Why did William win the Battle of Hastings Exemplar

In January 1066 King Edward of England died leaving no children to take the throne after him. Three different men wanted to become king, Harold Godwinsson the richest English Earl, the King of Norway Harald Hardrada and finally William Duke of Normandy. Harold Godwinsson was chosen by the richest most important nobles in England. They chose him to avoid a fight and he was a good soldier who wanted peace although he never did get any. This essay explains why Harold was unable to defeat the Norman attack upon England. I have organised the points into different types of causes.

It was the events before the battle which made it very difficult for Harold to win. In late September Harald Hardrada invaded England on the North East coast near York, he was quickly met by an army on the 25th of September which Harold Godwinsson had gathered of his best fighting men. There was a bloody battle at Stamford Bridge and Tostig Harold’s half brother who supported Harald Hardrada was killed along with Harald Hardrada himself and lots of Harold Godwinsson’s best fighting men. At the end of this battle a messenger came for Harold telling him of William’s invasion of England on the south coast near Pevensey. So with only part of his army left and all of them very tired he marched with great speed to London and then on to Hastings. “William filled his ships with mighty horses and very brave men”, said William of Jumieges, Deeds of the Dukes of Normandy.

A big reason for William’s victory was because of the tiredness of Harold’s army and the fact that many of his best men were dead all ready. Harold’s army were very tired and a weaker fighting army, they had marched all night from Stamford Bridge to Hastings. Harold assembled his army on the top of a hill in a tight circle so tight infact that not even the dead could fall down. The Normans had no chance now if the Saxons kept this up. Suddenly part of the Norman army broke away, they all thought Duke William was dead so he stood in front of them and took off his helmet and they realized who it was, William. This gave William an idea (and Harold a big mistake).

The Normans had an idea to pretend to give up and run away this they did and twice at that, on the second time nearly half of Harold’s army ran after the Normans but the Normans turned around and killed them. This was a big mistake for Harold and is a main reason for William’s victory. It is very important reason because otherwise William would never have gotten the Saxons off the hill. If Harold had let his army rest for a while and regrouped , then he would have had a better chance of victory.

William had a lot of good fortune and skill in the battle for instance he sailed over to England just as Harold was in York at the Battle of Stamford Bridge, he caught Harold’s army just after they had fought and all of them were tired and half of Harold’s army were dead including his best men (housecarls). Another piece of skill was pretending to run away at Hastings it was an important turning point in the battle. For otherwise he would never have got the Saxons off the hill.

I think the most important reason for William’s success was when William’s army pretended to run away, this was the only way to get the Saxons off the hill and the Normans could not win without getting the Saxons off it.

*This is very good Peter. You have organised the points intelligently and supported with plenty of detail.*