

# BASIC TACTICS

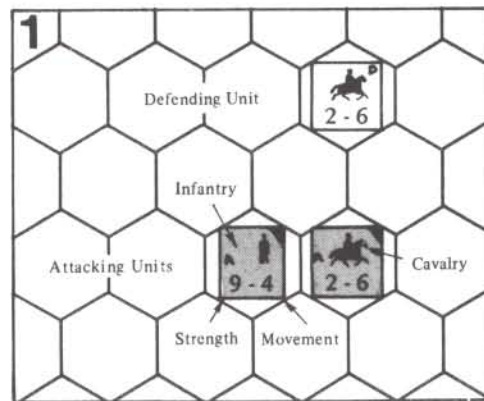


BASIC TACTICS FOR SPI's GAME  
NAPOLEON AT WAR  
EXPLAINED BY BOB MERRY

This article has been written in an attempt to give newcomers to boardgaming a little insight into the tactical possibilities that arise from a grasp of some of the basic rules. My own interest lies principally in Napoleonic warfare and I have, therefore, based the examples on the Napoleon at War rules. However, there are a large number of games, from SPI and others, whose rules are based on those developed in 1972 for Napoleon at Waterloo, refined in Borodino and Austerlitz and now used for the Napoleon at War and Napoleon's Last Battles QuadriGames. Consequently, many of the tactics described here can be readily adapted for games with similar rules.

The tactical key is mainly to be found in the Combat Results Table, an example of which is shown below:

cavalry unit available to engage an isolated enemy cavalry unit. How should he plan his attack?



because combat in NAW is mandatory in Zones of Control, commits the Enemy to either fighting at 1-5 next phase, or reinforcing the position, generally speaking this is not a very good tactic. Nevertheless, it occurs surprisingly often when the uninitiated attempt to employ brute force against small units.

In Fig.3, the cavalry unit has been involved, increasing the odds to 5-1. There are now two chances of a De result, two chances of an Ex result, but with the cavalry unit now able to absorb the attacker's share of the loss and only two chances of a retreat. This is clearly preferable to the previous example and may well be *occasionally* used where a frontal attack on a weak point is unavoidable. However, in the example we are considering, there is another alternative.

Probability Ratios (odds)										
Attacker's Strength to Defender's Strength										
Die Roll	1-5	1-4	1-3	1-2	1-1	2-1	3-1	4-1	5-1	6-1
1	Ar	Ar	Dr	Dr	Dr	Dr	Dr	De	De	De
2	Ar	Ar	Ar	Dr	Dr	Dr	Dr	Dr	De	De
3	Ae	Ar	Ar	Ar	Dr	Dr	Dr	Dr	Dr	De
4	Ae	Ar	Ar	Ar	Ar	Dr	Dr	Dr	Dr	Dr
5	Ae	Ae	Ar	Ar	Ar	Ar	Dr	Dr	Ex	Ex
6	Ae	Ae	Ae	Ar	Ar	Ar	Ar	Ex	Ex	Ex

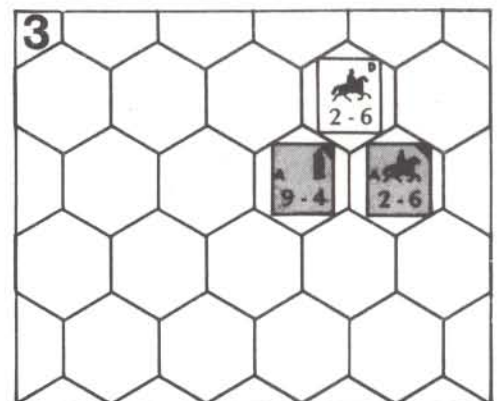
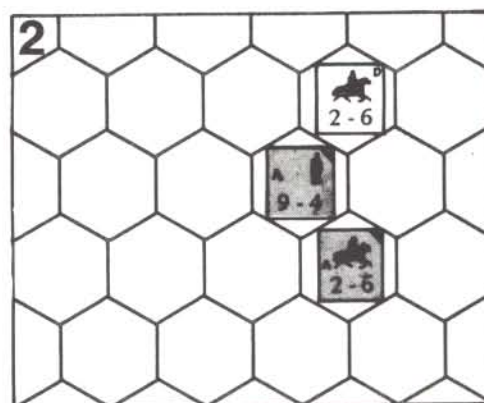
Ar = Attacker Eliminated; Ar = Attacker retreats one hex;  
Dr = Defender retreats one hex; De = Defender Eliminated; Ex = Exchange: all defending units eliminated and an equal or greater number of attacking strength points are eliminated.

