

Battle of Brienne

Age of Eagles Scenario
by GRW, 2010

SETTING

Date: 29 January 1814, 3:00 PM

Location: 20 miles south of Chalons, France

Combatants: French Empire vs. Kingdom of Prussia & Russian Empire

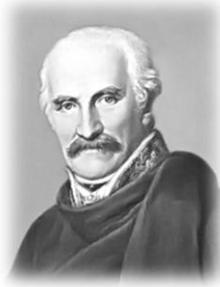
History: In early January 1814, Napoleon's weakened forces lost the Rhine barrier and over a quarter of one million allied soldiers began their advance to French soil. After a series of defeats under his blundering marshals, Napoleon decided to take personal command of the remaining French divisions defending Paris--barely 60,000 men. Reinvigorated with his old energy and fire, the Emperor sought to place his army in between the advancing allies, defeating each allied sovereign in detail before they could unite.

On January 28, Blücher and Schwarzenberg were dangerously close to joining forces. Napoleon pounced on the opportunity and directed his scattered divisions to converge against Blücher at the crossroads of Brienne. Here, fate intervened. Russian Cossacks intercepted some of the Emperor's written orders, which alerted Blücher to the trap. Not only was the wily old Prussian ready for the French attack, the capture of Napoleon's orders meant that his intended reinforcements would not fall on Blücher's exposed flank. Throughout the morning and early afternoon of January 29, French and Russian troops converged at Brienne for battle....



Napoleon Bonaparte

French Orders:
Destroy Blücher's
Russian army in detail.



Gebhard von Blücher

Russian Orders: Check
Napoleon's advance and
conduct a rear-guard
action to protect our line
of supply to Dienville.

Victory points: Refer to the *Age of Eagles* 'Casualty Points Chart' to determine victory points.

Game length: French 3:00 PM until 7:30 PM (10 turns)

AFTERMATH

A cavalry skirmish in the late morning drove back Pahlen's advance guard to the village of Brienne. The battle did not begin in earnest until 3:00pm, when Victor's infantry deployed for a frontal assault on the village and chateau. At this juncture, both commanders fed reinforcements into the battle piecemeal, as more men arrived on the muddy roads. Ney launched his own attack as dusk fell, and the battle continued into the darkness. Blücher and his chief of staff were nearly captured when the French stormed the chateau! The battle ended well into the night, with each side suffering about 3,000 casualties. Since Blücher withdrew from the field, Napoleon claimed a victory. But in truth, the battle was inconclusive--Napoleon had missed a prime opportunity to destroy Blücher before he could rejoin the main allied formation.

SCENARIO RULES

1. NAPOLEON and BLUCHER are Charismatic.
2. Darkness falls at 6:00pm, at which time line of sight and all ranges are reduced to 2". All units are considered permanently disordered at night (unless they are rated "excellent" or a division/corps commander is directly attached).
3. The scenario ends in automatic French victory if the French are able to exit an "unspent" brigade from road exit "C," cutting off Blucher's line of supply and communication.
4. The Prussians deploy first.
5. Historically, Blucher feared that some of Napoleon's flanking reinforcements might somehow arrive to the battle. To represent this uncertainty, the allied commander MUST leave at least two "unspent" brigades within 4" of Dienville for the entire scenario. For every turn Dienville is not properly protected, subtract two points from the allied player's victory point total.
6. NAPOLEON is +3 for initiative rolls, and BLUCHER is +1. The French start with initiative.

TERRAIN & WEATHER

The gaming table should be six feet long by four feet wide, laid out according to the accompanying map. Urban areas offer +1 advantages to defending units in melee and a -1 benefit when under fire. The chateau outside Brienne is a castle-like fortress and offers +3 advantages to defenders in melee, and a -2 benefit when under fire. The chateau should be placed on a small, gentle hill, representing the only high ground on the field. Urban areas may garrison up to 4 stands of infantry and a battery of artillery, except for Brienne-la-Chateau and the chateau itself. These two locations may garrison up to six stands of infantry and a battery of artillery. The river is not fordable. Movement along roads offers no movement benefits due to the mud. The weather is cold and overcast.

DEPLOYMENT

Units set up according to the accompanying map, in any formation they choose. Commanders must be deployed within 12 inches of their commands.

