

The Battle of Montmirail: 11 February 1814

A historical scenario for Sam Mustafa's Blücher rules, using the small scale option.

Background

It is early 1814, during the Invasion of France. As the Allied armies converge on Paris, Napoleon fights a desperate campaign to stave off defeat, flying across the countryside with his outnumbered troops and managing still to surprise the Allies and disrupt their plans. February will see an outstanding display of his genius.

The game begins on 11 February 1814. Thanks to a mixture of luck and judgement, Napoleon has placed himself in the middle of Blücher's strung out army. Yesterday he defeated Olsufiev at Champaubert and today he will turn on Sacken. Sacken is marching eastwards, trying to reunite with Blücher. He has numerical superiority at the start of the day and is expecting reinforcement from Yorck's Corps to the North.

Napoleon's objective is to inflict a defeat on Sacken and to keep Sacken from linking up with Yorck. However most of his army is still en route to the battlefield at the start of the day. Sacken's objective is to defeat the French to his front while he still outnumbers them and to keep his line of communication to Yorck open. The key for both sides is to control the road intersection in square D2/3.

Briefings and Orders of Battle (playing units highlighted in bold)

Russia. Morale 6

Briefing

The upstart emperor is breathing his last, trying to halt the tide of Allied armies advancing on Paris. Blücher's army, of which you command the sixth and eleventh corps, has been advancing westwards along the Marne valley, determined to have the honour of entering Paris ahead of Schwarzenberg. In its haste, the army has become strung out along the little Paris road. Yesterday, you heard news from Gneisenau that a small French force had placed itself in the midst of the army and surprised Olsufiev at Champaubert. It cannot be Buonaparte as he is embroiled with Schwarzenberg way to the south. Rumour has it that it might be led by Marmont. Blücher has instructed that as a precaution, you and Yorck retrace your steps so that all corps are within supporting distance of one another.

It is the morning of 11 February and you have been marching eastward up the little Paris road. After five days of rain, the weather today is fine but the ground is wet, especially to the right of the road where the land descends to the Petit Morin river. Your scouts report that a small French cavalry force is waiting up ahead near the village of Marchais, which is just beyond the intersection with the road to Chateau Thierry, from where Yorck is approaching. You need to brush this force aside and so both open the road to Blücher and keep the Chateau Thierry road clear for Yorck.

You should now deploy your forces. Your artillery commander warns you that no guns may move in the boggy ground to the right of the little Paris road. There is an objective in the village of Marchais, one at La Motte and one at La Meulière.

At some point Yorck should arrive on the table. The cautious old fool proposed that if you encountered enemy troops, you should await his arrival before engaging. You have reassured him that you can handle an enemy raiding party on your own. Nevertheless, once you have seized Marchais and La Motte, it would be wise to hold those positions until Yorck does arrive. You will then continue together to rejoin Blücher.

Overall Command: Lt. Gen. Osten-Sacken

VI Infantry Corps – Lt. Gen. Prince Tcherbatov
7th Infantry Division – Maj. Gen. Talyzin
1/7/VI Russian Line 6 St (11)
2/7/VI Russian Line 6 St (11)
3/7/VI Russian Jägers 6 St (11)
18th Infantry Division – Maj. Gen. Bernadesov
1/18/VI Russian Line 6 St (11)
2/18/VI Russian Line 6 St (11)
3/18/VI Russian Jägers 6 St (11)
1 x VI Corps Heavy Artillery (9)

XI Infantry Corps – Maj. Gen. von Lieven
10th Infantry Division – Maj. Gen. Sass
1/10/XI Russian Line 6 St (11)
2/10/VI Russian Line 6 St (11)
3/10/XI Russian Jägers 6 St (11)
4/10/XI Russian Jägers 6 St (11)
27th Infantry Division – Maj Gen Stavitzkiô
1/27/XI Russian Line 6 St (11)
2/27/XI Russian Line 6 St (11)
3/27/XI Russian Jägers 6 St (11)
1 x XI Corps Heavy Artillery (9)

Cavalry Corps – Lt Gen Vasiltchikov inspiring (10)
2nd Hussar Division – Maj. Gen. Lanskoï
1/2H Russian Light Cavalry 6 (10)
2/2H Russian Light Cavalry 6 (10)
3rd Dragoon Division – Maj. Gen. Pantchouliechev II
1/3D Russian Light Cavalry 6 (10)
2/3D Russian Light Cavalry 6 (10)

211 points

Prussia. Morale 3

Briefing

Napoleon is trying desperately to halt the tide of Allied armies advancing on Paris. Blücher's army, of which you command the second corps, has been advancing westwards along the Marne valley, determined to have the honour of entering Paris ahead of Schwarzenberg. In its haste, the army has become strung out along the little Paris road. Yesterday, you heard news from Gneisenau that a small French force had placed itself in the midst of the army and surprised Olsufiev at Champaubert. It should not be Napoleon as he is embroiled with Schwarzenberg way to the south. However he has a habit of appearing in unexpected places and so Blücher has instructed that as a precaution, you and Sacken retrace your steps so that all corps are within supporting distance of one another.

