The Battle of Ohain – 19 June 1815

Sequel to Mont-Saint-Jean

By: Hale Cullom, III

1.0 Introduction

- **1.1** This hypothetical *Napoleon's Last Battles* (SPI, 1976; TSR, 1982, Decision Games 1995) scenario explores what might have happened had part of Grouchy's army been able to interfere with Blucher's march to Waterloo. Scenario will work with SPI and TSR variants, but may be modified.
- **1.2** The game begins at 0900 hours, 19 June 1815, and concludes at 2000 hours, 19 June 1815, after which the victor is determined. The First Player may be either the French or the Prussian player (see "Variable Start" Rule 3.15, below).

2.0 "Historical" Background.

On the night of 17th June, Blucher had promised to come to the Anglo-Allied Army's support, in the event Wellington offered battle at Mont-Saint-Jean on the 18th. That morning, Blucher prepared to keep his promise, and columns of the fresh IV Corps, with the battered I and II Corps moving in support, started west towards Wellington's position, their steps punctuated by the audible cannonade coming from Mont Saint Jean. The III Corps was to be left to hold Wavre (and the Prussian communications) against Marshal Grouchy.

Military historians have, almost universally, criticized Wellington and Blucher's plan for the 18th as excessively bold, even rash. Although Blucher had stolen a march on Marshal Grouchy, that commander's forces were rapidly approaching Wavre, on the morning of the 18th and were positioned, if aggressively handled, to threaten the flank of Blucher's march.

This threat materialized. Gerard's IV Corps, moving by forced marches, crossed the Dyle near Mousty, and engaged Pirch's II Corps near Lasne and Chapelle St. Lambert. Hard-pressed, General Pirch called for help. Meanwhile, other elements of Grouchy's force played cat-and-mouse with General Thielemann's III Corps near Limale and Wavre. By late afternoon of the 18th, the Prussians, under attack all along the line from Lasne to Wavre, (and unsure of the precise disposition of Grouchy's forces), halted their march west and moved IV and I Corps to Pirch's assistance.

Gerard's timely attack, and the Prussian reaction to it, meant no assistance for Wellington. A general assault by the Imperial Guard, backed by the cavalry and a revived I Corps, crushed Wellington's left and center at about 7:00 p.m., and the Anglo-Allied Army of the Low Countries collapsed in utter rout, retreating to the north and west; the British and Kings German Legion making for Antwerp and Ostende; the Brunswickers and Hanoverians for Brussels and then the border, the Belgians defecting, the Dutch disintegrating.

Napoleon had won the Battle of Mont-Saint-Jean, and Gerard had won his Marshal's baton and the title "Duke of Lasne." Among the most remarkable of his victories,

it had been, as the Emperor would tell one of his high-ranking prisoners (Maj. General Peregrine Maitland) over dinner that night, "what you English would probably call a "nearrun thing."

The naming of the battle has caused a few historical arguments. The generally accepted name for the battle today is Mont-Saint-Jean, the hamlet from which the Emperor sent his victory dispatch to Paris. La Haye Sainte (the name used in some early accounts) is perhaps most accurate: possession of this farmhouse, near the center of the British line, was one of the keys to victory. Some British accounts, even today, call the battle "Waterloo." Had the Prussians actually shown up, "La Belle Alliance" – name of a nearby inn, might have been a very appropriate choice of name, but the less said about that the better.

Today, the great battle lives on in legend, even in popular culture (see the song by the Swedish 1970's pop group ABBA "Mont Saint Jean."). In English "he got himself Mont Saint Jeaned" or just "Montjohned" – usually refers to some total and unhappy disaster.

Despite the great French victory, there would be no pursuit of the defeated Anglo-Allies, because the Prussian Army was simply too close. The morning of the 19th found the Prussians, in poorly-roaded country, strung out between Wavre and Ohain, but between the two French wings. French morale was (after finally winning one against *les Anglais*) in the stratosphere.

