

BRIENNE – 29 JANUARY 1814

THE HAMMER MISSES THE ANVIL

By Francis Garnier ; original scenario by Martin-Soilleux Cardwell

After the liberation of Saint Dizier, Napoleon learns that Blucher is crossing the Aube river at Lesmont, to the south. By a swift manoeuvre, he has the opportunity to appear in Blucher's Back while Mortier attacks him from the south. Taken in such an hazardous position Blucher's army risks total destruction. A fate that could turn the campaign of France much in favour of Napoleon, given the already hesitating coalition. Fortunately for him, Blucher intercepts the instructions from Napoleon to Mortier and quickly turns back in direction of the army of Bohemia. To add to Napoleon's misfortune, the weather warms up and the roads, frozen for days, turn into mud, much slowing his army. When he catches up with the bulk of Blucher's army, it's already too late for the trap to succeed. Despite this, in desperate need for a victory to show to the French people, Napoleon decides for a frontal attack. Blucher cannot refuse it as its baggage is still on the road from Brienne to Dienville.

THE HISTORICAL BATTLE

First contact is made in the morning between Piré's cavalry and some Cossack outposts near Montier-en-Der. Pahlen's advance guard, called to the rescue, is sent to cover Blucher's movement. Around 1PM, Piré arrive on the battlefield, facing Pahlen. Pahlen's troops slowly give ground, making good use of the positions of Perthes, then the gardens of Brienne, until all of Sacken's corps has taken position behind Brienne. Pahlen then joins Vassilitchikov's cavalry and forms the first line of his corps.

The battle really starts with Duhesme's infantry appearance on the battlefield around 3PM (Ney arrives later at 5PM). The battle concentrate around the town of Brienne and the castle that commands it. Brienne changes hands several times as reserves of both sides are committed in the battle. Eventually, the cavalry of both sides, staying idle at first, also gets committed in the Battle for the town. The fight, that had begun with exchange of artillery and musket fire, turns into ferocious melees. The wooden houses are soon set on fire.

The castle itself is finally taken at dusk, by a French battalion attacking from the west, a direction Blucher thought was impossible. Actually, when the castle is attacked, Blucher thought the battle was already nearly over and was getting prepared to have dinner. He barely escapes capture. Despite several counter-attacks the French stay in possession of the castle.

Around midnight, both armies being exhausted, the fight cease with the French in possession of the castle and the Allied of most of the town. Blucher's park is then in security in Dienville and so he decides to leave the town, burning the last houses to cover his retreat.

Both sides claimed a victory, Napoleon because his army was holding the ground, Blucher because he could achieve his plan to join the main army corps. For political reasons, however, no one could afford to confess a defeat

or even a draw. Napoleon had to convince the French people that he had the situation in hands, and Blucher had to convince the Allied that it was possible to push forward and beat Napoleon. To be fair, however, this battle was a bloody draw, with no real military impact on the campaign.

GAME LENGTH AND VICTORY

The game begins with the 3:00 PM turn and runs through the end of the 12PM turn, a total of ten turns. The French player moves first.

The French player achieves a decisive victory if he holds Brienne-le-Chateau and the castle and cuts Blucher's army from its line of communication. Allied LOC is Dienville (see special rules below). Failing that, the French player wins by cutting Blucher's LOC or bringing all allied commands to exhaustion and at least one to morale collapse.

The allied player wins a decisive victory by holding Brienne-le-Chateau and the castle at the end of the game while still having his LOC. Failing that, the allied player wins if all French commands are exhausted and at least one Allied command is unexhausted. Taking French LOC is not a victory condition (actually it would put the Allied army in a dire situation). For information (only), French LOC is the road to Vitry.

Any other result is a draw.

ALLIED DEPLOYMENT (SET UP FIRST, NO TROOPS STATIONARY, ARTILLERY LIMBERED OR UNLIMBERED)

Russian IX corps In and within 12" of Brienne; Russian VI corps along the road from Brienne to La rothière; Russian cavalry corps, including Pahlen advance guard, between Brienne and Bois d'Ajou, along the road to Chaumesnil. Blucher in the Castle of Brienne.

FRENCH DEPLOYMENT (SET UP SECOND, NO TROOPS STATIONARY, ARTILLERY LIMBERED OR UNLIMBERED)

French reserve cavalry corps between the road to Vitry and the road to maizière, within 12" of the northern edge.

REINFORCEMENTS

TURN 1 (3:00PM)

French II corps and Napoleon enters from the road to Vitry, Duhesme division first

TURN 3 (5:00PM)

French guard reserve corps enters from the road to Maizières, Decouz division first.