The first point to notice is that between odds of 1-2 and 3-1 the only results are Dr and Ar — an apparently "bloodless" form of combat. At 4-1 and above there are De results but coupled with these are chances of Ex results. As we shall see, this is quite significant.

Now let us look at a couple of the rules which will have a bearing on our tactics. Firstly, we will quote part of the rule concerning retreats: "A retreating unit may not retreat into a prohibited hex, cross a prohibited hex-side, or enter an Enemy controlled hex. If no hex is open to retreat into, the unit is eliminated". This is, in fact, the most common way of eliminating Enemy units. The rules also allow a player, prior to an attack, to voluntarily reduce the odds for that attack. With these factors in mind, let us consider a few examples. In each case, the attacker is moving up the map.

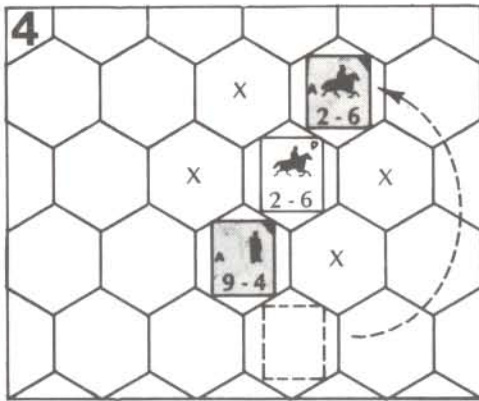
Consider Fig.1. The attacker, who is about to move, has a strong infantry unit and a

The first alternative is a direct assault by the infantry. This attack (Fig.2) gives odds of 4-1, with a one-in-six chance of eliminating the Enemy unit, a one-in-six chance of a very costly exchange (since all 9 strength points are required to satisfy the Ex rule!) and four chances of the Enemy making a withdrawal. Although this can be followed up with an advance after combat which,



A typical strategy used by Napoleon was to send part of his force to outflank the enemy and cut his supply lines before the frontal engagement. We can adapt this principle here in a tactical situation. In Fig.4 the more mobile cavalry unit has circled the enemy (and his Zones of Control, which do not allow movement through) and come up behind. The infantry has moved ready for the frontal assault. The enemy is now surrounded by Zones of Control with the four hexes marked 'x' in Fig.4 being adjacent to one or other of the attacking units. There is now no escape route in the event of a Dr result and the enemy will be eliminated instead. In which case, why risk an exchange? In some games, losses can more easily be borne by one side. If the attacker were to be in the situation where any loss would cause a weakness, either because of the disposition of his forces or because the effects of losses hit him harder, it would be preferable that the one-in-six chance should be one of Ar rather than Ex. The odds should be voluntarily reduced to 3-1 before the attack. A throw of 6 would be frustrating but gener-

ally speaking the reduction in odds is advisable, especially in the early stages of a game.