The ensuing French victory at Ohain wrecked the Prussian army. The twin defeats of Mont Saint Jean and Ohain destroyed the Seventh Coalition. Campaigning mostly subsided for a time: the French needed to refit, the other powers to determine what they were going to do. In Britain, the disaster of Mont Saint Jean (so soon after the humiliating defeat at the hands of the Americans at New Orleans in January) destroyed public confidence in Britain's military and its leadership. The public was disheartened at the apparent resumption of a long war which had seemingly ended victoriously the previous year. In early July, when the government unveiled its plans for tax increases both to support subsidies to the continental powers and to prosecute the naval and land war against France, Parliament balked, and Lord Liverpool's cabinet fell.

In Vienna, Prince Talleyrand (always a reliable political weathervane) suddenly declared himself no longer employed by Louis XVIII and ready to negotiate on behalf of Napoleon, an initiative that was, perhaps surprisingly, welcomed by French Foreign Minister Caulaincourt, who persuaded his Emperor that Talleyrand's volunteerism represented a chance worth taking. Meanwhile, Austrian Foreign Minister Metternich (aware that Austria was flat broke), also surprised observers by appearing ready to listen to Talleyrand.

As Metternich explained to Emperor Francis, now that northern Italy was safely back under Vienna's thumb, and Murat gone from Naples, there was no sense in a prolonged war Austria might not win just to pull Prussia's chestnuts out of the fire and keep the French off the Rhine, especially with possibilities for English subsidies looking dubious. Besides, Prussia and Russia had done much too well out of Saxony and Poland (respectively) for Habsburg comfort. Austria announced a cessation of operations against France – essentially defecting from the Coalition -- in late July and the Dutch followed suit almost immediately. Ultimately, all these machinations concluded in a negotiated peace (the Treaty of Vienna) by September, which left Napoleon on the French throne and in

possession of Belgium and the left bank of the Rhine (with Anvers/Antwerp demilitarized). Marie Louise was herded back to Paris along with Napoleon II (Vienna wags saying that she could wave at Louis XVIII riding by, on his way to final exile in Prague).

Overshadowed by the legendary Battle of Mont-Saint-Jean, it was Ohain that actually decided the campaign – and the war. Still, the Battle of Ohain could well have gone the other way: the Prussians had the opportunity to smash parts of the French army in isolation. A Prussian victory at Ohain might well have put the Coalition war effort back on track, perhaps sending Napoleon back into exile. . to Saint Helena perhaps?

3.0 Special Rules.

3.01 Bachelu's 5th Infantry Div. Bachelu's French 5th Infantry Division was much battered in fighting at Quatre Bras on the 16th and again at Mont Saint Jean on the 18th. The remnants of the division are being employed as prisoner guards and are also busy wrapping up the surrender of Hougoumont. Consequently, the two brigades of this division (reduced to 2-4 – one SP less than printed on the reverse side) may not move or be used unless (1) the unit is attacked by Prussian units (who gain 4 victory points for so doing (awarded to the Prussians by cancelling SP losses during victory calculation – basically the prisoners are released); or, (2) it is relieved of prisoner guard duties by an equivalent number of SP's moving into an adjacent hex.

3.02 Girard's 7th Infantry Div. Girard's French 7th Infantry Division was virtually destroyed at Ligny, where it took on the Prussian right wing virtually alone for a time. This unit was left behind on the Ligny battlefield under Colonel Matis to refit and to guard prisoners and captured stores. However, had Napoleon so desired, he could have called this unit forward. On the game's first turn, the French player may announce his intention to do so, incurring a victory point penalty of 6 points (awarded to the Prussians by cancelling SP losses during victory calculation) for so doing (the division will parole its prisoners). Three turns into the game, the French player rolls a die each turn, and, on a roll of 1 or 2, and both brigades (each of 2-4 strength one SP less than printed on the reverse side) appear at hex W1633.

The division's heroic commander at Ligny, Jean Baptiste Girard (mortally wounded) would be created Duke of Ligny by the Emperor on 21 June 1815. Unfortunately, the letters patent were not delivered prior to the Emperor's abdication.

3.13 Maréchal Ney. Whatever the quality of Marshal Ney's generalship in 1815, there can be no doubting his courage. "Les brave des braves" certainly lived up to his sobriquet during this campaign. In the "historical" scenario, Ney is considered to be severely but not fatally wounded during the closing phase of the Battle of Mont-Saint-Jean (while leading the Guard forward). The Marshal is under the care of Baron Larrey, and although he will make a full recovery, he is not available for the Battle of Ohain.

