your $40.00 and keep playing SPI's *Napoleon's Last Battles* until something better comes along.

Notes by Ed Wimble on *L'Armee du Nord*

Rich Erwin: Ed Wimble sent Paper Wars a large amount of commentary on Napoleonic game design and the reasons behind how he designed L'Armee du Nord. The former was covered very well in The Canadian Wargamers' Journal, so to keep our focus on the game being reviewed, I've decided to print the comments directly relevant to L'Armee du Nord.

The Zone of Control and the Operational Napoleonic Game

Western civilization has essentially prepared its armies to fight linear battles. I believe this is true throughout our history, with the possible exception of the fluid front tactics developed on the Eastern and North African fronts during the Second World War. For the Westerner, then, battles assume a kind of two dimensional form. Fronts are definable. Tactics and strategy are fairly straightforward. It's no surprise, then, that wargames conform to this pattern.

I postulate that the idea of the zone of control was originally intended as a kind of glue used to hold this pattern together. On a superficial level it certainly works. Battle games give the appearance of the two-dimensional maps that were used in researching their subject. But this does not justify the design panacea which the zone of control has become, although I admit to its validity in some situations.

Originally, when I encountered zones of control in a game on the Napoleonic Era, I rationalized their use by the designer as representing several things, among which, the area effected by a unit's small arms fire and its skirmishers. If an enemy unit came adjacent to one of my brigades, it would have to stop and deal with them. Of course, this gave all of the units a kind of compulsive imperative, that regardless of the degree of effrontery presented by an adjacent enemy unit, it would be dealt with immediately and unequivocally. I accepted this even though it led to some rather strange circumstances. But the more I delved into the period the more I realized it was the zone of control dictating strategy, rather than the historicity of the game. I was merely manipulating the designer's expedient in order to achieve his victory conditions. The following are some examples of how zones of control have warped our idea of Napoleonic warfare, as exemplified by *Napoleon at Leipzig*.

- A battalion rarely presented a front of more

than one hundred meters. The average brigade consisted of between four and eight battalions. Assuming that each battalion deployed at intervals, side by side (which they never did - they always deployed in at least two lines), the result would be a frontage of between four hundred and eight hundred meters. Now a corps of two or more divisions, consisting of at least four brigades, would have a frontage of between 1,600 and 3,200 meters in theory. But the theory is ridiculous compared to the way in which they were actually deployed. Even the biggest French corps on the battlefield occupied more than a kilometer of frontage. But with a zone of control-driven design, with every-other-hex deployment, four brigade-sized counters can easily present an impenetrable front of four kilometers (assuming five hundred meters per hex).

- By giving infantry a zone of control, the role of cavalry on the battlefield (to protect the flanks and intervals of the various divisions of infantry to which corps they were attached) has been completely sublimated.

- By increasing the frontage a corps is able to present, zones of control create an inadvertent surplus of troops. A corps' three infantry divisions is now able to cover the frontage it would historically cover with a single division. The other two divisions now either extend the front to Schiefesque proportions, or mass for huge odds on the enemy's line, which has been just as equally extended.

- Lastly, the ability of a corps to expand its frontage to three and four times its historical capabilities has also stretched their linear front beyond the furthest extremities of their command structure. A corps is just not equipped with a large enough staff to deal with this kind of distance. Of course, this opens a whole new can of worms whereby, in order to deal with this flaw, the designer is forced to contrive command rules, straight-jacketing everything back into a semblance of reality.

And that old three-to-one surround? Sorry, trap-blocking belongs to American football, not a historical simulation from the era of Napoleon. "It is the simplest plan that meets with success."

