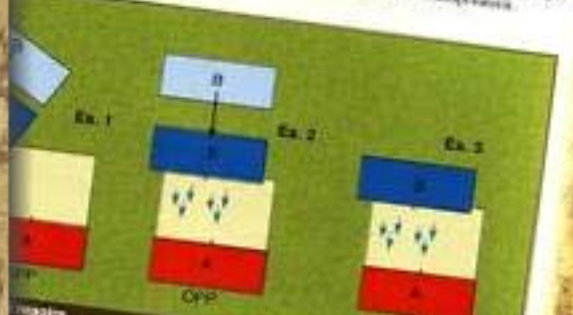


Esempi di Carica sul Fianco e sul Retro. Solo D ed E sono in grado di caricare A sul fianco o sul retro. Le cariche di B e C sono da considerarsi frontali.

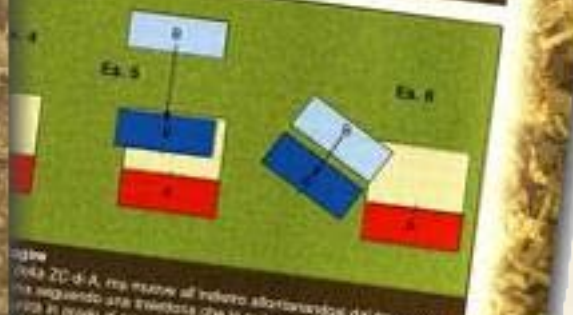
Una Zona di Opportunità che esista in una Zona di Opportunità da un'Unità che non è in grado di caricare (5.4.1) o non è in grado di caricare (5.4.2).

La Zona di Opportunità anche se è già stata usata e può quindi essere da un'Unità prevista per la Zona di Opportunità.

Opportunità. Nel caso di una Zona di Opportunità di fronte che non entri nella Zona di Controllo per essere la Zona di Opportunità data non è di Opportunità si deve dopo il suo scatto, salvo nell'ipotesi di scarto di tiro per la quale vale la regola della contemporaneità.



Regole. Se A, seguendo una traiettoria che non le permetta di caricare A, si muove in una Zona di Opportunità e può pertanto reagire.



Regole. Se A, seguendo una traiettoria che lo può portare in mischia con B, si muove in una Zona di Opportunità e può pertanto reagire.

– very crisp, clear and visually appealing. Lorenzo went for a wire spiral binding after taking a number of ‘polls’ on various news groups and forms. Gamers wanted to be able to lay them flat on the table with only one sheet worth of area taking up the precious table space. This also means the QRS can stay in the book to be used and is harder to misplace, which if you ever play in the clutter of WJ towers or even my games ‘loft’ is probably a good thing. Like is the norm nowadays the book is in full colour throughout with a mixture of diagrams, game shots and ‘scenic’ photos, which make it a good piece of ‘eye candy’ even before you start playing.

The game uses large bases (mainly 80mm x 40mm in 15mm and under, and 120mm x 60mm in 20mm plus) to represent ‘units’ of men. These units are put into ‘commands’ under the nominal control of a commander (one of whom is the C-C) and each army will have between approximately 1 and 4 of these commands. The commanders can be of various quality (depending on cost) and each army has a Command

System which basically gives the commanders command range. The player chooses the amount of commanders, and hence commands they have and if the commanders are attached to units or on their own. This makes a difference to how much influence they can have over the game. The game is played on a table ranging from 3’ x 2’ to 6’ x 4’ and uses every ones favourite die – the d6.

The turn sequence is a lot more interactive than a majority of ancient rules I have played. Players nominate a ‘command’ to activate and then dice for initiative, the winner gets to activate. Once they have finished with that command the players nominate and dice off again. This leads to a tense game and adds a deal of uncertainty to the turns.

However, the inactive player can interrupt the active player’s turn in a number of ways. A unit has a zone of control and can ‘react’ to enemy units who enter this zone, usually by having to pass a ‘discipline test’. Units can also be put on ‘opportunity’, now this is a first as

far as I have come across in an Ancients set of rules as it equates to putting a unit on 'overwatch' in a WWII game. Units on opportunity can interrupt the enemy unit at any point, again this adds to the excitement and tactical options. It all sounds slightly complicated but is actually a simple and fast mechanism.

Movement is fluid and easy to implement. Units can have more than one movement 'phase' if they are not disordered. They need to test for disorder at the end of each phase (this is a discipline test) and if they are still not disordered they can move again (there is a negative modifier on each successive attempt however). This works well and you can risk pushing units to achieve a contact/charge or an ambitious outflanking move for example. There is no real micro management or measuring involved in the movement which is always a blessing, I can put away the protractor and steel ruler.

