



OPERATIONAL STUDIES GROUP



"The most important parts of a film are the mysterious parts—beyond the reach of reason and language."

Kubrick

STANLEY KUBRICK, WARGAMER

Besides "2001," "Eyes Wide Shut," "Barry Lyndon," and "A Clockwork Orange," Kubrick wrote and directed several anti-war films, including "Paths of Glory," "Dr. Strangelove," and "Full Metal Jacket."

Taschen has published, "The Stanley Kubrick Archives"—as well as a 1,000 page-book on Kubrick's research and screenplay for "Napoleon, the greatest film never made." On page 75 of this book, among the research materials accumulated, we see SPI's "Napoleon at Waterloo." Kubrick was a subscriber to *S&T Magazine*. This is not a coincidence, considering the thousands of photos and hundreds of pages of research Kubrick put together for the film. Much of Kubrick's film philosophy could apply to wargames as well. A wargame has a narrative, a dramatic arc, tension and conflict, good guys and bad guys, with the difference being that each 'scene' can end dozens of different ways.

Kubrick explained, "The first step has been to read everything I could get my hands on about Napoleon, and totally immerse myself in his life." That total immersion is what it takes to create, and to fully appreciate and enjoy, a wargame. A wargame can be a window into a past world. Like Napoleon planning a military campaign, Kubrick mapped out his strategy for filming a huge historical epic. He envisioned the battle scenes as "a vast tableau where the formations moved in an almost choreographic fashion. I want to capture this reality on film, and to do so it's necessary to re-create all the conditions of the battle with painstaking accuracy."[\[1\]](#) Kubrick's research files contain much of relevance to a wargame designer.

In his seminal book, "On Film Technique," Vsevolod Pudovkin wrote: "A series of chance meetings and encounters bound together by no more than their sequence in time, is just a group of episodes. The theme as basic idea, uniting in itself the meaning of all the events depicted — that is what was lacking. Consequently the separate characters were without significance, the actions of the hero and the people round him as chaotic and adventitious as the movements of pedestrians on a street, passing by before a window. But the same author went through his scenario, altering it in accordance with the remarks made to him. He carefully reconstructed the line of the hero, guided by a clearly formulated theme. As basis he set the following idea : " It is not sufficient to be revolutionarily inclined ; to be of service to the cause one must

possess a properly organised consciousness of reality." The merely blustering workman of the opening was changed to a reckless anarchist, his enemies thus stood in a clear and definite front, his contacts with them and with his future friends assumed clear purpose and meaning, a whole series of superfluous complications fell away, and the modified scenario was transformed to a rounded and convincing whole."

Chris Moeller spells out what's required: "There are two parts to a game scenario: the data (times/forces/capabilities), and the story (that melds all of that into a unique identity). I think that's missing from many game series... you play one and then when you play the second one you're "reading" the same story. Only the times/forces/capabilities vary. It gets boring."

I'm really something of a film director myself. I want to immerse the player into history with the detail and background needed to get into character. It's no coincidence that role-playing games evolved from wargames. I have a way of peering into a map and seeing the whole world down there: the people, the buildings, and nature, fully in my mind's eye. Even as a teenager I would get the best atlas I could find and just fly over the ground, from town to town, crossing rivers, passing castles and farms, and enjoying the trip almost as much as being there, or even more so, because I was not dependent upon the material world 'out there' but fully deploying the imagination.

-Kevin Zucker

[\[1\]](#) *The Stanley Kubrick Archives*, p. 644.

Below: Card file prepared by college students with data on every day's events over the entire Napoleonic period.



Pre-Order

Napoleon's Counterstrike, 1813



NEXT GAME: Napoleon's Counterstrike

The War of Liberation: Part II

August-October 1813

BATTLES SIMULATED

***Löwenberg** A Game of Cat and Mouse, 18-21
August*

Marshal Ney, forming the French left, advanced on Bunzlau. The V and VI Corps advanced through Löwenberg while the XI formed the French right and the Guard moved into reserve. Easily capturing Löwenberg, the French were delayed repairing the bridge while the Prussians made good their escape. Blücher determinedly avoided combat according to the Trachenberg principles, and played cat and mouse with Napoleon.

