

# The Battle of Ocana

19 November, 1809

by Kenneth Clark

## The Scenario

The game's basic length is 6 turns

Weather: Sunny, no variation

The Spanish set up first then the French shown on the map. Artiezaga must start within 6" of the town of Ocana. Soult may deploy anywhere within the French deployment area.

The Spanish army's morale is fair. Its Break point: 6 (adjust down to 5 or up to 7 depending on your assessment of Spanish abilities)

The French army's morale is confident. Its break point is 7.

## Historical Background

Even before the retreat from Talavera had ended at Badajoz the Spanish Supreme Junta was clamouring for Wellesley to join them in a concentric attack on Madrid. A three pronged attack from south, south west and north was envisaged. The main Spanish attack led by Ariezaga with his Army of La Mancha would come from the south. Augmented by regiments from Esteramadura and armed and outfitted by the British this force had the main task of defeating Joseph and liberating the capital.

To the north the Junta ordered Ballasteros with 9000 men from the army of Asturias to join Del Parque's old Army of Galicia which had been reinforced with new recruits and attack the French in Salamanca and thus seek to draw as many troops as possible away from the defence of Madrid.

In Esteramadura, Albuquerque would, they hoped, be joined by either or both of the Portugese and British and likewise advance towards the city. However Wellesley would have nothing to do with this campaign and refused permission for any troops under his command to lend it any support and Albuquerque was relegated to a fairly minor role in the events which followed.

The northern army started off first and, brushing the French aside at the Battle of Tamames, swept into Salamanca. Another appeal was sent to the British to come and sweep the French from the plains of Leon and Castille but, receiving yet another negative response, Del Parque held his position until word reached him that French forces were hastening towards him. He then retreated but not back the way he had come. He cunningly retreated west, towards Portugal and even Esteramadura. The French, though they retook Salamanca, could not follow without uncovering Leon and Castille to guerrilla attack and held their positions. They would thus be unable to respond positively to Joseph's pleas for help when he in turn came under attack.

Albuquerque moved next but Victor, facing this front, soon realised the weakness of the forces opposing him and, disregarding them, moved off to assist the King as soon as he received instructions to do so. But his positions here and at Toledo had a significant effect on Ariezaga, as we shall see.

When that general with the main body moved off towards Madrid so he started off at a cracking pace. He covered 80 miles at a rate of 15 miles a day and completely caught Joseph on the hop. While the king was frantically calling for support from all sides it seemed as if the Spanish would force a battle on favourable terms in front of the city and push the French out. But Ariezaga, hearing that Victor was in the vicinity of Toledo became convinced that the latter was operating to attack him on the flank and halted for three days at Ocana, allowing Joseph time to gather his scattered forces together. Even then he did not resume his direct attack but moved off east, crossed the Ebro and moved towards the city from that direction. Then, finding a much larger French concentration in front of him, he retraced his steps, re-crossed the river and sought to re-establish his former line of communication by moving across the plains once more to Ocana. Soult, now in command of the French forces, raced to cut him off, calling Victor up to assist him. But Ariezaga won the race and entered Ocana as the French forces approached. But this time he could not avoid a battle.