NAPOLEON and his ADC, GROUCHY, begin deployed within 6" of St.-Leger. RICARD'S division of Victor's Corps does not arrive until 4:00pm (Turn 3) from road entry "A." NEY arrives with his corps at 5:00pm from point "A" or "B." A random dice roll should determine the location.

BLUCHER may begin the scenario deployed within 12" of Brienne-la-Chateau. SACKEN arrives with SCHERBATOV'S corps and VASSILCHIKOV at 3:00pm (the first turn) from La Rothiere.

SCALE

Each infantry stand represents 360 soldiers, each cavalry stand 180 troopers, and artillery stands a battery of 8-12 guns. Ground scale is one inch to 150 yards.

Notes on Sources

Had Cossacks not intercepted Napoleon's orders, several French divisions--including Mortier's Old Guard--might have arrived from the Dienville road, trapping Blucher's small army at Brienne. This could have been a decisive master-stroke, but fate intervened. The OOB for this battle is from George Nafziger, cross-referenced with Petre's narrative. As always, some liberties were taken to consolidate and stream-line forces. The outstanding *Atlas to Alison's History of Europe* (1850) provides a detailed map, but cross-referencing Google Maps reveals Alison's ground scale to be distorted--a common issue with Alison's *Atlas*. For narratives, see Francis L. Petre's *Napoleon at Bay, 1814* (1914) and Henry Houssaye, *1814* (1888).

French Order of Battle

NAPOLEON

Assorted, Ad-Hoc Commands

NAPOLEON army ldr

GROUCHY Napoleon's ADC

VICTOR II Corps ldr

Duhesme 1st Division ldr

Matterre R 4/3/2 Sk line

Voirol C -/4/2 line

Light Foot Artillery #1 & 2

Dufour division ldr

Chataux C 6/4/3 line

Saint-Michel C 5/4/3 line

Ricard division ldr (of Marmont's corps)

Beleport C -/4/2 line

Clavel C -/4/2 line

Gerard C 9/8/6 militia

Picquet R -/4/2 LC hussars

NEY Guard Reserve corps ldr

Meunier 1st Voltigeur Div. ldr

Rousseau R 6/4/2 Sk Young Guard

Lacoste R 6/4/2 Sk Young Guard

Decouz 2nd Voltigeur Div. ldr

Baste R 4/3/2 Sk Young Guard

Clozeau R 4/3/2 Sk Young Guard

Guard Heavy Foot Artillery Reserve #3

MILHAUD V Cavalry Corps ldr

Pire R 4/3/2 LC chasseurs

Briche R 6/4/3 HC dragoons

L'Heritier R 4/3/2 HC dragoons

Light Horse Artillery #3

Desnouettes E 6/-/2 LC lancers (Polish)

Guard Light Horse Artillery Reserve #4 & 5

Russian Order of Battle

BLUCHER

Elements of the ARMY OF SILESIA

BLUCHER army ldr

SACKEN Blucher's ADC

OLSUFIEV IX Corps ldr

Udom II 9th Division ldr

Poltorotski R -/4/2 line

Juskov R -/4/2 line

Heavy Foot Artillery #1

Karnielov 15th Division ldr

Pushkin R -/4/2 line

Anensur R -/4/2 line

Light Foot Artillery #2

SCHERBATOV IV Corps ldr

Tallisin 7th Division ldr

Kristischiknikov R 5/4/3 line

Augustov R 5/4/3 line

Heavy Foot Artillery #4

Bernodossov 18th Division ldr

Blagovenzenko R 5/4/3 line

Freudenreich R 5/4/3 line

Light Foot Artillery #5

Russian Order of Battle (continued...)

Pahlen Advance Guard div. ldr
 Rudinger E 5/3/2 LC hussars
 Tschingev R -/4/2 LC uhlands
 Heinrich R 5/3/2 Sk jagers
 Light Foot Artillery #6

Vassilchikov cavalry corps ldr
 Landskoi E 6/4/3 LC hussars
 Pantchalidzev E 4/2/- HC dragoons
 Karpov II C 6/5/4 LC cossacks
 Light Horse Artillery #7

MAP & DEPLOYMENT

