



The weather was clear and cold on the morning of Thursday, March 15, 1781. Patriots and Redcoats were about to begin a battle which historians consider one of the most important of America's war of independence. Fighting was so fierce that Lt. General Cornwallis, the British commander, reported:

*I never saw such fighting since God made me. The Americans fought like demons.*

Although technically winning the day, the British gave up most of North Carolina to American control when the battle was over. Redcoat losses (killed or wounded) were approximately 650 while American losses were approximately 250.

Many of the militiamen, fighting with General Greene, went home after the battle. That was disconcerting to the General, as we can see from his report (written three days later) to Governor Abner Nash of North Carolina:

*Time will not permit me to be very particular, and therefore I shall only Confirm the account of there having been an action on the 15th. The battle was fought near Guilford Court House. It was long and severe. We gave up the ground and were obliged to leave our artillery, all the horses being killed. We retreated in good order...*

*The Enemy loss is very great, much more than ours. We ought to have had a victory, and had your Militia stood by their officers it was certain. However the enemy have gained no advantage, except the ground and field pieces. Their operating force is diminished in such a manner, that I am not without hope of turning their victory into defeat, if the Militia don't leave me... (See Nathanael Greene's report to Governor Abner Nash of North Carolina Camp near the Iron Works, March 18th, 9 a.m., 1781.)*

Cornwallis' report, written two days after the fighting, uses no exuberant words as the general tells Lord George Germain what happened:

*I have the satisfaction to inform your Lordship that His Majesty's Troops under my command obtained a signal victory on the 15th Inst<sup>ant</sup> over the Rebel Army commanded by General Greene...The conduct and actions of the officers and soldiers that compose this little army will do more justice to their merit than I can by words.*

*Their persevering intrepidity in action, their invincible patience in the hardship and fatigue of a march of above 600 miles, in which they forded several large rivers, and numberless Creeks, many of which would be reckoned large rivers in any other country in the world, without tents or covering against the climate, and often without provisions, will sufficiently manifest their ardent zeal for the honor and interests of their Sovereign and their Country...I have the honor to inclose to your Lordship the list of our killed and wounded... (See Cornwallis' letter to Lord George Germain, March 17, 1781.)*

The results of this battle would ultimately lead to the British surrender at Yorktown.

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