Of course, matters could have turned out differently, and if the players agree, the French player may employ Ney at Ohain, and his headquarters is deployed as given in the French Order of Battle. This will give the French player an advantage.

- **3.14 Command Rules**. It is recommended that the Campaign Rules be used for this scenario.
- **3.15 Variable Start**. The standard game begins with the French Movement Phase. But it is possible that the Prussians, so close to the French, will attempt to draw back a bit, or to reposition to attack one French wing or the other. To simulate this possibility, before play commences, the Prussian player rolls one die. On a "1" or a "2," the game begins with the Prussian Movement Phase 0600 hours night turn. Following the completion of Prussian movement, the game proper than begins with the 0900 hours turn, and the French Movement Phase.
- **3.16** Weather. Weather is assumed to be clear all though this scenario, however, if the players desire, they may roll the die at the commencement of each turn. A die roll of "1" means that turn is "Rain." Apply the standard game's "rain" rules on such a turn.

4.0 Victory Conditions.

Victory will be determined on the last turn of the game (2000 hours, 19 June 1815) by comparison of strength point (SP) losses, based on unit strengths at the start of the scenario. At the end of the game "pocketed" units, that is units that cannot trace a line of communications free of enemy zones of control to a friendly map edge (south edge of the LaBelle Alliance and Wavre maps for the French; east edge of the Wavre map for the Prussians) are considered destroyed,

<u>French Decisive Victory</u>. The historical result. Prussian SP losses are at least three times greater than French, and are over 60 SP's. The coalition will collapse in 1815. France recovers the west bank of the Rhine and Belgium, and the House of Bonaparte is recognized by the allies.

<u>French Substantive Victory</u>. Prussian SP losses are at least two times greater than French, and the French have not lost more than 80 SP's. The coalition will likely collapse early in 1816. France gets territorial concessions in Belgium, but the Dutch keep Antwerp. The House of Bonaparte is recognized by the allies.

<u>French Marginal Victory</u>. Prussian SP losses are at least 1.5 times greater than the French, and the French have not lost more than 80 SP's. Alternatively, Prussian losses are at least two times greater than the French and the French have not lost more than 100 SP's. The Prussians leave Belgium, but the struggle will continue for a time (although the Austrians are looking for a way out). The House of Bonaparte will ultimately be restored in France, within the 1814 frontiers, in the form of a regency for Napoleon II, but Napoleon I will have to go abroad.

<u>Prussian Marginal Victory</u>. Prussian and French SP loss totals are within 20 points of each other. The war continues. The Army of the Lower Rhine remains in Belgium, but the Emperor will likely have to go south to confront the Austrians and Russians.

Prussian Substantive Victory. French SP losses are at least two times greater than Prussian. The war continues and the French long term situation is bleak. The Russians and Austrians will stay in the war, and Napoleon can likely expect to last no longer than late summer, 1815.

<u>Prussian Decisive Victory</u>. French SP losses are greater than two times Prussian losses. This is our timeline's Waterloo, except it's on the 19th and has a distinctly German accent. The *Armee du Nord* collapses, Napoleon abdicates, destination St. Helena. You've seen this movie before.

5.0 Orders of Battle and Deployment.

5.1 Maps

All unit placements given by letter(s) designating map and hex number

W = LaBelle Alliance/Waterloo map

Wa= Wavre map

5.2 French Order of Battle

(* indicates reduced strength unit)

ARMEE DU NORD

Emperor Napoleon I, commanding in person

Maréchal Michael Ney, Prince de la Moscova (wing commander – out with wounds)

<u>Unit</u>	Strength	<u>Hex Number</u>
Napoleon HQ		W1116
Ney HQ		W1316 (optional see special
		rule)

