

VARIANT

EXPANDED SIMPLICITY

An Enhancement of the Eylau/Napoleon at Waterloo System

by John B. Best

Although it may seem contrary to its purpose, one can't resist "complexifying" a simple game system. Everyone has a different sense of what is too simple or too abstracted to be realistic. And so we synthesize a new slightly more complex system out of the plain-Jane base. Or in this case should I say plain Jeanne? — Redmond

The *Napoleon at Waterloo* (NAW) combat system is justifiably celebrated. At the operational level, the system gives a great feel for the ebb and flow of combat and the ponderous movement of huge masses of soldiers. And yet, the NAW system accomplishes this with a very low level of complexity. Perhaps because of its simplicity, the system invites tinkering. Generally modifications involve tailoring the system to simulate the characteristics of specific historical periods and/or adding chrome to make the system seem a little more "funky."

What's presented here is another modification to the NAW system as it appears in one of its most recent incarnations: *Napoleon's Art of War*.

This alteration of the system represents an attempt to capture just a little bit more of the tactical feel of the Napoleonic landscape while retaining as much as possible the playability and clarity of the basic system. Of course, this alteration represents a compromise: play will be slowed down a tad and the tactical touches are not going to lure anyone away from *Ney vs. Wellington*. Simply put, the idea here was to take a basic game and add a few more of the things that made the system so delightful in the first place, namely "feel" and excitement.

The rules that follow are specifically intended as a modification of the *Eylau* rules; only those rules directly altered are included here. For that reason it's best to have a copy of the *Eylau* rules, although grognards may be familiar enough with the NAW system to get by without a copy. Original rules that are not contravened herein are intended to remain in force as they are written in *Strategy & Tactics* nr. 75.

Players will need one additional element to play the game: current strength chits such as those found in *Bataille de la Moscova* or *Gettysburg '77*. Would-be players who don't possess either of these games may resort to an expedient that is now all but forgotten: mounting your own counters. Simply rule a "neutral" colored piece of paper into a number of 1/2-inch squares. Fill in the squares with numbers ranging from 1 to

whatever the largest combat strength in that particular game is. It's desirable to make proportionally more 1's, 2's, and 3's because these numbers reflect the strength losses that are more likely to occur. After filling in the squares (a total of 60-70 counters should be sufficient), affix the piece of paper to a light cardboard backing using rubber cement for this purpose. After the cement is dry, cut the counters with scissors or a paper cutter. Voila! You now have a set of "current strength markers."

The modification to the standard rules is presented next. Following the rules, there will be a short explanation of the "whys and wherefores" and a perspective on the likely outcomes.

[3.0] BASIC PROCEDURE

Sequence of Play

The players take turns moving their units and making attacks. The order in which they take these actions is described in this Sequence of Play outline. One completion of the Sequence of Play is called a Game-Turn. Each Game-Turn consists of two Player-Turns. Each Player-Turn consists of several phases.

FIRST PLAYER-TURN:

Cavalry Movement Phase. The first player may move his cavalry units and bring in cavalry reinforcements. He may move as many or as few cavalry units as he wishes, one after the other, within the limitations of the rules of movement.

Second Player's Defensive Artillery Phase.

The second player may attack enemy cavalry units that are adjacent to his own artillery units. The second player may ignore any and all adverse combat results in carrying out these defensive artillery attacks against enemy cavalry units.

First Player's Cavalry Combat Phase. The first player's undisrupted cavalry units must attack some adjacent enemy unit. He may perform these cavalry charges in any order he wishes, applying the results immediately as each attack is made.

First Player's Non-Cavalry Unit Movement Phase. The first player may move his infantry and artillery units and bring in infantry and artillery reinforcements. The same stipulations of the first player's Cavalry Movement Phase apply here.

Second Player's Defensive Artillery Phase.

The second player may attack enemy infantry and artillery units that are adjacent to his own artillery units. The second player may ignore any and all adverse combat results in carrying out these defensive artillery attacks against enemy infantry and artillery units.

First Player's Infantry and Artillery Combat Phase.

The first player's undisrupted infantry and artillery units must attack some enemy unit if they are adjacent to any unit at the beginning of this phase. The first player may carry out these attacks in any order he wishes, applying results immediately as each attack is made.

