THE CLASSICS

Columbia Games'
Napoleon

Published in 1979 · Designed by Thomas Dalgliesh

reviewed by **Jonathan T. Price**

"They were falling fast - a shot every moment making great gaps in (the British) squares... With the courage of a madman, (Marshall) Ney was meanwhile charging up the slope, straight at the Allied lines. Behind him came some 5,000 heavy cavalry... The Anglo-Dutch forces were arranged in oblong squares like a checkerboard to resist them, and the Allied batteries placed between the infantry battalions let fly with a storm of shrapnel and case shot. The front lines of Frenchmen broke, and horses fell, shattered and screaming, but still the cavalry came on.

The square was the ideal defensive position (against cavalry)... as long as the men who comprised it kept their courage and allowed no gap to appear. The French cuirassiers swarmed in between and around the squares... (but) could not get close enough to do real damage (while the square let loose sufficient volley at the mass of horsemen to deal deadly effect).

It had been Ney's foolhardy choice to use ...cavalry (unsupported by infantry) for his charge... After a second futile attack... Ney charged yet again, with an even vaster body of horse. Once more the French batteries softened up the enemy lines with a fearful cannonade, (but to no avail). Having virtually wiped out the French cavalry in four unsuccessful charges, the marshall now tried an attack with both cavalry and infantry. But Wellington had reinforced his artillery, and the Frenchmen were again driven back with heavy losses."

The Battle of Waterloo, by J. Christopher Harold

Waterloo, the battle and campaign that would decide the fate of an empire and the destiny of Europe is successfully depicted in Avalon Hill's/Columbia Games' first edition of *Napoleon*. To win, the French player must eliminate at least half of both Allied armies within twelve turns while maintaining at least half of his own, while the Allies player(s) must prevent the French player from achieving this end.
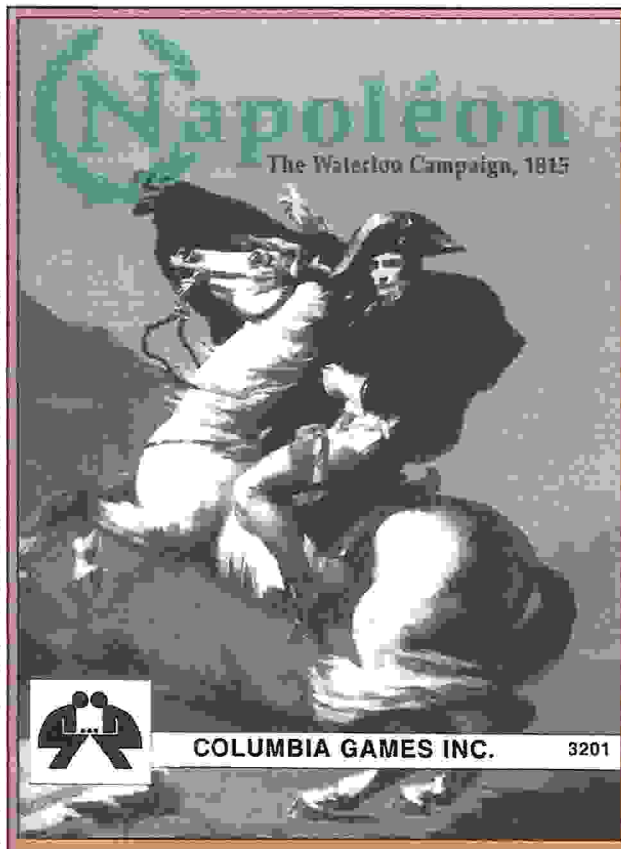

This game system is a pearl - simple, well rounded, authentic, and elegant. It is one of those rare games, like chess, that is simple to learn, yet difficult to master. The objectives and mechanics of the game ably mirror Napoleon's own simple principles which guided most of his campaigns, these being:

- The main objective is the destruction of the enemy's armies.

- All resources shall be used to obtain this end.

- Deception (fog of war) and surprise shall be employed towards attaining the objective.

- Endeavor to cut the enemy's line of communications, thus preventing supply and retreat, while heightening panic and encouraging desertion.

