



🇺🇸 ★ *Red Earth, Blue Steel: Skirmish at Peace Ridge*

A Developer Battle Report from the Front Lines of Game Design

🗺️ Introduction

Welcome, commanders! Today's clash is not fought for glory or victory points — it's fought for **rules clarity** and **design sanity**.

This is a live playtest of *Red Earth, Blue Steel*, a regimental-scale American Civil War wargame currently in development.

If you're new here, this system puts you in command of regiments, not individuals. Every base of figures (called a *stand*) represents about **100 soldiers**. It's a game about line, morale, and nerve — not how many buttons are on your kepi.

Today's scenario, "**Skirmish at Peace Ridge**," is a small clash fought over a country crossroads and a patch of light woods that's about to get a lot less peaceful. We're testing the refined **cover**, **LOS depth**, and **artillery range** rules, along with some new optional morale mechanics.

Goals for this playtest:

- See if the new *Maximum Effective (ME) Artillery* rule "feels" right.
- Evaluate the *Mixed Cover Optional Rule* (how units half in cover behave).
- Check pacing, morale flow, and the overall cinematic feel.

(Also, to see who can roll a six first — because apparently no one could last week.)

Forces in Play

Below are the rosters for each side, shown as play cards for quick reference.

Union Army Detachment – Col. Benjamin Lowell

Unit	Type	Move	Fire	Morale TN	Special Traits	Notes
1st Illinois Infantry	Infantry (6 stands)	6"	5+ (effective), 6+ (long)	7+ (Veteran)	Steady Line, Cover +1 on morale	Experienced; formed core of the defense.
7th Indiana Infantry	Infantry (5 stands)	6"	5+ / 6+	8+ (Green)	Inexperienced, -1 rally	New regiment; easily rattled but enthusiastic.
Battery A, 2nd U.S. Artillery	Artillery (2 x 12-lb Napoleons)	Limber 8", Fire 0–48"	4+ (E), ME 6-only Disorder	—	Test subject for ME rule; the real stars.	

Col. Benjamin Lowell	Commander	—	—	+1 Initiative	“Calm under fire.” Likes coffee and clean lines.
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Confederate Detachment – Col. James Beauregard

Unit	Type	Move	Fire	Morale TN	Special Traits	Notes
3rd Arkansas Infantry	Infantry (6 stands)	6"	5+ / 6+	7+ (Veteran)	Aggressive (re-roll charge morale once)	Hard fighters, no patience.
9th Mississippi Infantry	Infantry (5 stands)	6"	5+ / 6+	8+ (Average)	Average	Reliable until the guns open up.
Pelham's Battery	Artillery (2 x 6-pdr guns)	Limber 8", Fire 0–36"	4+ (E), ME 6-only Disorder	Light Guns	Young crew; overconfident.	
Col. James Beauregard	Commander	—	—	+0 Initiative	“Audacious and maybe too fond of adjectives.”	

The Battlefield

- A 6-inch **light woods** patch sits dead center — “Peace Ridge Grove.”
- A **split-rail fence** runs along the southern road.
- Gentle **rolling ground** offers occasional soft cover.
- Victory: Control the crossroads by end of Turn 6.

Special Rules Active:

- **Mixed Cover Optional Rule** (split hits by stands in/out of cover).
 - **1" LOS depth** for woods and buildings.
 - **ME Artillery Rule** (long-range fire causes only disorder on natural 6).
 - **Initiative:** 1d6 + leader modifier; ties reroll with no modifier.
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TURN 1 — “The Guns Open the Ball”

1 Initiative

Each side rolls **1d6 + commander modifier**.

- **Union (Lowell):** 🎲 4 + 1 = 5
- **Confederate (Beauregard):** 🎲 3 + 0 = 3

✅ **Union wins initiative** and goes first.

Moderator:

“The Yankees spot movement in the haze and shout ‘There they are!’ The Confederates shout back, ‘Where?’ It’s that kind of morning.”

2 Union Movement

- **1st Illinois** marches **6”** up to the **fence line**, aligning shoulder to shoulder.
 - All stands behind the fence → gain **Light Cover (-1 to be hit)**.
- **7th Indiana** moves obliquely **4” left**, creating a refused flank about 4” behind the fence.
 - **Col. Lowell** positions between both regiments, within **command radius**.

- **Battery A** is already emplaced near the farmyard — **no movement**.

Moderator:

“Lowell's line looks picture-perfect — which means something's about to go wrong.”

