



## Waterloo: The Paris Woods Scenario

### Prologue: What If?

by Rich Barbuto

It was nearly 1 p.m. and Marshal Ney sent a request for orders to the Emperor. The grand battery was in place and D'Erlon's corps was ready to attack. Inspecting the Anglo-Allied line through his telescope, Napoleon was about ready to order Ney to begin the bombardment when he heard the buzz from his staff. Looking to his right, toward the low sound of several officers, he saw them pointing off to the northeast. Their muffled voices grew ever louder. "Just a cloud."

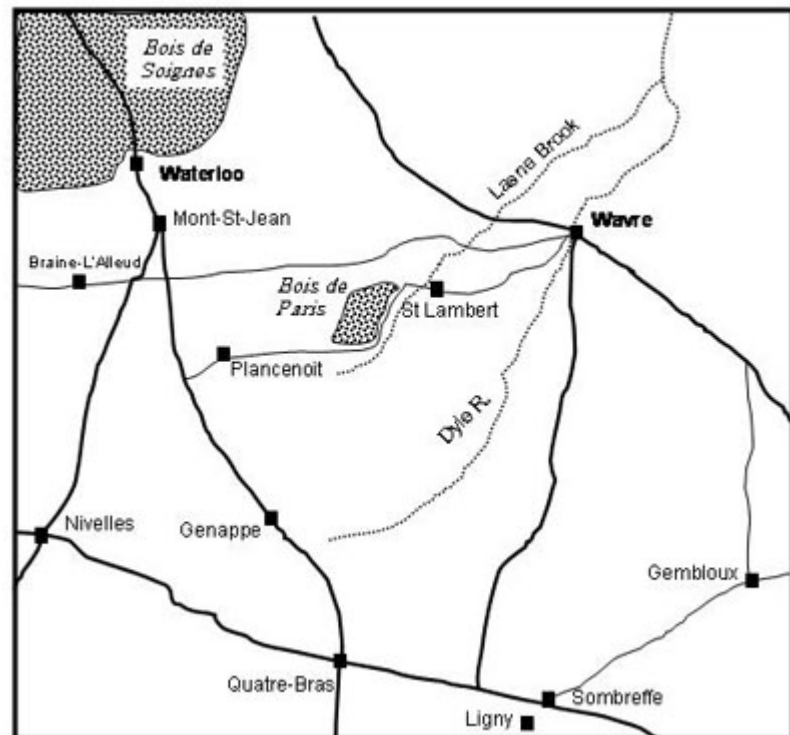
"No, see the movement. Infantry." "Maybe Grouchy." "Maybe not."

Turning his scope to align with their pointed arms, Napoleon inspected the ridge about four miles distant. A dark patch. Several patches. Some moving. Some not. The tell-tale dust rising from behind the ridge. Napoleon cursed. It wasn't Grouchy. These were Prussians. Grouchy was supposed to keep the Prussians away.

Speedily his nimble, analytical mind churned quicker than a man could speak. "It will be hours before the Prussians get here. Mustn't let them join Wellington. Can't stop now. Need to attack these British and Netherlanders immediately. Destroy them quickly and move on."

"Orders!" snapped the Emperor of the French. "Map!"

Soult and another staff officer approached, the young adjutant opening up a map of the local area, holding it at the right angle and distance for Napoleon to view it effortlessly. Soult stood by, quill in hand, ready to scribble off orders. Napoleon studied the map quickly yet carefully, his eye taking in every detail that his cartographers had sketched out the previous day. Some areas were clearly more detailed than others.



"Tell Lobau to guard the right flank east of Plancenoit. No, tell him to guard every road and path through and around these woods," pointing to the Bois de Paris. "No Prussian is to cross this road," pointing to a line drawn between the woods and Plancenoit. Napoleon saw that he could hardly prevent the Prussians from reinforcing Wellington's left. But he could prevent an attack against his own vulnerable right rear. "And send orders to Grouchy to come here with all his forces." "Now, tell Marshal Ney to begin."

Soult called over several eager couriers who received their orders and sped away. To the officer sent to Lobau, the commander of the Sixth Corps, Soult gave a map marked with Napoleon's orders translated into lines inked in on the paper.

### What If?

After the Prussians had managed to escape the Ligny battlefield and consolidate in and around the town of Wavre, Blucher made the most important decision of the Waterloo campaign: to send two corps, up to half of his army, to reinforce Wellington if the British would stand and fight. The Prussian Fourth Corps, under General Friederich Wilhelm von Bulow, had not fought at Ligny and was relatively fresh.

Although this body of troops was furthest from the British, Blucher nonetheless ordered it to move first. At 4 a.m. on the morning of June 18th, Bulow started his troops toward their British and Dutch Allies. The men slowly moved through the Second Prussian Corps and through the narrow streets of Wavre where a fire broke out. Moving along a single road, the boots of the soldiers and the hooves of their horses churned the roadbed to viscous goo. Struggling slowly forward, the Fourth Corps kept the other three Prussian corps locked in position as Grouchy eventually approached Wavre.



By noon, much of the Fourth Corps was at St. Lambert. Here, however, Bulow apparently forgot his orders. He was to keep his men out of sight but if Wellington and Napoleon had joined battle, Bulow was to attack into the French flank. It was about 3 p.m. when Blucher's badgering finally prompted Bulow to order his brigades forward, through the constricted terrain dominated by the Bois de Paris, and toward Plancenoit and glory.

Marshal Grouchy's lack of energy and muddled judgment contributed to Napoleon's defeat. But the Emperor himself shared much of the blame. What if Napoleon had been quicker to see the threat posed by Blucher and quicker to parry it? This scenario plays with that possibility. In this solo game, I hoped to simulate a situation in which Napoleon reached out to stop Blucher's Prussians from drawing close to Plancenoit and Napoleon's very vulnerable rear area. Instead of meeting Blucher's piecemeal attacks on Plancenoit, I wanted to see if I could prevent the Prussians from ever reaching the main French forces. Could Napoleon perhaps have done this by blocking Blucher as the Prussians worked their way through and around the Bois de Paris?

To do this I would need terrain that represented the low ridges, gentle valleys, small villages, and narrow paths through tracts of forest that marked the route from St. Lambert toward Plancenoit. I would also have to come up with rules to cover fighting along narrow roads through forested terrain. More on that later. First, I took stock of my figures to see what I could muster for this experiment.

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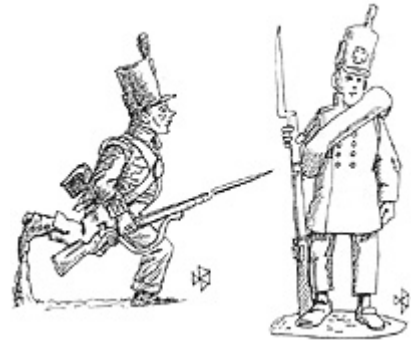


## Waterloo: The Paris Woods Scenario

### The Troops

by Rich Barbuto

My Napoleonic figures are an eclectic assortment of 22 to 25mm figures from half a dozen manufacturers: Newline Design, Scruby, Hinton Hunt, Kreigspielers, Phoenix and others. I mount infantry five to a stand that is 1 x 3 inches in dimension. Each stand represents a company of French or a half company of Prussians. So, a French Infantry battalion is thirty-six figures on six stands while the corresponding Prussian battalion is forty figures on eight stands. Cavalry are mounted two figures per stand and six to twelve stands representing a regiment of horse. I mount guns one to a stand that represents a battery or company of artillery.



