

# LOBOSITZ

A REVIEW OF GDW'S  
SERIES 120 SIMULATION GAME  
THE BATTLE OF LOBOSITZ  
BY ROB GIBSON

This is a most unusual choice of subject for a popular series of simulation games: I think most of us have heard of Frederick the Great — even the Panzer fanatics — but Lobositz sounds like one of the late Charles Grant's imaginary eighteenth-century states from his several series of articles on the horse-and-musket era.

However, the choice is an excellent one — at once, a typical Frederickian encounter battle with the added complication of fog (not the fog of war, this time — ouch!). The situation is such that it will not allow any passive manoeuvring, but demands instant action.

Briefly, an Austrian army under Laudon is marching down the valley of the River Elbe in Bohemia to relieve the entire Saxon Army which is besieged in the neighbourhood of Pirna. On hearing of their approach, Frederick leaves a screening force, and marches to cut Loudon off with his main force. But the timing is very acute: the Prussians emerge into the valley of the Elbe to find it shrouded in fog, and the largely invisible Austrians strung out along the riverside across their front, precise locations and strength unknown. Nor do the Austrians have any knowledge of the Prussian battle array either; both sides must deploy to meet whatever they feel the other side may throw against them.

Movement is standard SPI style with modifications for local conditions e.g. marshes, sunken roads, contour levels and woods, etc.

Combat is divided into fire and melee phases and is recreated most realistically. Fire combat rules are similar to those first used in SPI's "Soldiers" i.e. no account is taken of the defending unit's strength (or morale); the prime consideration is the attacking unit's fire strength, and the result of the dice throw plotted against this value, modified by terrain and relative arm-of-service factors, decides the number of strength points the defending unit will lose.

EXAMPLE:  
Attacking unit has a strength of 8

Die roll result = 1

Defending unit is Croatia Light Infantry in woods  
+ = skirmishers under cover  
= +2 on the die roll

Therefore, the total die roll = 3, which gives a loss of 2 strength points. This result would exterminate the unfortunate Croats, who are the only skirmishers in the game, and only unstacked at a maximum strength of 2!

For melee combat, both unit strength and morale value are taken into account. Basically, the attacking unit "charges" during the movement phase, sits out the fire phases, and then engages in melee combat.

Thus:

1. The attacking units all take a morale check. This decides who will actually take part in the attack.

A die roll for each unit involved is compared against the unit's current morale number. If the die roll is greater than the morale number, the unit does not take part. If no units pass the morale check, then the charge stops here.

2. Assuming the charge is still on, the defenders carry out the same morale check (artillery are

exempt, having no morale factor). Defending infantry add one to the result of the die roll.

Any defending unit failing a morale check loses one strength point and "routs" toward the designated friendly board edge.

3. Assuming the charge is on and the defenders stay for the main event, the melee is resolved thus:

Attacker		Defender	
Average current morale value	+	Average current morale value	+
Total current strength points	+	Total current strength points	+
Attacker's die roll.		Defender's die roll	
Attacker's Total		Defender's Total	

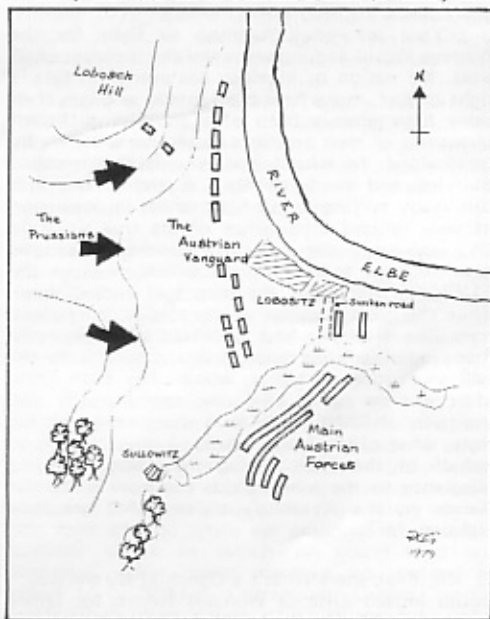
Whichever side (attacker or defender) has the greater total wins; if both are equal, the die roll is retaken. The loser "routs" all units toward the friendly board edge, and loses one strength point from among the luckless units.

