

Battle of Fere-Champenoise

Age of Eagles Scenario
by GRW, 2011

SETTING

Date: 25 March 1814, 12:00 PM

Location: 75 miles east of Paris, France

Combatants: French Empire vs. Russian Empire, Austrian Empire, & Kingdom of Württemberg

History: In the chaotic final days of March 1814, elements of Schwarzenberg's Army of Bohemia found a way to divide Napoleon's much smaller army. This was not by design, but rather, due to the utter confusion and swirling combat of the past two months. Hoping to somehow reunite with Napoleon, Marshals Marmont and Mortier joined their 20,000 remaining troops northeast of Sezanne. With them, they slowly dragged 84 pieces of vital artillery.

On the morning of March 25, 1814, leading elements of Schwarzenberg's army made contact with the retreating French columns. The crown prince of Württemberg commanded the advance guard, and not wanting to allow the enemy to slip away, he attacked the numerically superior French without infantry support. Throughout the morning, more and more allied cavalry arrived on the field, and the prince fed them into the combat with vigor. Retreating in squares, Marmont and Mortier tried to continue their withdraw, but the allied pressure continued to mount....



Auguste de Marmont

French Orders:

Disengage from the pursuit of the allies and withdraw with Mortier's corps.



Prince Wilhelm of Württemberg

Allied Orders: Infantry support is still miles behind...now is your chance to destroy the French!

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

Game length: 12:00 PM until 5:30 PM (12 turns)

AFTERMATH

By noon, the allied cavalry had driven off their mounted French counterparts, leaving the French infantry exposed. Mortier's Young Guard beat back three cavalry charges, but a sudden rain and hail storm around 1:00pm altered the balance of the battle. With wet powder, the French firepower slackened, and a fourth cavalry charge broke a Young Guard square. Panic struck the French, and they began to flee through the streets of Fere-Champenoise in disarray. Three miles to the north, the sounds of battle confused both sides. Who was approaching? The French troops rallied, hoping that Napoleon might be near. But the battle to the north was actually the determined retreat of Pachtod and Amey's National Guardsmen--fighting off a horde of pursuing Russian cavalry. By 5:30pm Pachtod's men were finally overwhelmed, unable to make contact with Marmont and Mortier, who had barely escaped the field. The disastrous day cost the French nearly 10,000 men and most of their artillery. The allies lost roughly 2,000 men.

SCENARIO RULES

1. PACTHOD and PRINCE WILHELM are Charismatic.
2. Historically, a brief, heavy rain around 2:00pm radically impacted the battle. To simulate the possibility of rain, players should roll a D6 at the start of every turn. On a roll of "1-2," it rains during that specific turn. Rain halves any movement, removes road movement benefits for the turn, and halves fire points for shooting.
3. Starting on the 2:30pm turn--and continuing at the start of each subsequent turn--the French player should roll a D6. On a roll of "6" PACTHOD and VASSILCHIKOV arrive according to the deployment rules. It is possible these forces may never arrive, implying Pacthod's destruction.
4. The French deploy first.
6. Lacking an overall commander, the French suffer a -2 penalty for initiative rolls. PRINCE WILHELM, considered the Allied commander, is +0. Tsar Alexander actually arrived on the field in the waning stages of the battle, around 5:00pm. By then, the French were fleeing the field.

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. Movement along roads offers normal movement benefits, unless rain occurs (see Scenario Rule #2). The weather is cool 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.

Prince WILHELM begins on the field with his advance guard, as well as PAHLEN'S Russians and NOSTITZ'S Austrians. Though not technically the overall commander, the prince did act as the de facto allied commander for the battle. GALLITZIN arrives at 2:00pm (Turn 5) from point "B".

According to Scenario Rule #3, the retreating French troops north of the battle may appear from in the afternoon. If the appropriate D6 roll is made, PACTHOD appears within 6" of point "A" with infantry in square formation. Units in square may move up to 3" a turn. VASSILCHIKOV also appears the same turn in hot pursuit, but only two of his four units may enter per turn.

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

As a small engagement in the waning weeks of the Napoleonic Wars, Fere Champenoise is difficult to research. The battle is often mentioned in passing, but rarely in detail. And those sources which do exist tend to disagree about some important details. Digby Smith, for instance, says that Marmont's small "corps" had 11,000 men under arms, while Houssaye puts the number closer to 6,000. This scenario averages the numbers provided by all sources. Ground scale for the map is verified by Google Maps and Alison's *Atlas*. For narratives, see Digby Smith, *Charge!* (2007), Francis L. Petre's *Napoleon at Bay, 1814* (1914) and Henry Houssaye, *Napoleon and the Campaign of 1814* (1914), trans. RS McClintock.

French Order of Battle

MARMONT & MORTIER IV Corps & Young Guard

MORTIER Guard Corps Idr
Christiani E 6/-/2 Sk Middle Guard
Friant E 6/5/2 Sk Young Guard
Charpentier E 6/5/2 Sk Young Guard
Light Foot Artillery #1 & 2
Heavy Foot Artillery #3 & 4

MARMONT IV Corps Idr
Richard R 5/4/2 line
Lagrange R -/5/2 line
Arrighi C -/6/3 Paris depot
Light Foot Artillery #6 & 7
Heavy Foot Artillery #8

BELLIARD Cavalry Corps Idr

Roussel 6th Hvy Cav. Div. Idr
Sparre R 6/5/2 HC dragoons
Rigau R 6/5/2 HC dragoons

Merlin R 5/4/3 LC chasseurs
Bordesoulle R 5/4/2 HC cuirassiers
Light Horse Artillery Reserve #5

(POSSIBLE ARRIVAL)
Pachod division Idr
Delort C -/6/3 National Guard
Amey C -/6/3 National Guard

Allied Order of Battle

SCHWARZENBERG ARMY OF BOHEMIA, Elements

WILHELM of Württemberg IV Corps Idr

Prince Adam Advance Guard Div. Idr
Walseban E 5/4/3 LC hussars
Jett E 5/4/3 LC mounted jagers
Light Horse Artillery #1

Pahlen cav. div. Idr (from VI Corps)
Rhudiger R 5/4/2 LC hussars
Dechtereve R 5/4/2 LC hussars
Lissanewitz R 4/3/2 LC uhlands
Vlassov C 5/4/3 LC cossacks
Light Horse Artillery #2 & 3

von NOSTITZ Austrian Cav. Idr
Klebensberg E 5/3/2 LC hussars
Lederer E -/4/2 LC uhlands

GALLITZIN Guard Cavalry Corps Idr

Depreradovich 1st Cuirassier Div. Idr
Arseniev I E 4/-/2 HC chevalier guards
Rosen E 4/-/2 HC cuirassiers

Kretov 2nd Cuirassier Div. Idr
Leontiev E 4/-/2 HC cuirassiers
Stahl II E 4/-/2 HC cuirassiers

Guard Light Horse Artillery Reserve #4 & 5

(POSSIBLE ARRIVAL)
Vassilchikov cavalry corps Idr
Landskoi E 7/5/3 LC hussars
Pantchalidzev R 6/4/3 HC dragoons
Karpov II C 6/5/4 LC cossacks
Light Horse Artillery #6

MAP & DEPLOYMENT

