

THE TACTICS OF THE ADVANCE

by Frederick Georgian

The purpose of this article is to increase the new gamer's repertoire of tactics. The reader should be familiar with a few basic wargaming terms or read Basic Tactics for The New Gamer, MOVES 22. The Napoleon At War folio games were chosen, because of their ease and simplicity of play, to serve as examples. The examples are general enough to be applicable to most other games.

This article concerns itself with advancing after combat. Its importance is often overlooked or misused. The reason for this is usually that one fails to recognize certain patterns, or to understand certain principles concerning when it is and is not advantageous to advance after combat. This subject matter is broken down into two sections. Each section explains when a Player should advance after combat. The first section studies the point of view of the attacking Player, and the second section, the defending Player.

In all the illustrations, the dark colored (French) units are always the attacking units; the light colored (Austrian) units, are always the defending units. For the sake of brevity, the historical designations are ignored and only the combat strengths and the nationalities of the units are referred to in the text. In the examples, the abbreviations "i" and "c" are used to refer to infantry and cavalry, respectively.

There are four illustrations, but actually each illustration has two parts. The first part of the illustration depicts the situation at some key point. The second part of the same illustration shows the outcome of that situation. Finally, one must keep in mind that the illustrations represent a microcosm of an entire battle.

THE ATTACKING PLAYER

First Principle: The attacking Player should advance a unit after combat whenever he can prohibit a defending unit from retreating.

This first principle was illustrated and explained under the flank to front attack in MOVES 22. To review briefly, the attacking Player executed two frontal attacks and advanced units into the vacated hexes. Although those two units could not attack any further that Game-Turn, the units' Zones of Control had flanked a defending unit and thus prohibited it from retreating. The result was that the defending unit was eliminated.

Second Principle: The attacking Player should advance after combat whenever he may gain favorable terrain.

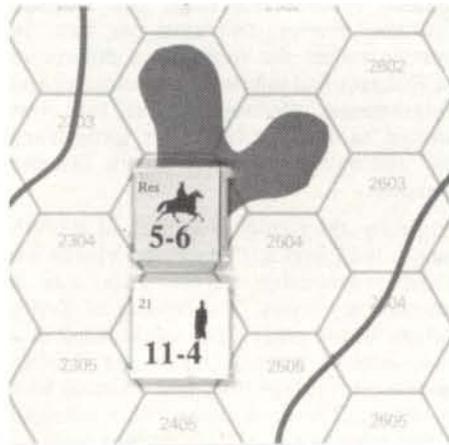


Figure 1

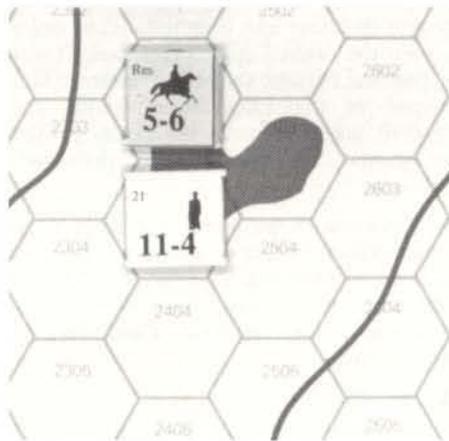


Figure one illustrates the second principle. In the top part of the figure, the French 11i is attacking the Austrian 5c, at 1:1 odds (the Austrian 5c is doubled because of rough terrain). The result was a Dr (defender retreat); the Austrian 11i advanced one hex; see the bottom of figure one. When it is the Austrian Player-Turn, the Austrian 5c will have to attack the French 11i at 1:5 odds, because now the French 11i is doubled for being in the rough terrain, i.e., it has gained favorable terrain. At 1:5 odds, there are four chances out of six that the Austrian 5c will be eliminated, which is to the French Player's advantage. In conclusion, although the French Player's initial odds were poor, 1:1, by taking advantage of the advance after combat, the French Player had a much better chance of eliminating the Austrian unit by forcing it to attack the French unit at very bad odds, 1:5.

Third Principle: The attacking Player should advance a unit after combat to pin enemy units.

