

Clauswitz' War: Theatre-Level Napoleonic Campaign Rules

I. Introduction

These rules are designed to be used to represent theatre-level campaigning with armies of several corps per side during the Napoleonic period. Each turn is a day, and maps covering an area from 100 - 500 miles on a side with good detail (roads, rivers, towns) should be used. The intent of these rules is not to depict campaigning 100% accurately, but to provide a referee with basic guidelines for running a Kriegspiel-type game for the generation of tabletop engagements. All dice are ordinary 6-sided dice.

If you have never read Carl Von Clausewitz' "On War" in its unabridged version, I strongly recommend you do so. (Much of the excellent detail [from a wargamer's perspective] is removed in most abridged versions.) This book has provided the inspiration and much of the detail for these rules, and it is justly reknown.

With modern resources (such as good maps) available on the Internet, and with e-mail and text messaging, it is easier than ever for a group of wargamers to conduct a campaign during the periods between active tabletop gaming. The types of situations and motivations which occur in campaigns are often far more interesting than most wargames scenarios, and they produce a type of realism which is difficult to capture in stand-alone tabletop scenarios, no matter how detailed.

II. Overview and Basics

A. Victory Conditions

Every historical campaign had some specific objective or set of objectives, and these can be defined by the referee at the start of the campaign. Very often in the Napoleonic period, however - and unlike earlier periods - the aim of a campaign was the destruction of the enemy army. One victory condition which is always in force in this campaign is the destruction of the enemy army. When more than 50% of an army has been destroyed, the campaign is over for that army. In the case where the lines of communication have been compromised, this number shrinks from 50% to 25%.

This victory condition serves two purposes - to stop players from simply fighting until all their troops are dead (an all-too-common phenomenon on the wargames table), and also to encourage classic Napoleonic maneuvering.

B. Forces and Actions

Each army is initially organized into Corps. These may be sub-divided at will by the players into their component organizations (divisions, brigades) and lower-level formations (including regiments, batteries, and battalions) may be transferred during the campaign between higher-level organizations which are in the same place. However, nothing smaller than a brigade may maneuver independently.

Complete orders of battle should be created by the Referee, and revealed only to their

commanders. these should include all Corps, Division, Brigade, and Regimental groupings (although this last is not typically important), along with the strength, type, armament, and quality of the troops, as reflected in the rules system(s) to be used for tabletop play.

Units which maneuver independently are given orders at the start of each day. Permissible activities are:

- Rest/Stand
- March
- Forced March
- Construction
- Demolition
- Bridging

It is assumed that the light troops of a maneuver unit are used to screen as per normal Napoleonic practice. If a larger "advance guard" is desired, this must be organized and maneuvered as a separate unit. Cavalry screens will extend 15 miles out from the unit; infantry outposts 5 miles. The lower figure is only used when there is no medium or light cavalry with the formation.

Turn Sequence:

1. Referee determines the weather, and informs players (weather is the same across the entire theatre).
2. Players give orders for each unit's activity for the day. Conditional orders are not allowed - in the case of contact with the enemy orders can be modified as described below. Orders should only concern the activities listed above.
3. The Referee will generate random events for each maneuver unit, and combine these with orders to determine outcomes.
4. Players will be informed if activities are successful, and where specific units are able to move, etc. If contact with the enemy is made, then the referee will let the players know, and get their reactions. This is simultaneous - all enemy contacts are reported for the day, and all responses are then given.
5. Based on responses, any battles generated are identified, and fought out on the tabletop.

Responses to enemy contact:

1. Withdraw
2. Defend
3. Attack

If one player withdraws, then the other player may choose to pursue or not, if Attack is chosen as their initial response. Otherwise, there will be no combat. Pursuit only generates a combat if the pursuing forces are faster than those they are pursuing. This is described more completely below.

If battle is joined, the reactions and location of forces are reflected in how the tabletop battle is set up. the Referee may have to use some judgement here, to make sure that a battle reflects the situation accurately. There are some guidelines, below, for how this can be done.