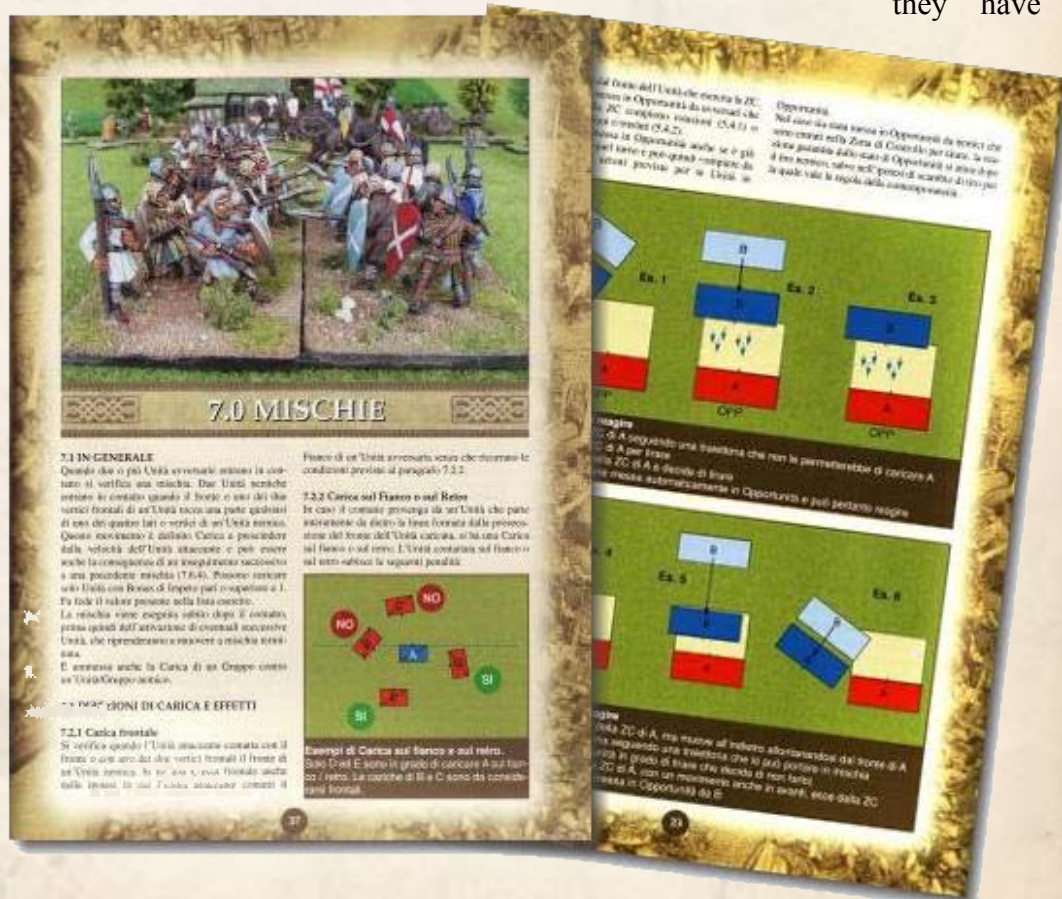
Shooting and melee are simple to calculate, share the same mechanics and are interactive for both sides. Each unit has a base combat value, to this you add any impetus and rank bonus and then subtract any 'losses' and modifiers. The result is the number of dice a player rolls. They are then looking for sixes or double fives which both give one hit. The target then makes a cohesion check. A unit has a 'critical number' to roll under depending on the amount of hits taken, its current status and any other modifiers. Pass the test and you take no reduction to your base value. Fail and you receive a reduction to your base value of the difference between the critical number and the roll. This means in a worse case scenario you can 'pop' some units in one turn. Combined melees are easy to work out as you nominate a 'main' unit and other units in contact with the enemy can add dice as 'support'.

