

Zach A., Age 12, School 28

Diary of Septimus Aufidus
Leader of the Carthaginian Cavalry
Advisor of Hannibal

July 30, Year 216 BC,

Hannibal is ushering us farther and harder. The Romans we now know are afraid of us and have been picking away at our lines for weeks. We are not afraid although with every raid comes more deaths. Today, in the morning we were raided again and it was right at my cavalry line. We slaughtered them and when inspecting the dead I came across a rather interesting artifact around one of the dead Romans necks. It was a coin with a man riding a flying horse on one side and a beast on the other side. I knew enough about mythology to recognize that the beast was Chimera, a fearsome beast with the head of lion, the body of a goat and the tail of a serpent, the man on the horse was obviously Bellerophon. The coin was bloody and old and although deformed I decided to keep it as a sort of token of luck.

July 31, Year 216 BC,

Our supply lines are still off although they have been let up a small bit. The whole army senses something going on and a Roman that we interrogated told us that Rome has appointed two consuls and removed Fabius Maximus from power, they intend on attacking us head on head. The army was crushed after hearing this news; the Romans would surely mass a much greater force than ours. Hannibal sent scouts to investigate the issue of the Roman army. Luckily though, the raids have stopped and we have not been interrupted on our way to the sea. It was a rather peaceful day.

August 1, Year 216 BC,

The scouts returned today, not all of them though, we had sent five and only two had returned. Even their return, although good for the information, was troubling. This meant that the Roman army was close and that they knew that we were close to them. They were following us and were to trap us between them and the sea; there was no way that we could avoid them now. The remaining scouts said that the army was composed of around ten legions and were indeed led by the two consuls. Hannibal held a meeting of all of his advisors, including me. We were all puzzled and had no idea how to defeat or escape alive at least from this monstrous force. Our only idea was to find good fighting ground and go head on against Rome. We couldn't rest until we had found the good fighting ground. We marched into the night without a sound to give our position away for it was crucial that we found an area of land that gave us a slight advantage. The entire army now knew what they would be facing most likely tomorrow and did not complain. I just wished that my newly found good luck charm would indeed prove to be lucky, I cradled it the entire march. We finally found our battlefield during the third watch of the night. It was near a town called Cannae so we built fortifications, posted a watch and got some sleep.

August 2, Year 216 BC,

I woke early in the morning at around the second hour of the day to the sound of the shouting of commands and stomping of horse's hooves. The battle would most likely occur today. I must admit that I was frightened. According to the scouts the enemy outnumbered us by a few legions. That was not much for us to handle because we were a skilled army but scouts could make mistakes and I thought it very likely that this was one of them.

Hannibal held another meeting and he discussed our tactics. He proposed that we encircle the enemy and use their sheer mass of soldiers against them, no one disagreed so that was the plan. He also discussed who would be leading which forces. I would be leading the Numidian cavalry composed of four thousand men, two men, one by the name of Sosylos and one by the name of Hasdrubal would be leading the Spanish and Celtic cavalry composed of six thousand men and Hannibal would lead our heavy infantry and our light infantry which was composed of forty thousand men. Hannibal would be leading the attack from the center, I would be on the right and Sosylos and Hasdrubal would be on the left.

We left the tent knowing that the battle would be today. I was so frightened that I was cradling the coin I had found the whole walk to my tent. I sincerely hoped that it would bring me good fortune for that was exactly what I was going to need. I quickly put my armor on and left to rally my cavalry.

Thirty minutes later we were head to head against our enemy. As I suspected our scouts had been wrong about the number of Roman soldiers. Rather than ten legions I counted fifteen with probably one still guarding the camp. That equaled out to about 70,000 foes. Also to make it even harder for us their cavalry were veteran Italian knights way beyond our class.

Right from the beginning it looked as if things were going to be bad for us, but it only looked that way to the Romans, they were playing right into our hands. At the start Hannibal ordered that 500 Numidian infantry act as if they were in panic and disorder. Then for them to fall back and stay there. My cavalry and that of Sosylos and Hasdrubal went head to head against our foes. Our infantry on the other hand steadily retreated at Hannibal's orders. Hasdrubal and Sosylos hit hard and quickly cut the Roman right flank into small units each retreating leaving their leader, consul Paullus dead. Quickly Hasdrubal and Sosylos came to our aid and attacked from both sides, the Roman cavalry was easily defeated. Holding my coin I led my cavalry around the back of the Roman infantry who at that time thought that they were winning the battle. At this time our left and right flanks were on the sides of the Romans and were attacking their flanks. They moved farther around the glob of men that was the Roman army and the rest of our infantry surrounded the nearest part of the Romans to them. The cavalry (us) surrounded them in the back. We had succeeded, we had now totally encircled the Romans and the rest of the battle would be easy.

The final count was of the 80,000 or so Romans 46,000 were killed, 22,000 were captured and 12,000 escaped. There were only 6,000 Carthaginian deaths. I quickly clutched my lucky coin on which was engraved chimera and thanked the gods for this fortune. Now on to Rome I hope.