3 Union Shooting

Battery A (2 x 12-lb Napoleons)

- **Target:** 9th Mississippi Infantry (open ground).
- **Range:** 30" → **ME band (24–48")**.
- **Rule:** Only **natural 6** causes **Disorder**.
- **Dice:** 2 guns → 2 dice.

 Rolls: 5, **6** → one hit (Disorder test).

9th Mississippi Disorder Test

- **Base TN:** 7+ on 2d6.
-  Rolls: 3 + 2 = **5** → **Fail**

Result: Regiment becomes **Disordered** (movement -2", -1 to fire next turn).

Other Union Units: Out of range.

Player Mark (Union):

“That’s what you get for standing in the open like you’re at a Sunday picnic!”

Player Chris (Confederate):

“Those shells are just encouragement. We advance faster when you make us mad.”

Developer Note:

The ME rule immediately shines — there’s tension in rolling for sixes without producing absurd casualties. The early artillery duel feels historical, not gamey.

4 Confederate Movement

- **3rd Arkansas** advances **6"**, halting **2" short** of the southern tree line.
- **9th Mississippi** (Disordered) advances **4"** up the road verge, slightly lagging behind.
- **Pelham's Battery** unlimbers on a **low rise**, guns roughly **30–32"** from the Union fence.

Moderator:

"Beauregard points dramatically toward the woods. The Arkansans march. The Mississippians grumble something about artillery being unsporting."

5 Confederate Shooting

Pelham's Battery (2 x 6-pdr guns)

- **Target:** 1st Illinois behind fence.
- **Range:** ~30" → **ME band**.
- **Rule:** Only **natural 6** causes **Disorder**.
- **Dice:** 2 guns → 2 dice.

 Rolls: 2, **6** → one 6 = **Disorder test** for 1st Illinois.

1st Illinois Disorder Test

- **Base TN:** 7+ (Veteran).
- **Modifier:** +1 (Light Cover morale bonus).
-  Rolls: 3 + 2 = 5 + 1 = **6** → **Pass**.

 The regiment holds firm.

Player Chris (Confederate):

“I hit you!”

Player Mark (Union):

“You *worried* me, there’s a difference.”

3rd Arkansas and 9th Mississippi: Out of musket range — no fire.

Turn Resolution

Unit	Condition	Notes
1st Illinois	Good Order	Steady behind fence.
7th Indiana	Good Order	Holding reserve line.
Battery A	Good Order	Found its mark.
3rd Arkansas	Good Order	Near woods edge.
9th Mississippi	Disordered	Shell-shocked; movement -2", -1 fire next turn.
Pelham’s Battery	Good Order	Found range, no effect.

Moderator:

“Both batteries traded insults and iron. The Yankees drew first disorder; the Rebs will claim it was intentional.”

Developer Commentary

The alternating full-action system flows cleanly — each side gets its moment.

The *Disorder-only ME rule* produced early tension without the usual Turn 1 body count.

The **cover morale bonus** feels just right; fences make soldiers brave but not bulletproof.

TURN 2 — “Into the Woods”

1 Initiative

Each side rolls **1d6 + commander modifier**.

- **Union (Lowell):** 🎲 3 + 1 = 4
- **Confederate (Beauregard):** 🎲 5 + 0 = 5

✓ Confederates win initiative for Turn 2.

Moderator:

“Looks like Beauregard finally found his dice — and his courage.”

2 Confederate Movement

- **3rd Arkansas:** Moves **2" forward** into the **light woods**, now **within 1"** of the southern edge.
 - **Effect:** Gains **Light Cover**; may fire *out* next turn *without penalty*.
- **9th Mississippi:** Still **Disordered** → moves **4"** (reduced). Ends just shy of the road fence.
- **Pelham's Battery:** Stays unlimbered on the rise.

Player Chris:

“The boys are in the trees. Nothing bad ever happens in the trees.”

Moderator:

“Except getting shot at from every direction, but yes — nothing bad.”

3 Confederate Shooting

Pelham's Battery (2 x 6-pdr guns)

- **Target:** 1st Illinois, behind fence.

- **Range:** 30" → still **ME band**.
- 🎲 Rolls: 1, 4 → **No 6s**.

3rd Arkansas Infantry (6 stands)

- **Target:** 1st Illinois, behind fence.
- **Range:** 12" → **Effective range (0–18")**.
- **Modifier:** -1 (Light Cover target).
- **Fire Value:** 6 dice, hit on 5+.
- 🎲 Rolls: 6, 5, 3, 4, 2, 1 → 2 hits → 1 hit negated by cover → **1 casualty** inflicted.

