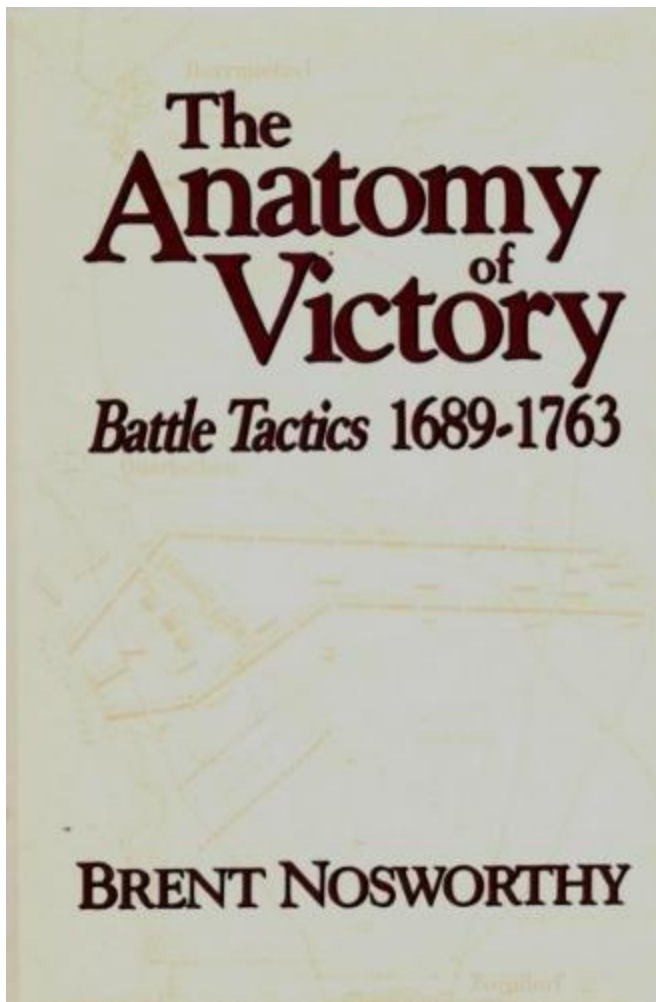


**'Anatomy of Victory: Battle Tactics 1689-1763'
and
'Battle Tactics of Napoleon and his Enemies'
By Brent Nosworthy
Reviewed by Paul Le Long**

Well friends, I have just read both of these books and was so impressed that I felt compelled to write a review. I've been reading up on Napoleonic warfare, so I read the 'Battle Tactics of Napoleon and His Enemies' and I thought it was so good, I immediately went out and got 'Anatomy of Victory.' I read both avidly and, together, I honestly believe they provide the definitive guide to tactics from 1689-1815. They have made me rethink all my assumptions and I will be rewriting my wargames rules for the period as a result.



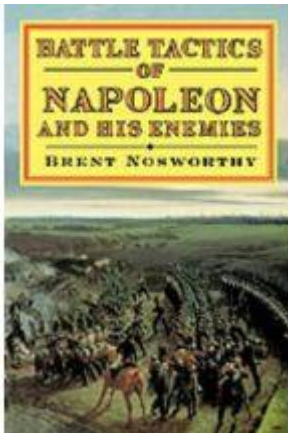
Actually, *Napoleon* has a good overview of the 'linear' period that preceded the French Revolution and you could leave it at that if you want. But *Anatomy* naturally goes into much more detail about 18th century warfare and also provides a very good link to 17th century tactics. The emphasis in both books is on tactics, which seems obvious given the titles but the author really pushes the point of how many times, for example, have you read lines in history books like 'the French attacked in column and were repulsed?' What Nosworthy does is examine in great detail what this actually means of how fast did the column march, how many men were in each rank, who could shoot, how many shots could they expect to face, what was the likely effect on the column's morale if they received fire at 30 paces rather than 60, what were the defenders thinking all the while, what would happen exactly when they came face to face with the enemy, would

anyone actually get a bayonet stuck in them -- and so on. In minute detail, leaving absolutely no doubt as to what happened on the battlefield.