The game components are a 16" x 22" full color map board depicting northern France and most of Belgium, forty-eight wooden playing pieces (eighteen French, sixteen Prussian, fourteen Anglo-Dutch), four dice, two battle cards, rules, and historical notes on the campaign. Collectively, all game components are attractive and functional. Aside from the references on the battle cards, the game rules couldn't be much easier to learn, and should be played to completion in one and a half to two hours.

The forty-eight one-inch square by half-inch deep
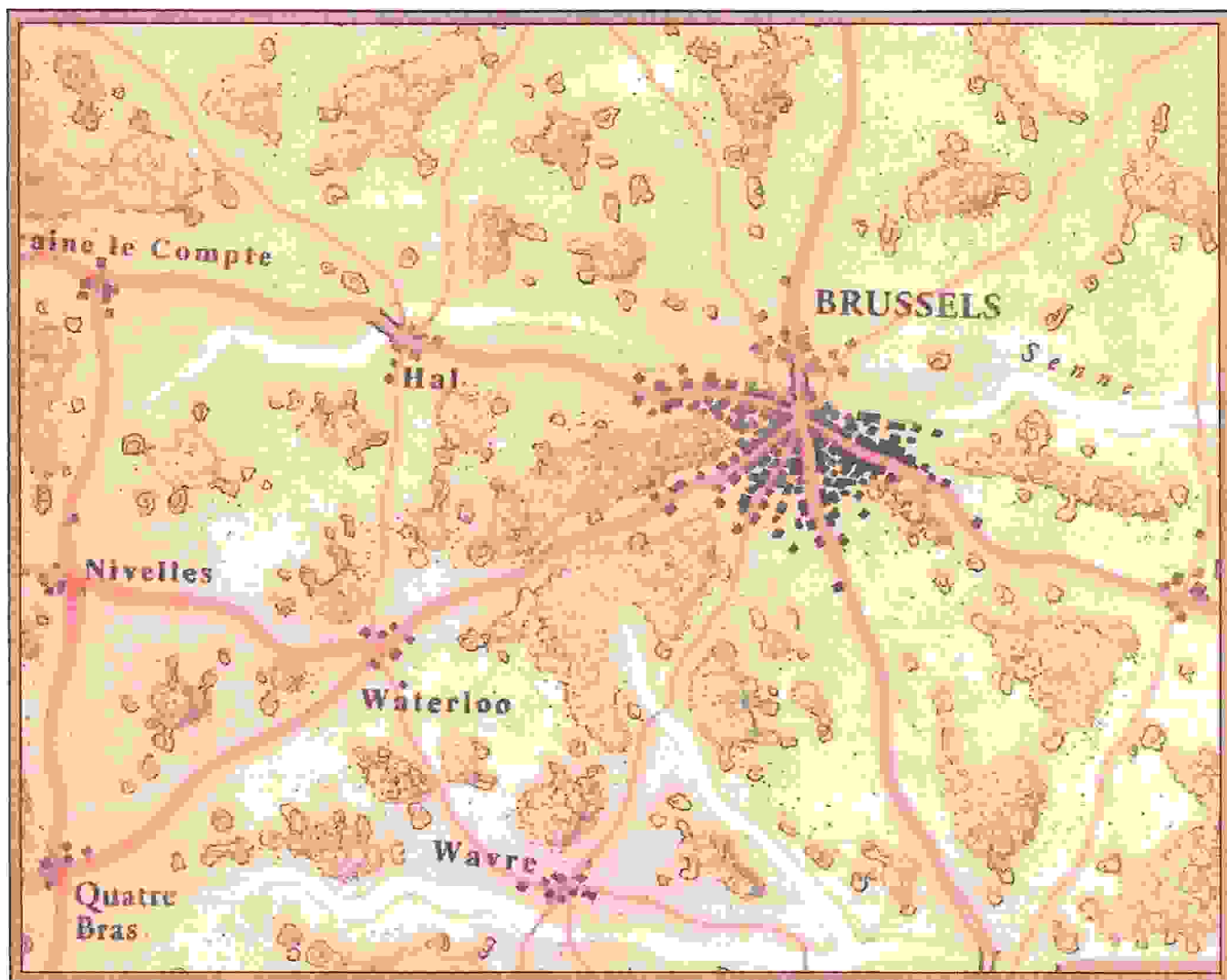
wooden playing pieces represent infantry, cavalry, and foot and horse artillery of the respective French, Prussian, and Anglo-Dutch armies. In addition to these unit identifiers printed on the counters, there are also unit strengths - combat values printed on each of the four edges of the counter to reflect an immediate reduction in force due to enemy fire or straggling. The result is a very simple yet efficient way to reflect a loss of firepower without having to resort to record keeping or annoying markers.