It is the morning of 11 February and you have been marching southwards down the road from Chateau Thierry to link up with Sacken, who is moving eastward up the little Paris road. Your scouts report that a small French cavalry force is waiting up ahead near the village of Marchais, which controls the intersection of these two roads.

After five days of rain, the weather today is fine but the ground is wet. Your artillery Park is lagging behind in the mud but you are pressing on to link up with Sacken. The news of the presence of French cavalry has unsettled you. You have fought Napoleon for too long to underestimate him. Consequently you proposed to Sacken that he should await your arrival before engaging the

enemy. He has assured you that he can handle this French raiding party on his own. You hope for both your sakes that he is right.

II Armee Korps: General of Infantry Yorck, hero (10)

Reinforcement factor 4 (turn 13+)

Cavalry Reserve: Maj. Gen. von Jurgass

2nd Brigade: Maj. Gen. von Kazler

1/2C Prussian Light Cavalry 6 (10)

2/2C Prussian Landwehr Cavalry 5 I (6)

3/2C Prussian Landwehr Cavalry 5 I (6)

Reinforcement factor 5 (turn 15+)

1st Infantry Brigade: Maj. Gen. von Pirch II

1/1 Prussian Grenadiers 7 Sh Sk St (18)

2/1 Prussian Landwehr 5 C (6)

7th Infantry Brigade – Maj. Gen. von Horn

1/7 Prussian Line 7 Sh Sk St (18)

2/7 Prussian Landwehr 5 C (6)

3/7 Prussian Landwehr 5 C (6)

86 points

France. Morale 2, then 6, then 8

Briefing

For the past month, the Allied armies have been crawling towards Paris, apparently in the belief that France will fall if the capital is taken. In concert, they are too numerous to defeat but old Blücher has given you a chance, - no, two chances - to achieve a brilliant victory. First, he has moved away from supporting distance of Schwarzenberg's army and second, he has strung out his own army along several miles of the little Paris road in the Marne valley.

You have seized this opportunity and raced with your finest troops to punish Blücher. Like a fox in a hen coop, you have erupted into the midst of his forces and yesterday you annihilated Olsufiev and his Command. Last night you sent Nansouty westward to seize the crossroad near Marchais, a certain intersection point for Blücher's forces. Today you will destroy the next unfortunate.

It is the morning of 11 February and you have been marching westward up the little Paris road to join Nansouty. After five days of rain, the weather today is fine but the ground is wet, especially to the left of the road where the land descends to the Petit Morin river. Your scouts report that a large enemy force is advancing eastwards towards Marchais. The next chicken is coming to have its neck wrung! You also hear that another force is advancing from Chateau Thierry in the north. You need to crush the enemy on the table and prevent the two forces from combining.

You should now deploy your forces. Your artillery commander warns you that no guns may move in the boggy ground to the left of the little Paris road. There is an objective in the village of Marchais, one at La Motte and one at La Meulière.

On table at start

Gen. Nansouty, inspiring (10)

1st Old Guard Cavalry Division: Gen. Colbert

1/1/GC Guard Cavalry 7 Sh (15)

2nd Young Guard Cavalry Division: Gen. Laferrière-Lévesque

1/2/GC Guard Cavalry 6 Sh (11)

2nd Brigade, 8th Division: Fournier

1/2/8/VI Conscript Infantry 5 Sh Sk Conscript A (11)

2/2/8/VI Conscript Infantry 5 Sh Sk Conscript (9)

Reinforcement factor 1 (turn 4+)

Emperor Napoléon I, legend (20)

Marshal Ney, hero (10) Prince de la Moskova

Escort Guard Cavalry 7- Sh (11)

1 x Guard Heavy Artillery (10)

1st "Old" Guard Infantry Division: Gen. Friant

1st Brigade: Gen. Cambronne

1/1/1OG Old Guard Infantry 7 Sh Sk St A (20)

