

Subscribers to 'Strategy & Tactics' will be familiar with the game 'Napoleon at Waterloo' which is given away free to all new players. Many of them will also be aware that SPI have, in the last year, taken to publishing large numbers of so-called Quadrigames, sets of four games on a common theme, available either individually, in a card folio, or else as the complete set packaged in the familiar SPI plastic box. 'Napoleon at War' is a typical such Quadrigame, comprising the battles of Marengo, Jena-Auerstadt, Wagram and Leipzig; viz, the four most significant Napoleonic battles not already covered elsewhere in the SPI range.

The physical quality of the games is the usual SPI standard, with a 21" x 16" heavy paper board, and die-cut counters printed on 1/16" card. A significant improvement is the use of four colours instead of two for the printing of the map. No longer does a wood hex consist of a mess of blue cotton wool, merely because rivers are printed in blue; instead, woods come into their own right as messes of green cotton wool. It's surprising how much more attractive and easier to read the map becomes in consequence.

Before going on to discuss the games themselves, it behoves me to describe one or two of my private prejudices about boardgames in general. In my opinion, for what it is worth, a great deal of rubbish gets both talked and written about the hoary old chestnut of 'realism and playability'. The idea seems to be that, if the rules of a game are sufficiently complicated to make a game realistic, then ease and speed of play suffer, and that any published game represents some sort of compromise between these two opposing demands. This is not the case. There is, indeed, a conflict, but it is not realism which is at stake but detail. Realism, in the strict sense, can never be remotely approached by any wargame; there is no connection whatever between pushing little pieces of cardboard about in the comfort of one's living room, and the historical reality underlying the whole business.

And yet the publishers and players claim, with some validity, that 'Battle of Nations', say, can mirror the actual events of 1813, in that the players are called on to re-enact, over the board, certain command decisions made by the generals actually present at Leipzig itself. And it is further claimed, or hoped, that the subsequent fate befalling the game pieces can serve to indicate what would have happened to the actual armies in 1813, had they been given the same marching orders.

The majority of readers of this piece will be committed wargamers themselves, and will be long familiar with the uncanny way that the games have of turning out in the same way as the events they describe; but it never ceases to amaze me.

Therefore, I propose to discuss the 'Napoleon at War' set of games, not on the

usual grounds of realism and playability, but instead in terms of accuracy, detail and complexity. Let the reader note that these are entirely different concepts, bearing no relation at all to the first two.

Complexity is throughout kept to a minimum, and indeed its absence is one of the principal design features of the system; the designers set out from the start with simplicity in mind. This is achieved mainly by the scale chosen for the games; one counter represents about 1000 men, one hex anything between 1/4 and 1/2 mile, and one move equals roughly 1 1/2 hours. These decisions, as always, determine most of what follows in the rule book; with the scales chosen, little in the way of detailed game mechanics could be included. The whole ebb and flow of two hours of Napoleonic warfare, is reduced to a series of decisions about which local combat should be resolved first, and whether the victorious counter should then advance into a vacated hex in order to cut off someone else's retreat. This may be very exciting for the relative newcomer to the hobby, but I suspect that its only use among more seasoned campaigners will be to fill in the odd half-hour left over when some more challenging game finishes early.

We are touching here on one of the weaknesses of the 'vox pop' Feedback system used by SPI to test market response to proposed new titles. The obvious danger in the system, that minorities will continually be overruled, is fairly well coped with by the sheer volume of SPI production; but the statistics which SPI collect from their feedback cards are capable of more subtle misinterpretation. S&T magazine is continually claiming that 'people who like complex games do not like Napoleonic games'; hence their choice of an ultra-simple game system. I would bet my boots that a more complicated thing is happening to their results, namely that fans of complex games rate Napoleonic titles poorly because they are judging SPI's previous output, and not because of a lack of interest in The Emperor. It would be interesting to watch the fate of a more complicated grand-tactical game in this period; were SPI to produce one, they might well be surprised. A pointer in this direction is already provided by Game Designers' Workshop's offering 'Torgau', which has been extremely well received by the small number of aficionados who have come into contact with it. A redesigned 'Waterloo', say, at about the complexity level of 'Torgau' or slightly less, would appeal to a large number of gamers.

