

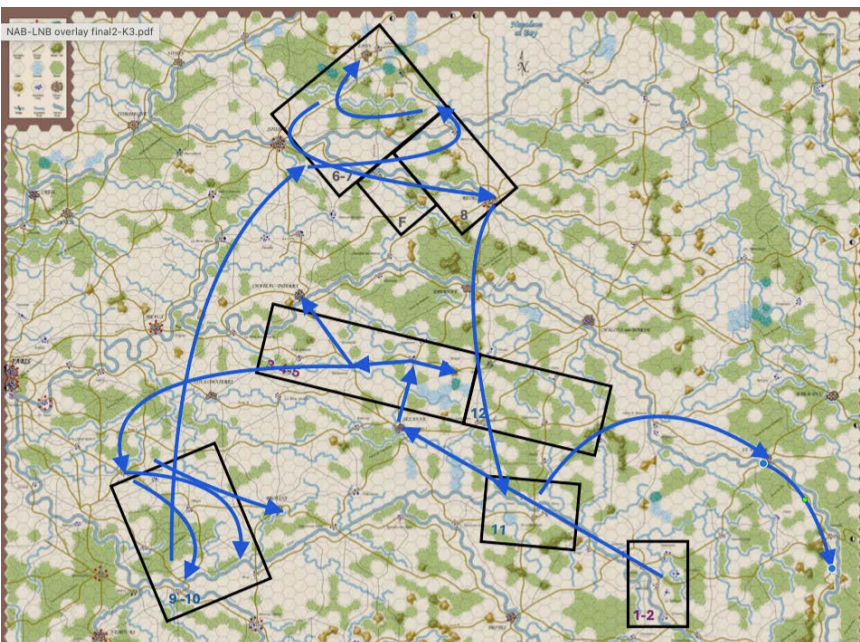
Consimworld Expo, 12-20 July 2024



Mill Street, Tempe

OSG SEMINARS

Using TLNB Games to Discover the 1814 Battles in France, Monday 7/15 5 PM



Join with OSG founder and designer Kevin Zucker in discussion of the 12 battles between Napoleon and the Coalition Armies of Bohemia and Silesia, tracing the flow of the battles on TLNB game maps and showing the key mistakes of both sides. Kevin will also be attending the morning session 1814 battles on Sunday and Monday. Players of those games will be invited to present to the seminar group their experiences.

Evolution of The Library of Napoleonic Battles, Monday 7/15 7:30 PM

Designer Kevin Zucker will provide a review of TLNB growth from early origins to grand-tactical system capable of simulating battles from 1794-1815. PLUS Overview of the five-year plan for the series.

Synopses of 1814 Battles

LA PATRIE EN DANGER

1. THE BATTLE OF BRIENNE

29-30 January 1814

Napoleon sought to prevent the advancing Armies of Silesia and Bohemia from uniting. He had failed to intercept Blücher's Army of Silesia at St. Dizier, catching only his rearguard, as Blücher reached Bar-sur-Aube. The Emperor then sent orders to concentrate several French divisions toward Brienne—including Mortier's Old Guard. Blücher, who had advanced to Brienne himself by that time, intercepted the Imperial dispatches, alerting him to the danger. He promptly withdrew the exposed VI Corps from near Lesmont. Napoleon began his assault on Brienne just as the VI Corps was arriving. Blücher's orders were to withdraw his army toward Trannes to unite with the Bohemian Army. He was, however, forced to accept battle, as Sacken's baggage trains were delayed on the muddy roads between Brienne and Dienville.

2. THE BATTLE OF LA ROTHÈRE

1 February 1814

After the Battle of Brienne, Napoleon expected Blücher to attempt a march on Paris and so maintained his position astride the enemy line of march. Instead the two Coalition armies had linked-up near Trannes. After holding the battlefield for a day to round-up enemy prisoners and the wounded of both sides, Napoleon decided to withdraw from the area, ordering a General Retreat. Ney had already set out through Brienne to Lesmont when the Emperor realized that Blücher's attack was imminent. He recalled Ney, intending to hold the villages on his extended front with infantry, filling the gaps with cavalry, until he could slip away under cover of night.

3. THE BATTLE OF CHAMPAUBERT

10 February 1814

Napoleon moved against the Prussian army, stretched out along the little Paris road. On 10 February, he caught General Olsufiev's 3690 Russians just south of Champaubert. The 30,000 advancing Frenchmen, including many raw conscripts, were supported by 120 cannons. Olsufiev decided to fight rather than retreat. After five hours of fighting, the Russians were surrounded by French cavalry, suffering over two thousand killed, wounded, and captured.

5. THE BATTLE OF MONTMIRAIL

11 February 1814

Blücher had ordered Sacken to return from the direction of Meaux and reunite with him near Champaubert. Sacken set out on the evening of the 10th from La Ferte. In order to break through the French position around

Montmirail, Sacken aimed his assault south of the high road at Marchais, to follow the banks of the Petit Morin, while Yorck attacked Montmirail from his left. Scherbatov's corps encountered obstinate resistance from Ricard's division in Marchais, finally capturing the village around 11 AM. Marshal Ney with the Young Guard attacked along the high road around 2 PM. As Vassilchikov's cavalry made contact with Yorck in Fontenelle, Sacken began shifting troops to the north. As darkness fell the Prussians still held Fontenelle but Marchais was wrested from Russian hands and the troops south of the high road were made prisoners.

5. THE BATTLE OF VAUCHAMPS

14 February 1814

With the return of Kapsevitch and Kleist from their *parade militaire*, Blücher was now in a position to intervene in events. He interpreted the stillness of Marmont's forces before him to mean that Napoleon was heading south against the Army of Bohemia. Napoleon heard of the Prussian advance at 3 AM on the 14th and ordered Ney, the II Cavalry Corps, Friant and Leval's fresh division to march east out of Montmirail. Marmont with Ricard's and Lagrange's divisions held west of Vauchamps, where he was attacked by Zieten at 10 AM. Blücher with Kapzevich and Pirch were still approaching from Champaubert.

