

# History's Real Hannibal

— the first free agent?

*A wildly successful commander and tactician, Hannibal fought and won great battles over many decades by attracting enthusiastic followers and accurately judging his opponents.*



In the Second Punic War (220 B.C.), Hannibal famously marched an army that included 37 war elephants over the Pyrenees mountains from New Carthage (a prosperous young city his father founded, now called Cartagena, Spain). He then crossed the snowy Alps into northern Italy, defeating Rome at the height of its military might at Trebia, Trasimene and Cannae. He maintained several armies in Italy and even Sicily for

14 years afterward, never losing a major engagement to Rome until the Battle of Zama.

To this day, Italians exclaim *Hannibalis at the gates!* (*Hannibal è ai portali*, from the Latin *Hannibal ad portas*) when friends or clients arrive unannounced or calamity must be avoided. So inspiring was Hannibal to his troops and even to his opponents that following his defeat at Zama, Romans erected statues to him right downtown ... not one, but several! After securing freedom for himself and his army — almost unheard of in those violent days — Hannibal undertook a personal makeover at age 42 to begin his next series of careers:

- Chief magistrate of Cathage, establishing direct election of the Hundred and Four ruling council by the citizens and requiring them to stand for just two-year terms of office.
- Military advisor to Seleucid Greek king Antiochus III
- Commander of the Phoenician fleet in the Battle of the Eurymedon River
- City planner for the new Armenian capital of Artaxata
- Naval commander for Bithynia against Rome's ally Pergamum

Called the Father of Strategy, even his extended adversary Rome adopted elements of his political and military outlook. Studied and praised by both Napoleon Bonaparte and the Duke of Wellington, his life has been the basis for hundreds of biographies and documentaries.

History is studded with flashes in the pan like Alexander the Great (who only lived to 33), but Hannibal enjoyed several careers, living out his full life of 64 years.

*We will either find a way or make one.* — Hannibal