Incorporating Troop Quality into Unit Size

How do you explain three thousand French Guardsmen attacking seven thousand Prussian infantrymen and winning? Some games level this stuff out, like *Napoleon at Leipzig*. Because these Guardsmen

fought with the same skill and fury as three times their number, their strength factor is trebled. Conversely, because the Prussian infantry wasn't up to snuff we round them down to slightly half their actual strength. The problem with this philosophy is, what exactly is "up to snuff"? Where do we find a common denominator for all of these various nationalities? Who is Joe Average? In the *La Bataille* games, each battalion is given its own morale rating. Good troops tend to rally quicker than bad troops, will more than likely go in when an assault is ordered, and stand their ground in the face of an infantry assault or cavalry charge. They also have their own melee value, which is both a function of their size and quality (as evidenced by their morale but factored in during the design). A synthesis of these two ideas, melee value and morale rating, found in these games, provides a means of having my cake and eating it too with the unit morale values for *L'Armee du Nord*. Three thousand Guardsmen can remain three thousand Guardsmen; otherwise they'd have been an artificially large target for artillery bombardment. Their morale gives them a better than even chance of giving as well as getting when attacking an enemy force three times their size composed of troops of lessor quality.

On June 15, 1815, near Gilly, Napoleon's escort of less than a thousand cavalrymen trashed five battalions from Pirch's brigade; odds of one-to-four at best! Pajol, on two separate occasions (at Charleroi and then again at Limale) seized well defended bridges over major water obstacles with just the espirit and panache of his troopers.

The French Cavalry is Too Strong

I admit I agree with those who point this out, but for a different reason. The French cavalry is certainly of better quality than the Prussian cavalry, and more numerous. It is also better than the Dutch-Belgian cavalry unit for unit. It is not better, unit for unit, than the British cavalry.

- The French cavalry consist of fifteen units of forty-seven increments with an average morale of 3.67.

- The Prussian cavalry consists of ten units of thirty-two increments with an average morale of 2.1.

- The Dutch-Belgian cavalry consists of three units of seven increments with an average morale of two.

- The British consist of seven units of twenty-two increments with an average morale of 3.1 (3.67 if we exclude the Brunswickers).

Taken together, the Allies outnumber the French four-to-three in both units and increments, but have a vastly wider spectrum of morale values. So this apparent superiority of the French cavalry must come from something other than an actual comparison of units. It must come from the French having the elements of surprise and concentration in their favor, for though all French cavalry units start the game on the map, it takes two full days for the bulk of Allied cavalry to come into play.

I think, however, there is something else going on here. It is not so much the superiority of the French cavalry over the Allied cavalry, but the uniform quality of the French infantry when compared to the Allied infantry when facing enemy cavalry. Excellent Allied cavalry attacking the average French infantry unit will at least be on the *1* column of the Cavalry Charge Table. The variety of Allied infantry morale values will find, more often than not, French cavalry enjoying the benefits of being at least one column better.

The Army of the North was a damn fine fighting machine; possibly the most kick-ass, foul tempered body of soldiers Napoleon had ever commanded. Every one of them was a veteran, and every one of them had a grudge. The shortages in cavalry experienced in the 1813 and 1814 campaigns had been sorely felt by Napoleon, and he made sure he brought an adequate amount of horse flesh with him into Belgium. It was good stuff on its own and great stuff when supported. The critics merely state what was going on in the minds of all that Prussian infantry as they watched the French deploy for battle at Ligny; "The French cavalry is too damned strong." (Grouchy held Thielemann's entire corps at bay throughout the Battle of Ligny with only three cavalry divisions and a single brigade of infantry.)

Of course, it is the job of the Allied player to win the game as their historical counterparts did. To do this, they must learn how to cope with the French cavalry, if not how to defeat it. Rule 21.0, Optional Prussian Infantry Deployment, is a first step on the path to doing so. (It's the closest thing to a magic wand rule that I'll ever provide in a game.) For its historicity I refer the reader to Scotty Bowden's *Armies at Waterloo*, and the chapter introducing Prussian tactics and organization... there was a reason for those big brigades.