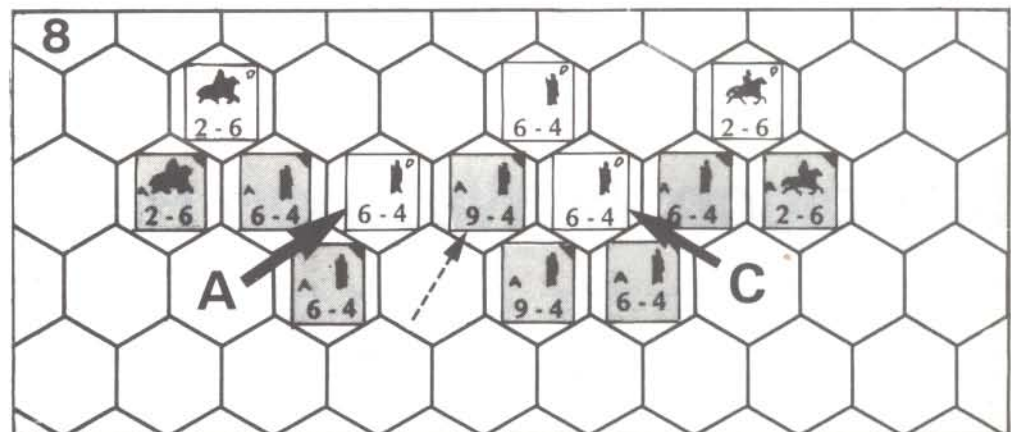
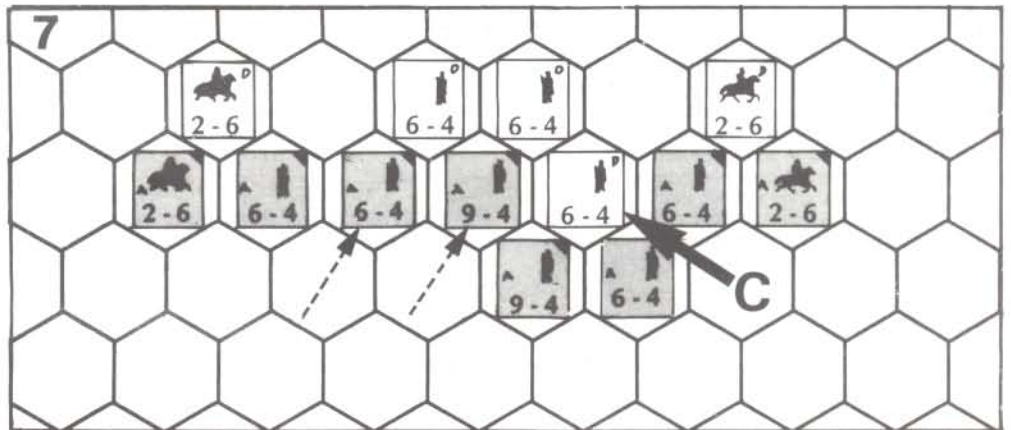
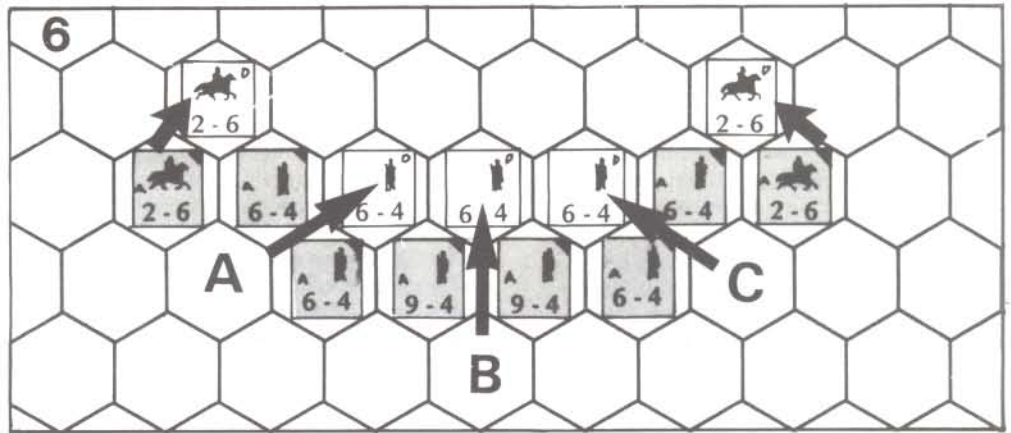
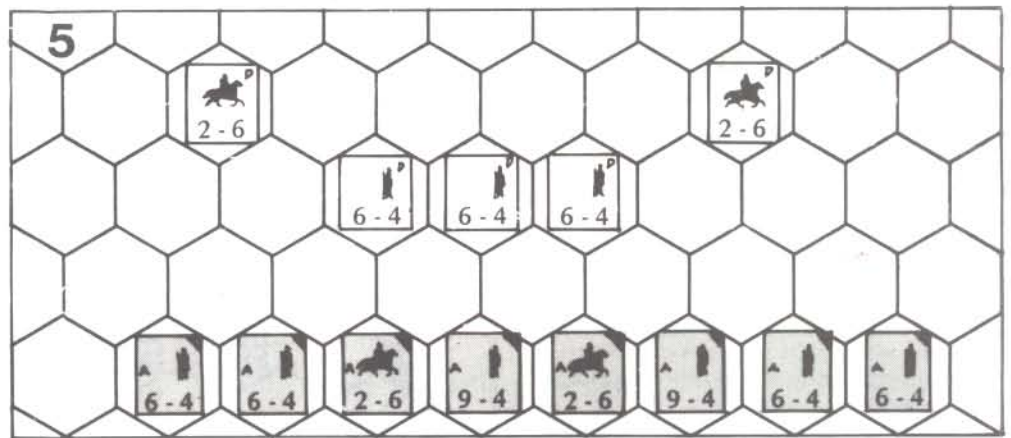