The French forces would enter the battle randomly and no set limit to the number that could be brought to bear against the Prussians. I had plenty of French line and light battalions and dragoons and guns to throw into the fray. In this solo game, I was playing the Prussians while the French were automated. So, a word about the Prussians.

### The Prussians

Historically, Bulow's 4th Corps was the first of Blucher's army to advance against Napoleon's right flank. However, my figures derive from a variety of 1815 Prussian formations. I chose them as much for the wide variance in uniforms as for any desire to adhere to the historical order of battle. So, without further apologies, I offer you the Prussian forces that fought this battle.

Nr. 9 Colbergsches Infanterie Regiment. I only fielded two battalions of this regular regiment, the 1st battalion and the fusilier battalion.

\*1/9 Infantry This battalion is in standard Prussian regular infantry uniform of blue kollet (the tailed jacket) with white facings (collar and cuff) and red shoulder straps. Belts are white. Breeches are gray tucked into black gaiters. The shako is regulation and, in typical Prussian fashion, covered in oilskin.



\*I use standard US military notation: the battalion followed by the regiment. Thus 1/9

is the first battalion of the 9th regiment. Fus/9 is the fusilier battalion of the 9th.

Fus/9 Infantry The fusilier battalion is identical to the first battalion except that belts are black.

Nr. 12 Brandenburgisches Infanterie Regiment. This regiment of three battalions was activated in July of 1813 and uniformed more like a reserve regiment.

1/12 Infantry I uniformed this regiment in the regulation shako with an oilskin cover. The short jacket is black with red color patches. The men wear white trousers.

2/12 Infantry The second battalion is in regulation uniform consisting of a blue kollet with red facings and white shoulder straps. They too are in oilskin covered shako.

3/12 Infantry The last battalion of this regiment wears light gray tailless jackets with crimson collar patches. Their trousers are white and they wear shakos with oilskin covers.

Nr. 21 (4th Pommeranian) Infanterie Regiment. This formation was initially formed as the 9th Reserve Infantry Regiment. I only have one battalion of this regiment, the 1st battalion.

1/21 Infantry The British provided this uniform which is cut pretty much like those provided to the Portuguese army. (I used a British light infantry figure.) The jacket and breeches are dark blue. The jacket sports green facings and shoulder rolls rather than shoulder straps. For headgear, the figures have stovepipe shakos with an oval plate topped with a white over red plume. Belts are black.

Nr. 1 Elbe Landwehr Regiment This formation was raised in late 1813 when the former Prussian lands that had formed the Kingdom of Westphalia were reoccupied by Prussians. While there was wide variance in landwehr uniforms and equipment, I kept mine "uniform."

1/1 Elbe Landwehr This battalion is uniformed in the blue litewka (long single-breasted coat with skirts) with light blue facings and shoulder straps. Trousers are white. Headgear is the low crowned blue schirmutze.

2/1 Elbe Landwehr. This battalion is uniformed identically with the first battalion except that the shoulder straps are red.

Nr. 2 East Prussian Jaeger battalion This rifle-equipped formation was uniformed in green kollet with red facings and shoulder straps. Breeches are gray and stuffed in to high black boots. The shako is covered in oilskin. All belts and straps are black.

The Prussians also have a heavy compliment of cavalry.

Nr. 1 Dragoner Regiment Konigin (the 1st Dragoons) This regiment of horsemen wears the medium blue litewka with crimson facings. The troopers also wear the oilskin-covered shako.

Nr. 5 Brandenburgisches Dragoner Regiment (the 5th Dragoons) Different from the 1st Dragoons, this regiment is in medium blue kollet with black facings. Trousers are gray.

Nr. 6 Sweites Schlesisches Husaren Regiment (the 6th Hussars) These colorful hussars

are in green dolman and pelisse with scarlet facings and yellow lace. They wear gray riding breeches with scarlet and yellow "girdle" or wide belt. Troopers had black sheepskin shabraques edged with red "wolf's teeth" over the saddles.

I supported the Prussians with three batteries: a 6 # foot battery, a 12# foot battery, and a 6# horse battery.

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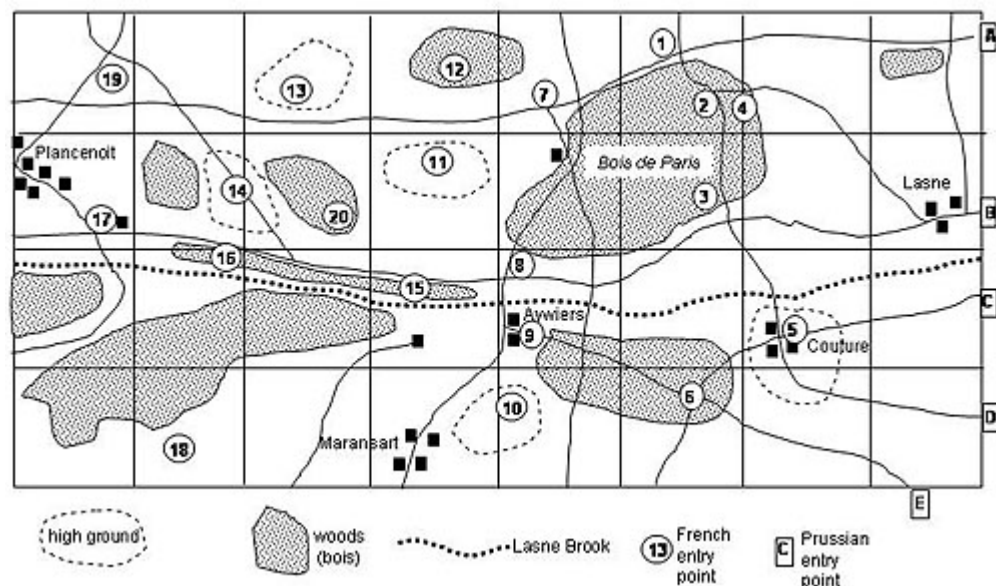
## Waterloo: The Paris Woods Scenario

### The Battlefield

by Rich Barbuto

My terrain board is four by eight feet. I built terrain as shown below. Villages were marked by a one or two model houses that could each shelter a single company of infantry. Ridges or gentle high ground were built of pieces of flat styrofoam. The high ground concealed what was behind it and gave a slight defensive advantage to troops defending along the front edges. Wooded areas were designated by green card stock. Models of trees were for visual appeal only. The card stock marked the expanse and edges of wooded terrain. The Bois de Paris and other woods were traversed by a number of narrow roads. I designated roads by narrow brown strips of paper. Lasne Brook was fordable everywhere so it's course was marked by a series of simple blue paper strips.

