

THE FIRST BATTLE OF YPRES

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The Second Phase (23~25 Oct. 1914)

A Mini-Campaign Scenario for SPI's 'SOLDIERS'

The First Battle of Ypres was the final attempt by the Germans to break through the Allies and take the Channel ports before the end of 1914. The Germans had several new Reserve Divisions that could be used in such an assault. These divisions were made up largely of enthusiastic young soldiers whose tactics were outmoded by the machine-gun and magazine rifle. They were thrown against the Allied line along with the rest of the German forces, much of the heaviest fighting being around the Ypres salient. The first phase was relatively fluid (Oct. 18-21) but thereafter the British and French formed a defensive line that withstood all attempts to break it until early November, when the battle came to an end (see Soldiers, Scenario 10 - 'Fromelles'). The battle heralded the end of the open warfare which is the subject of Soldiers. Total casualties for both sides were 250,000 men and it was effectively the last battle of the regular British Expeditionary Force, the "Old Contemptibles".

This scenario of course does not cover the whole battle, it deals only with the area directly around Ypres during a few days at the start of the main battle. A German decisive victory does not signal victory in the battle as a whole, although it would certainly suggest it as possible. The advantage of such a game is that, unlike the ordinary scenarios, it enables a player to plan moves that time would otherwise render impossible, such as a total change of emphasis in attack after enemy units have been drawn elsewhere. I must, of course, stress that it is only a poor approximation of the action, but I think it should stand up to criticism if it is borne in mind that it is primarily a game. As such it perhaps marginally favours the Allies but a German victory, given intelligent use of reinforcements, is a distinct possibility. The unit scale has naturally been changed, a company now representing between one and two battalions.

ORDERS OF BATTLE:-

GERMAN—
53 infantry companies, 3 M.G. companies, 4 M.G. platoons, 1 horse-M.G. section, 12 cavalry squadrons, 13 field gun batteries, 5 howitzer batteries.

Enter board as follows:-
At least 20% from Southern Edge, West of Railway.
At least 40% from Western Edge, MOVE FIRST

FRENCH—
15 infantry companies, 3 M.G. sections, 4 cavalry squadrons, 3 field gun batteries.

BRITISH—
12 infantry companies, 3 M.G. sections, 4 cavalry squadrons, 4 field gun batteries, 1 howitzer battery.

Deploy first as follows:-
French-anywhere N/E of or in "U", "L", "P", "60" and South of "B".
British-anywhere N/E of or in "U", "E", "40".

Allies may all begin game in Improved Positions and may have 5 Trenches.

GAME LENGTH:-

3 days of 12 turns each, plus 2 Night Phases.

SPECIAL RULES:-

(1) **NIGHT PHASES** —
After each day there is a Night Phase. During this phase units and reinforcements may be moved anywhere on or off the board (and placed in I/Ps) with the following restrictions:

(a) All units in cover must be 1 hex away from the enemy. All units in the open must be out of M.G./Rifle range of the enemy.

To operate this the allied player sets up first. He must only obey the above instructions when setting up units moved in the Night Phase. Stationary units may remain within range of Germans if these are within range of Allied units; the onus is then on the German to withdraw any such units when he moves. A unit that could only move into another enemy fire zone and is already within one remains stationary and MUST enter an I/P, or begin the next day dispersed in the enemy (Allied) phase. There is no combat in the Night Phase.

(b) No French unit may be moved North of Ypres ("B") during the Night Phase.

(2) **REINFORCEMENT SCHEDULE** —
Every night the players receive reinforcements before the Night Phase. These are determined in percentage of losses suffered the previous day, after throwing a die.

German	French	British
75%-1, 2	50%-1, 2	25%-1, 2, 3
60%-3, 4, 5	30%-3, 4, 5	20%-4, 5, 6
50%-6	20%-6	

Modifications:
Add 1 after Day 2.

Subtract 1 from French if Germans control "P", "L", "60" or any part of Polygon Wood ("E", "A" or "F").
Subtract 1 from British if Germans control any part of Polygon Wood or "40".
For reinforcements round up infantry fractions, round down others. However, 20% of 4 artillery batteries can be 2 field gun platoons, the same holds true for M.G. companies.

(3) **EMERGENCY REINFORCEMENTS** —
If the French no longer control any two of "P", "L" or "60" they receive 6 infantry companies, 1 M.G. section, 1 gun battery and 2 cavalry squadrons after a die throw. 1 = arrive one move later, 2, 3, 4 = 2 moves later, 5, 6 = 3 later.

Should the Germans control all of Polygon Wood the British receive 3 infantry companies, 1 M.G. section and 1 gun battery after 1 = 1 move, 2, 3 = 2, 4, 5 = 3, 6 = 4.

(4) **OFF-BOARD ARTILLERY** —
German field artillery may be placed 1 hex off the board and treated as howitzers. They must conform to all howitzer conditions (strike = 9). True howitzers may not fire in this fashion. Off-board artillery may never be fired upon.

(5) All German units must use the Reserve Units rule.

(6) The German player requires more counters than are available in Soldiers. To make up for this, use Belgian infantry as Germans and both Belgian and Austro-Hungarian artillery. Belgian 77mms may retain their strike of 11.

TERRAIN MODIFICATIONS:-

Ignore the canal (treat as a road) and its bridges. The railway must now be treated as a canal. There are four bridges over it, wherever it is crossed by a road.

VICTORY CONDITIONS:-

Victory conditions are evaluated after Day 3 and there is no third Night Phase. To control a feature there must be no undispersed Allied units present and any dispersed must be outnumbered 2-1 with at least one German unit adjacent to each. Cavalry remounts never count as units. German decisive victory = control of "B" + all Polygon Wood.. German tactical victory = control of either "B" or Polygon Wood.
German marginal victory = control of "F"/"A", "F"/"E" or "E"/"A".
British decisive victory = failure of Germans to achieve victory + control of 1 hex (undispersed) in both "B" and Polygon Wood (i.e. at least two hexes) + less than 20 German units on the board.
British tactical victory = as decisive but 21-45 Germans on board.
British marginal = as decisive but 46-60.
Any other results than these = a draw.

ERRATA:-

Order of Battle — Cavalry may enter/set up mounted or dismounted except for French, that must start the game mounted (so must their cavalry reinforcements). Dismounted cav. coming onto the board may leave their remounts off and still count as whole units.

Special Rules — Night Phase — To clarify this point; Allied units that MOVE may not be placed within German fire range. However, NO German unit may begin the next day within Allied fire range UNLESS it cannot move, in which case it disperses or enters I/P.

Special Rules — Reinforcements — destroyed cavalry remounts do not count towards reinforcements. Destroyed mounted or dismounted cavalry do.

Special Rules — Off-board artillery — Once artillery is designated as 'off-board' it cannot be brought on the board that day. Whilst off it cannot be used to reduce a British level of victory.

Special Rules — Night Phase — If after any Allied move phase both players mutually agree, a Night Phase may follow and that day will have come to an end. To do this of course the German player could simply retire from the board, thus forcing his opponent's hand. Remember that units withdrawn in daytime may not return until the next Night Phase.

