

The Battle Of Sacile

16 April 1809

by Chuck Hamack

Napoleon had severely miscalculated the Austrians' intentions and their preparations for war in the spring of 1809. As a result neither he, Eugene, nor the Army of Italy were prepared for the Austrian invasion. Eugene was compelled by the people of northern Italy and his generals to give battle at Sacile to halt the invasion of Italy by the Archduke John. John was tasked with winning back northern Italy which Austria had been forced to cede as a result of a peace treaty with France. Eugene's battle plans for Sacile counted on his reinforcements arriving on the day of the battle (which they did not) and an aggressive assault over rough terrain which was more favorable to the Austrian defenders. These factors undermined the Army of Italy's ability for success against the Austrian army. It is my thought that although Eugene's initial battle plans were severely flawed, his generalship during the actual day of battle was very good and had Eugene been a less capable commander his army would have been destroyed.

Having taken the Viceroy Prince Eugene by surprise, the Archduke John advanced his Army of Italy toward the Livenza river. Eugene, hurriedly concentrating his forces, prepared to meet the Austrian Archduke at the town of Sacile. Showing every sign of surprise, Viceroy Prince Eugene sent urgent order to all of his divisional commanders to concentrate near the town of Sacile on the river Livenza. The Austrians had crossed the frontier two days before on the 10th of April. Eugene suspected that his army would be mustered around Sacile sometime on 16 April. By the 14th three of his Divisions were still over sixty miles away, and to make matters worse in the evening of 14 April, it started to rain. The Northern Italian roads became impassable.

John's army arrived 15 kilometers from Sacile by mid-afternoon on the 14th. Early on 15 April, the Austrians pushed forward and drove on the town of Pordenone. Frimont's brigade rapidly took the town, taking prisoner three battalions of infantry that were unable to escape John's cavalry. The Archduke now directed Frimont to occupy Porcia, Talponedo, and Palse. The remainder of John's command was placed behind Pordenone with IX Corp anchored on Rovoredò.

With the majority of the 40,000 Austrians deployed north of the Pordenone-Sacile road, Eugene would direct his main assault at John's left. Counting on the arrival of Pully's and Lamargue's Divisions, the Viceroy issued orders for his 35,000 man army to attack at day break. Seras and Severoli now prepared to attack Porcia together. As the attack commenced, Frimont, now reinforced by elements of VII Corps, counter-attacked Severoli. Separated by a stream, Seras was unable to effectively aid his comrade. The Italians broke and fled to Palse. Seras had no choice but to follow.

Barbou's Division arrived around 10:30 am, just in time to take Frimont's disordered troops in the right flank. The Austrians were forced back beyond Porcia. More men from VIII Corps arrived and a bloody see-saw battle developed for the town. Not until noon, when a brigade of Grenier's Division arrived, did the French secure Porcia. Grenier's movement forced Broussier to move and maintain the French battle line. The Archduke was not caught napping. The lateral movement on Porcia convinced John that Porcia was indeed, the main French attack. It was no feint after all!

The Austrians launched a vicious counter-attack at 3:30. All of the VII and part of the IX Corps launched themselves at Grenier. The rest of IX Corps was to take Broussier and reveal the French left flank. Eugene sent Barbou to shore up Grenier. The Austrian impetus was so great that Barbou was little more than a speed bump. Eugene ordered a withdrawal.

The French right disengaged easily, as neither side was in any shape to continue the fight. Eugene's left and center weren't so lucky. By ordering Sahuc's Cavalry forward, Eugene managed to get most of his army disengaged. If the Austrians could pursue with vigor, the French army would surely be destroyed. As it turns out, nothing in the Austrian Army moves with vigor! IX Corps pursued so slowly that only the cavalry was effectively engaged against the French left. By 5 pm, Eugene formed his men into divisional squares and they calmly moved off to Sacile. By 7 pm, Archduke John could claim the first Austrian victory of the war.