BATTLEFIELD

The battlefield is a 8' x 6' area, with two options for a smaller battlefield (see below). The following terrain types are present:

Streams: The stream on the battlefield is the Aube river and is not crossable except at the bridge in Dienville.

Vegetation: The Bois d'Ajou to the east is forest. All other vegetation is orchard. The orchard along the Brienne-Lesmont road represents the gardens of Brienne.

Buildings: All buildings are wooden except Dienville and the castle of Brienne which are stone. See special rule below for the chateau.

Roads: All roads except the secondary track to Maizières are bordered by large ditches on either side. A skirmish infantry stand on a road is considered as in a sunken road. Other stands do not receive this bonus.

SPECIAL SCENARIO RULES

Sacken was the actual commander of the Russian corps on the field. The AC stand, even if named "Blucher" in the game, actually represents both Blucher and Sacken.

Allied LOC: The army of Silesia's baggage is spread along the road from Brienne-le-Chateau to Dienville, slowly moving in the direction of Dienville. For a more visual game, if not using the shorter table option, players can agree on the following: Place wagons or road column markers all along the road from Brienne-le-Chateau to Dienville. Each Allied turn, beginning on turn 1, remove 6" of markers nearest to Brienne-le-Chateau, to represent the baggage column progressing toward Dienville. If a French brigade starts its movement in contact with any part of this column, the French player can elect to put his brigade in disorder and stay in contact with the column. Each turn spent in contact counts as cutting LOC. If the French player manages to cut the LOC this way for two full turns (consecutive or not), he's considered to have cut the Army of Silesia LOC for the remainder of the game.

Road column: Due to the state of the ground, Road column gives no movement advantages, whether on road or open terrain.

MAIN SOURCES:

Histoire de la campagne de 1814 et de la restauration de la monarchie française, Vol. 1 ; De Beauchamp ; Le Normand ed. ; 1815

Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire de la campagne de 1814, Vol. 1 & 2 ; Von Koch ; Magimel Anselin & Pochard ed. ; 1819

Victoires, conquêtes, désastres, revers et guerres civiles des français, Tome XXIII ; collective work ; Panckoucke ed. ; 1821
1814 ; Houssaye ; Perrin ed. ; 1908

La campagne de France, du Rhin à Fontainebleau, 1814 ; De Ségur ; Cremille ed. ; 1969

1814, la campagne de France ; Hourtoulle & al ; Histoire et Collections ed. ; 2006

Thanks to Keith Mc Nelly for his help and support.

Night: Dusk descends on game turn 3 (5:00 p.m.). Command radius drops to 4" and no units may rally. Darkness falls on game turn 4 (6:00 p.m.). Visibility reduces to 2", all units suffer -1 morale, and no units may rally or recover disorder.

The Castle: The castle of Brienne is considered a stone village in game terms. In addition, it follows the rules for a breached fortress (rule 22.4). From turn 3 on, the French player can roll a die before movement. On a die roll of 4 to 6 he discovers a weak point and, if attacking from the west, his assault on the castle this turn is resolved as if the castle provided no advantage to the defender in melee. Once successful, this die roll cannot be attempted again (if the Allied player takes back the castle and the French has to capture it again). The Allied players can never roll for this. (In practice, it means that the French player, and him only, will have one opportunity to take the castle by surprise. The trick will work only once.)

Smaller table options: There are two options for a smaller playing area. Players can agree on using any one or both of them.

Option one is to trim the east edge of the table, as shown on the map, practically meaning the Bois d'Ajou is mostly out of the game. Players can agree either to give a half-move penalty to Ney's formation when it enters, or it can be used as a game-balance in favor of the French Player.

Option 2 is to trim the south edge of the playing area, as shown on the map. In this case, Allied LOC is the road to Dienville. Players should then not use the Allied baggage special rule and play the standard LOC rules. This option favors the Allied player.

If both options are taken, one can assume they sort of cancel-out each other.

OPTIONAL GAMES AND WHAT-IF

LONGER GAME OPTION

The players can agree on starting the battle with the 1PM turn, for a total of twelve turns. The 1PM and 2PM turns are respectively called turn -2 and turn -1 and the 3PM turn is turn 1. Deployment is modified as below:

Pahlen's advance guard sets up between Perthes, St Leger and Brienne ; Russian VIth corps sets up on the road from Lesmont to Brienne, en route to Brienne ; Russian IXth corps and Cavalry corps set up in or within 12" of Brienne, but no closer than 12" from the north edge.

