

Not Your Grandfather's Waterloo Tabletop Game Rules

By George Knapp

(Originally published in Lone Warrior 203)

Editor's Note: George Knapp has designed a multi-player game. Suggestions on how to play this as a solo game follows.

1. Background. This game is a simulation of the Battle of Waterloo, fought on June 18, 1815, between the French army under the Emperor Napoleon, the Anglo-Allied (hereafter referred to as the British) army under the Duke of Wellington, and the Prussian army under Field Marshal Blucher. Although designed to play on a tabletop with miniature figures, this game takes its primary inspiration from the board game *Napoleon at Waterloo*, copyright 1979, by Simulations Publications, Inc. (James Dunnigan, Al Nofi, and Redmond Simonsen). I designed this adaptation to be played on a war game table, 5 feet by 6 feet with either 15mm or 25mm figures.



2. The Game. This game consists of not more than **ten turns** during which players move miniature figures representing historical units that were present at Waterloo. During the course of each turn, units may conduct movement and combat leading toward victory or defeat within the ten turn limit.

The game is best played by three or four players. One player should control the French, one the British, and one should control the Prussians. A fourth player should play on the French side.

3. How to Win.

- The French win on the turn they capture and hold any one of the groups of six hexes on the map marked with blue or red stars. They must capture all six of the stars in any one group.
- The Allies and Prussians win by preventing the French from winning.

4. How to Start. Most of the units begin the game already on the map. Place them so according to the Order of Battle below. The remaining units may come onto the map later in the game. Set them aside.

Note that almost all units have a combat strength and movement allowance (all except the Hougomont, La Haye Saint, and the Pappelotte, La Haye, and Smohain Detachments). Movement allowance remains the same for a unit throughout the game, but combat strength may reduce during the course of the game. Each time a unit takes a hit in combat, players reduce the unit combat strength by one using markers of some type. When a unit's combat strength reaches zero, remove it from play.

5. How to Play. The game is played in turns. Each turn follows this sequence.

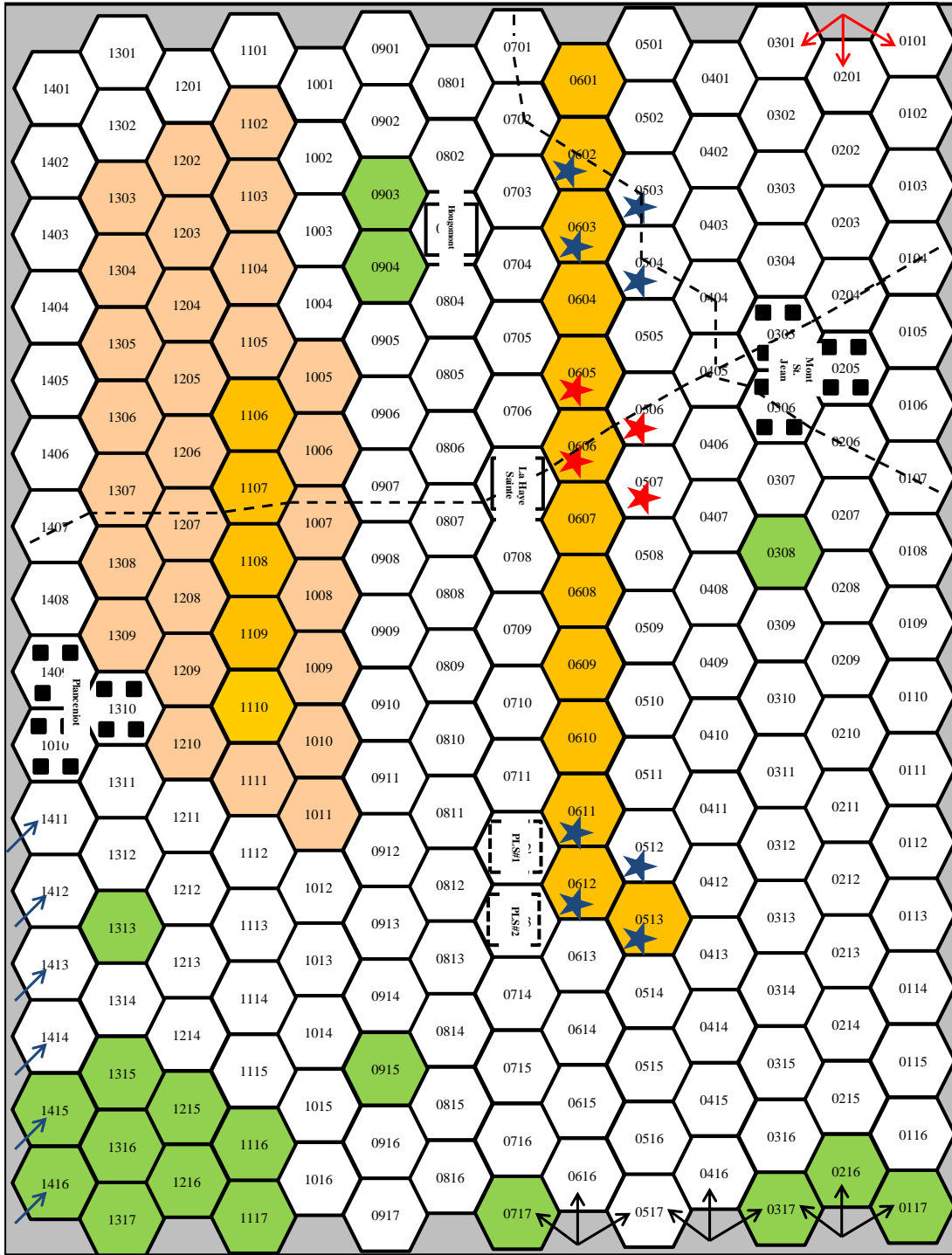
- French units fire.
- Check for Grouchy reinforcements.
- French units move.
- British and Prussian units fire.
- Check for Prussian reinforcements.
- British and Prussian units move.