First Player's Second Cavalry Movement Phase.

The first player may move his cavalry units again. He may move as many or as few cavalry units as he wishes, one after the other, within the limitations of the rules of movement.

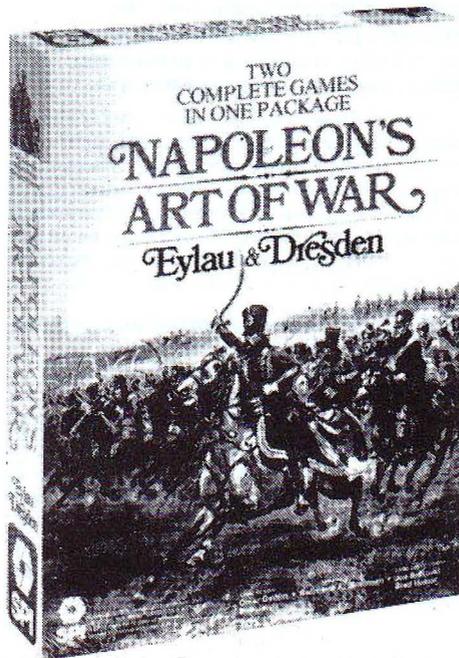
Disruption Removal Phase. The first player inverts all disrupted units, indicating that these units have returned to a fully functioning status.

SECOND PLAYER-TURN

Steps 1 through 8 are duplicated with the second player substituted for the first player.

[4.4] Some units may end their Movement Phase stacked together in the same hex as another friendly unit.

One or more units may move through a hex containing another friendly unit. In some cases units may end their movement stacked together with another friendly unit. Units may stack *only* in an enemy Zone of Control (see 4.5). Units which do not end their Movement Phase in an enemy Zone of Control may not be stacked. Cavalry units may stack only with other friendly cavalry units. At the end of their movement, infantry and artillery units may stack in any combination. The stacking limit is two combat units. "Informational counters" (e.g., fresh strength markers, disruption, leader, or current status counters) do not count against the stacking limit.



[4.5] An infantry or artillery unit must stop upon entering a hex that is the Zone of Control of an enemy unit.

Whenever a non-cavalry unit enters a hex that is directly adjacent to any of the enemy player's units, the moving unit must stop and move no further that phase. The six hexes surrounding a unit constitute that unit's Zone of Control (these hexes are considered "controlled" by the unit).

A non-cavalry unit may not move so long as it is in an enemy controlled hex. Only by freeing itself through a combat result may a non-cavalry unit escape the "freezing" effect of any enemy Zone of Control.

Cavalry units are not affected by enemy Zones of Control for movement purposes. When a cavalry unit enters an enemy controlled hex, it is *not* required to stop and may continue moving through and beyond the enemy unit's Zone of Control. Cavalry units continue to exert Zones of Control on enemy infantry and artillery units. A cavalry unit may leave or move through the Zone of Control of an enemy unit at the beginning of either of its Movement Phases. It need not free itself through combat.

[5.1] A unit that is in an enemy Zone of Control must attack.

All units which end their movement in enemy Zones of Control, whether they stack with another unit or not, "commit" themselves to making an attack. Players are *not* necessarily required to attack every enemy unit to which they have become adjacent during movement, but every unit that ends its Movement Phase in an enemy Zone of Control must make an attack on at least one enemy unit in the ensuing Combat Phase. (Note: The exception to this general rule occurs at the end of the second Cavalry Movement Phase. At this time cavalry units may end their movement in an enemy Zone of Control without performing a subsequent attack since there is no ensuing Combat Phase in this instance).

[6.3] The abbreviations on the Combat Results Table will indicate that units are either eliminated, unaffected, retreated, lose strength points, or are disrupted.

Each result on the Combat Results Table is divided in two. The result to the left of the slash indicate results that pertain to the attacking or phasing player. Similarly the result to the right of the slash are the results that pertain to the defender or non-phasing player. Note: For purposes of defensive artillery fire *only*, the non-phasing player is considered the "attacker."

E = the indicated player loses all units that participated in that combat.