2/1/1OG Old Guard Infantry 7 Sh Sk St (18)

2nd Brigade: Gen. Petit

1/2/1OG Old Guard Infantry 7 Sh Sk St A (20)

2/2/1OG Old Guard Infantry 7 Sh Sk St (18)

2nd Old Guard Cavalry Division: Gen. Baron Guyot

1/2/GC Guard Cavalry 7 Sh (15)

2/2/GC Guard Cavalry 7 Sh (15)

1st Brigade, 8th Division: Boudin

1/8/VI Conscript Infantry 5 Sh Sk C (9)

Reinforcement factor 6 (turn 20+)

2nd "Middle" Guard Infantry Division: Gen. Michel

1st Brigade: Gen Gros

1/1/2MG Guard Infantry 6 Sh Sk St A (16)

2/1/2MG Guard Infantry 6 Sh Sk St (14)

2nd Brigade: Gen. Christiani

1/2//2MG Guard Infantry 6 Sh Sk St (14)

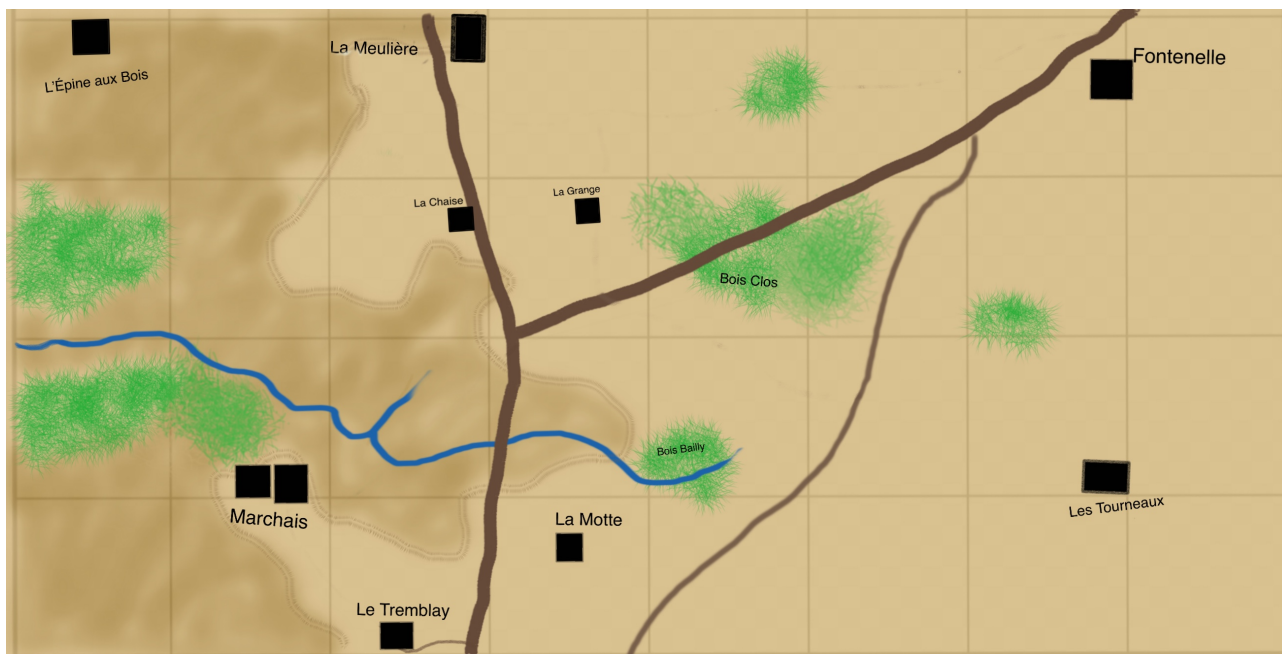
2/2/2MG Guard Infantry 6 Sh Sk St (14)

Cavalry Division: Gen. Defrance

1/D Gardes d'Honneur Cavalry 6 (10)

290 points

Note: the French Guard infantry have been slightly downgraded (and their cost correspondingly reduced) to reflect that they have been in frequent action and their quality has been diluted somewhat by new drafts. They still pack a heavy punch however. All point costs use the calculations in the Blücher rules. Also, despite Allied claims to the contrary, French sources are unanimous that the Young Guard was not present during the fighting.



Map and Terrain notes

The map is 32 by 16 BW with each square on the map representing 4 BW. Columns are labelled A to F and rows are numbered 1 to 4.