6. How to Move. A hexagonal grid covers the map. Units move from hex to hex up to the limit of their movement and the following general rules.

- Units always face the apex of the hex they currently occupy. In this way, units always have two front, two flank, and two rear hexes.
- All units spend one movement point to enter clear hexes.
- All units spend two movement points to move into a woods hex, up-slope, or into a ridge hex from slope or clear hexes.
- Only one unit can occupy a hex at the end of movement.
- A unit may never enter nor pass through a hex containing an enemy unit.
- Units have control of all six hexes surrounding them, but may only fight enemies in their two front hexes.
- A unit must stop upon entering one of the six hexes surrounding an enemy unit.
- Only infantry units may move directly into or through woods at a cost of two movement points for each woods hex. All units may move through woods along roads.
- Only infantry units may end movement in a woods hex.
- Cavalry units may not end their movement in a hex that contains the symbol for buildings, or the La Haye Sainte or Hougomont hexes.



This photo shows the French Grand Battery on a low ridge. Several French infantry divisions are forward of the ridge, ready to step off and attack the center of Wellington's line. Note the Guard units behind the ridge.



7. How to Have Combat. Units move, then their opponents get to fire at them. Next, the units that just fired get to move, then their opponents get to fire at them. ‘Fire’ in these rules means all types of combat such as firing or melee.

Units do not get to move, then fire. They fire, then move. Think of it this way. Units attack by moving and they defend by firing.

Firing. Units fire by rolling dice equal to their combat strength. They hit their targets based on the following conditions.

- Infantry and cavalry units may only fight enemy units in their front hexes.
- Artillery may fire at enemy units in distant hexes as well as adjacent hexes. Take the firing unit's two front hexes and extend them in the direction of fire. Enemy units outside that area are not legitimate targets.

All units hit their targets on die rolls of six with the following modifiers:

- Units in woods, town, village, and farm hexes add one to their die rolls. This **does not** apply to the two woods hexes adjacent to Hougomont.
- Units in ridge hexes firing at targets in non-ridge hexes add one to their die rolls.
- Artillery firing at enemy in adjacent hex doubles its combat strength. That is to say, roll two dice for each strength point.

No modifiers or combination of modifiers may ever exceed a final modified die roll of +2 to the firer's dice. No firer ever has a better chance to hit its target than by rolling 4, 5, or 6 on its dice. When a cavalry and infantry unit combine to attack a defender, the attacker adds one to its die rolls. This technique may not be used to attack Hougomont or La Haye Sainte.



This photo is the western end of Wellington's line. The Hougomont is in the foreground.

What Happens After Combat? The units that just fired may now move. They may opt to withdraw from contact with enemy units or they may decide to remain in place and take fire from the enemy. Units that opt to withdraw may not move directly from one of the six hexes surrounding an enemy unit into one of the six hexes surrounding another enemy unit. Units may become pinned in this manner and not be allowed to move.



This is La Haye Sainte in the center of the British line. Note British artillery and a Dutch-Belgian division atop the ridge, with other troops behind the ridge.