So much for complexity. On the score of accuracy, the four games under discussion fare much better. By accuracy here, I mean the tendency of the games to recreate the actual battle in miniature, along with such related matters as whether the outcome follows the historical one. Marengo is perhaps the weakest of the four. The actual battle was an incredible seesaw of a thing, with the First Consul taken completely by

# Napoleon



A review, and a  
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surprise by the Austrian attack in the morning, sent reeling back, and only regaining control with a desperate counterattack late in the afternoon. All this is covered in the game by a couple of special rules, one of which effectively forbids the French to attack anything on their first turn, while the other doubles the attack strength of the French army for a period of three moves (French player's choice) late in the game. The effect of these rules is indeed to produce a seesaw of a kind, but comparison of a typical game with a map of the actual battle in, say, Chandler's 'Campaigns of Napoleon' suggests that it's still not enough. A stream running across the map and passing close to Marengo itself, seems to provide in the game a more effective defence line than was actually the case.



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function at the operational level rather than the tactical, it is entirely appropriate that the players should be concentrating on these things, and not, as in many miniature games, being eternally bogged down with deciding whether the 999th Line Regt. ought to form square. In real life such decisions would be made perfectly well by the Colonel commanding the Regiment, who would not need to send back to Napoleon himself (i.e. the player) for instructions on the matter. In an operational level game, the proper place for such things is inside the vagaries of the Combat Results Table.

Jena-Auerstadt simulates both of the crucial battles of the 1806 campaign in a single game, with two battlefields displayed side by side and connected by a 'transit track' (an idea which seems to be borrowed from 'Bar Lev'). The Prussian player is given a choice between two reinforcement options; he can either send his entire army to Jena, or (historical choice) split it between the two. In the latter event, the holding force at Jena will undoubtedly be crushed by the main French army under Napoleon, but there is every possibility that Prussia can still save the day and the game by destroying Davout's Corps at Auerstadt. As in 1806, it is the Auerstadt battle which is crucial; and here again one feels the lack of a more subtle game system. Davout's Corps is represented by only ten counters; he suffers losses at the rather crude rate of 10% of his army at a time. On average, this may work out about right, but in a single play of the game the whole thing can hinge on a single lucky throw of the dice by the Prussian player. While the dice has a part to play in any properly regulated game, this seems a bit much.

All in all, Jena-Auerstadt would seem to have most to gain from an increase in complexity level; one would recommend that the number of counters could be doubled at least.

Battle of the Nations completes the set, and is probably the best game of the four. It uses more counters than any of the others, and is in fact the only one in which the set of 100 counters includes no blanks (Marengo uses fewer than 60 counters all told). As at Wagram, the simple game system seems again to be an advantage, as the situation abounds in strategic problems which are by no means easy to solve, and tactical matters only intrude, instead of being the order of the day, as at Auerstadt. Three scenarios are provided, of which by far the best is the Grand Battle game; the French have the opportunity of crushing the Austrian army to the South of them, but are continually frustrated in their attempts to get to grips with them, by an increasing pressure from a mixed bag of Russians, Prussians, and Swedes to the North. The slightest mistake in deploying his forces between these two fronts, and the French face disaster. All excellent stuff.

Regarded as a whole, the package suffers from a few defects which are probably

inevitable consequences of the standardisation imposed. The variation in size from the smallest battle (Marengo) to the largest (Leipzig) is rather too great for comfort; in the event, it is the larger battles which succeed best as simulations. Jena and Marengo definitely need more detail to do them justice. However, in the event that SPI's interpretation of their Feedback results is correct, the package will no doubt rightly be welcomed by those gamers who prefer simple Napoleonic games to such things as 'Starforce' and 'Dixie'!

One other addition may serve to complete the set. In fact, the field of Wagram was fought over twice in the space of six weeks; the game provided being the second, larger, and the decisive one of the two. It is, however, quite a straightforward matter to use the board and counters from 'Wagram' to recreate the earlier battle also. I therefore take leave to present, in my best approximation of a SPI rules folder:

## Aspern — Essling

Surprise Attack, May 21-22, 1809

### (12.0) Introduction

Aspern is a fifth scenario for the 'Napoleon at War' quadrigame published by SPI. It simulates the surprise attack on the French army of Napoleon, by the Austrian army under the Archduke Charles, May 21, 1809. The game uses the board, and certain of the counters, of the game 'Wagram'.