Also note several numbered locations throughout the terrain. These are the areas where the French might appear. The Prussians would enter from the left side of the board (generally east) and try to exit the right (west) side on their way to attack the left of the main French forces. I lettered the five places where the Prussians would enter the board A, B, C, D and E.



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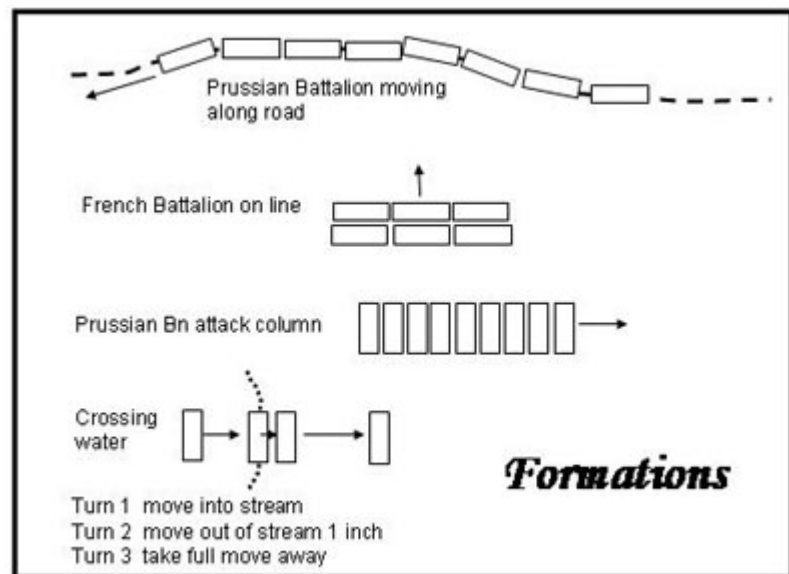
## Waterloo: The Paris Woods Scenario

### The Rules

by Rich Barbuto

The object of the game is for the Prussians to attack Plancenoit. Therefore, when a Prussian battalion launches its assault, I consider that activity indicative of Prussian success.

The general sequence of play is this. I formed up the Prussian march columns into two brigades. Each brigade had a single advance guard and one or two flank guards. Once I designated the order of march of infantry, artillery, and cavalry, I could not alter the sequence until after the forces had actually entered the battlefield. To help me plan, I photocopied maps of the battlefield and plotted out the routes of the various columns. I placed the two advance guards on the table up to ten inches on the board.



At the start of each turn, I roll to see if a French force shows up on the board that turn. A 1D6 roll of 1 or 2 means that a French force appears.

Then I roll a 1D20 to determine where this force appears.

Then I roll a 1D20 to determine where this force appears.

If in the open, the French force starts in attack column facing in the most advantageous way. It can use subsequent turns to put itself in the best offensive or defensive posture. If the French force appears in a woods, then I posture it to best block the road. Often that means placing the stands along the front edge of the woods.

I won't place a French force behind a Prussian force, that is to say, a location that the Prussians have already "cleared." For example, if a Prussian column has passed through checkpoint 6 enroute to checkpoint 9, then I won't place a French force at 6. When this anomaly occurs, then I put the French at checkpoint 17.

Then I roll 1D6 for the composition of the French force. I treat French line and light identically because I'm persuaded that in 1815, qualitative differences had pretty much disappeared. You may want to treat these two infantry types differently.

I don't allow either cavalry or artillery to be placed in the woods because they can't fight there. If the location is in the woods and the roll indicates cavalry or artillery, then roll again until you get an all-infantry result.

### Composition of French Forces

- 1: 3 companies infantry (2 line companies, 1 elite company)
- 2: 3 companies infantry (2 line companies, 1 elite company)
- 3: 3 companies infantry (2 line companies, 1 elite company)
- 4: Infantry battalion (4 line companies and both elite companies)
- 5: Battery plus 1 company infantry (1-4, 8# foot; 5-6, 6# horse)
- 6: Squadron dragoons (4-5 stands)

Movement		On road	In woods (not on road)	In open (attack column)	In open (line)
Feel entirely free to use your own movement rules (you are a soloist, are you not?) Here's what I used:	Infantry	8	3	6 (charge 8)	4 (charge 6)
	Cavalry	10		10 (charge 12)	8 (charge 12)
	Foot battery	8		8	8
	Horse battery	10		10	10

To get the on road rate, the infantry must be in march column. This means that a Prussian battalion of 8 stands is 1 inch wide and 24 inches long (8 three-inch stands).

My attack columns are one company (3 inches) wide. My line formation is half a battalion (3 or 4 stands) wide.

It takes half a move to change formation from attack column to line or reverse. It takes a full move to change from march column to line or attack column.

Firing	Figures firing ?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
I use home- grown firing rules. Simply stated, it takes half a	-2										
	-1									1	1
	0								1	1	1
	1							1	1	1	1
	2						1	1	1	1	2
	3					1	1	1	1	1	2
	4				1	1	1	1	1	2	2
	5			1	1	1	1	1	2	2	2
6		1	1	1	1	1	2	2	2	3	
7	1	1	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	3	
8	1	1	1	1	2	2	2	3	3	3	

move to load and fire so a stationary infantry unit can fire twice. While the woods are fairly open (minimal underbrush), the range and fire effects are greatly diminished. So, two units, both in the woods, can bang away for awhile without decisive results. However, if a unit on the edge of the woods is firing at a unit in the open, then the unit in the woods has no disadvantage. The unit in the open trying to return fire has no range penalty but the effect of the fire (number of hits) is decreased because the target is effectively behind cover.

### Modifications to D6 die roll

Long range -1

Target behind \*cover -2

Firer is elite +1

Rifle +2

\*in woods or in a village

### Range

Weapon	Short	Long
musket	6	12
rifle	8	16
cannister	10	16
ball	15	30

Well, there you have a new scenario and some thoughts on rules. Next issue I'll provide a narrative of the most interesting battle I fought plus some more ideas on rules.

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## The Paris Woods Scenario Part 2

### The Battle

by Rich Barbuto

*(The following is a narrative of a solo battle fought using the scenario and rules described in part 1.)*

General Freiderich von Bulow sat atop his horse under the shade of an oak tree. Looking out across the Belgian landscape through his telescope he noted the church steeple in the midst of a cluster of houses.

“Is that? What’s that name? Plance something.”

Major Tomas Huber, his adjutant, said, “Plancenot, my general. It appears to be the just short of the French positions.”



“Yes, our destination this afternoon,” replied the general.

As Bulow and his staff pored over a single map, a lone rider came galloping up. Bulow looked up and cursed silently. Von Gneisenau, Blucher’s over zealous and self-important staff officer. “Yes, Gneisenau, what can I do for you?” Bulow asked, hardly hiding his annoyance at the interruption. As the general staff officer pulled up, he saluted smartly. “Sir, General Blucher sends his regards and asks how your attack is coming.”

“My attack?” responded von Bulow. “I have only two brigades here with me. The other two are slogging through the waterlogged Belgian trails which our cartographers have elevated to the status of roads. It will be hours before I am ready to attack.” Von Bulow put his telescope once more to his eye signaling that the conversation was over.