Imperial Guard

Général de Division Comte Antoine Drouot

<u>Unit</u>	Strength	<u>Hex Number</u>
Imperial Guard HQ		W1116
Grenadiers (Friant)		
Friant's Bde.	6-4	W0917
Roguet's Bde	4-4*	W0917
<u>Chasseurs</u> (Morand)		
Morand's Bde	7-4	W1016
Michel's Bde	6-4	W1016
1 st Young Guard Inf. Division		
(Barrois)		
Guye's Bde.	5-4	W1417
Chartrand's Bde.	5-4	W1417
Guard Hvy. Cav. Division	6-6	W1116
(Guyot)		
Guard Lt. Cav. Division	4-7	W1116
(Lefebre-Desnoettes)		
Guard Horse Artillery	4-6	W1117
Old Guard Artillery (Lallemand)	6-4	W1217
Young Guard Artillery	6-4	W1217

I Corps

Général de Division Jean Baptiste Drouet, Comte D'Erlon

<u>Unit</u>	Strength	Hex Number
I Corps HQ		W1316
1 st Inf. Division (Quiot)		
Quiot's Bde.	4-4	W1315
Bourgeois's Bde	2-4*	W1315
2 nd Inf. Division (Donzelot)		
Schmitz's Bde	3-4*	W1416
Aulard's Bde	4-4*	W1416
3 rd Inf. Division (Marcognet)		
Nogues' Bde.	2-4*	W1415
Grenier's Bde.	2-4*	W1415
4 th Inf. Division (Durutte)		
Pegot's Bde.	4-4	W1414
Brue's Bde	4-4	W1414
1st Cav. Division (Jacquinot)	3-7	W1314
Artillery (Desales)	6-4	W1316

II Corps

Général de Division Comte Honore Reille

<u>Unit</u>	Strength	Hex Number
II Corps HQ		W1312
5 th Inf. Division (Bachelu)		
Husson's Bde.	2-4**	W0717 (see special rule)
Campi's Bde	2-4**	W0717 (see special rule)
6 th Inf. Division (Prince Jerome)		
Bauduin's Bde	4-4*	W1411
Soye's Bde	6-4	W1411
7 th Inf. Division (Col. Matis)		
de Villers Bde.	2-4**	Reinf. Only (see special rule)
Piat's Bde.	2-4**	Reinf. Only (see special rule)
9 th Inf. Division (Foy)		
Gauthier's Bde.	4-4*	W1513
Jamin's Bde	5-4	W1513
2 nd Cav. Division (Pire)	4-7	W1311
Artillery (Pelletier)	6-4	W1312

III Corps Général de Division Dominique Vandamme, Comte d'Unsebourg

<u>Unit</u>	Strength	Hex Number	
III Corps HQ		Wa1013	
8 th Inf. Division (Lefol)			
Corsin's Bde.	3-4*	Wa1013	
Billard's (Vernier's) Bde	3-4*	Wa1013	
10 th Inf. Division (Habert)			
Gengoult's Bde	6-4	Wa1314	
Dupeyroux's Bde	5-4	Wa1314	
11 th Inf. Division (Berthèzène)			
Dufour's' Bde.	3-4*	Wa1114	
Lagarde's Bde.	4-4	Wa1114	
3 rd Cav. Division (Domon) (att.	1-7*	W1317	
VI Corps)			
Artillery (Doguereau)	5-4	Wa1214	

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IV Corps

Général de Division Maurice-Etienne Comte Gérard

<u>Unit</u>	Strength	Hex Number
IV Corps HQ		W2417
12 th Inf. Division (Pécheux)		
Röme's Bde	3-4*	W2514
Schoeffer's Bde	4-4	W2514
13 th Inf. Division (Vichery)		
le Capitaine's (Laurain's) Bde	4-4*	W2317
Desprez's Bde	2-4*	W2317
14 th Inf. Division (Hulot)		
Hulot's (Baume's?) Bde.	5-4	W2315
Toussaint's Bde.	2-4*	W2315
7th Cav. Division (Maurin)	3-7	W2118
Artillery (Poully)	5-4	W2415

VI Corps

Général de Division Georges Mouton, Comte Lobau

<u>Unit</u>	Strength	Hex Number
VI Corps HQ		W1418
19 th Inf. Division (Simmer)		
Bellair's Bde	4-4	W1618
Thevenet's [Jamin] Bde	4-4	W1618
20 th Inf. Division (Jeanin)		
Bony's Bde	3-4	W1517
Tromelin's Bde	3-4	W1517
21st Inf. Division (Teste)		
(detached)		
Lafitte's Bde.	3-4	Wa0912
Penne's Bde.	2-4	Wa0912
Artillery (Noury)	4-4	W1418