D = the indicated player must "disrupt" each and every unit that participated in that combat. "Disruption" is indicated by flipping the affected units over. Disrupted units may not enter an enemy Zone of Control; they may not attack adjacent enemy units. Furthermore, disrupted artillery units may not bombard enemy units, nor may they fire at enemy units during the defensive artillery phases. Disrupted units have their Movement Allowance halved (fractions rounded down) and their Combat Strength halved if they are the object of an attack. Disrupted units retain their Zones of Control and they *do* count towards the two unit stacking limit. The effects of disruption upon friendly units end at the conclusion of each friendly Player-Turn.

R = the indicated player must retreat all units that participated in that combat. These retreated units are forced to retreat one hex away from the enemy

COMBAT RESULTS TABLE

DIE-ROLL	COMBAT RATIO (Attacker to Defender)									
	1-5	1-4	1-3	1-2	1-1	2-1	3-1	4-1	5-1	6-1
1	1RD/1	1/1	1/1	-/1R	-/1R	-/1RD	-/1RD	-/1RD	-/E	-/E
2	2RD/1	1R/1	1/1	1/1	1/1R	1/1R	1/1RD	-/1RD	-/2RD	-/E
3	2RD/-	1RD/-	1R/1	1/1	1/1	1/1R	1/1R	1/RD	-/2RD	-/2RD
4	2RD/-	2RD/-	1R/-	1R/1	1/1	1/1	1/R	1/1R	1/2R	-/2RD
5	E/-	2RD/-	1RD/-	1RD/-	1R/-	1R/1	1R/1	1/R	1/1R	1/1RD
6	E/-	E/-	2RD/-	2RD/-	1RD/-	1RD/-	1R/1	1R/1	1/1	1/1R

Results to the left of the slash apply to the attacking units; results to the right of the slash apply to the defender.

Key: **R** = Affected unit(s) must retreat one hex. **D** = Affected unit(s) is disrupted. **E** = Affected unit(s) is eliminated. **1,2** = Number of Combat Strength Points lost by one of the affected units. **-** = No effect.

units. *Phasing* infantry and cavalry units may advance into a hex vacated by the retreating of a defending, non-phasing unit. Up to two such victorious units may advance into the vacated hex.

1, 2 = the indicated player must lose the indicated number of Combat Strength Points from one of his attacking/defending units. If more than one unit is attacked, or defended, the owning player decides how to allocate the loss (i.e., he decides which unit will take the reduction in Combat Strength). If a unit's Combat Strength is reduced to zero, then the unit is eliminated. Combat Strength losses are permanent and cumulative. To show that a given unit has taken losses, place a Current Strength chit under the unit in question. This chit should show the number of Strength Point losses that are to be *subtracted* from the Combat Strength printed on the unit's face. **Example:** A Russian brigade with a printed strength of 8 takes a "1" result on the Combat Result Table. A "1" chit from their pool is placed under the Russian brigade. The brigade's Current Strength is now 7 (8-1=7). Further losses increase the number on the Current Strength chit that is then *subtracted* from the unit's face value. In essence, then, the Current Strength chit functions like a negative number. Once a unit has taken losses, its new Combat Strength is used in the same way as its old printed strength.

- = no effect. The indicated unit(s) is not affected by its participation in combat.

[6.5] When the only "safe" hex is occupied by a friendly unit, the retreating unit may stack with that unit even if this violates the previously mentioned stacking prohibitions.

Cavalry units may stack with infantry and artillery units; however, the retreating unit must unstack at the earliest opportunity. There is *no* limit to the number of units that may retreat onto a safe hex in this fashion; however, if the safe hex is attacked before the retreating units have an opportunity to detach themselves, then the retreating units suffer all adverse combat results.

[6.6] When a hex is vacated as a result of combat, up to two victorious participating units may advance into the hex.

Such an advance as a result of combat is an option which must be exercised immediately before going on to resolve any further combat in that phase. A unit is never forced to advance after combat. A unit *may* advance into an enemy-controlled hex (even when advancing directly from an enemy-controlled hex). Artillery may *never* advance after combat.

EYLAU EXCLUSIVE RULES

[23.1] Each player is awarded one victory point for each enemy Combat Strength Point eliminated.