But von Gneisenau would not let the pompous aristocrat off so easily. “My general. General von Blucher intends that you push forward as rapidly as possible to put pressure upon the flank of Napoleon’s army in order to relieve pressure on the English forces. As you do so, the First Corps will join Wellington on his left and strengthen the English position.” His voice grew more emphatic. “My general, you should move immediately.”

The corps commander’s staff involuntarily shuddered at the tactless order given to their general. Von Bulow himself was spitting angry but he knew from experience that von Gneisenau was relating his commander’s intentions faithfully if undiplomatically. “Colonel von Gneisenau” said Bulow, “You yourself can see from this map that there are few roads approaching Plancenot.” He was delighted that he remembered the name

of this collection of Belgian shanties. “How will I get there with enough force to accomplish my orders? The roads are mere sunken mud lanes and the Paris Forest lies in my way. If there are Frenchmen in the woods, my corps will be in great peril.”

Von Gneisenau changed his tone. He understood, mistakenly, this rhetorical question to be a genuine solicitation of his professional views. “General von Bulow.” He responded. “Your concerns are valid and I assure you that Blucher understands the great risk attendant to your movements. Nonetheless, he directs that you move forward rapidly along many routes. Your columns may move out of supporting distance, this is true. But the Frenchies can not guard all paths. While some columns may be stymied, others will emerge unscathed. Von Blucher expects you to attack the flank of Napoleon’s forces as quickly as possible with as much force as you can muster. A brigade attack in an hour will be more effective than a corps attack in three hours. If I may say so, General von Blucher is very much concerned that Wellington will be defeated and withdraw while our four corps are strung out between Wavre and Belle Alliance. He desires that Napoleon feel our presence at his rear quickly. This may prompt him to divide his forces between us and Wellington.”

Von Bulow, for the first time in two days, finally understood Blucher’s intentions. “Danke, Oberst von Gneisenau,” he said, almost apologetically. “Tell General von Blucher that the Fourth Corps will move immediately with two brigades upon Plancenoit and will launch an attack as soon as physically possible. Tell our general that he can count on the Fourth Corps to do its duty.” Smiling faintly, von Gneisenau saluted crisply and turning about, whipped his horse into a gallop back the way he came.



“Huber, get my brigade commanders, Kautt and Knapp, up here immediately! And Oberst Gabel, my cavalry commander. He is close by. Send for him as well.”



While Huber dispatched couriers to find and return with the three colonels, von Bulow examined the map. There appeared to be two roads leading directly into Plancenoit, one on either side of the Bois de Paris and both north of the flooded Lasne Brook. The Prussian general shook his head slowly from side to side. The terrain was dangerous in the extreme. The roads were swallowed up by low hills and small woods. There were dozens of points where a concealed battalion could stop a brigade. Cavalry would be next to useless, except perhaps to discover ambushes by running in to them. Fields of fire would be narrow and restricted. Nowhere could artillery stand off out of range and lend support to an attack. But he understood that his best security was in moving quickly, before the French could react. He looked up and openly cursed. Hundreds of his infantry were gathered about on this plateau, easily in view of the French. The French knew where he was and what his next move would be. He cursed again.

### Author’s Note

This solo battle is a “what if” scenario. What if the Prussians had started toward Plancenoit a few hours early and what if Napoleon had sent forces to dispute the Prussian advance east of Plancenoit. The fight would be between well concealed French forces firing out of woods against the heads of thin columns of slow-moving infantry. As described in LW 147, I played the Prussians while automating the French. Each turn I rolled to see if a French force would enter the board. If so, I rolled to see the size and composition of the force and the location. If the location (I call them check points) had previously been cleared by the Prussians, then the French could not enter there but

would enter in the vicinity of Plancenoit. The faster the Prussians could move, the earlier they would clear checkpoints, and the French would enter in less advantageous positions. This was really a new concept of a game for me and, as it turned out, a pretty rousing and surprising endeavor all the way around. Now, back to the corps commander's orders group.

### **Bulow Issues his Orders**

As soon as his subordinates arrived, von Bulow issued his orders. "Listen carefully. We are moving on Plancenoit immediately. Our goal is to put pressure on Napoleon's flank. This will cause him to fight in two directions at once. If we move fast enough and strike with enough strength, then the English will remain on the field. If not, then our Prussian Army will be caught strung out over many miles and defeated in detail."

His two brigade commanders looked at one another. Then General von Kautt blurted out what everyone was thinking. "Sir. Do you mean move right now? Part of my brigade is not yet here and the rest of the corps is still between here and Wavre." "Yes, I understand," responded von Bulow. "But speed is important. If Napoleon receives reports as we assault Plancenoit, he will assume that we are attacking in some strength. He will expect a much larger force and this may save the English as well as us. Even a few battalions in Plancenoit will cause him to react because we are in his rear and he must deal with us. Yes, this is a dangerous move. And here's how I want it done."

His adjutant held out a large map. "Von Kautt, take First Brigade along this route, north of the Paris Woods. Approach Plancenoit from the north. Baron Von Knapp, Second Brigade will use this route south of the Paris Woods. Hit Plancenoit from the south. Both of you, use flank guards. Take advantage of every path to move as much combat force as quickly as you can. Move as fast as you are able. Stop for nothing."

Colonel von Gabel here has assigned cavalry forces to act under your orders as your advance guards. Press the attack until Plancenoit is cleared of the enemy. Then wait for my orders. I fear that the French are aware of our presence here and may already be sending forces to delay us. Push through regardless of the cost. Napoleon must believe we are attacking in great force. If there are no questions, begin movement as soon as you have coordinated with your cavalry. In any case, I expect to see the advance guards moving out from here in fifteen minutes."

His abrupt salute signaled the end of the orders. Before von Bulow could depart, his brigade commanders frantically competed for von Gabel's attention. "General von Kautt, I will accompany your brigade with the First and Fifth Dragoons and a horse battery," said the cavalryman. "Colonel Baron von Knapp, Bielakowski will lead your advance guard with the 6th Hussars." The two brigade commanders breathed a sigh of relief. These were fine cavalry formations.

### **First Brigade makes First Contact**

One hour later, both brigades were well on their way to Plancenoit. [See map 1]. The 5th dragoons led the First Brigade. Traveling at a canter along the road, three horsemen abreast and von Gabel himself at the front, the column came to a sudden stop as the sight of an entire battalion of French light infantry, drawn up in a line blocking the road. Thinking quickly, the cavalry commander ordered his regiment to form line. The dragoons were just out of effective musket range and had nearly formed the line when the French moved forward. Von Gabel saw several



saddles emptied and a few horses down before he even heard the noise of five hundred muskets firing in unison. “First squadron,” he yelled. “Draw sabers. FORWARD!!!!” The first squadron moved out, leaving a dozen dragoons dismounted, wounded, dead. The other squadrons continued forming into squadron lines, anticipating joining the fight in moments.