### (13.0) Initial Deployment Chart

#### (13.1) French Army

Hex	Strength/type	Designation
0809	6-4	Moli
0808	3-6c	Lasa
0810	6-4	Legr
0813	6-4	Boud
0714	8-4a	2/IV
0611	8-4a	1/IV
0412	2-6c	Grou
On Lobau Island:	6-6c	Res
	10-1a	1/Res
	10-1a	2/Res
	10-1a	3/Res
	8-4a	II
	1-6c	Colb
	6-4	StCy

#### (13.2) Austrian Army

Hex	Strength/type	Designation
1205	6-4	3/1
1306	7-4	1/1
1307	7-4	2/1
1505	9-4a	1
2211	3-6c	2/Res
2213	3-6c	1/Res
2215	6-4	1/Res
2313	3-6c	3/Res
2315	6-4	2/Res
2413	6-4a	Res
2417	9-4a	IV
2513	1-6c	1/II
2613	9-4	1/II
2714	8-4	2/II
2813	8-4	3/II
2914	9-4a	II
2517	6-4	3/IV
2518	6-4	1/IV
2618	6-4	2/IV
2719	1-6c	IV

Wagram seems to work out much better. Once again, a stream proves crucial, on this occasion the Russbach. The French, having deployed across the Danube, spend most of the game battering at this line, which is made all the stronger as a defensive position by being both heavily wooded, and impassable to artillery. Here, however, the feature is a definite plus for the game, since that is precisely what happened. In this game, the simple mechanics are shown functioning at their best, as they do not intrude while the players are concerning themselves with strategic decisions concerning the precise timing and strength of the Austrian attack on the French left flank, and the strength of the French force which must be diverted from the assault on the Russbach in order to meet it. Since the game is intended to

Continued overleaf



## Napoleon at War Continued

### (13.3) Player Sequence

The Austrian player moves first in each game turn.

### (14.0) Reinforcements

Cases 14.1 - 14.4 of the game 'Wagram' stand unchanged.

### (14.5) French Reinforcements

Game Turn 2 on Lobau Island:

3-4 YoGd 5-4 OIGd 10-4a Gd 4-6cGd

Game Turn 5 on Lobau Island:

9-4 Thar 6-4 Demo 8-4 DHil 9-4Clap

French reinforcements enter the South edge of the map, anywhere between hexes 0110 & 0115 incl.

### (14.6) Austrian Reinforcements

Game Turn 1, enter on hex 2905

6-4 1/VI 6-4 2/VI 6-4 3/VI 2-6c VI 9-4a VI

### (14.7) Game Length

Aspern is 11 game turns in length; turns 4 and 5 are night turns. Use the Wagram time record track from Turn 2 to Turn 12 inclusive.

### (15.0) Special Rules

The Wagram special rules 15.1 - 15.3 are all in force.

(15.4) The Austrian army is not able to voluntarily reduce combat odds; i.e. Standard Game Rule 7.9 is suspended for the Austrian.

### (16.0) Demoralisation

When an army becomes demoralised, it loses its ability to advance after combat.

### (16.1) Demoralisation Levels

(16.11) The Austrian army becomes demoralised when its losses reach a total of 20 combat points.

(16.12) The French army becomes demoralised when its losses reach 50 combat points.

### (17.0) Victory Conditions

Victory is determined at the end of the game by Victory Points.

1) The French player scores one point for every Austrian combat point eliminated.

2) The Austrian player scores ½ point for every French combat point eliminated.

3) The Austrian player scores 25 points if the French are completely driven back to Lobau.

4) The French score 15 points if they still occupy either Aspern or Essling at the end of the game.

They score 30 points for both villages. Occupation is defined to mean that a French counter actually occupies a hex of the village concerned, and that this occupying counter can trace a line of communication to hex 0110. This line of communication may not pass through enemy units, or through enemy zones of control unless these are occupied by friendly units; i.e. friendly units negate enemy zones of control for this purpose (and only this purpose).

At the conclusion of Game Turn 11, any unit which cannot trace a valid line of communication is eliminated. Austrian units trace their l.o.c. to hex 2905, French units to hex 0110.

### (18.0) Designer's Notes

The purpose of 'Aspern' is fairly clear; it seemed a pity to have the map and counters set up for a battle, and not include it, particularly as the units are the same ones, identification and all, who fought at Wagram six weeks later. Justification of some of the special rules would seem to be in order. The low Austrian demoralisation level signifies an extremely low morale in the Austrian army at this time, and an unwillingness to believe that anyone could take on Napoleon and win. The Austrians nevertheless did win at Aspern-Essling, hence their considerably higher morale at Wagram six weeks later.

The geographical victory conditions should be reasonably self-evident; the French want to maintain a bridgehead on the North bank of the Danube, while the Austrians wish to deprive them of it. The rationale behind the pro-French bias in the casualty points is threefold. It represents a) an attempt to make for an evenly balanced game b) the argument that the Austrians must succeed here in a big way if they are to have any chance at all in the forthcoming replay at Wagram, and c) some discreet Imperial propaganda in the published casualty lists.