The roads that leaves the map at G1 is pointing North towards Chateau Thierry. (Note that I have omitted some minor roads that appear on contemporary maps on the principle that their waterlogged state made them useless. I have left only the metalled main roads).

The shaded area represents low ground which is sodden after five days of rain. Movement in this area is difficult for infantry and cavalry and impossible for artillery. (I chose to represent this by scattering several irregular shaped pieces of clear plastic, some with grass tufts attached, around the shaded area to denote waterlogged terrain).

The river is minor and hence fordable with a difficult move. The woods use the standard Blücher rules.

Timings and deployment

Start of game: the French deploy first. Nansouty deploys in box E3 and Fournier in box C4. All other French troops arrive later.

Sacken's entire army then deploys in boxes B1 to F1. The Prussians arrive later.

The Allies take the first turn. The game lasts 30 turns.

MO

Both sides receive 3 MO per turn.

Reinforcements

The reinforcement rule in the Blücher rulebook has been adjusted for this scenario as follows. The turn tracker shows the turn on which a player may start rolling for a particular reinforcement. At this point and on each of his following turns until successful, the player rolls a number of D6 equal to the formation's reinforcement factor. If the sum of the dice rolled is less than or equal to the current turn number, the formation arrives.

Reinforcements are otherwise subject to the reinforcement rules as written, including the right to use reserve movement.

From turn 4: roll 1 die: Road entry points in C4 & D4. Napoleon, Ney, Guyot, Friant and Boudin.

From turn 13: roll 4 dice: Road entry point in G1. Jürgass.

From turn 15: roll 5 dice: Road entry point in G1. Blücher, 1 and 7 Prussian brigades.

From turn 20: roll 6 dice: Road entry points in C4 & D4. Michel and Defrance.

MONTMIRAIL TURN AND REINFORCEMENT TRACKER

Allied	French	Time	Start rolling dice	Reinforcements	Allied	French	Time	Start rolling dice	Reinforcements
1		1000				16			
	2				17		1400		
3						18			
	4		1D6	Napoleon, Friant, Guyot, Boudin	19				
5		1100				20		6D6	Michel, DeFrance
	6				21		1500		
7						22			
	8				23				
9		1200				24			
	10				25		1600		
11						26			
	12				27				
13		1300	4D6	Jürgass		28			
	14				29		1700		
15			5D6	Blücher, Yorck		30			

Summary of operations on the day (with reference to the game map)

12pm, 10 February. Nansouty deploys just east of the junction of the two roads leading to Meaux and to Château-Thierry in box E3. Fournier deploys to the south of Nansouty in box C4.

9am, 11 February. Sacken arrives on the field. VI Corps deploys to the South of the main road below La Meulière in boxes B1 & C1 facing East.

XI corps deploys to the north of the main road in box D1 and advances to occupy La Grange and la Chaise (C2 & D2). It deploys a large battery in its centre.

North of XI corps, the cavalry of general Vasilitchikov deploys in box F1 facing Nansouty.

10am. The first regiments of VI Corps (Pskov, Vladimir, Tambov, Kostroma, 11th Jagers, a Cossack unit and battery of 6 artillery) advance on Marchais in box B3. The ground is too difficult for the artillery which stays on the main road. The advance guard occupies Marchais.

11am. Napoleon arrives at Le Tremblay in box C4 with Guyot, Friant and Boudin. Marshal Ney and Lefebvre accompany the Emperor without troops. Guyot reinforces Nansouty. Boudin joins Fournier before Tremblay (C4). Friant deploys north of Tremblay (D4).

12am. Ricard's 8 Division attacks Marchais with Artillery support.

2pm. After Marchais has changed hands several times, Ricard retires and reoccupies Tremblay.

2pm. Blücher arrives at Fontenelle in box G1.

3pm Mortier arrives at Tremblay with Michel and DeFrance. Michel, with Mortier leading in person, moves to the right to face the Prussians. 2 battalions are detached to support Ricard. DeFrance stands in reserve behind the centre.

4pm. Ney leads Friant to attack the Russian centre, with DeFrance charging the battery on the north of XI Corps line. Meanwhile Ricard attacks Marchais from the East while 2 battalions of Guard attack from the north.

4pm. Yorck attacks Michel with 1st Brigade. Michel repulses and pursues. Michel is stopped by 7 Brigade as night falls.

5pm. Night falls and fighting ends. The Allies retreat northwards towards Château-Thierry. Napoleon has inflicted serious losses on Sacken but the Russian has escaped total destruction and is able to retire behind a supporting Prussian rearguard.