

The Battle Of Espinosa

November 11th 1808

an introductory scenario by Ken Clark

Historical Introduction

As the right wing of the Spanish armies seeking to expel the French from Spain in 1808, Blake's Galician army had advanced through the Asturias and come up against Lefebvre's Corps which formed the right wing of Napoleon's forces. Napoleon had massively reinforced his armies in Spain and intended breaking through the centre of the Spanish armies and then enveloping each wing. Thus he intended Victor's First Corps to swing right and enter Asturias behind Blake and trap him between his Corps and that of Lefebvre. Unfortunately Lefebvre could not resist attacking Blake as he lay quietly in front of him and the latter started his retreat sufficiently early enough that when Victor poured across the mountains he found he was too late. Blake had, thus far, escaped. Napoleon, angry that Lefebvre's precipitate attack had foiled his designs, summoned him with his Corps south and gave Victor orders to pursue Blake and destroy him. Meanwhile he sent Soult's Corps deep into Leon with orders to cut across Blake's retreat once more.

Just before he began his retreat Blake's army had been augmented by some of the best troops Spain had, the division of Romana, snatched by the British Navy from Denmark and delivered to the coast of Galicia in time to take part in the Autumn 1808 fighting. The cavalry had been sent south to Esteramadura to seek horses but the foot had been hurried along the coast under the command of San Roman and formed the rearguard for the rest of Blake's forces, a mixture of patriotic volunteers and conscripts with little training and generally poor equipment.

The retreat went well until the army reached Espinosa where San Roman urgently sought help from his General if his rearguard was not to be overwhelmed. Blake liked the position. The *chaussee* opened out into a little plain bounded by the river to the south with steep hills on either flank and with the town of Espinosa itself acting as a stopper in the cork. Blake decided to stand and fight.

Victor's advance guard was Vilatte's division and when Spanish resistance stiffened they just kept attacking, expecting it to fall back as it had done before. But by nightfall their attacks on the hills south of Espinosa, defended by the Baltic veterans, had failed miserably. Victor called up his two other divisions and realised that a more scientific approach would be needed the next morning.

What Happened Historically.

Believing that the French would once again attack towards the town and the hills between it and the river, Blake strengthened his right leaving only his poor Galician levies to hold the steep hills and rough ground to his left. Victor however, believing correctly that Blake would reinforce his right, left only one division here and massed his two other divisions against the hills. Though it took them some time to get at the

Spanish left over the rough terrain, they eventually reached the enemy line, screened by a huge cloud of skirmishers and, after some little fighting, drove off the whole Spanish left wing. Blake, seeing his left gone and with the prospect of being outflanked, retreated his forces through Espinosa with little loss – in fact he had probably lost more men in the fight the day before against Vilatte alone. Alas his army's discipline rapidly deteriorated (he had already lost several thousand stragglers before he even got to Espinosa) and by the time he was able to shake pursuit off on the Galician border he had only half his men left with the colours.

The Scenario:

This is a very simple scenario with only one artillery battery (on the Spanish side) and no horse at all. The Spanish are considerably outnumbered but have the advantage of position. Despite this they will lose almost always but it's a small battle that can be fought in an evening and a good lesson for those wishing to move on to longer and more complex encounters.

The weather is Normal, with no variation. The ground is hard. The game's Basic Length is 6 turns.

The hills count as rough terrain with a movement multiple of 2 on the lowest slope and 3 on the higher slopes.