***Dresden** The Attack from Bohemia, 26-27 August*

Schwarzenberg made the error of leaving his left wing miserably weak in both guns and cavalry in the pouring rain, with the infantry

unable to fire its muskets. This fault was redoubled by the tardiness of Klenau, who was slow due to the weather, and due to taking the dismal forest road to Tharandt. The Prussians began their attack on the outskirts of Dresden early in the morning of the 16th. The battle opened at 5 AM when Kleist's Prussians moved into the Grosser Garten.

At 7 AM Wittgenstein's Russians on the right flank pushed forward, but French artillery across the Elbe forced them back to their starting positions. Napoleon galloped across the bridge and into town between 9 and 10 AM. He received an ovation from troops and citizens alike, and after visiting the King of Saxony he rode off to inspect his lines.

Jomini persuaded the Tsar that the opportunity had passed and the time for withdrawal was at hand. Unfortunately no one was sent to change the three-shot signal for the resumption of the attack, and a fresh wave of Coalition troops moved forward all along the front. Redoubt III fell by storm; violent attacks on redoubts IV and V failed. Beyond the Weisseritz, the Austrian attack ground to a halt before Friedrichstadt.

Losses: French, 8,854 men. Coalition at least 15,420 men killed and wounded and 12,535 captured, with 40 guns.

Wartenburg Blücher's River Crossing, 3 October

Here a crossing had already been attempted on September 20th, and General Bertrand had studied the locale and placed his defending forces so as to dominate the terrain. Unfortunately he had not considered the dropping water level of the Elbe, which had been running over its banks because of the heavy storms but now subsided.

After several hours of fighting the Prussians discovered a passage to flank the French position, and by nightfall Bertrand had been forced to pull out. Yorck's Corps, which started the battle with 12,000 men, lost 1,600.

Losses: French, 900 men killed and wounded, 1,000 captured, 13 guns.
Coalition, 1,900 killed and wounded, 200 missing.

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Napoleon's End Map Advisory

Please unfold maps carefully, on this printing of Nap's End some maps have been found to stick together at the center. Proceed with caution upon first opening. To avoid any problems unfold the map one time (to 11" x 17") and then press it flat so that the ridges uncouple. You may also gently back-fold into a "V" shape, then unfold the map fully.

These maps were produced by the same printer, on the same weight of paper, as all our other maps since 2011. Sorry for the problem.

Kevin

Evolution of TLNB

In the early games, such as *Napoleon at Leipzig*, the Sequence of Play had three Phases and 4 identified sub-segments

A. Command and Reorganization Phase

i. Reorganization Segment • ii. Command Segment

B. Movement Phase

i. Command Movement Segment • ii. Individual Movement Segment

C. Combat Phase

The current TLNB Sequence of Play has four Phases and 16 sub-segments or steps.

A. Start Phase

1. Weather Segment • 2. Card Segment

B. Command Phase

1. Supply Segment • 2. Recovery Segment • 3. Reorganization Segment
• 4. Command Segment

C. Movement Phase

1. Command Movement Segment • 2. Initiative Movement Segment

D. Combat Phase

1. LOS Step • 2. Cavalry Retreat Step • 2A. Artillery Reaction Fire Step

• 2B. Attack Declaration Step • 3. Bombardment Step

• 4. Cavalry Charge Step • 5. Combat Step • 6. 2nd LOS Step

Night Sequence of Play (three Phases and 3 sub-segments)

The Primary driver for evolving the rules was the need to simulate battles other than the large, set-piece battles like Waterloo and Leipzig. To simulate the Approach to Battle we needed Road March, March Orders, Hidden Forces, Alternate Forces, Repulse, Bridges and several additional types of terrain, Shock Combat, Counter-Battery Fire, Weather (11 types), Improved Positions, Vedettes, Supply, Baggage and Pontoon Trains. Nothing was added that was not absolutely needed to present the player with the situation of his historical counterpart anticipating a battle.