The French battalion commander had no time to form square. He would have to meet the dragoons in line. “Reload! Then fix bayonets.” Fortunately, his battalion was wider than the approaching dragoons. Furiously yet steadily, the French infantry rammed down powder and ball, primed pans, and then attached bayonets. As his men signaled their readiness by carrying their weapons in the ‘on guard’ position, their battalion commander ordered “Ready. Aim. Fire!” Hardly had the triggers been pulled when the horsemen made contact. Some places the horses stopped a few feet before the line of bayonets. In others, the frightened horses carried their riders through the three-man deep lines. Sabres flashed downward. Infantry cried in shock and pain. Within seconds, the once intact French line was a jumble of foot soldiers, horses, riders, bayonets and swords. Some dragoons who had penetrated the line turned, reformed, and moved back into the fray.

“Fall back!” Ordered the French commander. Obediently his survivors kept facing the main body of Prussians while steadily backing up, dressing their lines all the while, leaving dozens of wounded and dead behind. The Prussian First Squadron was spread out all over the place. As officers rapidly rallied the troops, the Second Squadron tried to force their way forward to get into contact with the French. The third and last squadron was still in the act of forming up in line. It was a mess. But the action would continue – von Gabel throwing squadron after squadron at the French who would get a single volley off before making contact with cold steel. Eventually ground down to nothingness, the French infantry, their battalion commander down, withdrew from the fight. The Fifth Dragoons cleared the road and reformed while von Gabel led the First Dragoons onward toward Plancenoit, still an hour or more away.

### **Meanwhile, along Second Brigade’s Advance**

Colonel Bielakowski with the the 6th Hussars heard the musketry to the north as his long column skirted the southern edge of the Bois de Paris. The small village of Aywiers had just come into view when his eyes caught the flash of light from a hill rising beyond the Belgian village. Horses reared as cannon shot swooshed above the column. “Witten!” Bielakowski yelled for his First Squadron commander. “Assault the battery immediately. I’ll bring up the rest in support.” Witten saluted while turning his horse toward his hussars who were getting their horses back under control. In seconds the First Squadron was trotting down toward the overflowing creek. The low creek bed actually concealed the Prussian cavalry from view.



Hurriedly the troops crossed and gingerly climbed the opposite bank. Witten led his men into the village where they would continue to enjoy concealment. The next blast of French cannon was directed at the remainder of the hussars north of the Lasne Creek as they attempted to form up. Leading about 200 troopers out of Aywiers, Witten formed on line and ordered his men to draw sabers. The French battery commander saw the flashes as the sabers caught the afternoon sun. He saw the ornate green pelisses and the uniformly black horses. “Re-direct your fire at the cavalry. Load grape!”

Witten's squadron was into a gallop now, the line formation broken as the horses climbed the gentle slope, avoiding the few trees and boulders. The six flashes and the crash of cannon preceded the storm of grape shot penetrating the hussar line. Saddles emptied, horses loudly neighed and fell, throwing their unlucky riders. But the better part of the hussars closed with the gunners who defended themselves with swords and rammers. It was over in a minute. Those French artillerymen who did not surrender were dead or seriously wounded. Seeing the results from his vantage north of the Lasne, Bielakowski recalled the second and third squadrons and ordered them to resume the column formation facing Plancenoit. The French battery interrupted their movement and cost them 15 minutes already. Looking back toward Aywiers, Bielakowski saw the flank guard, the dark blue uniforms of the 21st Infantry Regiment, pouring out of the woods and into the village. He imagined the traffic jam as the First Squadron tried to rejoin the regiment north of the Lasne. Now, how quickly could the commander of hussars get his troops moving again?

The Prussian movement through the difficult terrain was accordion-like. In clear areas, the troops moved quickly. However, where the terrain was close and the paths deep in mud, the rate of advance slowed considerably. [See map 2.] In the north, the 5th dragoons collected their wounded and pulled north of the road to reorganize. The 1st dragoons arrived at the site of the skirmish and saw the remnants of the French battalion scattered over several acres. Seeing open land before him, von Gabel ordered the 1st dragoons to form up with three squadrons in column, each squadron in two-deep line. He waited for the horse battery to catch up and he saw the dense columns of the 9th infantry approaching his rear. The jaegers, the brigade's flank guard, just erupted from the Paris woods. Waving to the jaegers, Gabel ordered the 1st Dragoons to advance.

Meanwhile, General von Knapp arrived at the crossroads between Aywiers and the Paris Woods. What confusion! Hussars were on both sides of the Lasne. He could see the 21st Regiment south of the Lasne, trying to pass through Aywiers but intermingled with hussars. The 12th regiment was closing fast on the crossroads which was still occupied by Bielakowski's hussars. "Colonel Bielakowski! Clear the intersection. Get your troopers north of the road and let the infantry through. Then give me your report." Bielakowski, still at a distance, had no trouble hearing Baron Knapp's booming orders. He saluted smartly, gave his own orders, and set off to join the brigade commander.

Bulow had reason to be concerned, although reports of the fighting would be slow to reach him as he hurriedly gave orders to his remaining two brigade commanders. A single battalion of light infantry and a battery of French guns had thrown his columns into confusion and slowed their movement. And worse was about to confront his leading brigades. Three companies of the Second Battalion of the 13th Light Infantry were clambering up the western slopes of a low rise hill northeast of Plancenoit [checkpoint 13]. Two battalions of the French 19th Infantry were occupying positions in the woods east of Plancenoit where they could easily defend the constricted approaches to that small town. West of Plancenoit, more infantry and a column of French dragoons and yet another of lancers were heading east with orders to stop the Prussians cold. The fight was about to get a lot hotter.

### **On a Hill near Plancenoit**

The small battalion of the 2/13th light Infantry appeared at the top of a low rise and immediately took the 1st and 5th Prussian Dragoons under long range musket fire. [See map 3.] General von Kautt, von Gabel the cavalryman, and Colonel Boehman who led the main body of the First Brigade, were conferring when the musketry erupted. Seeing

that the French were a small body, von Kautt ordered his advance guard dragoons to clear the open area to allow Boehman to form up the two battalions of the 9th infantry to assault the hill. Gabel sent word to the horse battery to come forward and take the French under long range fire.

It took awhile for the First Battalion and the Fusilier Battalion of the 9th Prussian Infantry to form up so Colonel Boehman sent the First Battalion in as soon as they were properly formed. With bayonets fixed and with the six guns of the horse battery firing in support, the 1/9th proceeded in a dense column of companies directly up the hill. The three companies of French light infantry steadily loaded and fired, oblivious to the cannon shot whistling through their line. But before the Prussians could impact, the commander of the 2/13th ordered his men to withdraw and they rapidly abandoned the high ground, falling back several hundred yards. As Colonel Boehman rode to the top of the newly won hill, he passed the bodies of scores of Colberg Infantrymen who hadn't fired a shot and hadn't crossed bayonets with the enemy.

