

THE BATTLE OF THEININGEN, 22-23 AUGUST 1796

# PRELUDE TO AMBERG

The War of the First Coalition had been raging for several years by the time the French Revolutionary armies crossed into the German Rhine territories in 1795. Despite initial successes, the French forces were driven back. Many of Napoleon's future Marshals came to the forefront during this campaign. Because of that, the campaign is sometimes referred to as 'a school for Marshals'.

By Eoghan Kelly

**T**he experiences in 1795 helped shape the plans for the Rhine campaign of 1796. Three armies were to advance on Vienna and cut it off from the rest of the Austrian-Hungarian empire, allowing the French to force recognition of its territory and the revolutionary government itself.

The army of the Rhine and Moselle, commanded by Jean Moreau, opposed the Austrian army of the Upper Rhine. To its north, the army of the Sambre and Meuse, under the command of Jean-Baptiste Jourdan, confronted the Austrian Army of the Lower Rhine. Napoleon himself advanced through Austrian possessions in the Po Valley.

In Italy, Bonaparte had an unexpectedly successful start to his campaign, and Austria was forced to send reinforcements, leaving the armies in Ger-

many significantly weakened. During the summer, French armies marched deeper into Bavaria, driving the Austrians before them. Until they saw an opportunity to combine their forces and focus on Jourdan.

Jourdan had camped around the city of Amberg, assuming the Austrians would be on the defensive after weeks of retreats and reversals. An Austrian reconnaissance of the situation demonstrated that Jourdan's rear was poorly protected. They left a screen to face Moreau, and massed reinforcements near Amberg. Recognising a threat against his right flank and his line of communications, Jourdan had sent Jean-Baptiste Bernadotte's division supported by cavalry to protect it.

On 22 August, Charles collided with the units under the command of Bernadotte. Some 9000 French soldiers faced Charles' Austrians who outnumbered them three to one.



Bernadotte recognised that he was facing a superior force and the need to delay the Austrian advance for as long as possible. He chose the village Theiningen as it offered an excellent defensible site with higher ground behind it. Masking his true numbers and using aggressive reconnaissance, he fooled the Austrians into thinking that they were facing a larger force, which made them cautious.

The Austrians sent successive waves forwards, but they were each repulsed. In frustration, the Austrians set light to the town to force the defenders out. It was very close, but eventually nightfall drew the battle to an end. Bernadotte's forces withdrew into the night. Throughout the following days, he kept harassing the pursuing Austrian forces and drew them away from Jourdan.

Thanks to Bernadotte's delay, Jourdan was able to execute a measured withdrawal. Knowing his full army could not get there in time, Archduke Charles hastened forward to take command of the available forces. At dawn on the 24th, he attacked Amberg.