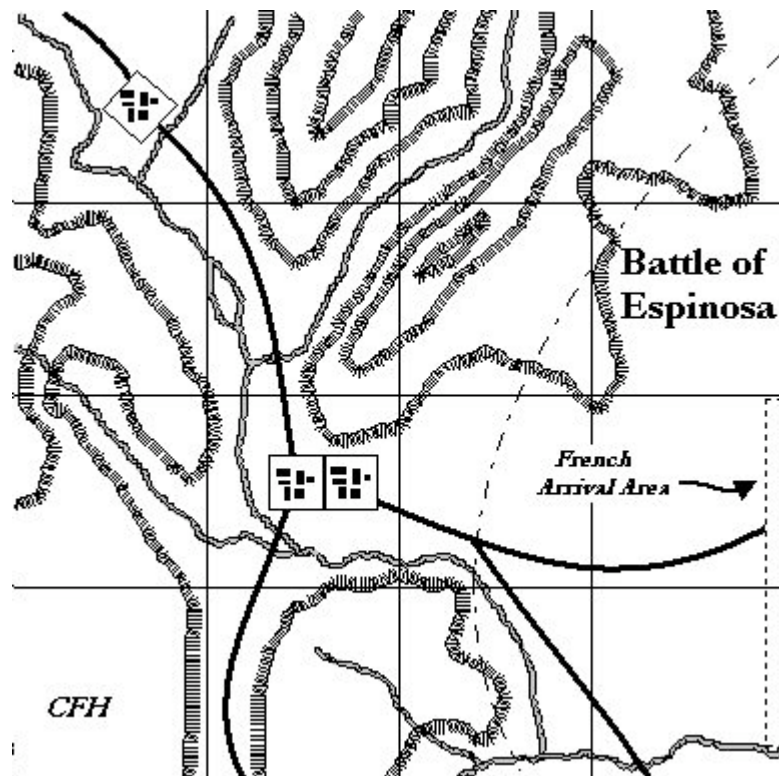
Spanish set up first anywhere to the west of their start line. I have described them as left, right and centre as they historically deployed but the Spanish player is under no obligation to conform to the historic deployment. Then the French deploy. There are two possibilities for French set-up. One can play the entire battle from the very start telescoped into one day and have the French appear one division after the other along the road (with Vilatte appearing first) or one can start from the morning of the second day and start them in the identified deployment areas, but if you choose this option, which division is going where **must** be decided and written down before the Spanish set out their deployment.

The Spanish army is "Shaky." Its Break Point is: 4. Non-raw Spanish troops are Sk1

The French army is "Confident." Its Break Point is: 3. French troops are all Sk2

The Espinosa Battlefield:

Each square represents 1 foot square



French Army

Commander: **Victor** (Average) 20"

This is a Napoleonic Army of 3 Forces

First Division Ruffin 1 / 6"

9 th Legere	Veteran 6SP _____
24 th Ligne	Veteran 6SP _____
96 th Ligne	Veteran 5SP _____

Second Division: Lapisse 1/8"

16 th Legere	Veteran 6SP _____
8 th Ligne	Veteran 5SP _____
45 th Ligne	Veteran 5SP _____

Third Division: Vilatte 1/8" (Aggressive)

27 th Legere	Veteran 5SP _____
63 rd Ligne	Veteran 5SP _____
94 th Ligne	Veteran 5SP _____
95 th Ligne	Veteran 4SP _____

The Spanish Army

Commander: **Blake** (Average) 20"

This is a Traditional army of 3 Forces

The Right: San Roman 3/6"

Fifth Division (a)	Veteran 7SP _____
Fifth Division (b)	Veteran 6SP _____
Fourth Division-Mahy	Raw 3SP _____

The Centre: Mendizabal 3/6"

Vanguard Brigade	Trained 4SP _____
Third Division-Riquelme	Conscript 5SP _____
Second Division-Martinengue	Conscript 3SP _____
Horse Battery _____	

The Left: Acevado 4/6"

First Division(a) -Figueroa	Trained 3SP _____
First Division (b)	Trained 3SP _____
Asturian Division-Quiros	Raw 3SP _____
Asturian Division -Valdez	Raw 3SP _____

Special Rules: The battle is heavily weighted in favour of the French. You can, to some extent alter the play balance by making the higher numbered French regiments trained instead of veteran. If you wish, then, make the 94th, 95th and 96th Ligne trained only.

Ready-Made Labels for the Espinosa Scenario Victor (Average)

Ruffin 1/6"

R/1 9 th Legere	SK2
R/2 24 th Ligne	SK2
R/3 96 th Ligne	SK2

Lapisse 1 / 8"

L/1 16 th Legere	SK2
L/2 8 th Ligne	SK2
L/3 45 th Ligne	SK2

Vilatte 1/8" (Aggressive)

V/1 27 th Legere	SK2
V/2 63 rd Ligne	SK2
V/3 94 th Ligne	SK2
V/4 95 th Ligne	SK2

Spanish Army:

Blake (Average)

The Right: San Roman 3 / 6"

R./1 5 th Division(a)	SK1
R/2 5 th Division (b)	SK1
R/3 4th Division-Mahy	

The Centre: Mendizabal 3 / 6"

C/1 Vanguard Brigade	SK1
C/2 3 rd Division-Riquelme	SK1
C/3 2 nd Div-Martinengo	SK1
C/A Horse battery 4lb	

The Left: Acevado 4 / 6"

L/1 1 st Div (a) –Figuroa	SK1
L/2 1 st Div (b)	SK1
L/3 Asturians-Quiros	
L4 Astrians-Valdez	

Note: I habitually use labels with more information such as SP and class of troops on them with each force in a different background colour. I will endeavour to provide this for Espinosa on the yahoo group site.