8. Reinforcements. Prussians, Grouchy, French Guard, British Optional.

Prussians. Divided into "Group 1" and "Group 2." Begin rolling for Group 1 on Turn 1. They arrive on a die roll of 6. If not, then on turn 2, they arrive on a die roll of 5 or 6. Turn 3 arrive on a die roll of 4, 5, or 6 and so forth. Group 1 will arrive no later than turn 6 and will be able to play an important role in the game.

On the turn after Group 1 arrives, start rolling for Group 2. Follow the same procedure as above. On their first roll, they need a die roll of 6 to arrive. 2nd roll, need 5, or 6 and so forth. It is possible that they arrive as early as Turn 2, never arrive, or arrive too late to be of any use.

Grouchy. Start rolling for Grouchy's force on turn 1. Use the same procedure as above. First 6, then 5, or 6, then 4, 5, or 6 etc.

French Guard. The French Guard infantry cavalry, and artillery (total six units) may not move until turn 7 or the turn after Prussians Group 1 arrives. So, they may move as early as turn 2 or as late as turn 7. Note that the Guard artillery unit, Niegre, begins the game deployed and may fire and move on turn 1.

British. Colville and Chasse are off the map guarding the British western flank. They only become available if any of the five French Guard units (not including Niegre) moves. Begin rolling for them using the same technique as above on the turn after the French Guard moves. It is possible that they never arrive or that they arrive too late to be of use.



French troops storm the Hougoumont while British divisions protect the flanks and reinforce the garrison.

9. Hougoumont and La Haye Sainte Special Rules. Both of these fortified farms played special roles in the battle. The garrison can fire in any direction. These two garrisons may be reinforced during the British movement phase.

Any British infantry units (not Perponcher or Chasse) adjacent to Hougoumont or La Haye Sainte may send one or more of its strength points to reinforce the detachments. Reinforcements may not move through any of the six hexes surrounding enemy units. Reduce the strength of the sending units by the number of strength points sent.

The strength of either garrison may never exceed its starting strength. Example, the Hougoumont garrison has lost two strength points during the French fire phase. During the next Allied movement phase, an adjacent British unit may reinforce the Hougoumont garrison. Remove one or both of the 'hit' markers from the garrison and transfer them to the adjacent British unit.

10. Pappelotte, La Haye, and Smohain (0711 and 0712). Units of the Anglo-Allied army occupied these farms and they acted as anchors on the left flank of that army. The French attacked but did not capture them. In this game, these two detachments number 1 strength point each and they have the same six areas surrounding them that stop enemy movement. They hit on 5 and 6 and can fire in any direction. They cannot be reinforced. Although unrealistic, the garrisons can be attacked by cavalry as well as infantry. Once eliminated, their strength points may not be replaced as is the case with Hougoumont and La Haye Sainte. The hex becomes a clear hex. French units entering either of these hexes do not gain any fire advantage. These two outposts serve to slow down the French advance onto Wellington's western flank.



The French assault the British left. They have already overrun one of the two Belgian farms.

11. Designer Notes.

My first goal is to produce a game that people enjoy enough to want to play again. I found myself sacrificing much of the historical fact of the Battle of Waterloo to develop this game. In doing so, I believe I have created a whole new Waterloo battle game.

In this Waterloo battle game, I tried to address all the major what-ifs having to do with the arrival of the Prussians, Grouchy's force, and the British west flank divisions. Doing it with a progressive die roll makes sure that every game is different. It is entirely possible that the second group of Prussians, and the two British west flank divisions will not arrive.



In this game, the Prussians may not arrive in time to make the difference as they did in the actual battle. Or they may arrive sooner. Grouchy's force may arrive in time to make the difference. The French Guard may be released for battle sooner than in the real battle. The British western flank units may join the battle, or not.

Because of these game realities, every game will be different.

I used several major departures from the original design.

- It's always helpful to start with a good map and the *Napoleon at Waterloo* game map is one of the best for simplicity. Originally 23 hexes wide and 17 hexes tall, I trimmed the map down to 16 x 14 to eliminate the French option of attacking farther west.
- I added ridge hexes because the whole point of Wellington's defense was to take advantage of the ridge anchored on both ends by buildings. I then added the broad elevated area where the French deployed for realism and balance.
- The turn sequence reflects reality. Units move then they take fire. If the firers decide to remain in place, then the original movers get their chance to fire.