The Austrians suffered 4,000 casualties. Eugene's army lost 3,100 men killed and wounded, plus a further 3,500 men and fifteen guns captured. Archduke John would continue his pursuit of Eugene until the French reached the relative safety of the Adige.

The Scenario:

Weather: Normal-20", Ground is Hard,

Game Length: 0900 to 1900 10 turns or 4+1D6 (roll if no agreement).

One turn advances the clock one hour to determine reinforcements.

French have the initiative on the first turn. Terrain notes here

Terrain notes: Palse, Pordenone, and Fontana-Fredda are Hard cover. All other towns are soft cover. Streams are Obstacles. All terrain is either clear or rough. No woods.

Deployment: Austrians place first and French second (at least 12" away from enemy units).

Austrians: VIII/I deploy between Talponedo and Porcia. VIII/AG deploy between Porcia and Palse.

French: I and It deploy around Tamis.

Arrivals:

0900- I. Gyulai & IX on road 1-8 to Pordenone. 1000- Barbous & V and Sahuc & CR on road 2-5 to Ranxan.

1100- Grenier & III on road 2-5 to Ranxan. Reichenberg & AR on road 1-8 to Pordenone. 1200- Broussier & II on road 2-5 to Ranxan.

Optional French arrivals: these are units that Eugene thought would make it to the Battle field that day.

1300- Pully & IID on road 2-5 to Ranxan. 1500- Lamarque & IV on road 2-5 to Ranxan. 1700- Lecchi & RG on road 2-5 to Ranxan.