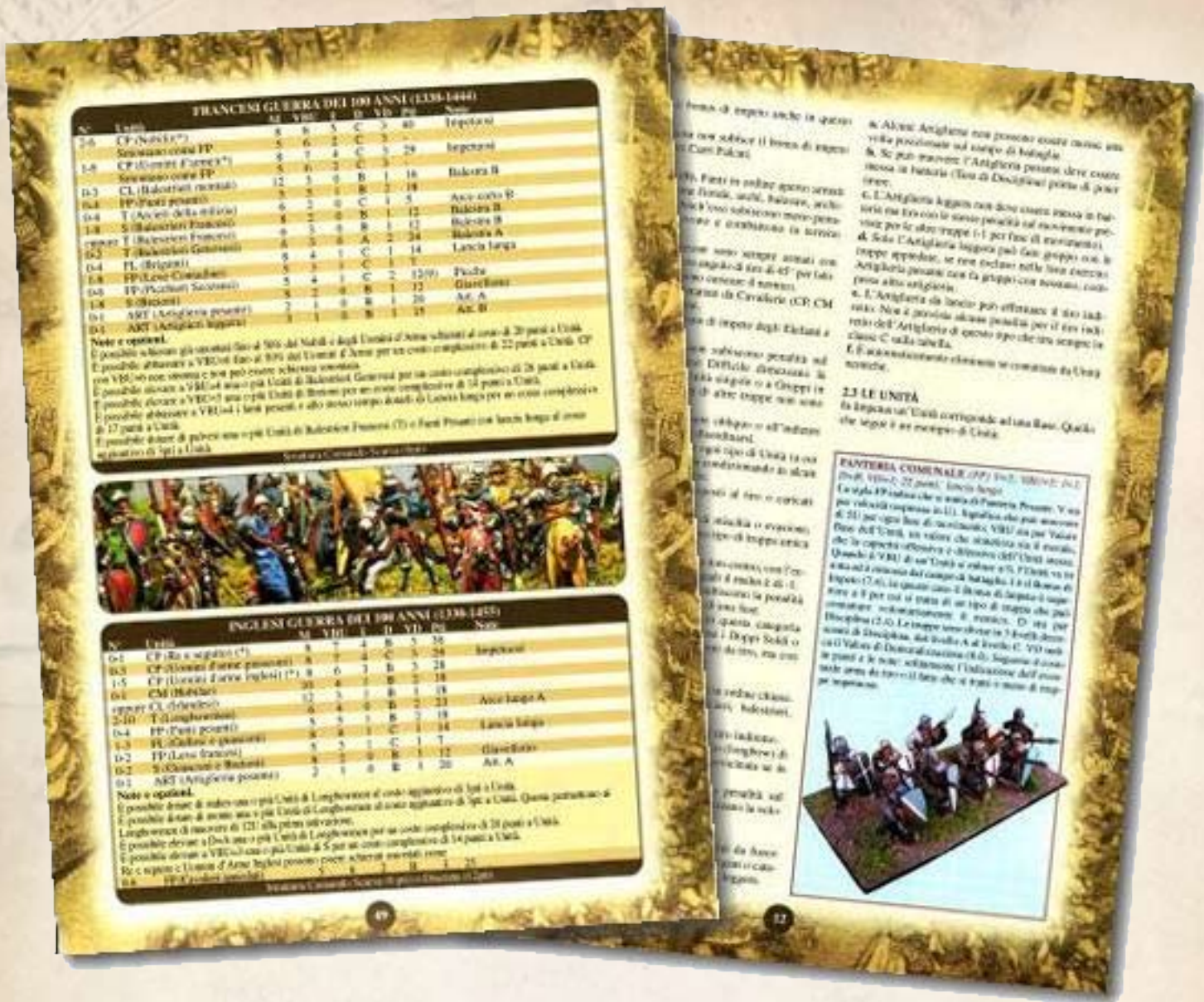
Melee is the section of the rules which caused us most discussion in

our test games. The rules do not 'align' units, in fact if units are parallel when one group charges in they shift randomly left or right. This sometime means that you do not get both units, in a group charging, into the melee etc. The overall effect is to make the combat fluid and it doesn't look too 'clinical'. I think our major discussion revolved around how different this was to the Field of Glory mechanism which goes out its way to align units up and doesn't involve push backs, melee pursuits etc.

Personally I really liked the approach in IMPETUS, the battlefield looked suitably chaotic, without looking like a fast moving skirmish game with units everywhere. However, it is perhaps right to say that for people coming from rules that enforce alignment between units, allowing you to manufacture flank support you are in for a bit of a shock. Also, to begin with, it will take some getting used to and slow the first couple of games down slightly.

There are special rules for troop types that you would expect to find in an ancients set of rules on the level the game is set. No flaming pigs but rules for the use of Pilum (pila), Republican Roman line exchange, pike blocks, elephants (these are hard units but do not be near them when they lose and trample all over you), chariots and large units of warband plus more are there. We have been using IER and Gaul lists for the majority of our play through games and they have





behaved liked we would expect them to. Legions are just hard and tend to eventually grind you down. Warband, especially in large units, hit hard but you better get your opponent on the back foot from the start or they will deteriorate rapidly.