So much for picking off a weak, isolated unit— now let us see how to deal with a short line of units, such as that in Fig.5. Here, the three infantry units should be vulnerable to the superior strength of the attack, so how can we best take advantage of the situation? The flanking enemy cavalry prevent us from getting units to the rear of the line, as we did in the previous example and many players would settle for the frontal assault, merely hoping to gain ground. However, intelligent choice of the order of combats and the use of the "advance after combat" option open to victorious units may prove to be a little more profitable.

Fig.6 shows the situation after the Movement Phase. The cavalry units have moved to the flank to hold the opposing cavalry, leaving all the infantry units free to deal with the enemy infantry. Bombarding artillery are also useful in diversionary attacks in those games where they can attack from two hexes away. Leaving aside the flanks, which are straightforward, we can now concentrate our attentions on the three combats in the centre. We will use two units of 6 strength points each to attack the left hand infantry unit, a similar combination against the right of the line and two 9 point units against the centre. This gives us three attacks to be resolved: (A) at 2-1, (B) at 3-1 and (C) at 2-1. The possible orders for these attacks, allowing for the symmetry of the situation, are, basically, ABC, ACB or BAC.

Fig.7 shows the position after successful attacks at (A) and (B), with the appropriate advance after combat. The final enemy unit is now surrounded by ZOC and a third lucky throw of the die will eliminate it. A similar fate awaits the centre unit if we resolve the combats in the order ACB. Tempting as it may be to "roll up" the line in a logical order, we have a potentially more profitable alternative.

Look at the situation in Fig.8, which results from successful B attack. Now, **both** the other units are vulnerable. A word of caution, however. There is a one-in-three chance of failure in each of the 2-1 attacks and a one-in-nine chance of them both resulting in an Ar results. In this event, the advanced unit from the initial attack would itself be cut off and unable to retreat as a result of the counter-attack in the next phase. Each situation must be judged on its merits, but remember that a weak unit is just as effective as a strong one in cutting off retreats



with its ZOC, so it may be wise to use weaker units for advancing after combat in positions similar to the example cited. It is also possible in many NAW-type games to enhance attacks with bombarding artillery but, again, keep the odds down to 3-1 to avoid Ex results.