Optional Victory Conditions: Austrians/French

Pordenone 65/50

Fontana-Fredda 40/50

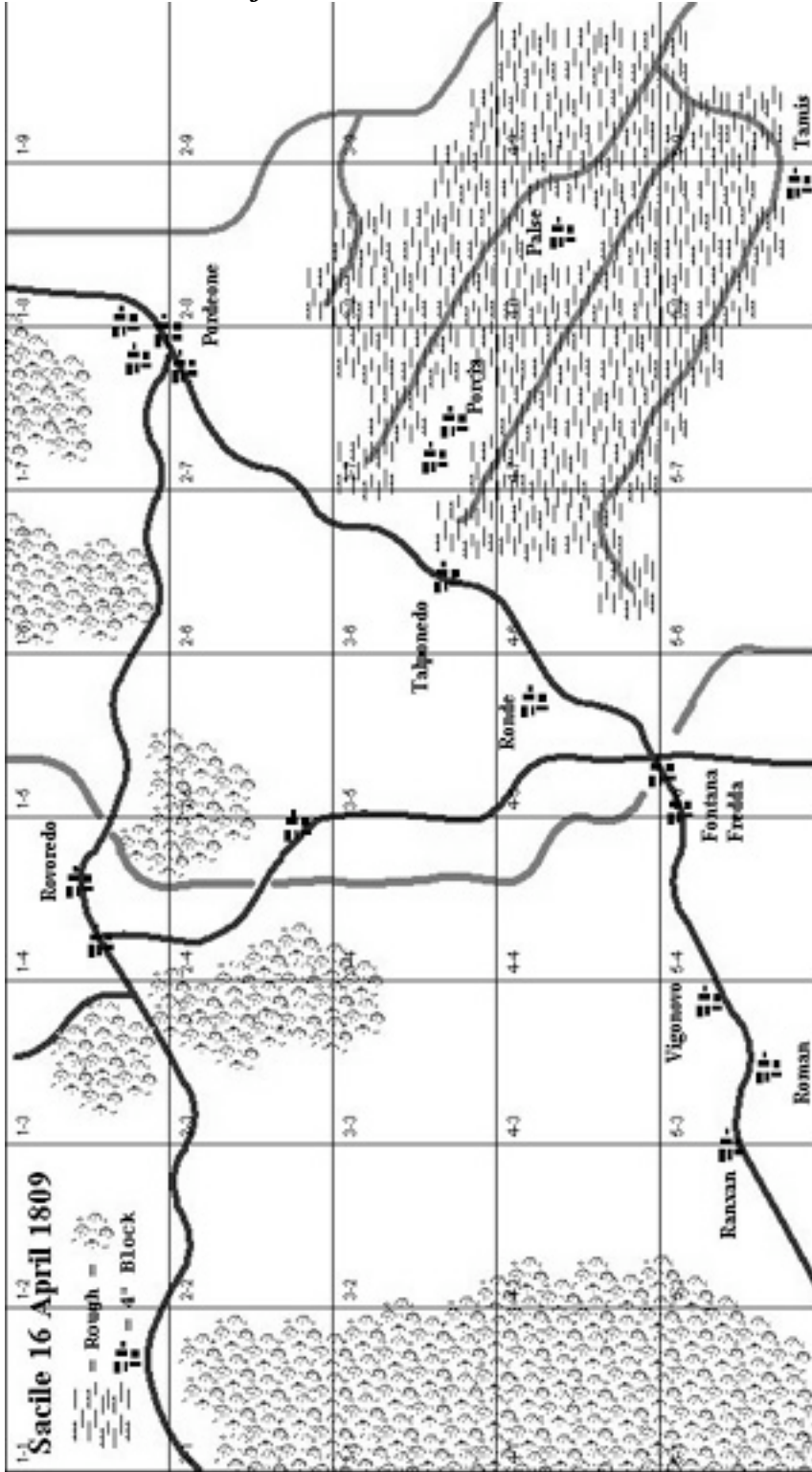
Rovoreda 35/20

Vigonovo 25/65

Ranxan, Roman, Tamis 15/35

Palse, Ronde, Talponedo, Porcia 30/30

The Sacile Battlefield:



Roster for the Army of Inner Austria
 Archduke John-Poor 20"
 Fair Napoleonic Army of 4 Forces, Break Point @ 6

VIII Corps: A. Guylai 4/7"

VIII/I Division: A. Guylai

VIII/I/1 Colloredo Line-Trained-Sk1	11 Sp	_____
VIII/I/2 Chevalier Line-Trained-Sk1	11 Sp	_____
VIII/I/3 Gajoli Line-Trained-Sk1	13 Sp	_____
VIII/I/4 Splenyi Hussar-Elite-LC	6 Sp	_____
VIII/I/5 Horse Artillery 6#	2 Sp	_____
VIII Corps Artillery:		
VIII/I/6 Foot Artillery 3#	2 Sp	_____
VIII/I/7 Foot Artillery 12#	2 Sp	_____

VIII/AG Division: Frimont 3/6"

VIII/AG/1 Wetzel Trained-Mx-Sk2 Grenz, Jager, & Chevauleger	6 Sp	_____
VIII/AG /2 Horse Artillery 6#	2 Sp	_____
VIII/AG /3 Schmidt Veteran-Mx-Sk2 Grenz & Hussar	7 Sp	_____
VIII/AG /4 Horse Artillery 6#	2 Sp	_____

IX Corps: I. Gyulai 4/6"(Aggressive)

IX/I Division - Besan

IX/I/1 KleinmeyerLine Trained-Sk1	11 Sp	_____
IX/I/2 Marziani Line Trained-Sk1	11 Sp	_____
IX/I/3 Kalnas Grenz Veteran-Sk2	11 Sp	_____
IX Corps Artillery:		
IX/I/4 Foot Artillery 3#	2 Sp	_____
IX/I/5 Foot Artillery 12#	2 Sp	_____

AR Division-Reichenberg 3/6"

AR/1 Grenadier Elite-Sk1	12 Sp	_____
AR/2 Hager Dragoon Elite-LC	6 Sp	_____
AR/3 Horse Artillery 6#	2 Sp	_____

Infantry units 9, Cavalry units 2, Artillery units 8 Total: 19

Infantry 93 SP, Cavalry 12 SP, and Artillery 16 SP Total: 121

Roster for the Army of Italy
 Prince Eugene-Good / 20”
 Fair Napoleonic Army of 6 Forces, Break Point @ 4

I French: Seras 3/6”