The Allied player(s) begins the game deploying his units on edge, so as not to reveal unit strength, in Belgian towns. The Prussians set up no more than four units per town on the eastern half of the board, while the Anglo-Dutch set up no more than three units per town on the western half of the board. The French player then deploys his units, once again on edge, in French towns of his choice with a maximum of twelve units per town. After initial placement there is no longer a limit to the number of units located in any one town.

The game is played in alternate turns beginning with the French, broken into two main phases: Movement (areas, not hexes) and Battle (when the attacker enters his opponent's town).

Like Game Designers' Workshop's *A House Divided*, this game system is based on area movement. The French are able to move up to two groups (a group is one unit or several units residing in a given town) per turn, while the Allies may only move one Prussian and/or one Anglo-Dutch. Cavalry and horse artillery may move up to two towns (three if force-marched) per turn, in contrast to infantry and foot artillery which may only move one (two if force-marched). In addition, there are major and minor road restrictions to adhere to: a major road can only sustain eight units traveling on it (four if crossing a river) and a minor road only six (three if crossing a river). Finally the inevitable night turn which restricts force-marches and battles.

When the attacker enters with at least three units into a town defended by at least three enemy units,

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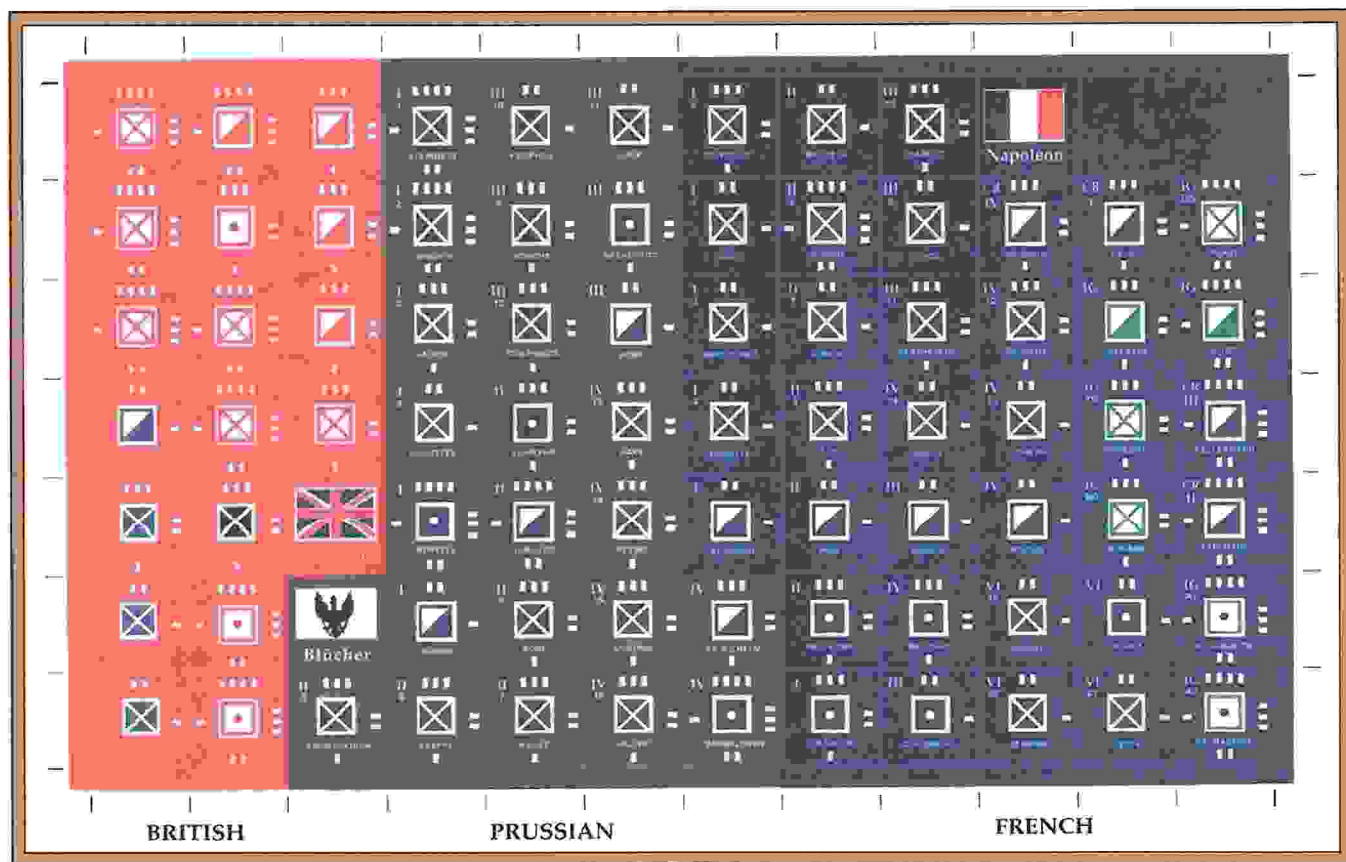
and the defender chooses not to retreat immediately, a battle ensues. The defender deploys first into three columns and a reserve on his battle card. The attacker then deploys his units into three opposing columns and a reserve on his battle card. When the attacker is done both players then lay flat their pieces to reveal (excluding the reserve) their units' current combat values. Players now resolve combat in alternate battle turns beginning with the attacker.