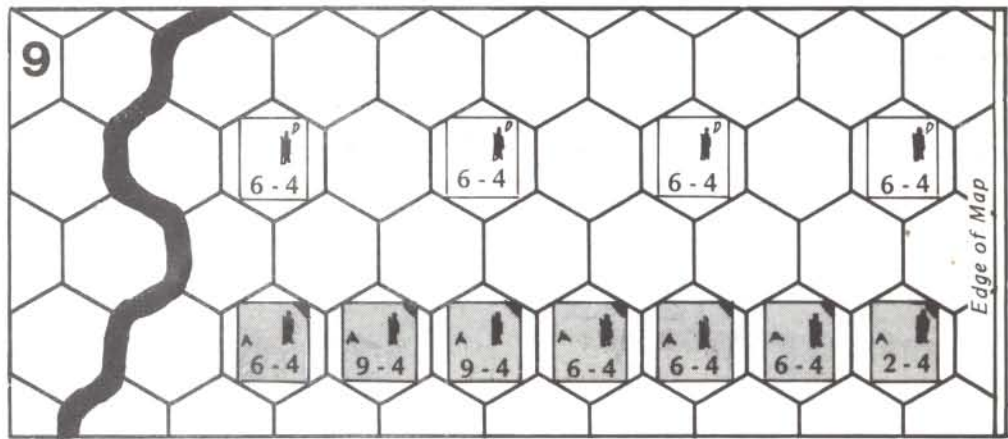
The tactics described above can be extended to longer lines, with attacks being alternated along the line to create the "surround with ZOC" situations. Reasonable luck with the

die should allow the odd prize to be picked up.

So far in this article, we have looked at some basic attack situations and seen how we should try to devise attacks that surround the defender with ZOC so that retreat is impossible. We will end by seeing what lessons can be learnt from this to aid the defence.

In many games, one side starts as the weaker force and has to hold ground until the arrival of later reinforcements redresses the balance. The Allied position at Waterloo is one such example, whilst the Allied side in Battle of Nations is probably an even better case. On the first day of the Battle of Nations, the advantage is definitely with Napoleon and, unless the defence is conducted correctly, he can take advantage of this to end the battle before the main body of the Allied reinforcements arrives.

Consider Fig.9. Here the defending units are spread out such that it is impossible to surround any units because of the ZOC overlapping. Even after successful attacks, advances after combat will not cut off the line of retreat of any other units and the advanced units may themselves become the target of counter-attacks. Of course, when adopting extended line defence like this, it is more than ever important to protect the flanks adequately or else units may be picked off one by one. The pivot of such a line should be a strong defensive barrier, such as an uncrossable riverside hex, a well-



defended town or some terrain feature that will limit the mobility of any cavalry unit that attempts to outflank the line in the way that we saw in our first example.

Well, I hope that this short article will enable newcomers to boardgaming to appreciate some of the basic tactics and to avoid what should, to more experienced players, appear to be the obvious pitfalls. Have a careful look at your next game and see if the rules are based on the NAW system. You will find a wide range of games that can be played using these basic tactics. New subscribers

to Strategy & Tactics will, of course, have an excellent example in the form of Napoleon at Waterloo. Like many of the early examples of the genre, however, the Combat Results Table is a little different and the chances of Ex results greater. The rules also do not allow for voluntary reduction of odds and care is needed in planning attacks. It can be most annoying to lose your Grenadiers of the Imperial Guard in an exchange with a piffling little cavalry unit that blocks its advance — believe me, I know from bitter experience!

## Battlefleet Mars

REVIEWED by E K MERRYWEATHER

This is the latest SPI sci-fi offering and quite interesting too. There are no hexes - distance (and movement) are worked out by using a scale printed in millions of kilometres and game turns. So if you wish to move a force between two places, you lay the scale on the map and read off the number of game-turns and place your task force in the appropriate distance-box of the destination planet. The task force then advances one box per game-turn until it arrives.

Combat is done in one of two ways. The first (and simplest) is the Tactical Abstract Combat System. Each ship is given a value on the fleet chart. The values are added up and the attacker's total is given as a percentage of the defenders. Then you roll and losses are expressed in percentages. A table is provided for converting percentages into loss points. This goes on until one side has eliminated the other.