NAPOLEON RETREATS

6. THE BATTLE OF CRAONNE

7 Mar 1814

The French Army was strung-out on the road from Berry-au-Bac, with troops arriving all morning. After 9 AM the first French batteries arrived on the plateau and opened fire. Marshal Ney then launched his attack—too soon—and was thrown back. Victor's troops reinforced him from the march. The 20-day wonders of Boyer de Rebeval's 9th Young Guard division, advancing in tightly-packed and unmaneuverable columns, were decimated by Russian guns.

By 1 PM Napoleon could finally launch a properly-coordinated attack. Fresh formations crossed the Hurtebise farm, backed up by a massed-battery of 72 guns. When it became clear that the turning movement had miscarried, Vorontsov had to fall back. His infantry squares took turns retiring in checkerboard fashion. Sacken sent forward Vassilchikov's cavalry to cover the retreat, and deployed a massed battery across the plateau, allowing Vorontsov to withdraw safely. After pursuing only 9 miles the French bivouacked toward the western end of the Chemin des Dames.

7. THE BATTLE OF LAON

9-10 Mar 1814

The pursuit after Craonne brought the French army well down the Chemin des Dames. Units were scattered over

a distance of 21 miles from Berry-au-Bac to L'Ange Gardien. They would have to advance on Laon by the Soissons road while Marmont marched by the Reims road. The Emperor believed Blücher was on the run and expected only a rearguard encounter. Having recovered Laon, he would use the hilltop position as a bulwark against further advances by the Silesian Army while he returned south to fall upon Schwarzenberg, summoning his garrisons to join him.

In the morning Ney's surprise coup de main on Laon was stopped cold by Russians at the village of Chivy; heavy fighting developed at the foot of the plateau. A thick blanket of fog concealed Napoleon's weakness and delayed Blücher's counter-attack, which he directed from a post in Laon (N0620).

8. THE BATTLE OF REIMS

13 Mar 1814

On the late afternoon of March 12th, the situation was grim at IHQ. French losses at Craonne and Laon had been prohibitive. Macdonald was falling back toward Paris, and Joachim Murat, in Italy, had just switched sides. Napoleon reorganized and looked for a way out.

A sudden opportunity arose with the news that Russian General Saint-Priest had captured Reims, re-establishing the vital link between the armies of Blücher and Schwarzenberg. About 25,000 French soldiers set off on a 30-mile hike from Soissons starting at 2AM. After 12 hours they approached the Coalition outposts in front of Reims.

Saint-Priest had carelessly deployed his 5,500 Russians and 2,500 Prussians forces. When his outposts reported the enemy, he dismissed it as an insignificant cavalry probe.

NAPOLEON'S END

9. THE BATTLE OF MORMANT

17 February 1814

The French army began its counteroffensive southeast of Paris, targeting a division of Russian advanced guard troops under Count Pahlen. The outnumbered Russians were enveloped and partly destroyed, only one in three escaping. Later in the day, a French column encountered an Austro-Bavarian rearguard at Valjouan, driving it behind the Seine.

10. THE BATTLE OF MONTEREAU

17-18 February

Württemberg's Corps took post in the hills north of the Seine, holding-off Victor's attacks all morning. In the afternoon the troops broke and fled toward the bridge behind them. Pajol's cavalry charged into their midst, capturing the spans over both the Seine and Yonne Rivers and seizing Montereau. Schwarzenberg began his retreat to Troyes.

11. THE BATTLE OF ARCIS-SUR-AUBE

20-21 March 1814

The walls were closing-in. Napoleon moved south again to interfere with Schwarzenberg's advance. Informed of the threat, the Generalissimo quickly pulled back to Troyes and Arcis-sur-Aube.

Upstream, at Plancy-l'Abbaye, a French force of 7,500 men crossed the Aube. To everyone's surprise, Schwarzenberg turned about and began concentrating his army while Wrede's Bavarians engaged at Arcis. The 20th of March was inconclusive, with the loss of 2,500 Coalition and 1,700 French troops. Napoleon prepared to pursue what he hopefully perceived as the enemy's rearguard.

In the morning light, the French advanced to behold not a rear-guard in flight, but 80,000 troops advancing in battle array. Only 48,000 of these troops were able to engage across a shrinking frontage of 10,000 yards, giving the French a chance to cross the river, losing another 1,700 killed and wounded, 3 guns and 800 prisoners; the Bavarians lost 2,300 casualties and their allies 700. Marching northeast out of Arcis-sur-Aube, the Emperor hoped to lure Schwarzenberg away from Paris by threatening his communications; this desperate ploy was exposed in a captured letter to Marie Louise.

12. THE BATTLE OF FERE-CHAMPENOISE

25 March 1814

Marmont and Mortier, with 18,884 men, were hurrying to join Napoleon. On the morning of the 25th, Marmont was attacked by Pahlen's advanced guard cavalry at Soudé Ste. Croix. The French had the advantage of numbers but assumed the Coalition infantry was close behind the cavalry.

The French soldiers managed to maintain an orderly retreat until a violent rainstorm fouled their muskets. They were steadily driven back and routed by a force of 14,889 cavalry, suffering 2,000 killed and wounded, 4,000 prisoners, 45 guns and 100 ammunition wagons.

At the same time a nearby supply convoy escorted by two French divisions of National Guards (4,300 men and 16 guns) under Pauthod, was attacked and wiped out. (Battle of Bannes.) Paris fell six days later.