No French forces are on the battlefield at the start of the game.

Reinforcement:

Turn -2 (1:00PM): Vth cavalry corps. Enters the table between the roads to Vitry and to Maizières. All other reinforcements as before.

WHAT-IF OPTION

The battle could very well have had a much different aspect, would the message from Napoleon to Mortier have been intercepted too late and Napoleon's army able to proceed faster. Here are some ideas to set a what-if battle.

Consider the roles reversed. The French player occupies Brienne and must hold it, while the allied must get through to join the army of bohemia before Mortier appears. The games starts with the 12:00 PM turn.

French Deployment (set up first, no troops stationary, artillery limbered or unlimbered): cavalry reserve and 2nd infantry corps in or within 12' of Brienne.

Allied Deployment (set up second, no troops stationary, artillery limbered): Pahlen's advance guard, within 12' of Chaumesnil.

Reinforcements :

Allied army enters the battlefield from the road to Lesmont. The French young guard enters the battlefield from the road to Maizières.

Turn 2 (1:00 PM): Russian IX Corps

Turn 3 (2:00 PM): French guard reserve corps, Russian VI Corps

Turn 4 (3:00 PM): Russian Cavalry Corps

Russians moves first

The allied achieve victory by exiting at least four unexhausted divisions or six exhausted divisions by the south edge between the road exits to Trannes and to Morvilliers (both roads included).

All other result is a French victory.

Pahlen advance guard and Vassilitchikov cavalry corps are considered divisions for determining victory.

ROAD TO GLORY OPTION

Players can have a more open game using the Road to Glory battle generation system. Both players choose 2000 points in the 1814 French and Russian or Prussian army lists.

Use the Optional shorter table discarding the 2' most to the south.

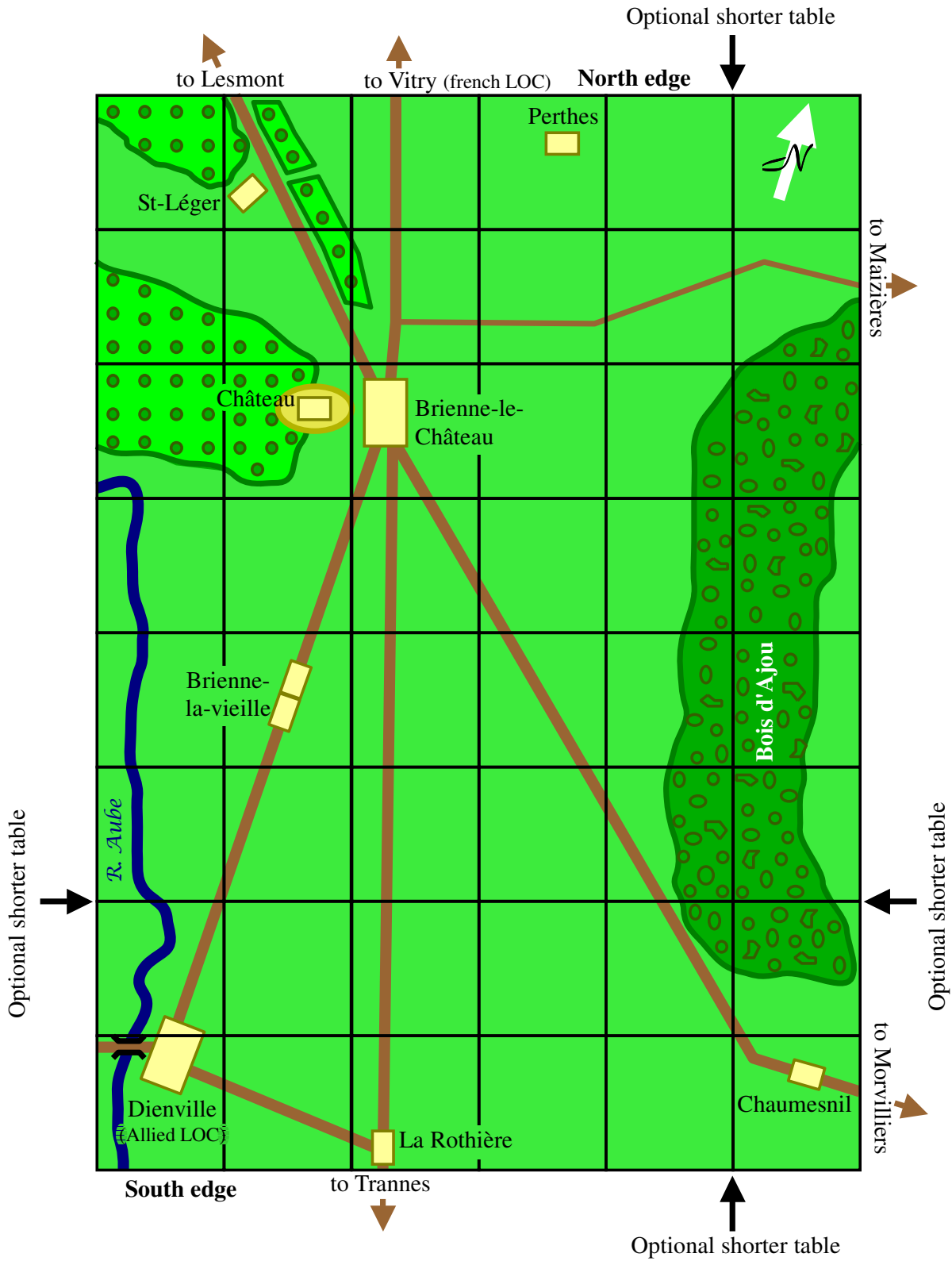
French player must take deployment card #7 while the Allied player must take the deployment card #20.