The other system uses a tactical display, akin to

'StarForce' (Phoenix 8). However, height is represented by an additional display so each ship is represented by two counters, one on the 'plane' display (the X-Y display), the other on the height (X-Z) display.

There are three sorts of ships, Miners, Catapults and Transports, commercial ships normally, which have been fitted with lasers and missiles or fighters.

You win the game by pushing the other side's Morale down so far that he cannot fight on. This is done by winning battles, as well as sabotage and political interaction. Once per turn, each player rolls on the morale table. This gives a variety of results, including depressing the other side's Morale table, sabotage attempts (rolled for on a separate table), assassination attempts, truces and WORD support for Ares Corporation (Ares Corporation is the firm which owns and is supposed to control the revolting ships and planets). WORD (World Organisation for Resource Development) is a sort of Earth

government. Morale is also affected by control of Asteroids, the opposition's home planet and other strategic planets (like Jupiter). The map covers the Solar System from Jupiter inwards.

As far as scenarios go, there is the main Campaign Scenario and several tactical scenarios (for fighting on the tactical display). For further info on sides etc. see the advertisement in S&T 60.

The game is great fun. Those of you who like 'Foxbat and Phantom' or the up-coming 'Air War 78' should enjoy the tactical game immensely. Not for those of you who like conventional games with front lines and the like but for anyone who reads a lot of Sci-fi or anyone who likes something different (which accounts for about 90% of wargamers in my experience), this game is great fun and well worth getting.

## Napoleon At Waterloo Revisited

ROB GIBSON

I was greatly pleased to read M.Booth's comments in Phoenix No.8 on "my" suggestions for improving the basic Napoleon at Waterloo simulation. In truth, like most tried and tested "improvements", they are the work of a number of people all playing the game and testing ideas — all I did was to join in and write it up.

The reasoning behind the La Haye Sainte revision is simple — the position was held by infantry (Major Baring's detachment of KGL riflemen) — the artillery were located up the hill to the rear. So we have recreated the historical placing, in a sense. The trebling of the defensive position was a change made some time later. Although the French could have and should have taken the position earlier, the change of counters made it too easy. Over a run of ten games in play-testing, the number of times the position was taken at the first attempt was too high (eight out of ten) to be acceptable; therefore the value of the position was trebled, giving the odds of which Mr Booth complained.

Having settled the point that we were not playing the "numbers game" i.e. seeking better odds at La Haye Sainte, consider the value of the 3-3 artillery piece unhampered by fortifications. Moved in a mobile defensive role, it can help to stiffen Anglo-Dutch counter attacks at decisive points.

Personally, simulations for me are a means of exploring the alternatives open to the commanders. The Anglo-Dutch line is more susceptible to attack at its extremes — use of the French unit superiority, especially in cavalry/infantry attacks at these points has often forced the Anglo-Dutch player to redeploy his forces from the centre opening the way for a crushing attack all along the line. This is especially effective in the advanced game.

Re Hougomont, I am impressed with Mr Booth's thinking on this but at this level I feel it would be better to 'mask' Hougomont i.e. prevent it gaining reinforcements who can build on its flanking strength as a fortification — this is nearly always where the Anglo-Dutch counter stroke comes from.

The poor old Prussians are a bit limited in deployment; the woods tend to channel them on to the French right wing anyway — it takes too long to get anywhere else. God knows how they managed to reach Plancenoit in time to do anything practical — it ain't on in this simulation unless the resident Napoleon is as erratically inclined as his historical counterpart — part lethargic, part dynamic. Perhaps we could give some thought to building in an 1815 Napoleon factor into the game e.g. "continue frontal attacks unless a six is thrown" or some such contrivance.

The fact is, the French could and should have done better on the day and thousands of latter-day Napoleons are proving it so on various simulations, Mr Booth and my self amongst them. Vive l'Empereur!

P.S. I haven't forgotten Grouchy, Mr Booth. I'm working on it. More later in detail.