

Because English ships could not easily penetrate the Spanish crescent formation, the Brits had to use different tactics to attack the Armada.

With easier-to-maneuver ships, which were smaller than the Spanish galleons, the Brits had a chance. It would not be easy, however. To help their position, Howard had his men use a line-astern formation.

With their sails fully hoisted, and the wind directly behind them, the British ships were ready to attack. About a quarter-mile away from the Spanish crescent, Howard gave the order to "Fire!"

For Englishmen on the gun decks, the scene was cramped and extremely loud. Marked by their own sweat, the gunners fired broadside after broadside - about one round per minute. They kept going until they were ordered to stop.

After expending a huge amount of effort, and firing hundreds cannonballs, the British were unable to harm the Spanish fleet in any meaningful way. No ship was sunk; no ship was severely damaged.

After seven hours of fighting, the Spanish Armada was still intact and still extremely powerful. England's men had done nothing to even put a dent into King Philip's invasion plan.

Credits:

Clip from "Battlefield Britain," an 8-episode series (produced by Danielle Peck) and distributed by the BBC. This clip is from Episode 4, "The Spanish Armada," which originally aired on 27 August 2004.

Presented by Peter and Dan Snow; produced and directed by Nathan Willians.

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