At the top of the high ground Boehman saw a disturbing sight. Arrayed in the low ground west of the hill was a fresh battalion of French infantry and a regiment of green-coated dragoons. He sent word for General von Kautt to join him. Over the next twenty minutes, Kautt, Boehman and Gabel brought their troops onto the hill, forming them up to attack these new French forces. Von Kautt sent for his jaeger commander, Lieutenant Colonel Gott, and ordered him to clear the woods immediately south of the First Brigade's attack position. And Colonel Boehman sent a frantic message back to the Elbe landwehr to hurry forward with all speed. If they could break this unexpected French opposition, they would need more infantry to continue the assault onto Plancenoit itself.

### **Confusion at Aywiers**

Meanwhile, the Second Brigade was running into troubles of its own. The battalion commander of the 1/21st Prussian Infantry surveyed his situation. He managed to get his troops moving westward through the hussars around Aywiers. The hussars were using the ford there to re-cross Lasne Creek. There were extensive woods on both sides of the Lasne but in order to best protect the flank of the Second Brigade, the 1/21st would have to be on the north side of that creek and clearing the woods between Lasne Creek and the road to Plancenoit. The battalion commander found a ford and ordered his companies into march column and across the creek. Once across, the lead company entered the long, narrow woods, ensuring that there were no French waiting in ambush. Slowly each company managed to cross the water obstacle and enter the woods.



The 12th Prussian Infantry was held up at the intersection until the hussars could get out of the way. The men enjoyed the break from the marching that had begun at dawn. Their commander, Colonel von Eggering, ordered the First Battalion to form into attack column – one company wide and four deep. In this formation Eggering led them westward. The remaining two battalions were still in march column spread out for miles. When the 1/12th arrived at the defile between the woods [south of check point 20] all hell broke loose. From their positions in the woods, three companies of the 2/19th French infantry poured a withering fire into the left flank of the Prussian attack column. The Prussians stopped cold as von Eggering ordered them to return fire while his trail company attempted to assault the ambushers in the wood line. But the ambush was much larger than von Eggering imagined. Thundering over a low hill to the west of

the Prussians came a column of French lancers!

With buglers calling the charge, the French lancers drove in to the head of the Prussians. Prussian infantry fought back valiantly but gave ground steadily to the cavalry among them and the French infantry firing from the relative shelter of the wood line. Too many Prussian infantry were boxed in by their peers and unable to fight back. Fortunately for the Prussians, the jaegers in the woods [at check point 20] heard the sounds of battle and a few companies managed to work their way through the woods to the southern side where they could bring some firepower to bear on the French lancers. Picked off their horses by the close range rifle fire, the commander of the lancers finally ordered his bugler to sound the recall. Slowly breaking off the fight, the French lancers, now down to half their original strength, escaped down the road toward Plancenot.

The 1/21st Prussian Infantry in the woods, hearing the fighting just to their west, redoubled their efforts to move through the trees. Eventually they came upon the half-battalion of the 2/19th firing at the Prussian column on the road to their front. The Prussians in the woods came on line and attacked westward, into the flank and rear of the 2/19th. Caught unawares, the French threw out a company to face the Prussian threat in the woods. Back and forth the fighting raged but slowly the French were forced westward in the woods. They no longer posed a threat to the 1/12th Prussian Infantry Battalion.

### **Von Bulow arrives on the Scene**

As General von Kautt, commander of First Brigade, was making final preparations to assault the French to his front, who should arrive but the corps commander himself. “Wilhelm, what is happening?” said von Bulow, unexpectedly using Kautt’s Christian name. “My general. As soon as the artillery company commanders signal their readiness, I will order Colonel Boehman to attack with two battalions. The 5th Dragoons will support on the right and Gott’s jaegers from the woods on the left.” Von Bulow nodded approvingly and examined the French line through his telescope. He saw a battalion of French on line with what appeared to be a small battalion of French light infantry behind them. Standing astride the road was a regiment or less of French dragoons. Catching the artillery battery commanders’ signals of readiness, von Kautt nodded at Boehman who in turn waved his two battalions forward. As the Prussian infantry marched down the slope, they uncovered their friends, the artillery gunners who opened fire with solid shot into the ranks of the French dragoons. A moment later, the jaegers broke out of the woods in skirmish formation heading for the high ground to their front [check point 14.] The battle was on.



With flags waving and drummers beating the cadence, the Prussian infantry conjured up visions of Frederick the Great’s prized infantry. The French defenders didn’t spend their time admiring the spectacle. With the precision derived from countless hours on the drill field, the French infantry raised their muskets. Firing by company, they kept up a steady blast of smoke and lead. The French dragoons were steadying their horses despite the numerous solid balls of iron hurtling through their ranks. When the Prussian fusilier battalion was only 150 yards away, the dragoon commander ordered his horsemen forward at the trot. In response to this new threat, the battalion commander of the fusiliers ordered his column to halt and form line. However, the Prussians were

caught in the act of changing formation when the dragoons made impact. This did not, however, work to their disadvantage. The fierce Prussian fusiliers threw themselves on the dragoons and the fighting between saber and bayonet, dragoon and elite infantryman, was savage. Once the French dragoons lost the momentum of their charge, they were no longer at an advantage. Seeing frightful losses, the commander of the French dragoons ordered a withdrawal and his survivors happily complied, pulling back into Plancenot itself. Many dragoons continued the withdrawal well westward.

The 1/9th Prussian infantry had similar results. [See map 4.] Taking significant casualties from the infantry on line to their front, the Prussians nonetheless advanced steadily. However, it was the impact of the 5th Prussian Dragoons on the left flank of the 1/19th French Infantry which proved decisive. Barely holding a semblance of formation, the French slowly yielded ground to the Prussian infantry column and accompanying dragoons. It was at this juncture, when the 1/9th Prussian infantry was pushing its attack forward into the French line, that the French got a break. The remnants of French lancers, hardly a troop, took advantage of the billowing clouds of smoke, to approach the gap between the two Prussian battalions. Attacking in to flank of the 1/9th, the lancers inflicted heavy casualties but within moments were themselves wiped out.

For their part, Gott's jaegers performed magnificently. The French infantry in the woods immediately east of Plancenot [three companies of the 2/19th French Infantry] opened fire at the Prussian skirmish line. Jaeger rifle fire accurately found Frenchmen who left the cover of trees or the concealment of bushes. French musket fire passed harmlessly through the very thin Prussian ranks. Gott saw the French ranks waver. He ordered his bugler to sound the advance. Other company buglers picked up the call and the anxious jaegers, in pairs and in squad groups, crashed into the woods. The French gave ground and tried to take their wounded with them. The fighting was without mercy and only the thinness of the Prussian ranks allowed as many of the French to withdraw as did.

In the Second Brigade area, the 1/12th Prussian Infantry steadily drove the remaining companies of the 2/19th into the very tip of the woods. Refusing to yield, the French were killed or captured to a man. However, as the Prussians emerged from the western end of the long, narrow woods, what did they see but a French battery astride the road backed up by an infantry force at battalion strength [the 3/19th Infantry.]

The 2nd and 3rd battalions of the 21st Infantry had been moving up rapidly on the south side of the Lasne. They had crossed at Aywiers when it became clear to the commander of the 2/21st that the road ahead was too clogged to permit rapid movement. This fortuitous decision now yielded results. The 2/21st emerged from the defile and saw the French drawn up astride the road facing the 1/21st. Feeding companies into a firing line as they arrived, the battalion commander of the 2/21st poured escalating fire into the flanks of the 3/19th French infantry. Assailed by fire in front and flanks, the French slowly withdrew into Plancenot.