Not Your Grandfather's Waterloo Order of Battle

Allies	French
At Start, British	At Start
Cooke, 6-3, 0503	Friant, 7-3, 1405 (Guard)
Clinton, 5-3, 0502	Morand, 6-3, 1407 (Guard)
Alten, 5-3, 0505	Duhesme, 5-3, 1406 (Guard)
Colville, 5-3, Off Map to the West	Allix, 5-3, 1005
Picton, 5-3, 0510	Donzelot, 6-3, 1006
Cole, 5-4, 0507	Marcognet, 5-3, 1007
Perponcher, 4-3, 0608	Durutte, 5-3, 1008
Chasse, 4-3, Off Map to the West	Bachelu, 5-3, 1004
La Haye Saint Detachment, 6-0, 0706	Jerome, 6-3, 1103
Hougoumont Detachment, 8-0, 0802	Foy, 6-3, 1104
P, L, S Detachment #1, 1-0, 0711	Lobau, 6-3, 1205
P, L, S Detachment #2, 1-0, 0712	Guyot, 4-4, 1305 (Guard)
Heavy Cavalry 1, 4-4, 0403	Lefebvre-Desnouettes, 3-4, 1307 (Guard)
Heavy Cavalry 2, 4-4, 0408	Jacquinot, 3-4, 1009
Light Cavalry 1, 3-4, 0401	Pire, 3-4, 1102
Light Cavalry 2, 3-4, 0411	Domon, 3-4, 1207
I Corps Artillery, 3-3, 0607	Kellerman, 4-4, 1204
II Corps Artillery, 3-3, 0603	Milhaud, 4-4, 1208
Reserve Artillery, 3-3, 0605 SP=77	Neigre, 5-3, 1107 (Guard)
	DeSales, 3-3, 1108
Prussians: Group 1. Off Map to the East	Pelletier, 3-3, 1105
Tippelskirch, 5-2	Noury, 3-3, 1206 SP=102
Hacke, 4-2	
Ryssel, 4-2	Grouchy's Force: Off Map to the South
Losthin, 4-2	Lefol, 5-3
Hiller, 4-2	Habert, 5-3
Jurgass, 3-3	Berthezene, 5-3
Wilhelm, 3-3	Pecheaux, 5-3
Rohl, 4-2	Vichery, 4-3
von Bardeleben, 3-2 SP=34	Hulot, 4-3
	Maurin, 3-4
Prussians: Group 2. Off Map to the East	Exelmans, 4-4
Steinmetz, 5-2	Soult, 3-4
Jagow, 4-2	Doguereau, 3-3
Krafft, 5-2	Poilly, 3-3 SP=44
Brause, 4-2	Total SP=146
von Roder, 3-3	
Hobe, 3-3	
Lehman, 3-2 SP=27	
Total SP=134	

Notes for solo play

Having played the game three times, it became apparent to me that since the Allies were on the defensive, their role was to maintain a line along the ridge. They delivered cavalry counterattacks from time to time, and did what they could to establish additional units on whichever of the three groups of stars that the French were focusing on. It would be very easy to 'automate' their role, as they had little decision making to do.

On the other hand, the time constraint (10 turns) caused the French very early in the game to designate one of the three objectives as the primary focus and to start attacking relentlessly. There were two major avenues of approach, and either forced the French to clear the Hougoumont or La Haye Sainte. Unlike the historic battle, the rules concerning not passing through a defender's zone of control forbid bypassing the two strongholds.

Having said that, if Grouchy is released early and the Prussians are delayed several turns, it appears possible that Grouchy could deliver the main attack on the east. However, too many things have to go right to make that work. Grouchy's main focus is to keep the Prussians away from reinforcing Wellington's main line in the west and center.

So, automate the Allies. The rules generally favor the defender. Each move deploy Allied units to strengthen the line atop the ridge. Send an infantry division or two to protect Hougoumont and La Haye Sainte. The longer those two stay in British hands, the longer the French move onto the ridge is delayed.

The constraint of a 10-turn game is a powerful limitation. Ten turns reflected what was actually done in the historical battle. When playing solo, experiment with a longer game. Assume that the fields dried earlier and the guns and cavalry could negotiate the ground better.

As you can see, George Knapp used paper figures from Junior General. He added an upside down golf tee to hold casualty rings. He prepared the unit name, strength, and movement onto strips. Everything is mounted with magnetic tape on a steel move stand. The steel is glued onto a piece of black foam core. Very elegant.

What I find most appealing about the game is that it is scalable and the rules can be modified for many other corps or army-level battles and wars.