The battle will continue until one player retreats or is routed (one of the three columns is left vacant) with the surviving units then turned back on edge at their current combat values and placed back on the map board. Retreating units from a battle receive pursuit fire.

In a given battle a player may move or fire (except horse artillery, which may do both) one or all of his units. Units move the same in battle as they would in the campaign game: Infantry one area, foot artillery one, cavalry two, and horse artillery two or one move and one fire. The battle moves options include:

- **Advance to Engage** - Advance (not artillery) from column into the middle ground to engage the opposite enemy column.

- **Withdraw from Engagement** - Withdraw from engagement across the middle ground

back to column.

- **Redeployment** - Moving from one friendly column to the next when not engaged

- **Reserve** - Moving from the reserve to column or vice-versa.

- **Square** - Infantry forming square against advancing cavalry.

If a unit doesn't move in its turn it may then fire, assuming it has already engaged or been engaged by the enemy; this excludes artillery, which may bombard over the middle ground area into the opposite enemy column. To fire a unit, the player indicates to his opponent the target unit. He then throws the amount of dice equal to the attacking units' combat value (i.e., a combat value of three is equivalent to three dice) scoring a hit for each six thrown. If a unit fires at double combat value, hits are scored by not only rolling a six, but a five as well. Double combat value reflects: Cavalry