Von Bulow was delighted with himself [although why is hard to tell]. The French had clearly delayed his two brigades despite their best tactical efforts. The Prussian corps commander helped von Kautt set up his attack that would crash into Plancenot from the north. The Elbe landwehr had arrived and were even then forming up into attack columns. Von Bulow sent orders to Baron von Knapp to attack in the south with whatever troops were on hand when von Knapp heard the sounds of von Kautt's attack. It was evident to von Bulow that Napoleon had taken the bait and was feeding even more troops into Plancenot. He would not have been so happy to discover that a

brigade of Young Guard was fortifying every house, every building of the town, prepared to prevent the Prussians from getting into the rear of the French Army of the North.

## **Conclusion**

While I, acting as the Prussians, was frustrated by the results, I must admit this was a rollicking good game. Every time I thought I had cleared an obstacle, another French force was discovered in an advantageous position. I was constantly changing formations, from march column to attack column to line and back again. The dice were erratic as always, producing improbable results at the most inconvenient times. The terrain was constrictive enough to cause the Prussians to bunch up and to run out of maneuver room. Too often an asset, such as cavalry or a battery of guns, was left out of a fight because the terrain prohibited movement and maneuver. Many fights were evenly-matched infantry slug fests continuing for three or four turns until one side could force a decision.

For me, essentially a tactical commander in this game, the continuous fighting in several simultaneous skirmishes was entertaining. The entire flow of the game had gone pretty much as I had anticipated. The longer I took to move forward, the greater chance that more and more French troops would appear. As I suspected, the French had considerable strength in Plancenoit by the time the Prussians arrived in force. However, because of problems in scale (Plancenoit occupying less than a square foot of table top) I did not fight that battle. It was enough for me to shape the conditions of that battle.

If I had to do it all over again, I think I would add a movement corridor south of the Lasne or perhaps shift the battlefield further north. The tabletop south of Lasne Brook was under-utilized. Perhaps the addition of an ahistorical road through the woods between Maransart and Plancenoit would give the Prussians more options at approaching their goal. I also would tweak my morale rules. Too many formations fought on stubbornly or only backed up in the face of heavy casualties. But this was perhaps brought about because of too few opportunities for flank attacks or attacks in overwhelming strength.

Well, the itch to replay the Prussian approach to Plancenoit has been satisfactorily scratched for the time being. However, my youngest [age 14] was quite taken by the battle and the concept of play. He wanted to fight the French but I thought that would defeat the purpose of a solo game. So I think the next game will have the French positioned by chance but fought by a human. There is so much chance involved in where the French appear and in what composition, that no two battles should be similar. And if I open up a southern route to Plancenoit, well, the Prussian options have doubled. Okay, where is my master map? Let's see, how will I do this?

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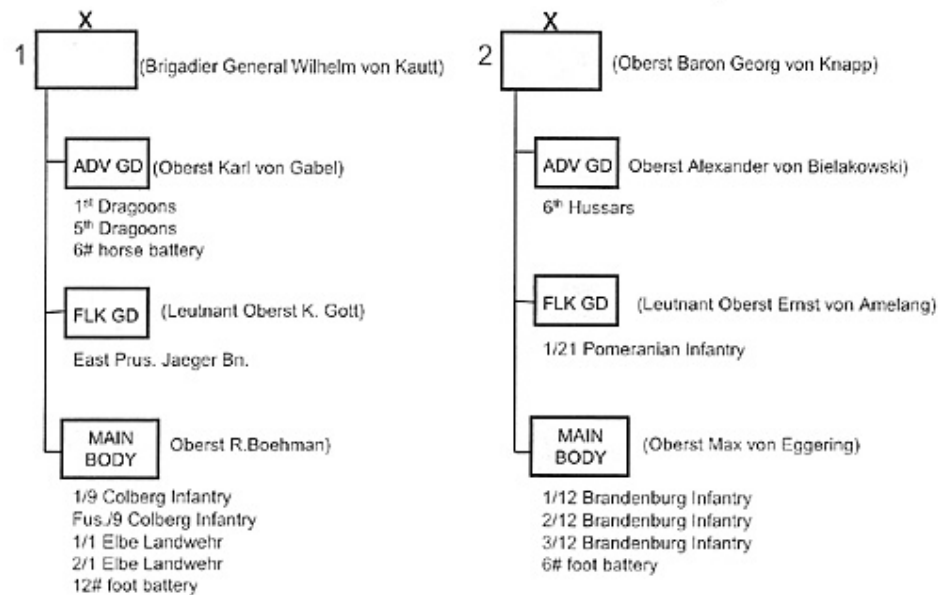
## The Paris Woods Scenario Part 2

### Prussian Order of Battle

by Rich Barbuto

### Prussian Order of Battle

IV Corps (General Freiderich Wilhelm von Bulow)