French deployment area is the north edge and extends 12" to the south while Allied is the south edge, extending 24" to the north.

The Allied player doesn't gain victory points for holding the French LOC, but rather for holding Brienne.

The French player moves first.

Brienne



FRENCH ARMY

Emperor Napoléon – Army Commander, Monarch.

CAVALRY RESERVE

General Grouchy – Corps Commander

V Cavalry corps (Milhaud)

Exhaustion	[] [] [] [] []
9 th light Division (Piré) (M5, Light Cav) <i>14th, 26th & 27th chasseurs à cheval ; 3rd & 13th hussards</i>	[s] [s]
5 th heavy Division (Briche) (M5, Medium Cav) <i>2nd, 6th, 11th, 13th & 15th dragons</i>	[] [] [] []
6 th heavy Division (L'Héritier) (M5, Medium Cav) <i>18th, 19th, 20th, 22nd & 25th dragons</i>	[] [] [] []
Horse artillery battalion (M5, Field Horse Arty)	[] []

3rd Guard Cavalry Division (Lefèbvre-Desnouettes)

Exhaustion	[] [] [] [] []
Brigade Dautancourt (M6, Heavy Cav) <i>Empress Dragoons & Grenadiers à cheval</i>	[] [] [] []
Brigade Krasinski (M6, Light Cav, Lancers) <i>1st Polish lancers & 2nd éclaireurs</i>	[s] [s]
Guard horse artillery battalion (M6, Field Horse Arty)	[] [] []

FRENCH II CORPS D'ARMEE

General Victor – Corps Commander

Corps troops

No Exhaustion	
Corps artillery (M5, Field Arty) <i>1st foot artillery battalion</i>	[] [] []
Corps artillery (M5, Field Arty) <i>2nd foot artillery battalion</i>	[] [] []

Division Duhesme (Duhesme)

Exhaustion	[] [] [] [] []
Brigade Materre (M5) <i>4th & 72nd line infantry; 20th light infantry</i>	[] [] [s]
Brigade Voirol (M5) <i>18th, 46th & 93rd line infantry</i>	[] [] [] [] []

Division de Reserve de Paris (Gérard)

Exhaustion	[] [] [] [] []
1 st Brigade (M5, PT, NE)	[] [] [] [] []
2 nd Brigade (M5, PT, NE)	[] [] [] [] []

Division Dufour (Huguet-Chataux)

Exhaustion	[] [] [] []
Brigade Huguet-Chataux (M5) <i>19th & 37th line infantry; 24th light infantry</i>	[] [] [s]
Brigade Saint-Michel (M5) <i>2nd & 56th line infantry; 11th light infantry</i>	[] [] [s]

CORPS DE RESERVE DE LA GARDE Maréchal Ney – Corps Commander

Corps troops

No Exhaustion	
Young guard foot artillery battalion (M6, Field Arty) (see note below)	[] []

1st Division de Voltigeurs (Meunier)

Exhaustion	[] [] [] [] []
Brigade Rousseau (M6) <i>1st & 2nd voltigeurs</i>	[] [] [s]
Brigade Lacoste (M6) <i>3rd & 4th voltigeurs ; 1st & 2nd tirailleurs</i>	[] [] [] [s]

2nd Division de Voltigeurs (Decouz)

Exhaustion	[] [] [] [] []
Brigade Baste (M6) <i>5th & 6th voltigeurs</i>	[] [] [s]
Brigade Pelet-Clozeau (M6) <i>7th, 8th & 9th voltigeurs</i>	[] [] [s]

Note: It seems that the artillery was actually attached to the different brigades. Players are encouraged to replace the Young Guard Artillery battalion by dedicated guns for all four Young Guard brigades. If doing so, add the DG capacity to all brigades and increase 1st division exhaustion by one (the rounding of men strength is already slightly in defavor of this division).