Routs work well: if you collide with a friendly unit 'en rout' (ugh!), then that unit must take a morale check as per melee. Thus the effect can be cumulative in a tightly-packed battle area; however, no specific mention is made of collisions with enemy units, assuming that there happen to be any in rear of your lines?

One great advantage of the melee combat system is that morale is at least as important as unit strength, which gets round the thorny problem of small highly-motivated elite forces. In fact, it works so well that it would be interesting to see it applied to, for example, a Napoleonic battle simulation.

There are few complaints to air about this simulation. I have my doubts about giving cavalry automatic advantage when charging infantry: it depends too much to my mind on formation. Again, infantry are not allowed to "charge" cavalry — well, Minden was only two years after Lobositz, and that battle featured a prime example of infantry routing badly-led cavalry by "charging" them. Last is a common complaint: over the last few years, much of the instant-use tables have disappeared from the map sheet. Please could we have the turn sequence boxes back again — to most of us, it saved a deal of mental effort and page-turning? Mr. Redmondson & Company may not like it from the artistic viewpoint — a bas M. Redmondson et al!

A final word — my eldest son, aged eight, fresh from 'Napoleon at Waterloo' and 'Invasion — Sicily', can't wait to get his hands on this one.



The actual style of combat will be familiar to aficionados of the Russian Front — face-to-face confrontation all along the line, at least to start with. As the game develops, the opportunities occur to break the line and outflank your opponent, but it all depends on intelligent initial dispositions and use of available forces.

But the forces employed are far removed from the dreaded Ostfront; three levels of infantry (light, medium/heavy and heavy), plus cavalry and elephants. All have their advantages if used sensibly. For example: elephants may not attack heavy infantry frontally — let's face it, no self-respecting pachyderm would charge into all those spears — but elephants wreak havoc if they attack in flank or rear, and are deadly to cavalry (horses were, quite reasonably, afraid of charging elephants). Equally, routing elephant units could cause panic if they rout into a hex containing other units, and a Morale Check must be taken.

The morale check itself is worthy of mention. Firstly, the numerical value of the morale factor, unlike the strength factor, is inversely proportional to the morale of the unit concerned — a high value morale factor means low morale.

How it works is like this — if a morale check is required by the Combat Results Table (or by routing elephants!), the player whose unit it is must throw, on two dice, the value of the morale factor or greater to avoid routing. It follows that the odds are against units with high-value morale factors surviving the result of the dice throw without routing.

Once your unit fails a morale check, it heads for home at top movement speed, but retakes the morale check at every turn, and can thus be brought back into action at a later time. Sadly, only friendly units are supposed to be on the line of retreat according to the rules, so theoretically enemy units in collision escape a morale check — friendly units not being so lucky. Common sense tells us that a stampeding elephant cannot distinguish between friend and foe and its behaviour will be equally random.

No clue is given as to whether routing units should continue to flee during the opposing player's movement phase. This might seem daft, but with historical examples of ancient forces leaving the field of battle faster than they advanced in mind, I feel that this is a valid point. After all, they would hardly stand and wait within range to be caught by their recent vanquishers, would they?

One or two minor irritations with the game as presented; nowhere does the game map include any kind of numerical turn chart. I hate book-keeping in a simple simulation of this kind — it distracts one — and the absence of any marker to tell me what turn I am on forces me to keep book on it. Really, the little map on the game map telling us where in the Sinai Desert we are could have been in the rules booklet for all the relevance it has for the playing of the simulation.

These small things apart, I greatly enjoyed playing (simulating?) *Raphia*, and will definitely do so again.

# RAPHIA

A REVIEW OF GDW'S  
SERIES 120 SIMULATION GAME  
THE BATTLE OF RAPHIA, 217BC  
BY ROB GIBSON

As reviews go, I am way out of my period with this one. On the other hand, I am no stranger to ancient warfare simulations — having found them an excellent antidote to post-1939 tactical simulations like *Mech War '77*, *October War*, *Panzer '44* ... not to mention *Combat Command!*

Simultaneously with my copy of the *Battle of Raphia*, I also received a copy of G.D.W.'s *The Battle of Lobositz* (reviewed above), and it is interesting to compare them. Both simulations are based on little-known battles — both use counters marked with strength and morale factors — but there the similarity ends.

The very nature of the battle situation is totally different: *Raphia* is fought in open desert with the opposing forces starting five hexes apart in line of battle. Both players can see where their opponents pieces are — and more or less what they are — no fog conceals unsuspected infantry, artillery or cavalry here.