Reserve Cavalry

Maréchal Emmanuel Marquis de Grouchy (wing commander)

<u>Unit</u>	Strength	Hex Number
Grouchy HQ		Wa0913

I Reserve Cav. Corps

Général de Division Comte Pajol

<u>Unit</u>	Strength	Hex Number
I Res. Cav. Corps HQ		Wa0514
4 th Cav. Division (Soult)	3-7	Wa0514
5 th Cav. Division (Subervie) (att	1-7*	W1519
VI Corps)		
Horse Artillery (Cotheraux)	2-6	Wa0514

II Reserve Cav. Corps

Général de Division Comte Remi Excelmans

<u>Unit</u>	Strength	Hex Number
II Res. Cav. Corps HQ		Wa0712
9 th Cav. Division (Strolz)	4-6	Wa0712
10 th Cav. Division (Chastel)	4-6	Wa0712
Horse Artillery (Godet)	2-6	Wa0813

III Reserve Cav. Corps

Général de Division Kellerman, Comte de Valmy

<u>Unit</u>	<u>Strength</u>	Hex Number
III Res. Cav. Corps HQ		W1017
11th Cav. Division (L'Hertier)	4-6*	W1017
12 th Cav. Division (d'Hurbal)	3-6*	W1017
Horse Artillery (Marcillac)	2-6	W0918

IV Reserve Cav. Corps

Général de Division Comte Milhaud

<u>Unit</u>	Strength	Hex Number
IV Res. Cav. Corps HQ		W1119
13 th Cav. Division	2-6*	W1119
(deStAlphonse)		
14 th Cav. Division (Delort)	3-6*	W1119
Horse Artillery (Duchet)	3-6	W1019

5.3 Prussian Order of Battle

(* indicates reduced strength unit)

<u>ARMY OF THE LOWER RHINE</u> Generalfeldmarschall Gebhard Leberecht von Blücher, Fürst von Wahlstatt, Commanding Generallieutenant August Wilhelm Antonius Graf Neidhardt von Gneisenau, Chief of Staff.

I Corps

Generallieutenant Hans Ernst Karl von Ziethen

<u>Unit</u>	Strength	Hex Number
I Corps HQ		W2011
1 st Inf. Bde. (von Steinmetz)		
12 th Inf. Rgt.	3-4*	W1911
24 th Inf. Rgt.	3-4*	W1911
1 st Westp. Land. Rgt.	2-4*	W1912
2 nd Inf. Bde. (von Pirch II)		
6 th Inf. Rgt.	2-4*	W1812
28 th Inf. Rgt.	2-4*	W1812
2 nd Westp. Land. Rgt.	2-4*	W1912
3 rd Inf. Bde. (-) (von Jagow)		
7 th Inf. Rgt.	2-4*	W1713
29 th Inf. Rgt.	2-4*	W1713
4 th Inf. Bde. (-) (von Henckel)		
19 th Inf. Rgt. ¹	2-4*	Wa0710
4 th Westp. Land. Rgt.	2-4*	W2112
Corps Cav.(von Roder)		
von Treskow's Bde.	1-6*	W2008
von Lutzow's Bde.	1-6*	W2009
Horse Artillery	3-6	W2009
Artillery (Lehman)	6-4*	W2011

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The "Stengel Detachment."

II Corps Generallieutenant Hans Ernst Karl von Ziethen

<u>Unit</u>	Strength	<u>Hex Number</u>
II Corps HQ		W2013
5 th Inf. Bde. (von Tippelskirch)		
2 nd Inf. Rgt.	2-4*	W1914
5 th Westp. Land. Rgt.	1-4*	W1914
6 th Inf. Bde. (von Krafft)		
9 th Inf. Rgt.	2-4*	W2014
26 th Inf. Rgt.	2-4*	W2014
7 th Inf. Bde. (von Brause)		
14 th Inf. Rgt.	4-4	W2312
22 nd Inf. Rgt.	3-4	W2312
2 nd Elbe Land. Rgt.	2-4	W2412
8 th Inf. Bde. (von Bose)		
21st Inf. Rgt.	2-4*	W2114
23 rd Inf Rgt.	2-4*	W2114
Corps Cav.(von Wahlen-		
Jurgass)		
von Sohr's Bde.	2-6*	W2213
von Thuman's Bde.	2-6*	W2113
von der Schulenberg's Bde	2-6*	W2113
Horse Artillery	2-6*	W2213
Artillery (Rohl)	7-4	W2011