Units are considered to be pinned when they are not able to move during their Movement Phase. Figure One shows the value of pinning. Had the French 11i not advanced, the Austrian 5c could have moved elsewhere during its Movement Phase and not have faced attacking the French unit. Furthermore, that Austrian 5c could have been moved to perhaps a more critical position for the Austrian's defense. By advancing after combat, the French 11i pinned the Austrian 5c. Admittedly, this illustration appears overly simplistic, yet the concept of pinning enemy units is very important. The fewer the number of units that your enemy can maneuver against you, the better your chances of finding and attacking his weak spots. The use of pinning will be seen again later.

Fourth Principle: Do not advance a unit after combat if the advancing unit can be flanked.

The following illustration, Figure Two, explains why. The left part shows that the French Player has faithfully followed many important principles — he is executing a frontal assault at good odds, 3:1, and advances the 4i after combat to pin the Austrian 3i; however, the French Player should not have advanced a unit after combat according to the fourth principle. During the Austrian Movement Phase, the Austrian 6i and 5i, which are not pinned, have moved to flank the French 4i. The right part shows the situation just before combat. The Austrian Player must attack the French units in the following manner: the Austrian 3i and 6i attack the French 4i at 2:1 odds and the Austrian 5i attacks the French 5i at 1:1 odds. The Austrian Player resolves the 2:1 attack first and then the 1:1 second. By resolving the attacks in the above order, the French 4i, if flanked, faces a two-thirds chance of being eliminated. Granted that 2:1 odds are not the best, but they often can be deadly enough as illustrated above. The French Player should not have risked the possible loss of his 4i unit.

Let's digress a moment to review and to understand why the Austrian Player chose to resolve his attacks in the stated order. Suppose he resolved the 1:1 odds attack first and lost, i.e., Ar (attacker retreat). Notice that now the French 4i could not be eliminated, because it could retreat and displace the French 5i. It is evident that the Zone of Control of the Austrian 5i extends into a very important hex; hence by resolving the 2:1 attack first, the Austrian Player has insured that a ring of Austrian Zones of Control surround and prohibit the French 4i from retreating.

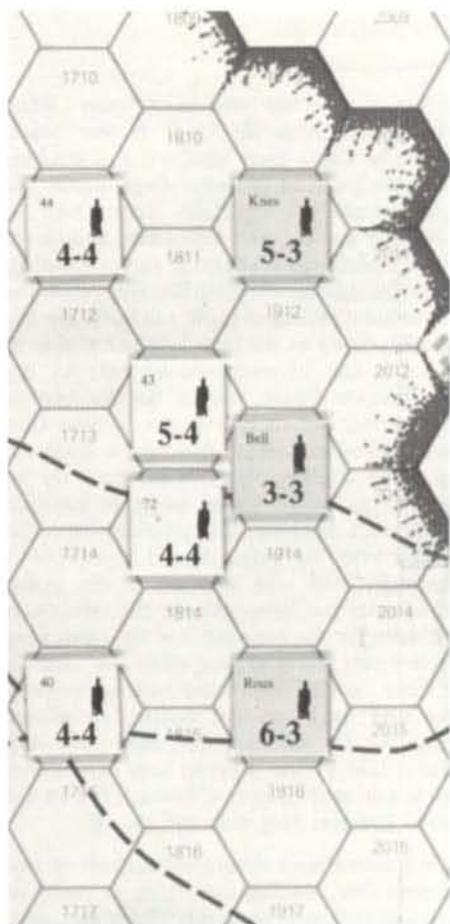


Figure 2

Since Figure Two is such an important pattern in wargaming, how could the French Player have handled the situation? The secret is using principle three. Look at Figure Three. Notice that in the left illustration, the French Player is executing two frontal attacks with good odds, 3:1. In both cases, the Austrian units must retreat and in both cases a French unit advances after combat. Since the Austrian's units are pinned, his defenses are becoming weaker and he is less able to react and to correct his weakness. Lastly, notice the manner in which the French Player attacked. The units which had advanced after combat cannot be flanked; therefore principle four does not apply here, because there is a hex to which the French units may retreat if attacked. In conclusion, although a particular attack may be justified, it may be necessary to pin nearby enemy units to prevent your advancing units from being flanked.

THE DEFENDER

Fifth Principle: The defending Player should never advance a unit after combat because he is needlessly pinning his own units.