One problem that can be cleared up here and now is a confusing sentence in the rules for which I take full responsibility. Rule 5.3d might lead one to believe cavalry that successfully charged a hex may occupy the hex free of movement point cost. This was not the intent of the rule. It should read as follows:

> 5.3d - If the cavalry charge results in the charged hex being vacated by the defenders

(either by retreat or elimination), all charging cavalry must advance into the hex and deduct from its remaining movement potential the cost of the hex as if it had moved into the hex under normal (non-charging circumstances. It must pay the full cost for the hex, even if it is currently in road column. It may then continue its movement and may make additional charges if it has the movement potential to do so. There is no additional movement cost for charging a hex.

I would also like to add the following errata:

The Off Board Movement Track: All Allied cavalry and horse artillery may move two spaces to the left per turn, and not one space, as currently written in the rules. (Of course, they must have been activated and their CMAs on the game board.)

I would also like to point out there is no place in the game where it says that optional rules may be employed at the consensus of all players. If the Prussian player wishes to use optional rule 21.0, Special Prussian Infantry Deployment, or Rule 23.0, Obscured Units, then he may do so, regardless of the wishes of his ally or enemy.

The most important tip I can give to Allied players is this... don't lose your nerve. Blücher got thumped at Ligny and Wellington escaped disaster on the 17th by the smallest margin. If either of them had lost their nerve, history would have been quite different. I have played this game a dozen times, and know that what looks insurmountable on the 16th may look quite different on the 18th.

Questions and Answers

• Prussian Special Infantry Deployment: What happens to combat modifiers when there are different terrain features in the three hexes the unit is assumed to be occupying?

If the unit is attacked in only one of the three hexes, it gets the defense value of only this hex. If it is attacked in more than one of these hexes, it gets the weakest benefit that is provided by the hexes in which it is defending.

Example: A Prussian infantry unit that is deployed in a clear hex receives only the defense benefit of the clear hex. If it is attacked in both the woods hex and the clear hex, it would still only receive the defense benefit of the clear hex.

• When leaving this deployment, may the unit

consolidate in any of the three issues?

Yes, after expending one movement point to do so.

• What if it is in a zone of influence that affects two of its three hex deployment?

In this case, it may not consolidate into a single hex deployment.

• **Terrain**: Are terrain modifiers cumulative if a hex has more than one terrain feature within it?

Yes, for movement and combat.

• Must all attacking units be attacking across a given hexside in order for the defender to receive its defense benefit?

No, these benefits are cumulative.

• Leaders: What happens to leaders that are alone in a hex that is subsequently entered by an enemy unit?

It automatically moves to the nearest friendly unit of the same army.

Optional Cavalry Charge Table

Die Roll	Morale Differential						
	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	4
1	AR2	DR2	DR2	DR2	DR2	DR2	DR2
2	AR2	AR2	DR2*	DR2	DR2	DR2	DR2
3	AR2	AR2	AR2	DR2*	DR2*	DR2	DR2
4	AR2	AR2	AR2	AR2	DR2*	DR2*	DR2
5	AR2	AR2	AR2	AR2	AR2	DR2*	DR2*
6	AR2	AR2	AR2	AR2	AR2	AR2	AR2

An asterik (*) next to the result indicates the charging unit must end its movement immediately upon entering the hex that was charged regardless of the success of its charge or its remaining movement potential.

Charge Die Roll Modifiers

• Charging a non-clear hex: plus one

• Charging across a bridged river hexside: plus one

• Complete cavalry corps** charging: minus one

• Blücher is with the charge: minus one

• Charging a Grand Farm hex: plus one

* Modifiers are cumulative in their effect. Cavalry that charged a Grand Farm hex across a bridged river hexside would have the die result modified by plus three. (Plus one for the hex being non-clear, plus one for it being across a bridged river hexside and plus one for

it being a Grand Farm hex.)

** A complete cavalry corps is a French option. The charge must include both cavalry divisions, its unit of horse artillery and the corps leader. The cavalry divisions of the Imperial Guard may not exercise this option since their corps leaders (Mortier) missed the campaign.

Note: Cavalry that charged in the Movement Phase may not attack in the Combat Phase.

Charge combat results are applied in the same way as attack combat results.