III Corps Generallieutenant Johann Adolf, Freiherr von Thielmann

<u>Unit</u>	Strength	<u>Hex Number</u>
III Corps HQ		Wa0909
9 th Inf. Bde. (von Borche)		
8 th Inf. Rgt. (Leib)	4-4	Wa0409
36 th Inf. Rgt. [actually I.R.30]	4-4	Wa0409
1st Kurmark Land. Rgt.	2-4	Wa1506
10 th Inf. Bde. (von Kemphen)		
27 th Inf. Rgt.	4-4	Wa1208
2 nd Kurmark Land. Rgt.	2-4	Wa1208
11 th Inf. Bde. (von Luck)		
3 rd Kurmark Land. Rgt.	3-4	Wa1407
4 th Kurmark Land. Rgt.	3-4	Wa1407
12 th Inf. Bde. (von Stulpnagel)		
31 st Inf. Rgt.	4-4	Wa0810
5 th Kurmark Land. Rgt.	3-4	Wa0810
6 th Kurmark Land. Rgt.	2-4	Wa0910
Corps Cav.(von Hobe)		
von der Marwitz's Bde.	3-6	Wa0709
von Lottum's Bde.	2-6	Wa0809
Horse Artillery	3-6	Wa0809
Artillery (Mohnpt)	3-4	Wa0909

IV Corps Generallieutenant Bulow von Dennewitz

<u>Unit</u>	Strength	Hex Number
IV Corps HQ		W1815
13 th Inf. Bde. (von Hake)		
10 th Inf. Rgt.	4-4	W1715
2 nd Neumark Land. Rgt.	3-4	W1715
3 rd Neumark Land. Rgt.	2-4	W1815
14 th Inf. Bde. (von Ryssel)		
11 th Inf. Rgt.	5-4	W1916
1st Pomm. Land. Rgt	3-4	W1916
2 nd Pomm. Land. Rgt.	3-4	W1815
15 th Inf. Bde. (von Losthin)		
18 th Inf. Rgt.	4-4	W1717
3 rd Silesian Land. Rgt.	3-4	W1716
4 th Silesian Land. Rgt.	3-4	W1716
16 th Inf. Bde. (von Hiller)		
15 th Inf. Rgt.	4-4	W1717
1st Silesian Land. Rgt.	3-4	W1817
2 nd Silesian Land. Rgt.	2-4	W1817
Corps Cav.(Prince Wilhelm of		
Prussia)		
von Watzdorf's Bde.	2-6	W1915
von Schwerin's Bde.	2-6	W1915
von Sydow's Bde.	2-6	W1917
Artillery (Bardleben)	11-4	W1814

6.0 Notes.

I first worked up an Ohain "scenario" for *Napoleon's Last Battles* sometime back in the late 1970's, but it consisted of little more than hand-written OBs and deployments, and sketchy victory conditions. This slightly more elaborated version was inspired by Stephen Martinsen's superb *Napoleon's Waterloo Campaign: An Alternate History*, which I highly recommend. Peter Hofschröer's *1815: The Waterloo Campaign - The German Victory* was helpful for hints on deploying the Prussians and Grouchy's wing, as was Scott Bowden's *Armies at Waterloo: A Detailed Analysis of the Armies That Fought History's Greatest Battle.*

This scenario favors the French, but can be adjusted, either by moving the positions of the Prussians, or adding some British units. The game is, after all, hypothetical, and anything goes. The French have more SP's (240 to 166), but things can get dicey for Gerard and even Grouchy if the Prussian player gets stuck in like Blucher, and Napoleon's force is not aggressive enough.

The Prussians should move back from the Chapelle St. Lambert/Ohain area and try to concentrate somewhat nearer Wavre, and maybe take a swipe at Grouchy or Gerard if opportunity offers.