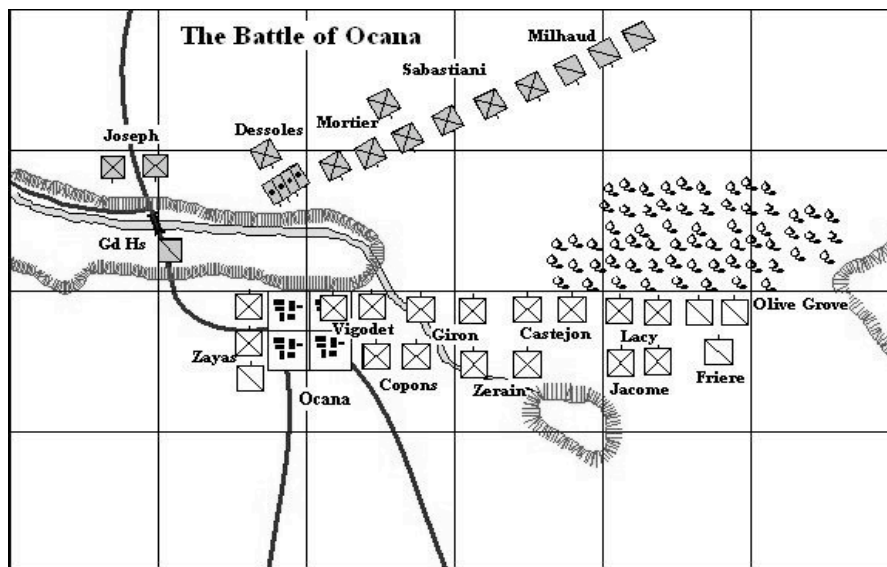
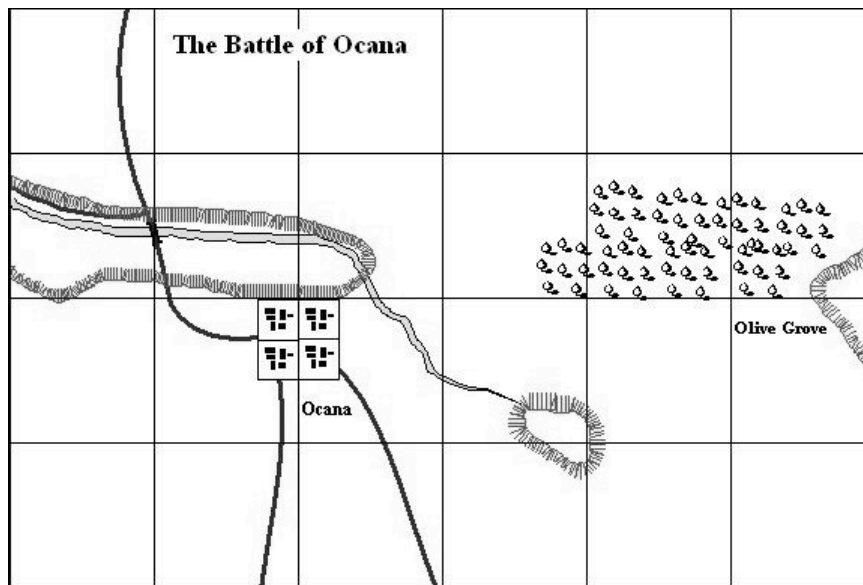
In the French camp the discussion centred around whether to wait for Victor who was about 40 miles distant but, fearful that the Spanish might slip away if they delayed, Soult plumped for an immediate attack the next morning, scorning the 17,000 superiority in manpower the Spanish had.

## The Maps.

Map One shows the terrain. There are three elevation levels. The ravine beyond Ocana with the stream and bridge counts as an obstacle and rough terrain. So too does the gully on the opposite side of the battlefield. The small hillock in the centre counts only as higher ground for sight purposes. The stream outwith the gully has no effect and can be readily omitted. The dotted line is the southern edge of the olive groves which hindered sight but had no other effect on the battle. While the French are north of this line Spanish commanders count no enemy in sight for command control purposes.

I have provided a second map showing what would seem to be the historic dispositions of the two armies. I won't tell you what happened – you should check it out in Oman (**after** you have fought it).

## Kenneth Clark



## Roster for the French Army

This is a Napoleonic Army of 5 forces. All units have SK2 except Joseph's Spanish Brigade who have no skirmish capability

### **Commander: Sout (Good)**

#### **I Corps: Mortier (V) 2/6" Aggressive**

Girard's Division

1/1 Brigade Veteran 6 -----

1/2 Brigade Trained 6 -----

Gazan's Division

1/3 Brigade trained 5 -----

1/4 Brigade trained 5 -----

#### **II Corps: Sebastiani 3/3 Aggressive**

Werle's Polish Division

2/1 Brigade Veteran 5 -----

2/2 Brigade Veteran 4 -----

Leval's German Division

2/3 Brigade trained 7 -----

#### **Reserve Division: Dessoles 3/5"**

3/1 Roy's B'de Trained 7 -----

3/2 Grand Battery 4@ 12lb batteries A -----

B -----

C -----

D -----

#### **Joseph's Royal Guard 4/3"**

4/1 Royal Guards Elite 6 -----

4/2 Spanish Conscript 3 -----

4/3 Gd Cav Veteran 3 -----

#### **Cavalry Reserve: Milhaud 2/5" Aggressive**

C/1 Dragoons Trained 6 -----

C/2 Paris' light cav Veteran 4 -----

C/3 Beauregard lt cav Veteran 6 -----

## Roster for the Spanish Army

This is a traditional army of 9 forces. The trained brigades are SK1

Commander: **Ariezaga** (Poor)