1st Illinois loses **1 stand** (representing 100 men).

- Must take **Morale Check**:
 - **Base TN:** 7+, +1 (cover).
 - 🎲 Rolls: $3 + 4 = 7 + 1 = 8$ → **Pass**.

Moderator:

"The Illinois boys duck behind the fence just in time — except one poor soul who'll be remembered for standing too tall."

4 Union Movement

- **1st Illinois:** Holds position behind fence.
- **7th Indiana:** Advances **3"** forward to close interval on the right.
- **Battery A:** No movement; sighting adjustments only.

Player Mark:

"We'll let the guns do the talking."

5 Union Shooting

Battery A (2 x 12-lb Napoleons)

- **Target:** 9th Mississippi (still Disordered, open).
- **Range:** 28" → **ME band**.
- 🎲 Rolls: 4, 6 → one 6 → Disorder test.

9th Mississippi Disorder Test

- Already Disordered → second fail causes *Disorganized morale check*.
- **Base TN:** 8+, -1 (Disordered penalty).
 - 🎲 Rolls: $2 + 3 = 5 - 1 = 4$ → **Fail**.
- **Result:** Regiment falls back **4"**, remains **Disordered**, and cannot act offensively next turn.

1st Illinois Infantry (5 stands remaining)

- **Target:** 3rd Arkansas (half in woods, half out).
- **Apply Mixed Cover Optional Rule:**
 - 3 stands in open, 3 in cover.
 - Divide 5 potential hits proportionally → 3 hits to open, 2 to covered (round down toward open).
- **Range:** 12" → Effective band, hit on 5+.
- 🎲 Rolls: 6, 5, 5, 3, 1 → 3 hits → 2 on open, 1 on cover (-1 to hit → miss).
- **Result:** 2 hits → **1 casualty** (open stands).

3rd Arkansas Morale Test:

- **Base TN:** 7+, no cover bonus (open casualties).

- 🎲 Rolls: $3 + 2 = 5 \rightarrow$ **Fail**.

- Regiment becomes **Disordered**.

6 Turn Resolution

Unit	Condition	Notes
1st Illinois	Good Order	Down 1 stand.
7th Indiana	Good Order	Moved up.
Battery A	Good Order	Re-shelled Mississippi.
3rd Arkansas	Disordered	Casualty, morale failed.
9th Mississippi	Disordered + fallback	Wavering.
Pelham's Battery	Good Order	Ineffective this round.

💬 Commentary

Moderator:

"The Arkansans ran into the woods to find cover — and instead found Illinois. The Mississippians might be thinking about early lunch. The only steady thing here is the coffee on Lowell's desk."

Developer Note:

Turn 2 delivered everything we wanted — mixed cover worked smoothly, artillery stayed dramatic, and morale shifts felt organic.

The interaction between cover, morale bonuses, and Disorder markers is *doing real work* — adding tactical decisions without extra bookkeeping.

So far, the system's rhythm feels right: clean sequences, satisfying narrative, and just enough dice drama.

✅ End of Turn 2

Red Earth, Blue Steel: Skirmish at Peace Ridge

Turns 3–6: “Fire in the Woods”

Situation Recap

At the end of Turn 2:

- The **Union** line sits steady behind the southern fence.
- **Battery A** continues to pound away at range.
- **1st Illinois** has lost one stand but remains firm.
- The **3rd Arkansas** is disordered in the southern edge of the woods.
- The **9th Mississippi** has fallen back, shaken and disordered.

Moderator: “If this were chess, the Confederates just discovered what a pawn storm feels like.”

TURN 3 — “Through Smoke and Splinters”

1 Initiative

Each side rolls **1d6 + leader modifier**.

- **Union (Lowell):**  $3 + 1 = 4$
 - **Confederate (Beauregard):**  $5 + 0 = 5$
 Confederates go first.
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2 Confederate Movement

3rd Arkansas (Disordered) – may move at half rate.

- Advances **3"** to the edge of the woods. Half the regiment now **in open**, half **in cover**.
- "Mixed Cover" situation triggered again.

9th Mississippi (Disordered + Fallback)

- May only reform in place; no advance.
- Colonel Beauregard rides over, shouting: "You boys planning to redecorate that ditch or fight a war?"

Pelham's Battery – remains on the ridge, wheels slightly to re-aim at the fence line.