The fifth principle makes common sense; one can consider it the opposite of principle three. For the most part, the defending Player can always move into the vacated hex during his Movement Phase. Furthermore, by not advancing units immediately after combat, the defending Player is able to keep his units

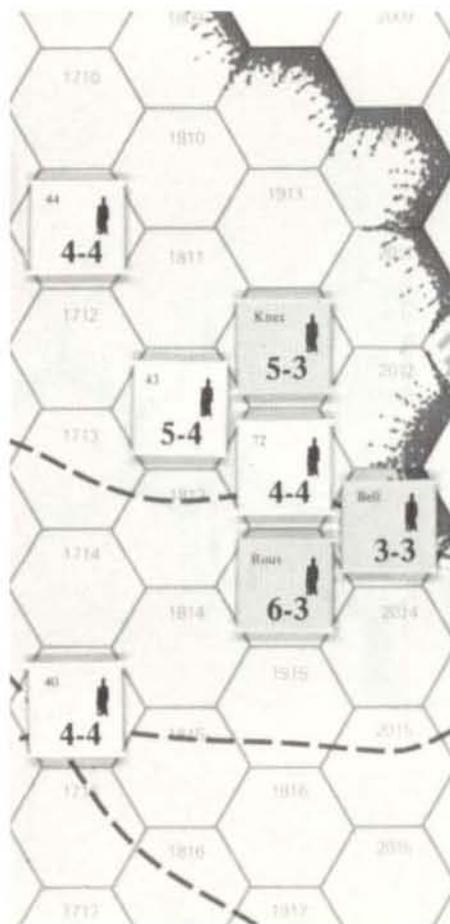
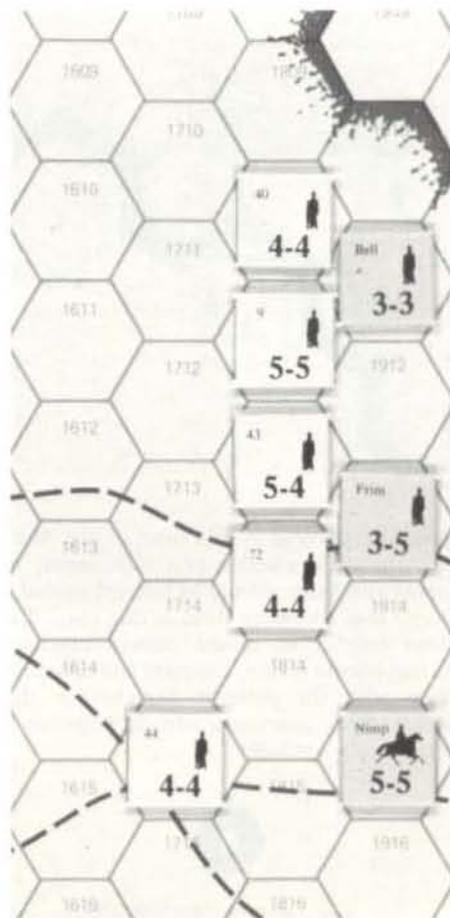


Figure 3



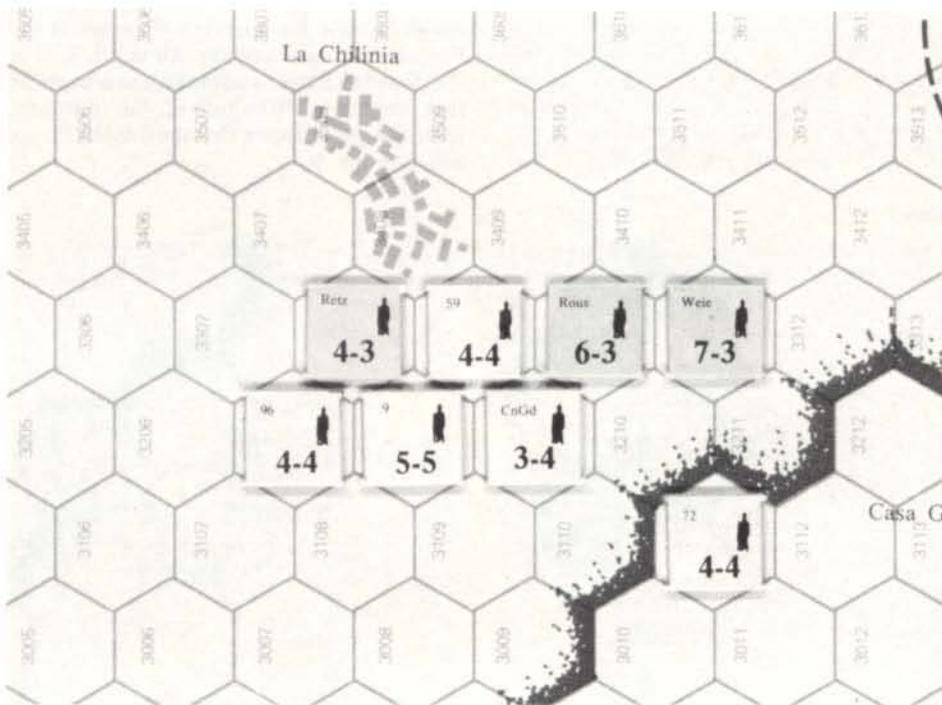
mobile; during his Movement Phase, he has time to survey the battle front and can switch units from sector to sector. If the defending Player had advanced units after combat, then his units would become pinned. Once his units are pinned, he is less able to react to critical situations and, consequently, weaknesses develop in his battle lines, as shown in Figure Three.