A real designer doesn't just put in the kitchen sink. The result is not a game if it is so top-heavy it cannot be played. In order to make room in the design for all the new rules, huge elaborations of combat could not be afforded. Overall the game increased from 16 pages of rules to 24.

When I made the decision to design a game around a basic combat system, I knew that there would be a lot of grumbling. Decades later the grumbling continues... There are even amateur designers out there who have "corrected" the game, gutting the design and turning it in to a regular combat-driven wargame. However, when people want to play a game they use the OSG series rules; if they just want to grumble online they trot out the unwieldy modified system.

One major complaint is the ZOC-surround method of destroying enemy units. This is seen as ahistorical. I have argued in OSG's magazine that the ZOC-surround mechanism is accurate. A unit's flanks were vulnerable, especially when deployed in the standard three-rank line. The ZOC surround is a way of detemining when a unit has been flanked, without using the word "flank."

In Wargame Design Vol. III there are two articles in particular that pick up on this idea.

Nr. 1, page 13: "Combat in the Library of Napoleonic Battles" https://cdn.shopify.com/s/files/1/0443/6423/4910/files/WDM_V3_1_2.pdf?v=1603724107

Nr. 5, page 75: "The Closed Watchcase" https://cdn.shopify.com/s/files/1/0443/6423/4910/files/WDM_V3_5.pdf?v=1603723414

(See especially "The Flanking Effect" on page 79.)

For example, Baggage Trains- why burden the player with supply at all? Everyone knows the player doesn't care about supply. He just wants to get on to the fight. Which is fine, very Napoleonic as far as it goes; but Napoleon didn't ignore supply, he just failed at it.

March Orders for another example have allowed us to simulate the various crazy things that occur in the march of armies. There are pre-programmed March Orders and General Retreat March orders.

Baggage was a reality of the battlefield. The baggage train is used to denote the vulnerable underbelly of the army. Everybody from the general on down is aware of the vulnerability in that direction. Baggage trains were a real presence at every battle, usually parked near or just off the mapedge of most of our maps; sometimes they got caught in the wrong place. The baggage train is something the player has to be prepared to defend, placing it in the safest zone in the rear, so that if this point is reached by the enemy it is a morale disaster, indicating that the route back home has been blocked.

I want a game that can be played ftf in 2 sessions (if not one). That is the whole point of everything we are doing. People who play the game, buy the game. That is our whole marketing idea. The maps are designed to draw you in and the series rules also work toward creating a narrative each time you play. A parallel development took place in how we render each battle, how the map is orientated, given the narrative arc of each battle is different. The historian in us always wants a coherent world view. But that view must be married to the effect it has in ftf play, so that together they create a drama and tension evident, for example, in the Thursday Night Gamers videos. I learned much about being a game designer by watching those videos closely. (See Napoleongames.com for the link.)

Then there is the perception of the "bloodless, push and shove" CRT. I never tire of tweaking the goremongers, who think that the side that kills the most men wins. This is not true, nor is it the point of Napoleonic Battle. Napoleon advises that the point of battle was to create theatre, timing "*evenements*" (surprise events) to maximize drama and tension. For all the numbers in our games, it is the drama and tension of ftf play that creates the story, the narrative, and stamps the experience on the player.

Besides, the Napoleonic Battlefield *was* a lot of push and shove. The obvious case is the battle of Ligny, where the town changed hands 6 times. You could make a very long list of similar battles. Units would attack, take the town, get thrown out, then attack again and again, usually becoming exhausted by the third or fourth attack. But this exhaustion had as much to do with expenditure of ammunition and morale, as manpower lost.