3 Confederate Shooting

Pelham's Battery

- **Target:** 1st Illinois.
- **Range:** 28" → ME band.
- **Dice:** 2 guns.
 Rolls = 5, **6** → one 6 → Disorder test.
- **Illinois Morale TN 7+, +1 for cover.**
 Rolls = 2 + 4 = 6 + 1 = **7** → **Pass**.

Result: Still steady.

3rd Arkansas (half in woods)

- **Target:** 1st Illinois.
- **Range:** 12" (Effective band).
- **Penalty:** -1 for Light Cover target.

- **Dice:** 6 stands → 6 dice, hit on 5+.
 Rolls = 6, 5, 5, 3, 2, 1 → 3 hits → 2 after cover = **1 casualty**.

Illinois Morale Check: TN 7+, +1 cover.

 3 + 3 = 6 + 1 = **7** → **Pass**.

Player Mark: “Another splintered rail and a bruised pride. We’ll count that as a win.”

4 Union Movement

- **1st Illinois:** Hold the line.
 - **7th Indiana:** Steps forward 3" to extend the line.
 - **Battery A:** Stays on target.
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5 Union Shooting

Battery A (2 guns) → 9th Mississippi (open).

- **Range:** 28" → ME band.
 4, 6 → one 6 → Disorder test.
Mississippi already Disordered → second fail = Fall Back 4" and remain Disordered.
 Rolls 2 + 3 = 5 → **Fail**.

Moderator: “The guns speak; the Mississippians listen — from farther back.”

1st Illinois (5 stands) → 3rd Arkansas (mixed cover).

- 3 stands open, 3 in woods.
 - **5 dice**, 5+ to hit.
 6, 5, 5, 4, 1 → 3 hits → 2 open, 1 covered (–1 miss) → 2 casualties.
Arkansas Morale: 7+, no bonus.
 2 + 3 = 5 → **Fail** → **Disordered again**.
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6 Turn Resolution

Unit	Condition	Notes
1st Illinois	Good Order	Down 2 stands total
7th Indiana	Good Order	Extended line
Battery A	Good Order	Breaking Mississippi
3rd Arkansas	Disordered	2 casualties
9th Mississippi	Disordered + Fallback	Morale slipping
Pelham's Battery	Good Order	Ineffective fire

Automatic Rallies: Both Confederate regiments attempt to recover.

- 3rd Arkansas 🎲 4 + 3 = 7 → **Rally Successful.**
- 9th Mississippi 🎲 2 + 3 = 5 → **Still Disordered.**

Moderator: "The Arkansans shake it off; the Mississippians debate heading home."

TURN 4 — "The Ridge Erupts"

1 Initiative

- **Union (Lowell):** 🎲 6 + 1 = 7
 - **Confederate (Beauregard):** 🎲 5 + 0 = 5
✅ Union first.
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2 Union Movement

- **1st Illinois:** Hold.

- **7th Indiana:** Moves up to the fence line beside Illinois (+Light Cover).
 - **Battery A:** Adjusts 2" left to clear firing arc toward woods.
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3 Union Shooting

Battery A → 3rd Arkansas (at woods edge).

- **Range:** 24" → Effective band.
- **Dice:** 2 guns × 2 shots = 4 dice, 4+ to hit, -1 for Light Cover.
 6, 5, 3, 2 → 2 hits after cover = **1 casualty**.
Morale 7+, +1 cover:  3 + 3 = 6 + 1 = **7 Pass**.

1st Illinois + 7th Indiana Combined Volley → 3rd Arkansas

- **Total Dice:** 11 (6 + 5 stands), 5+ to hit, -1 for Light Cover.
 6, 6, 5, 5, 5, 4, 3, 3, 2, 2, 1 → 5 hits → 4 after cover.
- **2 casualties** and Disorder check.
Morale 7+, +1 cover:  2 + 2 = 4 + 1 = **5 Fail → Disordered**.

Moderator: "The woods light up like a July bonfire. Arkansas is learning that trees don't stop lead."

4 Confederate Movement

- **3rd Arkansas (Disordered):** May move 3" forward out of woods to threaten fence.
 - **9th Mississippi (Disordered):** Holds position.
 - **Pelham's Battery:** Holds.
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5 Confederate Shooting

Pelham's Battery → 7th Indiana (at fence)

- **Range:** 30" → ME.
 3, 6 → one 6 → Disorder test.
7th Indiana Morale 8+, +1 cover:  5 + 2 = 7 + 1 = 8 **Pass.**

3rd Arkansas (Disordered) → 1st Illinois

- **Dice:** 6 stands → 6 dice, -1 cover, -1 Disordered = need 6+.
 6, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1 → one hit → negated by cover. No effect.