So in the games we have played (all set at 300 points) it has been fairly even. If the warband get the upper hand in the initial impact they have a fair to good chance of winning. If the Legions take the initial impact well then they will grind down the warband fairly quickly. This seems to reflect what actually happened. Skirmishers work in a simple fashion and reflects their use, they screen your troops from fire, they hassle the enemy with their fire and while they are not going to destroy a unit they can force disorder which means when the big boys go in they should be at an advantage. They are, as in reality, pretty brittle and if they get caught by a charge (ie they fail to evade) then they are 'dispersed'. Quick, simple but as my gaming mate Sean says: "it makes you use skirmishers properly."

Each unit has a value and when each command reaches over 50% loss they break, when half your army total is reached the entire army decide it may not be for them. We only played straight forward 'battles' but I believe there will be scenarios for the rules on the site and in the magazine.

Overall the rules succeeded very well in delivering what they aim to. They are quick, easy to play, bloody once units are not 'fresh' and are good fun to play. They give a good feel for the period (at least with the armies we tested them with) without being too over detailed or 'fiddly'. Our 300 point (an average full game is between 300 and 500 points) games were taking between 1.5 to 2 hours and that was with not being used to the rules and looking rules up when we strayed out of the comfort zone.

The rules are very well set out in a logical fashion with a 'point' numbered system in an extensive 'contents' which makes things very easy to look up. This is far better than in FoG which has come under fire for not

having an easy 'looking rules up' format. The Quick Reference Sheet is in the book and not separate, again FoG came under a lot of fire for not having a separate sheet. All I can say is that if it really bothers you then at least in Impetus the spiral binding makes it easier to use.

I do appear to be starting to compare the two new rules, which is I suppose a natural occurrence because of the timing of the release of both sets. Both rules abstract a lot of detail. Impetus abstracts more in a lot of ways although a lot of people will like how they have included troop characteristics in a simple way that makes the troops 'feel' different. FoG tended to keep clear of this, although there are of course arguments to support both camps and it boils down to personal preference. Impetus is definitely more interactive, keeping both players engaged, especially when you start to realise how useful going on *opportunity* is. On the down side this may not be to everyone's liking and could be quite interesting in a competition setting, from my observations so far (could be wrong) they do appear to have a bit more of the 'luck' factor in the casualty stage, which again I like but can see why some people may not.

FoG is definitely 'tighter' in its rule definitions and examples, again perhaps showing more about their 'intended' market than the rules themselves. The upside of this for the casual club player is that Impetus is easier to read. Impetus does, even after only a couple of games, give a very quick game, no you will not be able to 'model' every tactic known in the ancient world, yes some things are very abstracted but our overall feeling was that they give the same result and 'feel' as FoG (and other rules) but in a lot easier to play fashion and more importantly for us, in a lot less time. This means that even on a club night of 3-4 hours we should be able to get in a couple of games towards a campaign and maybe even three.

I do think that I will end up playing Impetus a lot more than FoG (although I do love FoG) mainly because of the time factor and that we tend to do campaigns at the club. Impetus armies are going to be easier for people who are not avid ancient players to collect.

The rules will certainly be easier for people to 'pick up' and learn to play. As to which set is going to come up on the top of the 'heap' the jury will be out for a while. I can see mechanisms in Impetus that are not going to sit well with ex DBM now FoG players. The good thing is that the basing in Impetus allows you to be able to 'group' together the DBx or Warmaster Ancients stands, perhaps on a *sabot* base and be able to play either. One small thing that may come up is that the author has kept the Italian abbreviations for the troop types and in a lot of cases these make little sense in English. The explanation for this, however, does make sense, there are a lot of Basic Impetus players already playing with the Italian abbreviations. Also in the end it just means you have to get used to it and you tend to call the troops by names anyway.

So to sum up: I can see these becoming my standard set of ancient rules, but they will not stop me playing the other sets I use. To use my bus analogy from the beginning of the review I will be making a dash to hop on the Impetus bus. They will also be very useful for a club set of ancient rules for occasional ancient gamers as they are quick, easy and have fewer opportunities to use the *nuances* of the rules to great effect against a new opponent. I can see them being on the shelves of any avid ancients gamer along with a bunch of sabot bases as I can see them getting a good following quite quickly and anything that increases the chance of one getting a game has to be a good thing.

I suspect Lorenzo will be in for a busy Salute as these do seem to hit the buttons that a lot of people were hoping FoG would, but in their opinion didn't. I'd go so far as to say with the right support and the fact that the plastic figures are about to hit the ancients gaming world in a big way we could see a lot of younger gamers being drawn into playing ancients ... we will have to wait and see.

While you are making your mind up you could do a lot worse than downloading the free Basic Impetus and giving it a go: <http://www.dadiepiombo.com>

WJ wise, look out for some battle reports and a Tale of Four Gamers series of articles starting in Issue 10!

**Rich Jones**

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