Napoleonic warfare was all about maneuver on the battlefield, not two lines blazing away at each other.

—Kevin Zucker

New Blog Posts

- General Dufour in the 1814 Campaign
 - John Prados, Part III
 - TLNB Upcoming Titles

<https://napoleongames.com/blogs/osg-blog>

Update: Roadblocks

This REVISED text is included in Nap's End Study version 2.09.

25.9 Optional Rule: Roadblocks

Roadblocks may be adopted by consensus of players.

25.91 General Rule: A roadblock is several companies of infantry with an obstruction in the roadway: **1 (3) 0**. It cannot move, has a combat strength of 1 and Initiative of (3) for defense only. It may never attack and simply remains in contact when adjacent to the enemy during the friendly combat phase. Neither side's units may cross a roadblocked (red arrow) hexside (although leaders may). Until the roadblock is cleared a roadblocked hexside is

impassable to French and Coalition movement, retreats, pursuits and supply lines (but not Command Radius). Enemy Units may *not* enter a hex containing a *concealed* roadblock marker. Roadblocks are always immobile and “unable to retreat fully/PEU.”

25.92 Roadblock Construction: Each side can construct up to 2 roadblocks at start (unless otherwise specified) and 2 each Night PM turn, at least 3 hexes from the nearest enemy unit, and within 2 hexes of a friendly infantry unit (tracing only through terrain passable to infantry). Roadblocks may only be placed on a *road or trail* at a “*defile*”—either end of a bridge, town, slope, or woods. Construction is automatic—simply place the roadblock marker with the red arrow pointed toward the blocked defile hexside, and conceal it with a friendly flag marker on top. You may build up to 2 roadblocks in a hex, each pointing to a different defile.

25.93 Reconnaissance against Roadblocks: Road-blocks are hidden from the enemy until revealed by recon (8.3) or Repulse (9.12). The roadblock is treated as "no cav" on the Reconnaissance Table. A repulse is resolved as a regular combat, with no column shift (9.22).

25.94 Roadblock ZOCs: A *hidden* roadblock marker has a ZOC into all adjacent hexes. A *revealed* roadblock marker exerts a ZOC into the *two* hexes on either side of its red arrow hexside only. The *5 other* adjacent hexes are revealed as non-controlled when the roadblock marker is revealed. Friendly units may stack with the roadblock—their ZOCs are unimpaired.

25.95 Clearing Roadblocks: To clear an enemy road block, a friendly combat unit must attack it through the defile hexside (in either direction). A retreat or 1R result for the roadblock means it is cleared (removed). A cavalry or artillery unit cannot *charge* or *bombard* the defile, but may make an adjacent attack. The initiative of roadblocks (needed to resolve shock combat) is (3); a shock attack by a 3 or better will cause it to be cleared. A player may clear a friendly roadblock when occupied by a *friendly* combat unit during Movement, at a cost of 1 additional MP.

25.96 Defending a Roadblock: There are no additional terrain effects on combat for units stacked with a roadblock. The defense strength of the roadblock is added to the total combat strength defending the hex.



DEAN ESSIG

Veteran designer Dean Essig, whose wargame career spanned more than 35 years, has died. Founder of the Gamers, publisher of the Operational Combat Series, Essig passed away in his sleep. He had suffered a cancer-related stroke, which involved an auto-accident. An update on March 11 confirmed that Essig's cancer had spread, and he had been moved into a hospice rather than continue treatment.

Dean has design credits on 92 games, many shared. Essig's highly-regarded work won a string of Charles S. Roberts awards. His award-winning designs include *Afrika*, *Enemy at the Gates*, *DAK*, *Case Blue*, *Last Chance for Victory*, and *Last Blitzkrieg*.

A memorial will be held in Homer, Illinois in the coming weeks.

Source:

<https://boardgamewire.com/index.php/2024/03/26/tributes-pour-in-after-death-of-veteran-wargamer-designer-dean-essig/>

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