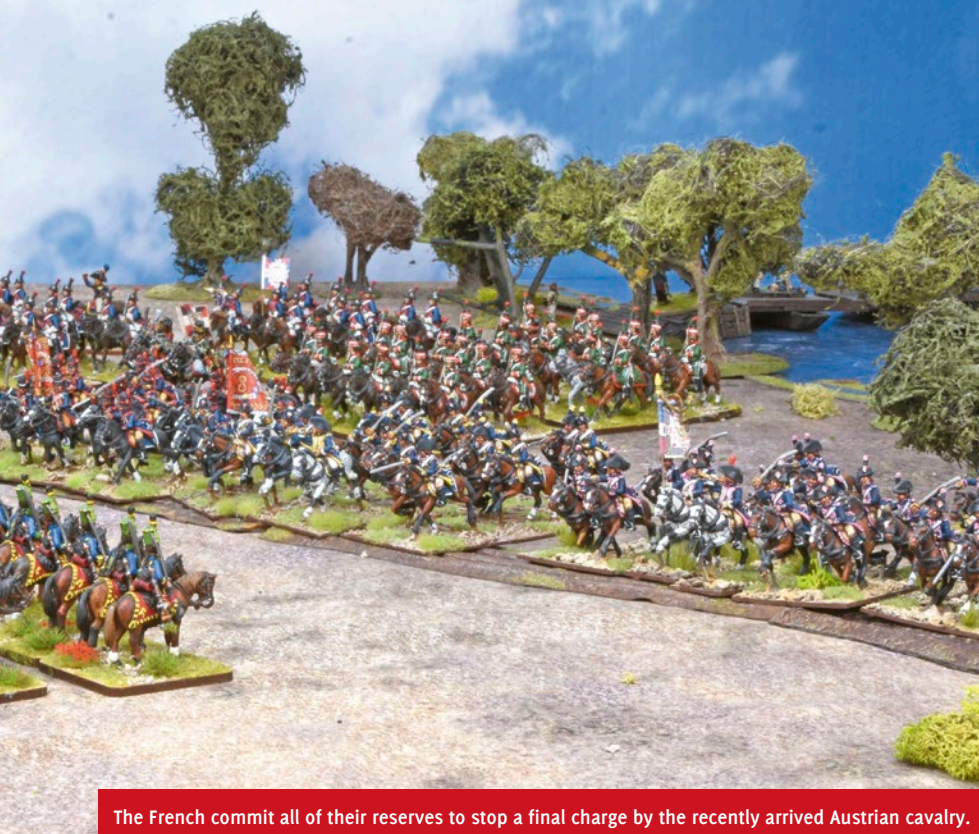
## GAMING THEININGEN

This scenario has been written with *Black Powder 2* in mind, although it should be

French General Bernadotte is shown charging the Austrian centre during the 1796 Battle of Theiningen.

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The French commit all of their reserves to stop a final charge by the recently arrived Austrian cavalry.

easy enough to adapt to any Napoleonic ruleset such as *Soldiers of Napoleon* or even *Chosen Men*. Simply treat each battalion, squadron, or battery as a single unit of the equivalent type in that system.

Set up the board with a road running from the middle of one short table edge to the other. Place in the first quarter of the table a river and a bridge where the road meets the river. Place a second crossing point on the river (a ford suitable for infantry); it can be either side of the bridge. The second quarter should be open fields. Place a village (Theiningen itself) in the third quarter straddling the road. Behind that (in the last quarter), set up a series of hills and higher ground. Any cannons on the higher ground may fire over the village.

Most of the board is open, but the odd copse or field will add to the aesthetics of the table.

### Deployment

The French forces may set up anywhere on the high ground (in the fourth quarter) or in the village. The Austrian first wave may start before the crossing points of the river in the first quarter. Successive waves enter from the table edge in the first quarter.



### Orders of battle

#### FRENCH

*General de Division Bernadotte*

#### Regiment 83<sup>ème</sup> Demi-Brigade d'Infanterie de Ligne

- 3 x Battalions of infantry
- 1 x Medium Gun battery (8 pdr)

#### 37<sup>ème</sup> Demi-Brigade d'Infanterie de Ligne

- 3 x Battalions of infantry
- 1 x Medium Gun battery (8 pounders)

#### Le 7<sup>e</sup> régiment de dragons

- 4x squadrons of dragons
- 1 x Light Gun battery (6 pdr)



More Austrian reinforcements arrive to push the French from Theiningen. Will they hold until nightfall?

General Bernadotte should be rated at leadership 9. The three brigade commanders should be rated as leadership 8.



### AUSTRIANS

The Austrians arrive in march column in successive waves. Austrian infantry battalions cannot use attack columns.

#### First wave

- 2x brigades of three battalions of infantry.

#### Second wave (arrives on turn 5)

- 2x brigades of three battalions of infantry.
- 1x Medium Gun battery

#### Third wave (arrives on turn 10)

- Two brigades of three battalions of infantry.
- 1x Medium Gun battery
- 1x Hussar brigade of four squadrons

The Austrians have no commander-in-chief. The brigade commanders should be rated as leadership 7 to 8. As there are more Austrian reinforcements coming, the Austrians will not break until all three successive waves are broken.

### Winning and losing

The French player will win if they manage to break all Austrian waves. The Austrians will win if they manage to break the French army and cause it to retreat from the field. **WS&S**