

## FUTURE GEM

Crown Tactics, Inc.'s  
*High Ground*

Published In 1991 • Designed by Walt Drury and Ed Rex

reviewed by **Rich Erwin**

At the recent Dragonflight convention in Seattle, (and a fine one too, if I say so myself), I acquired a copy of the 1962 Edition Milton Bradley game *Broadsides* at the game auction. It was bought as much due to nostalgia as the quality of the game — as a little boy I owned both it and *Dogfight*, until the destructive tendencies of youth lost them to me forever.

*Broadsides* is by far the most mature of the four designs Milton Bradley produced at the time (*Broadsides*, *Dogfight*, *Hit the Beach* and *Battle Cry*). It's a broad-brush simulation of nineteenth century naval warfare, with a tie-in to the War of 1812 primarily through the cover art and an accompanying booklet by American Heritage. The enjoyment of *Broadsides* came from playing a game with simple rules that allowed for great flexibility in strategy.

Now we have *High Ground* by Crown Tactics, Inc., a small outfit in upstate New York. It attempts to provide a general view of Seventeenth Century land warfare. Like *Broadsides*, it provides a simplified view of the situation — this is no *Torgau* or *Napoleon at Leipzig*.

On the other hand, *High Ground* is not simplistic. The best way to describe the game would be "A Milton Bradley game hip to its audience". Plastic

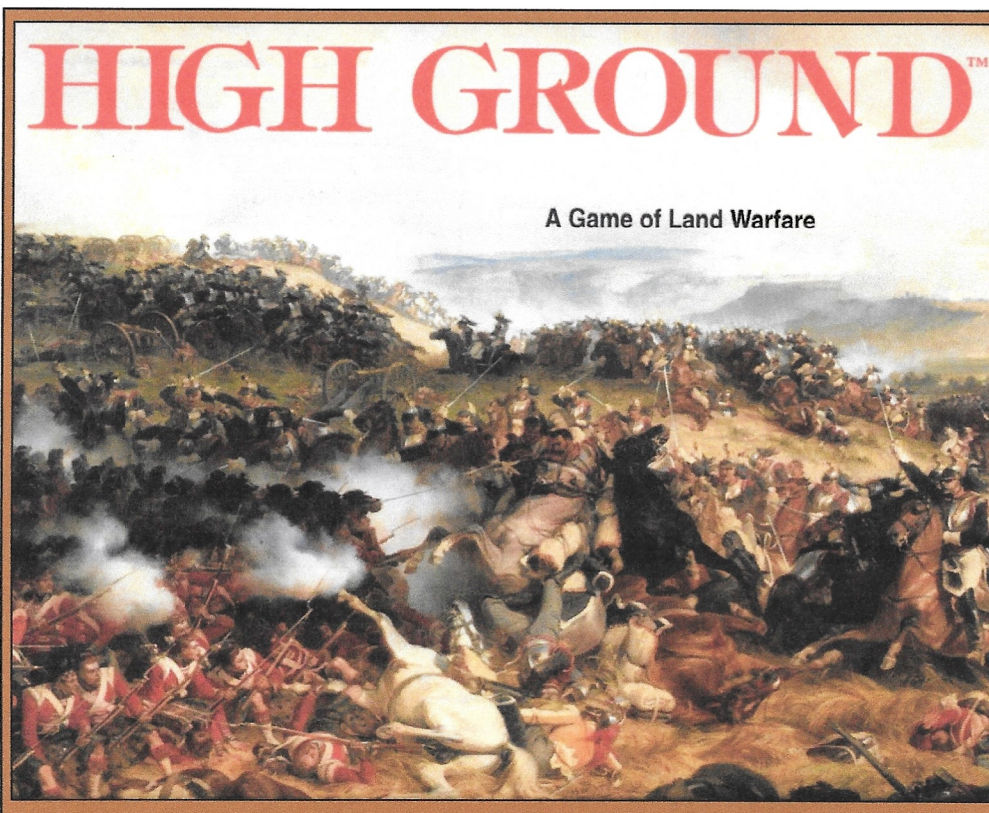
abounds in this game, and squares instead of hexes are used, but the production quality is very high on the whole. The cover art on the box, with Scottish Highlanders in square formation, fighting off charging French cavalry, is stunning. The rules have a slightly higher level of sophistication than you might expect, with a few twists that make things a little different and a lot better.