ALLIED ARMY

Feldmarschall Blucher – Army Commander

RUSSIAN IX CORPS Olsufiev – Corps Commander

Infantry Division 9 (Udom II)

Exhaustion	[] [] [] [] [] []
1 st Brigade - Poltorotski (M5, DG) <i>Musketeer Regt Rascheburg & Apsecheron ; Jaeger Regt 10</i>	[] [] [] [s]
2 nd Brigade - Juskov (M5, DG) <i>Musketeer Regt Iafuz & Riastin ; Jaeger Regt 38</i>	[] [] [] [s]
Division heavy artillery (M5, Heavy Arty) <i>13th heavy foot battery</i>	[] [] []

Infantry Division 15 (Kornilov)

Exhaustion	[] [] [] [] []
1 st Brigade – Mussin-Puschkin (M5, DG) <i>Musketeer Regt Vitebsk & Kaslov ; Jaeger Regt 12</i>	[] [] [] [s]
2 nd Brigade - Anensur (M5, DG) <i>Musketeer Regt Koliman & Kurin ; Jaeger Regt 22</i>	[] [] [] [s]
Division light artillery (M5, Field Arty) <i>35th light foot battery</i>	[] [] []

RUSSIAN VI CORPS Scherbatov – Corps Commander

Infantry Division 7 (Tallisin)

Exhaustion	[] [] [] [] [] []
1 st Brigade - Kristischiknikov (M5, DG) <i>Musketeer Regt Pleskov & Moscow ; Jaeger Regt 11</i>	[] [] [] [s]
2 nd Brigade - Augustov (M5, DG) <i>Musketeer Regt Sofia & Liebow ; Jaeger Regt 36</i>	[] [] [] [] [s]
Division heavy artillery (M5, Heavy Arty) <i>10th heavy foot battery</i>	[] [] []

Infantry Division 18 (Bernodossov)

Exhaustion	[] [] [] [] []
1 st Brigade – Blagovenzenko (M5, DG) <i>Musketeer Regt Vladimir & Dnieprov ; Jaeger Regt 28</i>	[] [] [] [s]
2 nd Brigade - Freudenreich (M5, DG) <i>Musketeer Regt Tambov & Kostroma ; Jaeger Regt 32</i>	[] [] [] [s]
Division light artillery (M5, Field Arty) <i>24th light foot battery</i>	[] [] []

RUSSIAN CAVALRY CORPS

Vassilitchikov – Corps Commander

Vassilitchikov Cavalry Corps (under direct command of Vassilitchikov)

Exhaustion	[] [] [] [] [] []
2 nd Hussars Division (Landskoï) (M5, Light Cav) <i>Hussars Regt Aschtirsk, Marienpol, Alexandria, White Russia</i>	[s] [s]
3 rd Dragoon Division (Pantchalidzev) (M5, Medium Cav) <i>dragoons Regt Kurland, Smolensk, Tver, Kinbur</i>	[] []
Cossack Regt Karpov II (M4, Light Cav Skirmishers) <i>2nd Kalmuks, 4th Ukraine, St Petersburg volunteer cossacks</i>	[s]
Cossack Regt Lukovsin (M4, Light Cav Skirmishers) <i>2nd Karpov, 4th Kutainikov, Sementschenko, Lukovkin & Grekov</i>	[s]
Corps Horse Artillery (M5, Field Horse Arty) <i>18th horse artillery battery</i>	[] []

Advance Guard – Bohemia Army (Pahlen)

Exhaustion	[] [] [] []
3 rd Hussars Division (Rudinger) (M5, Light Cav) <i>Hussars Regt Grodno, Sum, Oriopol, Lubni</i>	[s] [s]
Cossack Regt Ilowaiski (M4, Light Cav Skirmishers)	[s]
Ulhans Regt Tschningev (M5, Light Cav, Lancers, Linear)	[s]
Jaegers Detachment (M5) <i>Detachments, Jaeger Regt 4 & 34</i>	[s]
Advance Guard horse artillery (M5, Field Horse Arty, Battery) <i>Half-Battery, 23th horse artillery battery</i>	[]