Sixth Principle: The defending unit should advance after combat if there is a chance that the unit is able to prohibit an attacking unit from retreating.

Figure Four illustrates the sixth principle nicely. The French Player is executing two attacks — a 2:1 attack on the Austrian 4i and a 1:1 attack on the Austrian 6i. The French Player decides to resolve the 2:1 attack first. Unfortunately, the result of the attack is Ar (attacker retreat). The French Player retreats each of his units into separate hexes. At this point, the Austrian Player should advance his 4i into the hex vacated by the French 5i. This advance is in accord with the sixth principle. Keep in mind that the French Player has yet to resolve his 1:1 attack (see the bottom of Figure Four). Should the result of the attack also be an Ar (attacker retreat), the French Player will lose his 4i because the Austrian 4i prohibits the French 4i from retreating. All in all, it is to the Austrian Player's advantage to accept the fact that his 4i will be pinned, but in return, there is a good chance that the French Player will lose his 4i.



Figure 4



It should be made clear, however, that if the French Player had a 3:1 attack rather than a 1:1 attack on the Austrian 6i, as shown in Figure Four, that the Austrian Player should not advance his 4i. The reason is that the sixth principle no longer holds true. At 3:1 odds, the French units are much less likely to retreat and hence the Austrian Player may be needlessly pinning his own 4i unit, the fifth principle. The Austrian Player should advance his units only when there is a good chance to prohibit a possible attacking French unit from retreating.

All in all, most of the common patterns of advancing or not advancing after combat

have been covered in this short article. Such patterns are applicable to a wide variety of games and hence should be learned so that a Player may recognize them during play. It is often helpful to record certain positions during play to review, compare and contrast them with the patterns depicted in this article. Such practice gradually improves a wargamer's aptitude.

Chickamauga

[continued from page 9]

unless it is within your reach early. Keep driving for Rossville Gap; if you reach Rossville Gap, then conduct a secondary offensive for three purposes. *One*: to grab the Confederate Victory Point hexes; *two*: to eliminate and cut off Union units; and *three*: to take McFarland's Gap. If you accomplish even the taking of Rossville Gap with the subsequent exiting of units, you have won the game (as long as the exited units are able to trace a line of communications). As the Confederate Player, remain flexible against the second day. If it becomes obvious that your offensive against Rossville is doomed, take the Victory Point hexes and try to destroy as many Union units as possible while still keeping the pressure on. The Union Army just *might* find it impossible to maintain itself even this late in the game. The forces you have now are the forces you will have for the remainder of the game; use them wisely and it will pay off in the last two to three Game-Turns, when once again [as in the first day] you can launch an all-out offensive. Do not exit your units until very late if that option is open; they can't come back, and may be more effective if left on the map. Besides, they may get cut off.

The Union Player should concentrate on two things: *One*, making everything as costly as possible for the Confederate Player and, *two*: exit Union units. With these two things, the holding of Rossville Gap is tantamount to a successful Union game. Don't exit until late in the game; you may need the units. Keep some units on the map to hold the Confederate Victory Point hexes near each of the gaps. If you keep the Confederate Player from exiting, and hold a coherent exiting force yourself (as well as keeping the Confederate off high-scoring Victory Point areas) victory is yours.

Conclusion

Wargames are *not* chess. In chess, a given move will have given results. In wargames, this is simply not true. I have assumed herein a certain working knowledge of the tactics and probabilities involved, as well as an understanding of one's opponent and his weak points. It will come down to exploiting specific weaknesses and strengths that will be unique to each game of *Chickamauga* played by two Players.