III. Actions

For all actions, it is assumed that the day starts at 6 AM, and that 12 hours of useful time are available. Movement is based on an 8-hour day, with the caveat that each division in a corps

requires an hour to pass a single point at march pace. Thus, with a three-division corps with a cavalry unit attached, it takes 4 hours for the last element to begin marching. Contacts with the enemy are reported according to this estimation: if a unit has a 15-mile march for the day, and it encounters enemy after 5 miles, then it will be a third of the way through the day (6 AM + 4 hours = 10 AM).

Actions may always include sub-division or transfer of sub-units to co-located friendly maneuver units. Splitting-off of sub-units should be specified in the day's orders, but they are subject to the parent unit's random event, which may disallow execution of intended orders.

A. Rest/Stand

When resting/standing, the maneuver unit holds position. It is assumed that scouting and outposts are as normal, so the approach of any enemy will be reported according to the movement of the enemy forces.

B. March

This represents a normal march of 8 hours for each element of the maneuver unit. The base movement rate is 15 miles for infantry and mixed maneuver units, and 25 miles for cavalry. Random events and weather may also modify the base move. Terrain certainly will:

Extremely rough terrain will slow movement by 75%; moving through the countryside (off of primary roads) terrain will slow movement by 50%. Primary roads negate the effects of terrain. Crossing a river on a bridge does not slow movement.

However, multiple maneuver units using a single stretch of road will cost an hour's worth of base movement (that is, modified base movement divided by 8) for each division over 4.

Bad weather will slow movement by 25%.

When writing orders for a march action, the relative positions of maneuver units should be specified (if more than one) but the positions of subunits need not. A typical, simple march order would read as follows:

"II Corps will march from their position at Landshut along the road to Pffeffenhausen, and from there to Siegenburg."

C. Forced March

Forced march is an attempt to go further by forcing troops to march at a faster pace and for longer than normal. It has huge downsides - the troops become exhausted, with many falling by the wayside, and the ones which arrive at their destination are often very ineffective in battle.

Base movement for a forced march is 25 miles for infantry and mixed maneuver units, and 35 miles for cavalry. Roll a single die: 1-4 reduces these distances by 5 miles; 5 or 6 and the full distance is realized. Troops which have made a forced march will also suffer attrition: roll again - on a 3-6, the units lose 10%; on a 2 they lose 15%; on a 1 they lose 20%. For each successive day of forced march after the first, these rolls get a cumulative -1.

When troops making a forced march go into combat on the same day or the following day, they will be fatigued, if the tabletop rules include this feature. For "Age of Eagles", they will start the game with a "worn" status. For "Republic & Empire" they should be given a fatigue rating of 5. For other rules sets, they should be degraded a quality rating.

D. Construction

Redoubts and entrenchments can be made equal to the front of half an infantry battalion in line (per tabletop rules) for every day of construction by 3,000 troops. This work assumes that it is uninterrupted - if enemy attack, construction is spoiled for the day. If a reaction to the enemy involves a withdrawal, construction is lost. Normal patrols and outposts are in effect while construction is going on, but other action is not allowed.

E. Demolition

Demolition of construction, towns, and bridges is relatively quick - assume a half day for any maneuver unit to destroy any single item. If desired, a bridge or other construction can be rigged for demolition, but not destroyed until the enemy reach it - this can make for some exciting games. Normal patrols and outposts are in effect while demolition is going on, but other action is not allowed for the half day used.

F. Bridging

It is assumed that all corps have pontoonniers and engineers as needed to perform bridging operations. Typically, it takes an uninterrupted half day to bridge a river - this time is doubled in bad weather (flooding). If the enemy is encountered, it is suggested that this be gamed out on the tabletop (think Aspern-Esseling), or the bridging can simply be aborted. Normal patrols and outposts are in effect while bridging, but other action is not allowed for the half day used.

IV. Weather and Random Events

At the start of each day, roll for weather:

Spring/Fall: bad weather 2 in 6

Summer: bad weather 1 in 6

Winter: bad weather 4 in 6

This assumes normal European conditions, and should be adjusted at the referee's discretion. Bad weather is assumed to affect the entire theatre of operations equally. Players should be informed of bad weather before writing orders for the turn.

Random Events:

Each turn a random event should be generated for each maneuver unit by rolling one die: on a 1-4, there is no event. Otherwise, roll on the following table with one die:

1 = Administrative failure - no action is permitted.

2 = Administrative failure - action is limited to a half day starting at noon.

3 = Intelligence failure - encounter radius reduced by half.