I/ Garreau Line Trained-Mx-Sk2	9 Sp _____
I/2 Rousel Line Trained-Mx-Sk2	8 Sp _____
II French: Broussier 2/6”	
II/1 Dessaix Line Veteran-Mx-Sk2	11 Sp _____
II/2 Dutruy Line Trained-Mx-Sk2	12 Sp _____
CR Light Cavalry: Sahuc 3/6”	
CR/1 Pages Trained-LC Chasseurs & Hussars	4 Sp _____
CR/2 Horse Artillery 6#	2 Sp _____
III French: Grenier 2/6”	
III/1 Abbe Ln&Lt Veteran-Mx-Sk2	11 Sp _____
III/2 Teste Line Trained-Sk2	12 Sp _____
V French: Barbou 4/6”	
V/1 Moreau Ln&Lt Veteran-Sk2	11 Sp _____
V/2 Roize Line Trained-Sk2	12 Sp _____
It Italian Severoli 3/6”	
It/1 Bonfanti Trained-Mx-Sk2 Line & Dragoons	9 Sp _____
It/2 Peyri Trained-Mx-Sk2 Line & Chasseurs	10 Sp _____

Infantry units 10, Cavalry units 1, Artillery units 1 Total: 14
 Infantry 105 SP, Cavalry 4 SP, and Artillery 2 SP Total: 111

(Optional)

2nd Dragoon Division (IID) – Pully 3/6”

IID/1 Poincot Trained-LC 6 Sp _____

(Optional)

4th French Division(IV) – Lamarque 3/6”

IV/1 Huard Trained-Sk2 11 Sp _____

IV/2 Almeras Trained-Sk2 9 Sp _____

(Optional)

Royal Italian Guard Division(RG) – Lecchi V-2/6”

RG/1 Viani Guard-Mx-Sk2 6 Sp _____

RG/2 Lecchi Guard-Mx-Sk2 8 Sp _____

Guard Horse 6# 2 Sp _____

Ready-Made Labels for the Sacile Scenario

Army of Inner Austria

John-Poor 20"

VIII A. Gyulai 4/7"

VIII/I/1 Line Sk1

VIII/I/2 Line Sk1

VIII/I/3 Line Sk1

VIII/I/4 Hussar

VIII/I/5 Hs 6#

VIII/I/6 Ft 3#

VIII/I/7 Ft 12#

VIII/AG Frimont 3/6"

VIII/AG/1 Lts&Chevauleger Mx-Sk2

VIII/AG/2 Hs 6#

VIII/AG/3 Grenz & Hussar Mx-Sk2

VIII/AG/4 Hs 6#

IX I. Gyulai 4/6" (Agg)

IX/I/1 Line Sk1

IX/I/2 Line Sk1

IX/I/3 Grenz Sk2

IX/I/4 Ft 3#

IX/I/5 Ft 12#

AR Reichenberg 3/6"

AR/1 Grenadier Sk1

AR/2 Dragoon

AR/3 Hs 6#

R Army of Italy

Eugene-Good 20"

I Seras 3/6"

I/1 Line Mx-Sk2

I/2 Line Mx-Sk2

II Broussier 2/6"

II/1 Line Mx-Sk2

II/2 Line Mx-Sk2

CR Sahuc 3/6"

CR/1 Chasseurs & Hussars

CR/2 Hs 6#

III Grenier 2/6"

III/1 Line & Light Mx Sk2

III/2 Line Sk2

V Barbou 4/6"

V/1 Line & Light Sk2

V/2 Line Sk2

It Severoli 3/6"

It/1 Line & Dragoons Mx-Sk2

It/2 Line & Chasseurs Mx-Sk2

(Optional)

IID-Pully 3/6"

IID/1 Dragoons

(Optional)

IV-Lamarque 3/6"

IV/1 Line Sk2

IV/2 Line Sk2

(Optional)

RG-Lecchi V-2/6"

RG/1 Guard- Mx-Sk2

RG/2 Guard- Mx-Sk2

RG/3 Guard Horse 6#