charges, artillery fires upon advancing infantry, artillery fires upon infantry in square, or infantry and cavalry engaged against lone artillery units in a column. Thus shock, through cavalry charges, slowly advancing infantry, concentrated masses of men in square, and of course unsupported artillery, are all smoothly and accurately depicted. The diminishing firepower of infantry in square is also reflected via the cost of
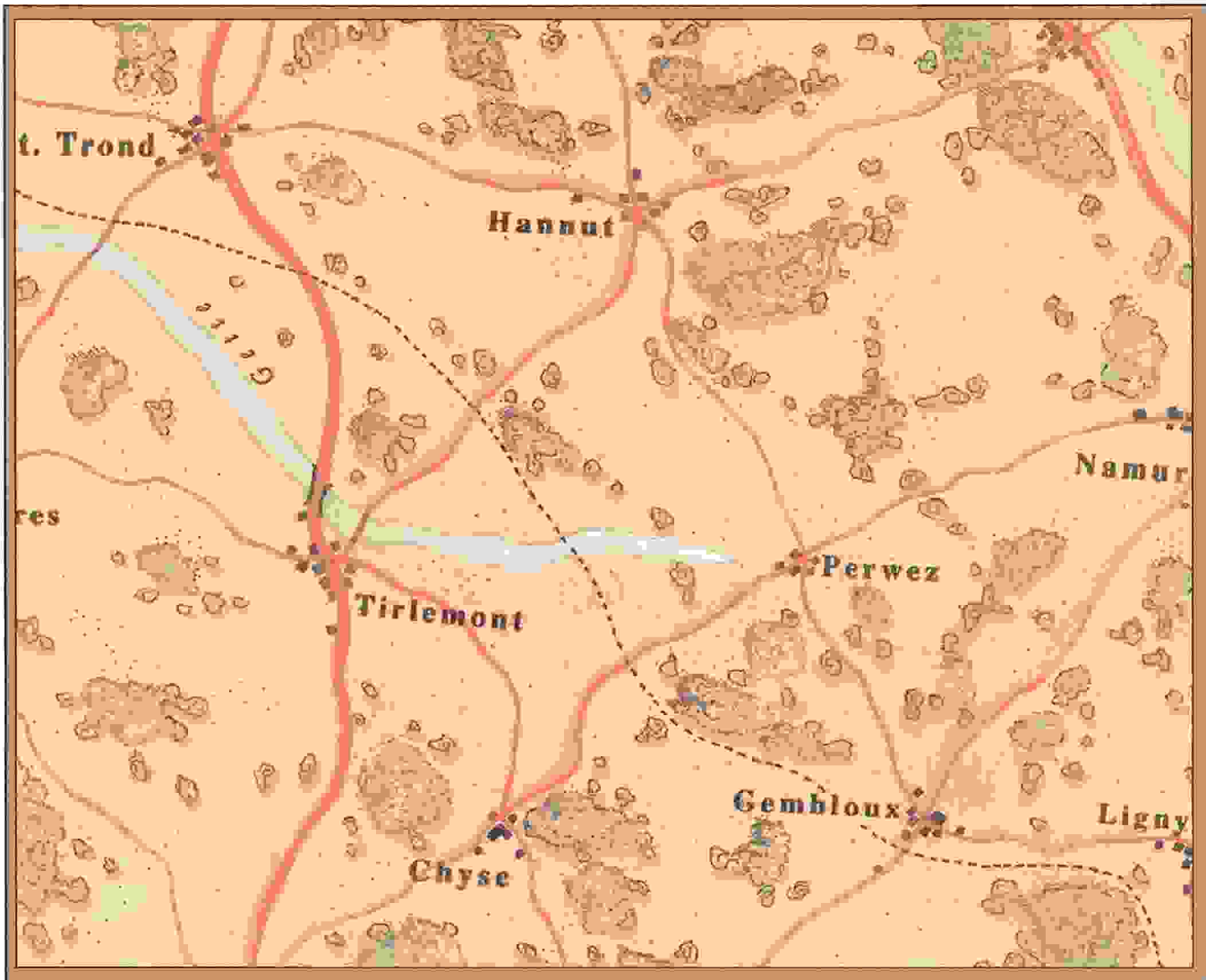
half of its firepower (one-half of the combat value rounded up) and perhaps becoming welcome targets to enemy artillery.

An optional rule is that, when a unit's combat value drops to one, a check upon the unit's morale is immediately made. If a one, two, or three is rolled, reflecting poor morale, the unit immediately drops back to the reserve. A four, five, or six reflects good morale and the unit continues to stand. A morale check is then made on all units in a given column every time a unit in the column is lost or reduced to one.

An optional rule exists to simulate command and control. If two groups are to attack the same enemy group, the two groups must be in adjacent towns. If not, only one of the two groups can attack immediately while the other is forced to only reinforce the battle.

If you have three players instead of two, you can easily divide command for more realism. Play is

the same except the Allies overall command is divided between one player acting as the Anglo-Dutch and the other as the Prussian. What truly makes this play so interesting is if you do not allow the two Allied commanders to communicate unless it is an Allied night move.