Note that bonus points (fresh strength and divisional integrity) are not considered in this calculation. For units that have lost Combat Strength Points through combat, each point lost from the unit's original strength is counted as an eliminated Strength Point.

[24.0] ARMY DEMORALIZATION

GENERAL RULE:

Each of the opposing armies has a Morale Level representing their spirit and elan. Losses have an adverse effect on this willingness to fight. If losses reach critical proportions the army is said to be demoralized.

PROCEDURE:

Both players keep track of their losses on a separate sheet of paper. If, at any point during a given Game-Turn, the total number of Combat Strength Points lost equals or exceeds the number indicated on the Demoralization Table, then that particular army is said to be *demoralized*. An army may recover from demoralization in later Game-Turns if its Strength Point losses fall below the levels indicated on the Demoralization Table. Both the French and Allied forces may undergo and recover from demoralization several times during any one game.

Example: On Game-Turn 6, a French attack has just eliminated a Russian brigade with the result that the Russians have now lost a total of 37 Combat Strength Points. This exceeds the 35 Strength Point limit listed in the Demoralization Table for the Russians on that turn. The Allied Army (Prussians included) is now immediately demoralized for the remainder of Game-Turn 6, and the effects of demoralization apply to them. If, by the beginning of Game-Turn 7, the Allies sustain no further casualties, they will recover from demoralization because the new limit is 45 Combat Strength Points for that turn. So, either (or both) armies might begin a turn in "normal" morale status, become demoralized through combat losses, and then recover on the subsequent turn. The demoralization of one army in no way precludes the demoralization of the opposing army. Both armies may become demoralized and recover during the course of the game.

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Despite the titles, the abilities have real effects on the character's play and differentiate the character's player from the "joes" who accompany him.

Once up into the "Major Novel" hero class (two ranks above TV hero) he may choose to use the Miraculous Escape Matrix once per mission, immediately after learning the results of a combat. The player rolls two dice and cross-references the results on the matrix to obtain an escape — a predictably tongue-in-cheek result such as "meteorite strikes enemy man," "enemy man falls for the old 'Look, It's Halley's Comet Trick,'" "sentry trips over untied shoelace" and "bullet strikes commando's lucky charm." But no matter what it reads, the results are the same: miraculous escape from imminent doom (unless of course the unlucky sod rolls 1,1 or 6,6 in which case he takes the wound points due). It comes as a bit of surprise that the thin humor does not detract from the game but rather adds to it...perhaps because so little flavor otherwise colors the role-playing section.

Another desolate area in the rules is the between-mission status of the commando and his team. While a character may heal wounds, increase certain characteristics, and practice skills, the process is boringly mechanical and without any role-playing flavor. The same may be said of the rules for the perpetuation of the fire-team (assuming you have a team you want to keep together... but what would happen if Sgt. Fury changed cronies each comic?) along with the rules on aging and retirement. The designer seems to have stopped short in his efforts, providing us with a fairly complete game for simulating missions but not providing us with a system by which to give life to the characters performing those missions. It becomes incumbent on the players to fill in the blanks in order to complete the game in the manner we have come to expect in role-playing games.

Again, for reasons known only to the designer, command control has been left out of the rules (although covered in part in the section on rank and promotion). Perhaps they were considered too "dirty" for the system to be included.

Basically, one must consider the role-playing segment an open-ended system: a framework to allow players to develop their own more elaborate structures. Obviously to prevent *Commando* from being a mere one-shot game, players will want to establish a continuity-fiction such as bind fantasy role-playing games between expeditions. An interested gamesmaster will be able to research and add into the game structure a wealth of current information and militaria to give added chrome to the game. Players should consider required reading Forsythe's *Dogs of War* (the book; not the movie which offers a rather flat presentation of the characters). This should help to create an atmosphere for players to design their own characters.

Unlike far too many role-playing games, characters in *Commando* have real game-

purposes and do not exist merely to accumulate treasures, slay enemies or improve their skills at dice-rolling. *Commando* characters have well-defined goals and their success or failure as a character is keyed into their performance of their missions.