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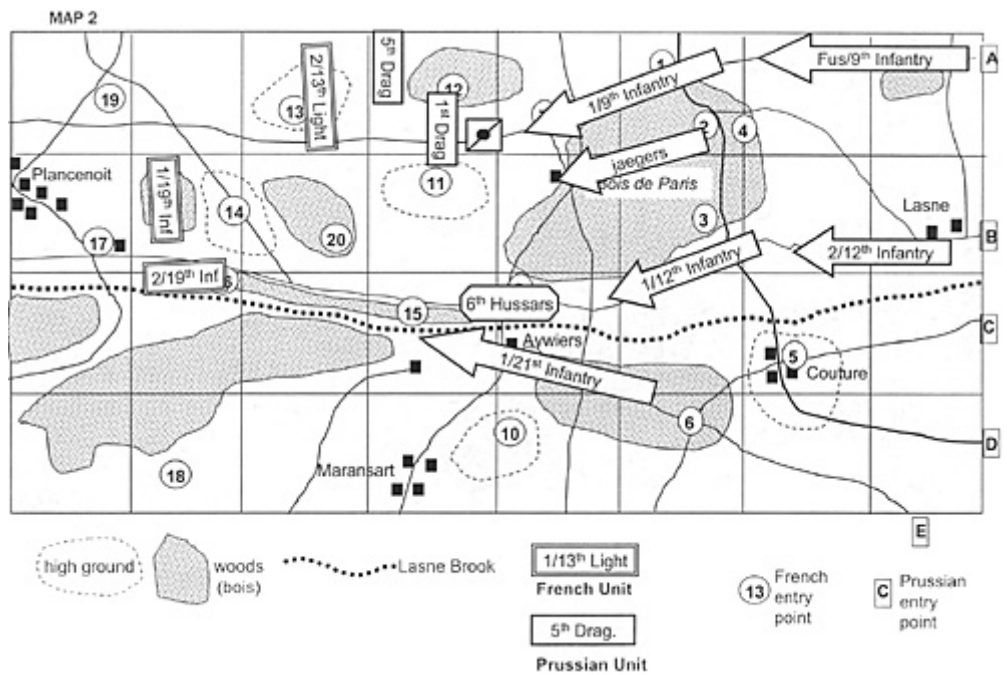
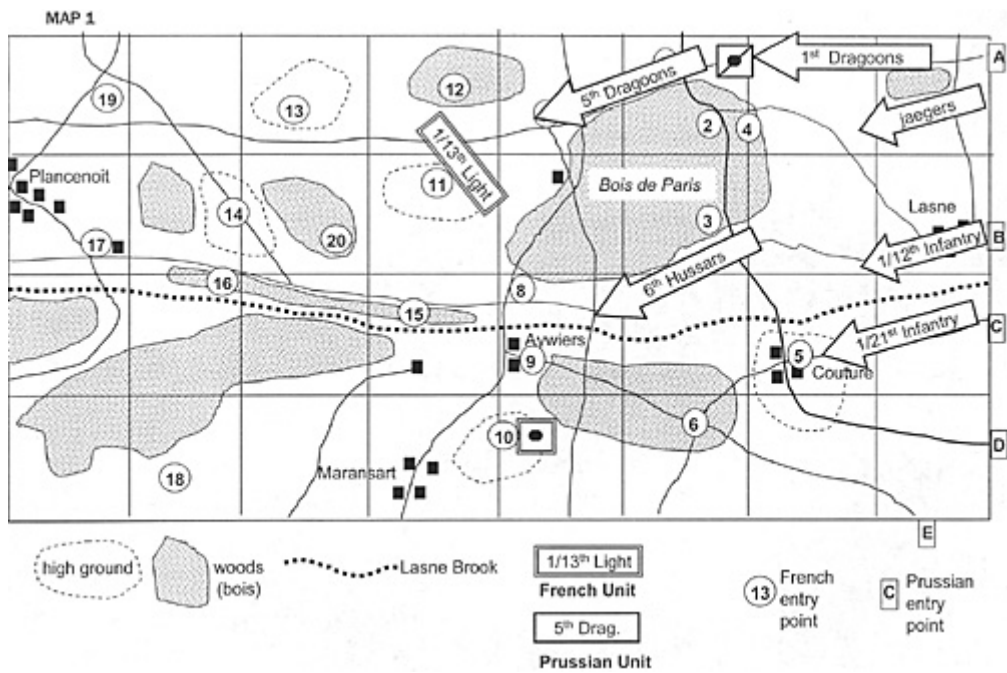
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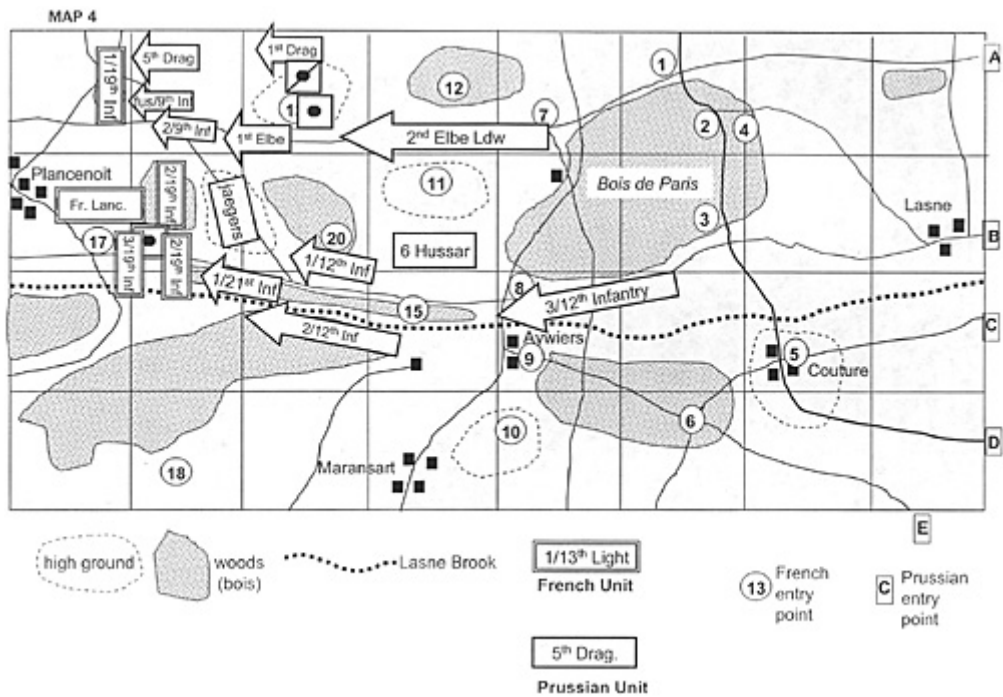
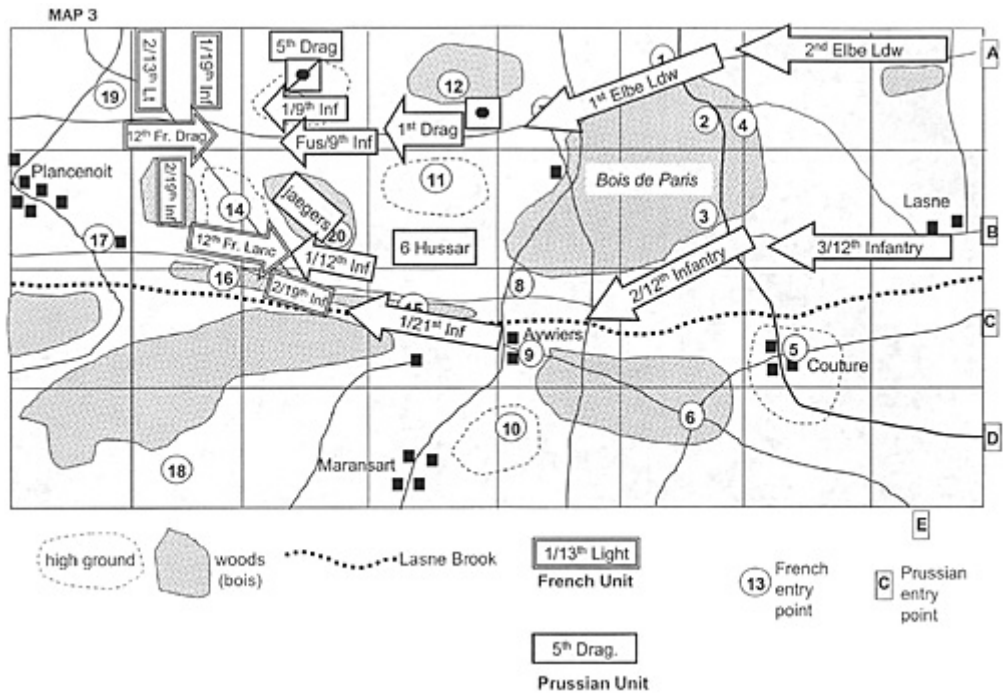


# The Paris Woods Scenario Part 2

## Battlefield Maps 1-4

by Rich Barbuto





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