Unlike other wargames, *Napoleon* rarely plays alike twice. With the ability to establish one's own initial deployment and the myriad of moves available from this, each game plays fresh almost every time.

The burden of attack rests with the French. However, since the Allies set up first, the French player must evolve his strategy based upon the Allied plan. No matter what the Allied deployment is, the French must make for at least one of the Allied supply bases (Ghent, Brussels, or Leige) to begin to whittle down his opponent. The Allies must then concentrate and attempt to prevent this. If a major battle occurs prior to the French acquisition of a supply base the battle may actually facilitate the Allied demise. In order for the French success to be

realized the French player must maintain in his mind the three points that historically dictated the Emperor's own operations:

- **Speed of Development** - The French have but twelve French turns to obtain their objective (the destruction of both Allied armies). They must move rapidly (recommending an occasional force-march when needed) depriving the Allies the much needed time to concentrate and thus overpower Imperial forces (seventy-eight combat value to sixty combat value).

- **Concentration of Force** - The French must bring to bear the greatest available strength against the enemy at any one given time and achieving tactical numerical superiority in any one engagement (a la Napoleon).

- **Divide and Conquer** - Defeat each opponent separately, or at least part of each army at the same time, while still maintaining battlefield numerical superiority. You must begin to dismember the Allies early or risk losing later.

Historically the Emperor usually followed one of two strategies when facing two or more armies that separately were smaller than his force but combined were larger. The Strategy of the Indirect Approach, best exemplified in the Ulm Campaign, requires a flanking movement that actually brings about a separation of one group from the rest. This facilitates the destruction of one body (often prevented from retreating) before the others can advance soon enough to support it.

The Strategy of the Central Position is the plan Napoleon actually used in the Waterloo Campaign. The strategy requires the advancing of one's army, unobserved, between the two enemy armies, preventing union. Then destroy one opponent with the main force of your army while keeping the other at bay with a considerably smaller force. When the battle is over and the enemy is in retreat, pursue with a fraction of your main force and descend upon the next victim with what's left of your main body.

Either of these strategies the French player can implement will then dictate one of three avenues of maneuver: The Western or Eastern Approaches representing the Strategy of the Indirect Approach or the Central Approach representing the Strategy of the Central Position.

The Western Approach requires advancing against the Anglo-Dutch, there by threatening the line of communication centers of Ghent and Brussels and forcing the Anglo-Dutch to fight without the support of his Prussian brother. Initial deployment would concentrate in Conde and Soire, then advance via the Mons and/or Leuze Roads where by enjoying the distinct advantage of which Allied communications center to fall upon to the last moment.

The Eastern Approach finds the French advancing at full speed against the Prussian supply base of Leige and forcing this enemy to battle without Anglo-Dutch aid. Deployment should center in Phillipeville and Givet advancing through Dinant to either Namur following the River Meuse, or Cincy through Bomal and on. This strategy impedes your then rapid movement against Brussels (Leige is found far to the right of Brussels and Ghent on the map) and the next adversary.

The Central Approach advances La Grande Armee against both Allies with either Brussels or Leige as the possible goal. Initial deployment could concentrate anywhere between Mons in the west and Givet in the east, depending upon the ultimate goal. However, if Brussels and the Strategy of the Central Position is your aim then deployment in Phillipville and Beaumont are your two main starting points. Advance through Charleroi, Quatre Bras, and Waterloo to the gates of Brussels for the Titanic showdown. Do not waste time in this approach, the barbarians will be massing.

One final note about French strategy, these are only basic suggestions; feints and combinations of above strategies all work quite well and should be investigated.

The Allies initial deployment will dictate the overall French strategy, and because Allied forces will be spread out, the initiative of attack will fall upon the French, at least until the Allies make a reasonable concentration. The Allies must protect their supply bases, however, placing too much strength at or near Ghent or Leige will most assuredly invite that type of response allowing the French to defeat one of the Allies before the other can come in time to his assistance. The recommended Allied deployment should gravitate itself slightly towards the center, thus allowing each of the Allies to lend swift support to the other. If the Allies lose a supply base, following concentration, they could counterattack to regain it. The Allied player should also place some small units on the major north/south corridors to impede French movement. Remember, time is the Allied player's friend, accrue as much of it as possible to concentrate. Important towns for deployment in addition to the supply centers include: Alost, Hal, Quatre Bras, Ligny, Namur, and Bomal. As for tips on tactics, here are a few:

- Do not needlessly enter a battle. It's wiser to retreat and live to fight another day if you

have any serious concerns about the outcome.