### **Vanguard Division: Zayas (V) 2/5"**

V/1	Brigade	trained	6	-----
V/2	Brigade	conscript	6	-----
V/cav	Bernuy's Cav	raw	3	-----

### **Lacy's Division 3/ 3"**

1/1	Brigade	conscript	6	-----
1/2	Brigade	conscript	6	-----

### **Vigodet's Division 4/3"**

2/1	Brigade	trained	6	-----
2/2	Bridage	conscript	6	-----

### **Giron's Division 3/3"**

3/1	Brigade	trained	6	-----
3/2	Brigade	raw	6	-----

### **Castejon's Division 4/3"**

4/1	Brigade	conscript	5	-----
4/2	Brigade	raw	6	-----

### **Zerain's Division 4/3"**

5/1	Brigade	trained	6	-----
5/2	Brigade	raw	6	-----

### **Jacome's Division 4/3"**

6/1	Brigade	conscript	6	-----
6/2	Brigade	raw	6	-----

### **Copon's Division 4/3"**

7/1	Brigade	trained	5	-----
7/2	Brigade	conscript	5	-----

### **Friere's Cavalry 4/3"**

C/1	Rivas	raw	3	-----
C/2	March	raw	4	-----
C/3	Osorio	raw	4	-----

*Ariezaga started the campaign with about 50,000 foot and still had about 47,000 at Ocana. This was one of the best equipped Spanish armies of the time, well equipped from British supplies. However the foot were of very mixed quality and the army suffered from the usual key failings of Spanish armies, a very inadequate officer corps, a very poorly equipped cavalry arm and a commander unable to make a decision and stick to it. I have assumed that no more than a third of the foot were trained, a third conscript and a third raw. The cavalry are all raw. The army had 60 guns placed along its line. I have chosen not to guess where individual batteries may have been but to factor the guns into the infantry strength points.*

## **Labels for Ocana**

### **Soult (Good)**

#### **1. Mortier (V) 2/6" Agg.**

1/1 Brigade  
1/2 Brigade  
1/3 Brigade  
1/4 Brigade

#### **2. Sebastiani 3/3" Agg.**

2/1 Brigade  
2/2 Brigade  
2/3 Brigade

#### **3. Dessoles 3/5"**

3/1 Roy's B'de  
3/2/1 12lb battery A  
3/2/2 12lb battery B  
3/2/3 12lb battery C  
3/2/4 12lb battery D

#### **4. Joseph 4/3"**

4/1 Royal Guards  
4/2 Spanish  
4/3 Gd Cav

#### **5. Milhaud 2/5" Agg.**

C/1 Dragoons  
C/2 Paris' light cav  
C/3 Beauregard lt cav

### **Ariezaga (Poor)**

#### **Zayas (V) 2/4.5"**

V/1 Brigade  
V/2 Brigade  
V/cav Bernuy's Cav

#### **Lacy 3/3"**

1/1 Brigade  
1/2 Brigade

#### **Vigodet 4/3"**

2/1 Brigade  
2/2 Bridage

#### **Giron 3/3"**

3/1 Brigade  
3/2 Brigade

#### **Castejon 4/3"**

4/1 Brigade  
4/2 Brigade

#### **Zerain 4/3"**

5/1 Brigade  
5/2 Brigade

#### **Jacome 4/3"**

6/1 Brigade  
6/2 Brigade

#### **Copon 4/3"**

7/1 Brigade  
7/2 Brigade

#### **Friere 4/3"**

C/1 Rivas  
C/2 March  
C/3 Osorio