

Rebels and Patriots: Wargaming Rules for North America: Colonies to Civil War

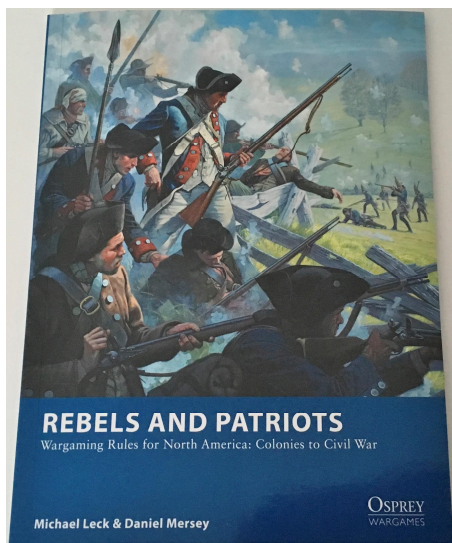
Osprey Wargames Series No. 23 (2019)

By Michael Leck and Daniel Mersey; illustrated by Mark Stacey

Review by Paul Le Long

If you have read any of my reviews of Dan Mersey's Osprey Blue Book series ó Lion, Dragon Rampant, The Men Who Would Be Kings -- then there will be no surprises here. All those rule share common DNA and this is really not much more than the Horse and Musket expansion. Michael Leck has taken the lead on this one, which is why he is named as first author and in fact a recent issue of *Wargames Illustrated* has an interesting article by Dan Mersey talking about the development process for the game and how Michael Leck has melded the Rampant and Kings systems to make this one.

Wars covered here are: French and Indian War, Revolutionary War, Old Northwest (1785-95), Mexican War of Independence, 1812, Texas Revolution, Canada Patriots' Rebellion, Mexican-American War, Cortina War, Civil War, Mexican Adventure, Fenian Raids, What-if British intervention (1860s). However, there is no reason at all that you couldn't run traditional European theatre Napoleonic scenarios using these rules. The authors state this in the book and indeed I've seen it stated many times online recently. I'm assuming that Osprey aren't marketing R&P as "Napoleonic" because they don't want to compete with their other Napoleonic title, *Chosen Men*. That's just my guess; the headline though is that this is a set of rules that can easily, and without tweaking, cover the whole Black Powder era. It could also cover the Plains Wars, though again this is not said explicitly since TMWWBK already covers that.



As with all the "Rampant" titles, the focus of the rules is small battle/large skirmish. For example a typical force ó called a Company here ó is 24 points. A standard unit of infantry (12 figures each) would cost 4 points. So you are fielding a company of about half a dozen units on average.

Types of unit: Line Infantry (most common), Light Infantry (as you would expect for Napoleonic but also representing later line infantry operating in looser order), Shock Infantry (think grenadiers and aggressive "at them with the bayonet" types), Skirmishers, Natives (woodland Indians mostly who want to get in close; the shoot-from-cover types are better represented by Skirmishers ó so a force of Indians might comprise both types),

Artillery (light, medium or heavy), Light Cavalry (most common), Shock Cavalry (very rare in North America).

Turn sequence is IGO-UGO but with less chaos than in earlier sets ó you still have to successfully activate a unit to get it to act but your whole turn is not over should it fail. Units accumulate disorder which degrade their staying power. Morale is simpler and better than in earlier games: you simply roll 2d6 minus the casualties you've taken and if the result is >2 you pass. If not, you either acquire disorder or rout. Once casualties mount up, it is a slippery, one-way slope to oblivion. You can choose from a range of options when issuing an order to a unit: Move, Attack, Fire, Skirmish (move & shoot), Form Close Order, Volley Fire, Rally. Units are more predictable than in Lion Rampant but you'd expect that in this period as opposed to the Medieval. Overall, the rules are clean and simple, easy to learn and quickly memorised. Different troop types operate in very different ways and that's quite satisfying without adding complexity.

As in TMWWBK, each player has an officer with background, traits and the ability to gain (or lose) honour during a game and is really intended for campaign play ó you follow him through several battles, hopefully winning honour and promotion and avoiding death and dishonour. This is a nice touch and is a great addition for the soloist.

As usual the games are very scenario based ó here you get 12. Again, we are concentrating on small actions with ~50-60 men per side ó raids, attack on a battery, patrols and the like.

You will not like the book if:

- i. You want big battles
- ii. You don't like Horse and Musket
- iii. You want a very serious, rules-heavy, tournament-style approach

You will like the book if:

- i. You like small games with about 50-60 miniatures on each side
- ii. You like scenario-driven encounters
- iii. You want to represent the everyday small war of outposts rather than large formal battles with proper formations
- iv. You like the Black Powder era in North America
- v. You want to use these rules for Napoleonic or other wars in other theatres ó the Peninsula War is an obvious choice and I feel R&P is a strong competitor to Sharp Practice by Too Fat Lardies
- vi. You want a simple (but elegant) game that flows quickly without getting bogged down in detail

Highly recommended.