4 = Good intelligence - encounter radius doubled.

5 = Forced rest for troops (no action permitted unless enemy encountered) relying on supply train (all but the French, typically) if a march has occurred for the preceding two days, or if a forced march occurred the preceding day.

6 = Forced rest (no action permitted unless enemy encountered) if bad weather or very rough terrain - supply train has bogged down (units not using a supply train are exempt).

Players should not be told any more than need be about the random events, and the enemy should not be told under any circumstances. For example, a player who experiences an

intelligence failure should not know that this is the case - they simply don't receive reports of the proximity of the enemy.

V. Reactions and Setting Up Tabletop Battles

When the enemy is encountered - that is, when an enemy unit comes within the encounter radius of a unit - then any player who is aware of the encounter may make a reaction. The time of day (6 AM to 6 PM) should be determined based on pro-rated movement or other activity.

Reactions are as follows:

Withdraw: Player specifies which direction unit withdraws in, and may be subject to pursuit by swifter enemy forces.

Defend: Unit will hold ground, and is liable to be attacked.

Attack: Unit will advance, and may choose to pursue if the enemy unit(s) withdraw.

Each player should specify to the referee what their reaction will be. In the case of an attack (including pursuits) any nearby unit which could potentially reach the battlefield may also choose to make a reaction move consisting of a march or forced march, pro-rated to the time of the encounter minus an hour (for delivery of changed orders). These units will march onto the table as appropriate according to the time it will take them to reach it, and will suffer full forced-march penalties if that is what they have been ordered to do.

If all units defend, there is no combat. It was typical of the period for adjacent armies to skirmish on the first day, and not fight a full battle until the following day. In this game, all campaign actions take place before tabletop play for the second or following days.

If one unit defends, and the other attacks, then the defender can set up the table with suitable terrain, and choose their position. The attacker would then be forced to set up second, march onto the table, etc.

If both units choose to attack, then the referee should set up the terrain, and a blind be placed down the center of the table. Both sides will set up simultaneously without knowing what the enemy set-up is.

There is a pursuit scenario when the attacking unit has chosen to pursue, and has enough movement to overtake the withdrawing unit, and all enemy units have chosen to withdraw. The pursuit and withdrawal may both include a forced-march (with full penalties) when the pursuit scenario is determined, but players should not know the enemy has chosen to execute a forced march. The referee can negotiate a scenario if it seems appropriate, by determining if there will be a rear-guard, and which units might be split off from a maneuver unit to participate in the pursuit.

Reactions may always include sub-division and transfer of units as desired.

Note that when battle is joined, the grand tactical situation on the map should always be reflected in the entrance of units - a force which has out-flanked the enemy should come in at the appropriate point on the table to reflect the out-flanking maneuver. Encounter radius remains in effect during a battle, so players may learn while they are fighting that enemy forces are joining the battle while it is taking place.

VI. Result of Tabletop Battles

A roster of unit strength should be kept for all units. and it should be reduced according to the

...number of units strength should be reported at the end of the battle, and it should be noted that Napoleonic casualties could be tremendous. If, for example, "Age of Eagles" is used, then the loss of a base represents the proportional loss of manpower for that unit (eg, if half bases are removed, cut the roster strength by half).

The loser of a battle will often lose guns and accompanying equipment, etc., and this should be reflected by rolling for each surviving battery on the losing side: on a 1 in 6 the guns are lost or abandoned. Referees can reflect rules about capturing guns as they exist in the tabletop ruleset chosen, if any, as they please.

Players may choose to continue a battle on the following day if they want, with all troops restored to fresh status (unless the troops in question have recently made a forced march).

At the end of each day's battle, victory conditions should be assessed: if there is a clear line of communications, then more than 50% of the enemy forces in the theatre (as compared to starting rosters) will indicate a loss for that side. If there is no clear line of communications for the unit(s) engaged in battle, this figure drops to more than 25%.

VII. Reenforcements

Referees may define a re-enforcement mechanism if so desired at the start of the campaign. However, most theatre-level campaigns in this period were very decisive, lasting only for a week or two, so it is likely that there will be none. It is suggested that an historical campaign be used as a precedent to base the game on, even if this is disguised or altered. This can provide a wealth of detail on which to base the referee's decisions.