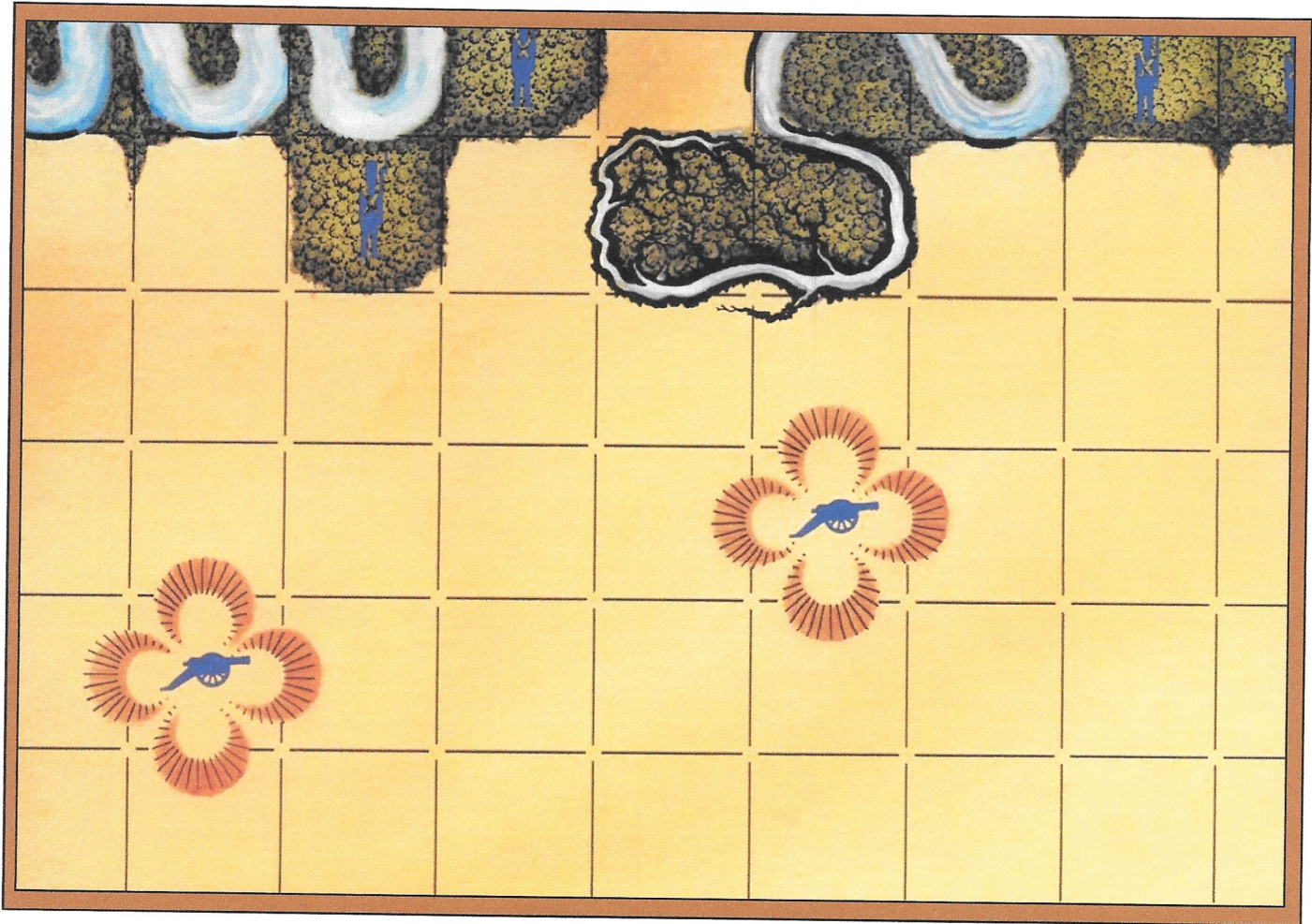
For example, friendly units in adjacent squares can switch positions at no cost in movement points. However, any unit of any type can be used by a player, within the confines of the rules, in an attack. If a player wishes to continue an attack after his first attack on a unit he has available to him a limited number of attack cards which he should use only as necessary to press his advantage.

Four types of units exist: Infantry, cavalry, artillery and supply. Each unit is represented by a stand, where pegs repre-

sented soldiers and that unit's flag can be positioned. Artillery has range, cavalry can go far quickly, and infantry can go anywhere. Supply units follow a specified, required route to provide reserve units for a player.

The ultimate objective of the game is to acquire the opponent's crown square. To do this will require a bit of skill and cunning, but no one way works best, save the general concept of coordinating your diversely talented units for maximum effect.





The folks at Crown Tactics, however, are much better at maxims than this author. Along with a six-turn example booklet and a four-page rules summary, a review of warfare in the period which includes no less than twenty-nine Maxims of Strategy and thirty-two Maxims of Tactics is included.

The best way to learn *High Ground* is to set up the board and run through the six turn booklet, reviewing the rules and charts for details. It took me half an hour to know the game cold, and I'm always slow at catching on to all the nuances of the rules for any given wargame.

If I were to complain about anything (and for a game that fulfills its objectives so well, it's hard to do so), it would be that you don't see enough of the effects of Napoleon's radical departure from traditional tactics implemented. However, they summarize this quite well within their review of the period. Variants, anyone?

Only one thousand units of *High Ground* have been produced by Crown Tactics, so given its reception at Origins and how well it plays, get your copy NOW. Walter Drury, who, along with Ed Rex, head Crown Tactics, have also noted that three new games are undergoing final development, while an-

other three designs are just beyond the concept stage. Mr. Drury wasn't able to provide details on the designs or when any are planned for release, but he promised that none would come out until the company was sure they played at least as well as *High Ground*.

One of the common laments in board wargaming is that there just aren't any games to introduce potential players into the hobby. *High Ground* is unique in that, while it doesn't immediately show many of the concepts in a typical wargame, it provides enough of what a good wargame is, at its heart and soul, without overwhelming a new player. While we collectors can revel at its scarcity today, I for one hope that a Milton Bradley or Parker Brothers will come along soon, provide Crown Tactics with a wheelbarrow full of money to license *High Ground*, and produce a few hundred thousand copies of this game — the hobby would benefit from a game geared toward a mass audience.