Player Chris: "I swear these muskets were issued with crooked barrels."

Player Mark: "Maybe you should aim the other end."

6 Turn Resolution

Automatic Rallies:

- 3rd Arkansas  3 + 5 = 8 → **Recovered.**
- 9th Mississippi  1 + 3 = 4 → **Still Disordered.**

Developer Note: *The automatic rally system creates nice ebb and flow — units can regain composure if not under constant pressure, encouraging players to alternate fire and maneuver.*

TURN 5 — "The Charge That Wasn't"

1 Initiative

- **Union:**  2 + 1 = 3
 - **Confederate:**  4 + 0 = 4 → **Confederates first.**
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2 Confederate Movement

3rd Arkansas (Recovered): Attempts **Charge** against fence line.

- **Charge Distance:** 6" → in range.
- **Morale for Charge:** 7+, Aggressive re-roll allowed.
🎲 2 + 3 = 5 → Fail → Re-roll 🎲 4 + 4 = 8 → **Succeeds**.
- Moves into contact with fence — hand-to-hand combat next.

9th Mississippi: Remains Disordered, cannot charge.

3 Confederate Shooting

None — charging units forgo fire.

4 Union Movement

None — defending behind fence (advantage in melee).

5 Union Shooting

Pre-Melee Defensive Fire from 1st Illinois + 7th Indiana.

- **Dice:** 11 total, 5+ to hit, -1 for Light Cover (attacker approaching from woods).
🎲 6, 6, 5, 5, 5, 4, 4, 3, 3, 2, 1 → 5 hits → 4 after modifiers = **2 casualties**.
3rd Arkansas Morale 7+: 🎲 3 + 3 = 6 → **Fail** → **Disordered before contact**.

Result: Charge stops 1" short — attack aborted.

Moderator: "Turns out bayonets don't go through fences or volleys. Who knew?"

6 Turn Resolution

- 3rd Arkansas attempts rally: 🎲 2 + 4 = 6 → **Still Disordered.**
 - 9th Mississippi: 🎲 3 + 4 = 7 → **Rallied!**
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TURN 6 — “Hold the Line”

1 Initiative

- **Union:** 🎲 5 + 1 = 6
 - **Confederate:** 🎲 4 + 0 = 4 → **Union first.**
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2 Union Movement

- **1st Illinois + 7th Indiana:** Hold at fence.
 - **Battery A:** Shifts 1" right for clear LOS on Arkansas.
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3 Union Shooting

Battery A → 3rd Arkansas (at fence).

- **Range:** 22" → Effective band.
🎲 6, 5, 5, 4 → 3 hits, -1 for Light Cover → 2 casualties.
Morale 7+, +1 cover: 🎲 2 + 3 = 5 + 1 = 6 → **Fail.**
Result: 3rd Arkansas breaks — retreat 8" in rout.

Infantry Volley → Retreating Arkansas (automatic Disordered target).

🎲 11 dice → 5 hits → 3 casualties → unit shattered (< half stands remaining).

Moderator: “The woods belong to Illinois now. Arkansas heads for the state line.”

4 Confederate Movement

- **9th Mississippi** (Recovered): Moves 6" toward center, covering Pelham's guns.
 - **Pelham's Battery**: Unlimbers rearward to avoid overrun.
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5 Confederate Shooting

Pelham's Battery → **1st Illinois** (still at fence).

🎯 2, 6 → one 6 → Disorder test.

Illinois Morale 7+, +1 cover: 🎯 $3 + 2 = 5 + 1 = 6$ **Pass.**

Player Chris: "At least we're consistent!"

Player Mark: "Yeah — consistently missing."

6 Turn Resolution

No rallies for broken Arkansas (unit removed next turn).
Other units steady.



After-Action Report

Final Positions

- Union line intact behind fence, minor losses.
- 3rd Arkansas routed; 9th Mississippi in fallback position.
- Confederate artillery still firing but ineffective.

Outcome: Union Victory



Player Reflections

Player Mark (Union):

"Fences are the real heroes of this battle. That and dice that understand discipline."

Player Chris (Confederate):

"Next time we bring more Arkansas and fewer Mississippians — or at least a tree that shoots back."