- Save most of your cavalry, if possible, in your reserve. Unleash them in well timed charges to impose shock effect, and then, after firing, withdraw and charge again. If at all possible, do not allow yourself to simply use your cavalry as fast moving infantry. Finally as, exemplified by Marshall Ney, do not charge enemy infantry without being supported by infantry and/or artillery.

- Infantry should only go into square if attacked solely by cavalry. Otherwise, they can become very welcome targets of massed men for enemy infantry and artillery.

- It is enticing to deploy artillery en mass; however, this encourages the enemy to charge your guns to silence them. It is best advised to spread your batteries around, particularly if you are on the defensive.

- It is seriously recommended that a force be kept in reserve, particularly cavalry and horse artillery. This allows the ability to throw a knock out punch of unexpected firepower to be used upon an opponent strung out in column. It can also be used as a desperately needed fire brigade.

- In an ensuing battle, attempt to spread and pin down the enemy along the battle front. Then, after your opponent has committed the last of his reserves apply the coup de grace on an isolated column with a massive attack designed to empty a column and cause a rout.

Napoleon is not a detailed simulation, but it is one great game. One that offers a genuine feel for Napoleonic strategy and tactics, a tremendous amount of suspenseful fun, and an easy system to learn and enjoy. Unlike many other wargames on the market, *Napoleon* usually offers a fresh game each time you crack it open.

In the next issue of Paper Wars: How well does Columbia Games' revision of *Napoleon* compare against the original?

Columbia Games'
Napoleon - Part II

reviewed by **Jonathan T. Price**

"Go, sir, gallop, and don't forget that the world was made in six days. You can ask me for anything you like, except time."
> - Napoleon to one of his aides (1803)

> *The Corsican* by R. M. Johnson

"Napoleon has humbugged me, by God!! He has gained twenty-four hours' march on me."
> - Wellington, Duke of Richmond (1815)

> *Wellington: The Years of the Sword*
> by Elizabeth Longford

The third edition of *Napoleon*, revised and re-released by Columbia Games, builds upon the two previous versions. The first edition was published by Gamma II, a precursor of Columbia Games, in 1974. The second edition was published by Avalon Hill in 1977. (See Issue #13 of Paper Wars for a review, play analysis and general game description, with focus on the second edition.)

The map board depicts the exact area of southern Belgium and northern France as does its predecessor. This playing field is infinitely more colorful and graphically appealing than in the two previous editions, supporting a greater period flavor.

The counter - or should I say wooden block? - mix has been increased from forty-eight to eighty-two units (thirty-three French, nineteen Anglo-Dutch and twenty-five Prussian). The reason is anchored in attempting to establish actual unit identifiers; divisions for the French and Anglo-Dutch, brigades for the Prussians. As with all of Columbia Games' latest editions of wooden-block games, colorful stick-on labels are used to identify units on each of the blocks.

The battle board is both very attractive and very useless. The card has an aerial view of a Belgian (Or maybe Virginian? It appears to be the same battle board as in *Bobby Lee*...) countryside split into three columns and a reserve. What makes this card so useless is the lack of a middle ground in which to give battle. This existed in the previous game.

There are a number of system changes from the second edition:

- **Unit Types** - There are no longer counters

for horse artillery - Columbia Games thought it would be best to amalgamate these units into the cavalry divisions. The units that now exist are cavalry, infantry, artillery and leaders.

- **Deployment** - Having more units available has resulted in a greater initial set up density - the Anglo-Dutch can deploy up to five units per town, the Prussians up to six units per town, and the French up to sixteen (!!) units per town.

- **Group Movement** - This too has increased with the increase in units. The movement limit per turn is now three groups for the French and four groups for the Allies (two for the Anglo-Dutch, two for the Prussians), regardless of size. This can be split up, but if together, is still considered a group.