Commando as a role-playing game is far from as complete or detailed as many role-playing games are today. No provisions are made for many of the minutiae which flavor (or weight, depending on your viewpoint) these games: carried weight isn't considered; intelligence isn't a factor, nor is charisma; modern electronic technology, communications systems, and high-tech weaponry aren't considered. There are more details missing than included. But players shouldn't consider that it detracts from the game; instead they should consider *Commando* as a base from which to further develop. It's a good game, a remarkably smooth system which has accepted the compromise of a lightweight framework in exchange for a well designed, complete tactical system — something few, if any of the swords-and-sorcery can boast.

The Morrow Project

A footnote to any mention of modern role-playing games should include reference to Timeline's *The Morrow Project*: a pseudo-SF game which supposes sometime in the present that a concerned group of philanthropists will make exacting preparations for the continuation of civilization after a nuclear holocaust. In order to do so, modern day soldiers and specialists in "hibernation" are sealed into protected bases to be awakened after the next war has devastated a good portion of the planet. The premise isn't exactly new, nor are the rules particularly different from a host of others around. What is of interest is the amazing amount of data the one book provides — hard data about weapons, ammunition, grenades, radiation shielding, travel times, vehicles and nuclear weapons. While the authors were overly-conservative in predicting the development of future weaponry, they have provided an extensively detailed survey of current military hardware. A typical entry for a particular weapon would include name, caliber, weight, effective and maximum ranges, type and rate of fire, feed device and feed device weight, basic load carried, load and total weights, plus comments. For this information alone, players of modern games should get the booklet. It also proves fairly easy to interface with *Commando*.

Morrow has unique properties all of its own, however, and players might care to try playing the game itself, although the combat is neither as exciting nor as complex as *Commando*. It is unfair to compare the two games since they represent two divergent paths in game design: *Morrow* is far more the traditional role-playing game while *Commando* is an attempt to meld together two systems. But *Morrow* has some useful and interesting material in it and that is rare enough in current games. You can't criticize it for trying so hard. ■■

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Effects of Demoralization.

When an attack is made *against* a unit of a demoralized army, the attacker subtracts *one* from the die-roll; cross-index this modified die-roll with the appropriate column on the Combat Results Table.

When an attack is made by a unit of a demoralized army, the attacker adds *one* to the die-roll; cross-index this modified die-roll with the appropriate column of the Combat Results Table. When an attack made by units of a demoralized force clears a hex of defending units, the demoralized attackers may *not* advance into the vacated hex.

[24.0] DEMORALIZATION TABLE

GAME-TURN	FRENCH LOSSES (in Strength Points)	RUSSIAN LOSSES (in Strength Points)
4	30	25
5	40	30
6	45	35
7	50	45
8	55	50
9	60	55
10	70	60
11	75	65
12	80	70

An army that loses enough Strength Points during a Game-Turn to top the figures in the table becomes demoralized. Assuming the army does not gain too many extra losses, it may regain morale in subsequent turns if its losses fall below the numbers listed on the table.

[25.0] STARTING THE GAME

In this version of the game, play begins with Game-Turn 4.

One of the overall effects of these rules is to make the cavalry much more mobile. Now, players will have an easier time recreating Murat's famous charge at Eylau in which several stunned Russian brigades were hacked to pieces. Curiously, however, cavalry is also far more fragile than they are in the original rules. Simply put, cavalry simply cannot stay in the battle line against a concerted infantry and artillery counterattack. Improperly used, the cavalry will melt away fairly quickly. Again this result might seem right. Historically, Napoleonic cavalry was the most difficult of the three arms to control. Similarly, the infantry are likely to find themselves locked in attritional but relatively indecisive fire fights up and down the line. In a simplistic way, the variant seems to reproduce the slaughter on the Napoleonic battlefield, with units wearing each other down until finally one side or another cracks altogether.

The game seems to be well balanced. In half of the games played, the French were in possession of both Eylau hexes; in the other games, the Allies held the town. On the average the French lose an average of 17 totally eliminated units for a total of 70 points. Total combat strength losses run about 86 points for the French. The Allies lose about 18 units on the average totalling about 75 points.

I think the modification represents an intriguing alternative to the standard system, one that can be enjoyed by both novice and experienced gamer alike. ■■