Let's take *Anatomy* first. We start with a description of 17th century warfare, the innovations of Gustavus Adolphus in the 1620s-30s and the adoption of different weapons, firing procedures and formations of cavalry and artillery, as well as infantry. This is very good because it shows progression rather than revolution in tactics of I was accustomed to thinking of Pike and Shot and Horse and Musket as distinct periods of idiotic when you stop to think about it but the trouble is most of us don't stop to think and this book is a welcome corrective.

The first section of *Anatomy* takes us up to 1714 and is really setting the scene for linear warfare. If you want to know how armies under Gustavus, Turenne or Marlborough fought then already this book is for you. Section two focuses on the period of relative peace between the end of the War of Spanish Succession in 1714 and the beginning of the Seven Years War in 1756. Here linear tactics were really developed of in France the development was largely theoretical with the works of Folard and de Saxe, and in Prussia the development was more practical under Frederick the Great and his father before him. Finally we look at the Seven Years War itself and how armies fought in practice as opposed to in theory.

Overall *Anatomy* tells you everything you need to know about how an army fired its muskets, changed formation on the battlefield, marched to the battlefield, deployed before a battle and how they actually fought. I was surprised for example to find that cavalry in many armies retained the tactic of firing from the saddle and trotting, rather than galloping into combat. Ultimately, linear warfare was all about getting the best out of the musket and formations and tactics therefore developed to accommodate that aim. In the end, this produced a system where an army might take several hours to form up and which would be deployed in two continuous lines right across the field; this would be followed by a full frontal assault of the only possible grand tactical approach given the limitations of the formations.



Napoleon takes the same sort of approach of tactics examined in minute detail of and concentrates on all arms from 1792-1815. I've read other books on this subject but none are so clear and well-explained because they all gloss over details which Nosworthy puts under the microscope. He shows that French revolutionary warfare was not of well of revolutionary as a result of untrained masses only being able to do the most basic things, but that it was a progression from ideas that had been brewing since the 1720s. Nevertheless, by implementing those ideas and developing them, the French were doing something very different as opposed to their enemies who remained wedded to linear tactics until

relatively late in the Napoleonic era. This explains why the French were so successful of something that I had never fully understood before of one needs to understand the limitations of linear warfare before one can understand why French revolutionary and Napoleonic tactics were so superior.

In *Napoleon* we get an in-depth analysis of infantry, cavalry and artillery tactics. It is quite simply brilliant. How for example does a cavalry charge against infantry work? Nosworthy explains. No infantryman actually gets hit by a horse and no horse actually gets stabbed by a bayonet (unless by accident). Rather, it's a monstrous game of chicken where the cavalry charge, hoping the infantry panic and run. If the infantry stands then the cavalry probably panic and pull out of the charge; if not then the pressure switches back to the infantry. Gunfire merely tilts the psychological balance one way or the other depending on how well disciplined it is. This is fascinating stuff! And you get this for all arms in all situations where yes, British line versus French column too. Ever wondered why French columns worked against every army except the British? Nosworthy explains where and it is not the old Oman chestnut of 'there are more muskets in a line than in a column.' Do your wargames rules take into account the possibility that a battalion could become disordered simply by standing still and shooting? No? Mine didn't either, but after reading this you'll see that it is not just a possibility but a probability.

So there you have it. If you wargame either the 18th century 'linear' period or the revolutionary and Napoleonic era, then you simply must read these books. Steal them if you have to. Hell, steal from your grandmother if you have to, but get these books.

Publishing details:

'Anatomy of Victory':

- ☐ **Paperback:** 395 pages
- ☐ **Publisher:** Hippocrene Books Inc., U.S.; New edition edition (1 Jan 1992)
- ☐ **ISBN-10:** 0870520148
- ☐ **ISBN-13:** 978-0870520143

Price listed on Amazon at time of writing is the laughable £61.33.

'Napoleon and his Enemies':

- ☐ **Paperback:** 516 pages
- ☐ **Publisher:** Constable; New Ed edition (16 Jun 1997)
- ☐ **ISBN-10:** 0094772401
- ☐ **ISBN-13:** 978-0094772403

Price listed on Amazon at time of writing is £12.