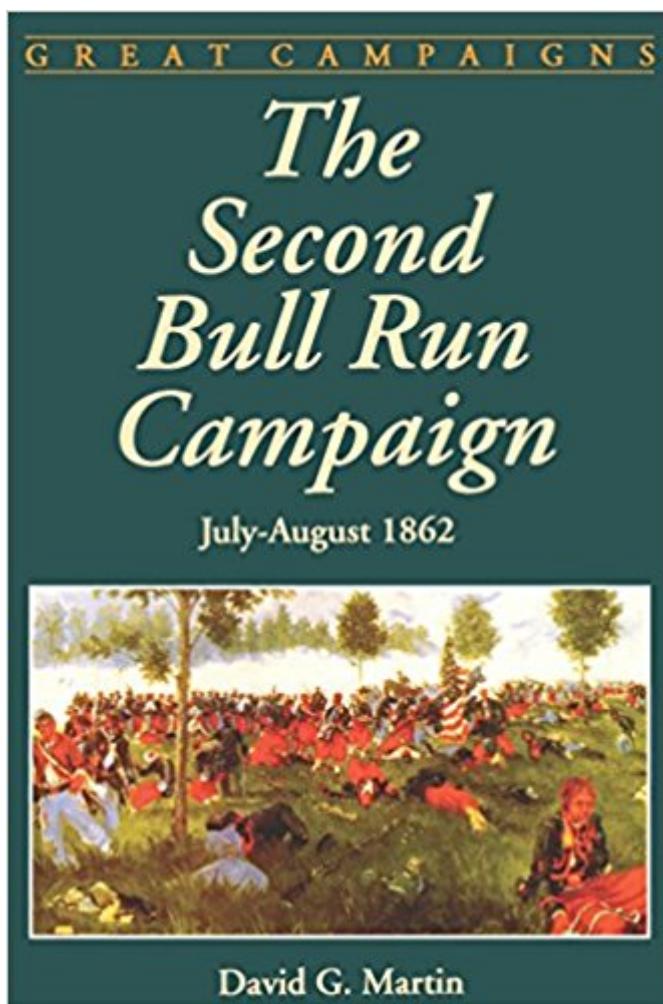


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The Second Bull Run Campaign: July-august 1862 (Great Campaigns)



Synopsis

A fully illustrated account, replete with detailed maps, of one of Robert E. Lee's greatest Civil War successes.

Book Information

Series: Great Campaigns

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Customer Reviews

Dr. David G. Martin has written numerous books of military history including The Vicksburg Campaign, The Shiloh Campaign, The Philadelphia Campaign, and Confederate Monuments at Gettysburg.

This is the third book I have read from the Combined Books 'Great Campaign' series and I must admit also the best so far. Although it only offers a concise account of the events leading up to the battle, the battle itself and the aftermath (all in 256 odd pages) it is still a very good read. The author offers an excellent story about this blotched campaign with 14 good maps to help follow the action and a number of topical sidebars for further information (I liked the one about the oldest surviving soldiers of the battle!). This is a well researched and well presented book and it was pleasure to read. I am sure that there are a number of very detailed books covering this battle/campaign and the author offers a number of good choices for further reading. For example; 'Return to Bull Run' by John Hennessy and 'Stonewall Jackson at Cedar Mountain' by Robert Krick, however this book wets your appetite for taking the plunge and aquiring a more in depth volume or it may certainly satisfy your interest with just this account. I would recommend this book for anyone looking for a

decent account of this battle. One point in regard to this book is that a small number of typo errors were noticed which should have been picked up by the editor, but once again it did not detract from the value of the book, a good story!

This isn't a long book and in some ways that works to its disadvantage because the botched second battle of Bull Run was complicated. There were no grand sweeps around the enemy's flank, like Jackson's at Chancellorsville. There was no single outright blunder like Burnside's at Frederickburg, no glorious Gotterdammerung like the Confederate charge against Cemetery Ridge at Gettysburgh. Instead, the Union Army lost the initiative and finally the battle itself through a series of misjudgments and inexplicably misrouted orders on the part of General Pope and some of his subordinates. There is always what von Clausewitz called "the fog of war", of course. In this instance, there was a lot of confusion on both sides about who was doing what, and where, but as much as anything the Federal defeat could be attributed to one feature -- Pope's persistent conviction that the enemy was in full retreat and needed only to be cut off to be annihilated. This was less than the fog of war. It was garden-variety wishful thinking. I found much of it a bit hard to follow, often losing track of the movements of brigades and of whole divisions. (The author has helpfully put the regimental names in italics.) The fog of comprehension would probably have been lessened if I'd know more about the battle, or about the Civil War in general, to begin with. There are a series of easily read maps, and they were useful. They were limited too because the text frequently mentions units or terrain features that don't appear on the maps. For anyone like myself, who is trying to win a victory -- ANY victory -- in the "Take Command" series of video games, not too much should be expected. The terrain in the video display doesn't exactly correspond to the terrain indicated on the maps in the book. I read the book hoping I'd be able to pin down the errors made by the participants in the battle so as to avoid making them myself in replaying the individual engagements, but it was a dead end. (I'm beginning to suspect that the so-called Artificial Intelligence in the video game is not so "artificial" after all, that it actually has a soul and that the soul is demonic. It seems to know my plans even when I'm simply dreaming them up. Can it all be part of an Alien plot to take over the universe? Or maybe just the McDonald's franchise? Who can know for sure?) I can see why someone might recommend this as a good overall introduction to the battle but I wouldn't. For a novice, what's mostly lacking are simple generalizations, something on the order of "Pope moved north, where Jackson stopped him, and meanwhile Longstreet sneaked up on Pope's left flank and kicked butt." Followed by a map clearly labeled "Pope", "Jackson", "Longstreet," and with three broad black arrows showing movements, so that the numbest of minds can be

penetrated. It's not a Cliffs Notes rendering of the conflict. It's more like -- well, if you had already learned who did what but it was a long time ago and you needed a quick refresher on the battle, this would be fine.

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