- **Road Capabilities** - Major roads can now support up to ten units per turn, and minor roads can support a maximum of six units.

- **Rivers** - Road capabilities are no longer automatically halved when crossing a river - now this occurs only when there is opposition.

- **Forced Marches** - Units may now force march to retreat, but as always, with the risk of attrition. A die roll of one to four causes a unit to lose one step level.

- **Disruption** - This occurs when units retreat. Units involved are turned face down to indicate their status and may not reinforce any battle for the remainder of the current campaign turn.

- **Pursuit Fire** - There is none in the third edition. The players automatically receive rout attrition. (Two steps are lost for artillery, one for infantry, and one for cavalry if engaged by cavalry.)

- **Battle Fire** - Cavalry units now have triple fire capability when first engaged and double fire capability at all other times. Artillery units retain their two traditional ranges - long range (across the middle ground of the battle board) at single fire and short range (firing at units in the middle ground) at double fire. For short range artillery, the guns are no

longer silenced after one cannonade, but may instead continue to fire into the melee at double fire.

- **Battle Losses** - Unlike the second edition, in which losses were removed from whichever unit the owning player desired, losses are now removed first from the unit engaged with the highest combat value, continuing downward. The exception to this rule is when units have formed square.

- **Leader Move Bonus** - Units starting a turn with a leader unit in their midst receive an additional two units per road maximum. Thus, major roads with a leader present can support twelve units, (six if forcing a river crossing) and minor roads eight (four if forcing a river crossing).

- **Leader Morale Bonus** - An optional rule for battle morale allows leaders to provide plus one to the morale rolls of friendly units in the same battle column.

- **Supply** - The Allied armies still retain their original supply bases; however, Brussels is now only worth one Anglo-Dutch unit lost per turn in French hands, while Liege in French hands can result in two Prussian units per turn lost.

- **Squares** - If the optional rule concerning squares is used, firepower effects change to:

  - Engaging cavalry has single fire capability

  - Engaging infantry has double fire capability

  - Artillery fires into squares at double fire capability

  - Infantry in square has single fire capability

Napoleon couldn't create time, but apparently Columbia Games knows the trick - they've expanded

the game to thirty turns while reducing from eight to six the number of days of operations. With the change in group movement and the leader movement bonus, each player receives a welcome increase in mobility, flexibility and deception. This particularly aids the French, allowing them to better mask their true intentions for as long as possible. These changes also somewhat alleviate the obsessive need in the past for the French to advance at a frenzied pace.

The decrease in the value of Brussels and the increase in the value of Liege not only makes the game more realistic, but also illuminates a new horizon of options and opportunities for both players. Coupling this change with the additional turns and group movement, the strategy of the Eastern Approach (developed in Issue #13) becomes much more palatable for the French.

Cavalry now commands maximum firepower on the battlefield. It isn't consistent, but when it strikes, it can be devastating. Artillery, on the other hand, now becomes more devastating on the defense and can be quite consistent with its new level of firepower.

So what do all of these changes mean? In a nutshell, a much more balanced and enjoyable game, assuming that one can get through the third edition gibberish Columbia Games calls rules. It is readily apparent they didn't put the time into the third edition rule book they had in the other game components. Instead, one sees a hodgepodge of old and recycled ideas, good new ideas, clarifications on existing rules and some borrowed (and untailored) thoughts from the then in play test *Bobby Lee*.

This is not to say that this is a poorly constructed game - on the contrary, the game is, overall, better than before. The problem is one wouldn't know it if all they had to base their opinion on was the third edition rule book. It is inexcusable, considering this is the third time around for *Napoleon*, that this reviewer had to call the designer to clarify rule omissions, additions and changes. I hope when other Napoleonic titles are brought out by Columbia Games (something assured to me by Tom Dalgliesh, *Napoleon*'s original designer and retro-fitter for the third edition), they will take the full measure of time and commitment that this game system deserves to be all that it can be - a masterpiece.

(Rich Erwin: A review of Napoleon in the Fall 1993 Canadian Wargamers Journal provides an excellent set of recommendations for this game.)