Even with these attempts to even the situation, Aspern is admittedly a less balanced game than the other members of the set. My only apology is that it seemed such a pity not to include it.

## ROMAN INITIAL STRATEGY in the 2nd PUNIC WAR

Dave Mylie

At the opening of the 2nd Punic War scenario, the Roman player is at a distinct disadvantage. The Carthaginian is strong in troops and leaders and Hannibal is poised to strike at the heart of the Roman Republic. For the Romans to win, they must first of all weather the initial Carthaginian assault. At the start the Romans have a slight edge in areas controlled but this advantage will certainly be wiped out by the end of the first turn.

If the Carthaginian player is to win he must strike hard and fast at the Roman heartland in Italy. Hannibal to hex no.2302 and from there into Northern Italy is a must on the first turn. Any delay on Hannibal's part gives the Romans time to recover. As the Carthaginian starts with the initiative he will surely try to retain it and the best way to do that is to keep the Roman off balance and on the strategic defensive. The Roman starts with four armies and one leader in Cisalpine Gaul but placing them in Placentia or Ravenna allows Hannibal to freely enter Italy. Placing them in hex 2402 forces the Carthaginian to fight or suffer attrition twice in the Alps. If Hannibal leaves one army in Tarraco and one in Emporiae in order to control those regions, he will have eight armies when he enters hex no.2302, he must therefore fight at 1-1 or 1-2 odds depending on his Alpine attrition. At 1-2, even the most favorable combat result for Hannibal will leave a Roman army in the hex. At 1-1, only a die roll of six will eliminate the Roman force, the important point here being that as long as there is a Roman force

in hex no.2402, Hannibal will be unable to move his troops from that hex without suffering attrition. The Romans must delay Hannibal on the first turn and the best way to do this is to force him to fight.

The Romans need armies to survive. If they move their fleets from Massilia to hex no. 1804 they will be out of supply but this allows for two more armies to be raised. If he also moves the Sicilian fleets out of supply, he gains another four armies. A possible alternative for these units is to move them together with two armies across to Zeugitana and from there to Hippo Regius. This would depend on the Carthaginian set up - if his fleets are in Carthage, the Roman fleets would suffer attrition once in hex no.2815. If the Carthaginian sets up in hex no.2716, the Roman would suffer attrition twice in hexes 2815 and 2715. Even if the Romans suffer 50% attrition in both hexes, their armies would still make it to Africa. This must at best be regarded as a strategic diversion but it may prove effective however as Carthage cannot ignore Roman control of the Massaesylii Kingdom. The resultant campaign in North Africa will prove to be more of a drain on the Carthaginian treasury than the Roman and is therefore a valid Roman move. Every army built by Carthage in Africa is one less for Hannibal and Spain.

In Italy as many towns and cities as possible should be garrisoned on the first turn to prevent Hannibal from easily gaining control of any region. As Hannibal can raise at the most two armies per turn in Italy the Roman player must try to eliminate at least two enemy armies per year in order to limit Hannibal's strength. Rome must avoid a pitched battle with Hannibal (Fabius) and

slowly build up their strength in Italy. It will not be possible to defeat Hannibal early on but it may be possible to contain him and limit his gains to a minimum.

The Roman armies in Massilia should be moved to Valentia during the first turn as control of Gaul is preferable to control of Massilia. The Romans will then have to contest Gaul and Spain for as long as possible to deny Carthage the treasury points. A direct strike at New Carthage should be borne in mind if the opportunity presents itself as this kind of spoiling attack will cause the Carthaginian considerable embarrassment.

One thing the Roman must pray for is the early arrival of Scipio. However, should he be sent to Gaul or Italy? If he is placed in Gaul he will give the Romans an edge in leadership although he will still be heavily outnumbered in terms of armies. If he is placed in Italy he will neutralise Hannibal. If Scipio can besiege Hannibal, the Carthaginian will effectively be removed from play, for a while at least. Hannibal will not be able to leave the siege without fighting and maybe sacrificing his army. Scipio could of course move away from the siege at the start of his turn and return at the end of it. If Scipio is trapped in similar manner by Hannibal, the Carthaginian would not be able to raise any troops that turn as troops can only be raised in a friendly controlled city.

The first half dozen turns of Punic Wars should see a finely balanced game, the Romans must neutralise Hannibal before the Carthaginians gain undisputed control of Spain and Gaul. If they can achieve this they should be able to take the offensive which will lead to eventual victory.