

The Battle of Valmy

20th of September 1792

A Grande Armee Scenario by Greg Savvinos

“From this place, and from this day forth, commences a new era in the world’s history; and you can all say that you were present at its birth” - Goethe

The battle of Valmy is rightly considered one of the decisive battles of the modern era.

The allied invasion of France in 1792, by the Brunswick’s largely Prussian force, aimed at restoring LouisXVI to power and strangling the emerging republic at birth. At first it appeared that this plan would succeed, with the fortresses of Longwy and Verdun falling to the invading forces at the first summons. The new order appeared doomed.

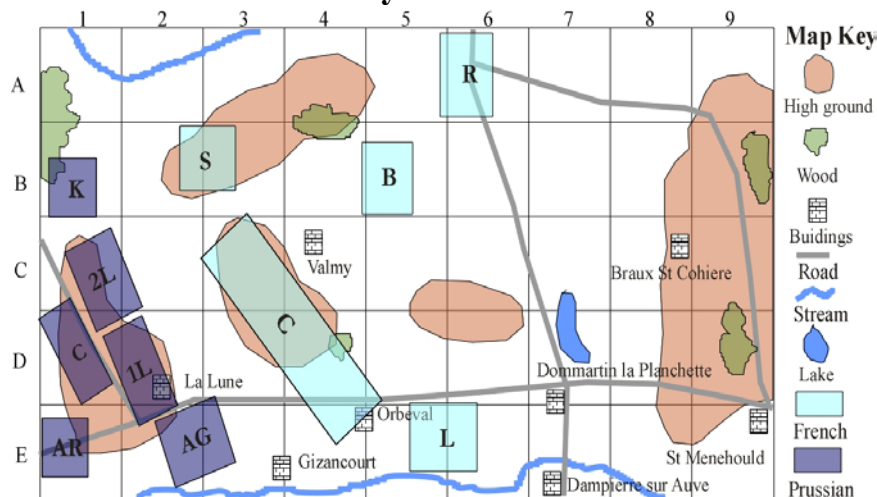
In a desperate measure to halt the seemingly unstoppable Prussian juggernaut, Dumouriez placed his Armee du Nord at the pass of Les Islettes on the road between Paris and Verdun and called on Kellerman to join him there with the Armee de Centre. The intention was to block any advance from Verdun and threaten the lines of communication of any force that sought to outflank the French position.

As it happened Brunswick did outflank the strategic barrier of the Argonne and was advancing on Dumouriez’ and Kellerman’s united forces from the east, whilst other allied forces were threatening from the west. The French were between two fires and defeat would result in the annihilation of the only forces capable of protecting Paris. However Brunswick was himself in a similar position because retreat after the loss of a pitched battle would have been virtually impossible.

Therefore it should come as no surprise that the actual battle itself was little more than a cannonade with neither side choosing to press the issue. Despite this, the success of the French forces in standing up to the vaunted Prussian military machine ensured that the new Republic, based on the ideals of Liberty Equality and Fraternity, would survive to ultimately transform the face of Europe.

This scenario focuses on the question of what would have happened if Brunswick had made a serious attempt crush the French.

The battlefield of Valmy



The Scenario

The game opens with fog. The weather is overcast and variable. The ground is soft. The game’s Basic Length is 6 turns.

All towns are soft cover. The streams can only be crossed at bridges.

The morale of the Prussian army is Fair. Its Break Point is 8.

The morale of the French army is Fair. Its Break Point is 8.

Roster for the Prussian Army at Valmy

Commander: Brunswick (Average)

Weather: Overcast and foggy, (10")

Army's Break Point: 8 rising to 9 if Clairfayt arrives.

Generals Available: 1

This is a Traditional Army of 4 Forces (rising to 5 if Clairfayt arrives) and two detachments.

Avantgarde: Hohenlohe-Ingelfingen 3 / 5"

AG/1 Wolffradt SK0 Trained 5SP _____

AG/2 Hertberg SK0 Trained 5SP _____

AG/3 Kliest SK1 MX Trained 5SP _____

AG/4 Hussars LC Elite 8SP _____

Artillery:

AG: 6-pdr Horse ____

1st Line: Schonfeld 4 / 4"

1L/1 Romberg SK0 Trained 7SP _____

1L/2 Borch SK0 Trained 7SP _____

1L/3 Thaden SK0 Trained 7SP _____

Artillery:

1L: 6-pdr Foot ____

2nd Line: Courbiere 3 / 4"

2L/1 Wittinghof SK0 Trained 7SP _____

2L/2 Prince Royal SK0 Trained 6SP _____

2L/3 Baden SK0 Trained 7SP _____

Artillery:

2L: 6-pdr Foot ____

Cavalry: Lottum 3 / 4"

C/1 Weimar HC Elite 4SP _____

C/2 Norman LC Veteran 6SP _____

C/3 Tschirsky LC Veteran 6SP _____

C/4 Ilow HC Elite 4SP _____

Detachment: Kohler 3 / 3"

K/1 Kohler SK1 MX Veteran 7SP _____

K/2 Eben SK1 MX Veteran 7SP _____

Artillery:

K: 6-pdr Horse ____

Artillery Reserve (Detachment): Tempenhof 3 / 5"

AR: 12pdr Foot A ____

AR: 12pdr Foot B ____

AR: 6pdr Foot A ____

AR: 6pdr Foot B ____

AR: 6pdr Foot C ____

Reserve: Clairfayt 3 / 8"

R/1 Jordis SK1 Veteran 8SP _____

R/2 Miremont SK1 Trained 6SP _____

R/3 Boros LC Elite 8SP _____

Artillery:

R: 12-pdr Foot ____

Alternative Valmy, play balancing etc.

1. The Austrians are coming

Clairfayt's Austrian force didn't arrive on the scene until after nightfall on the day of Valmy. Had the Kaiser's boys moved a little more snappily it is possible that they could have arrived earlier and taken part in any pitched battle that was under way. To reflect this, try the following:

- Starting at the end of turn 3 roll one die. On a roll of 4+ Clairfayt's Reserve Corps arrives at the E1 table edge.

2. Dillon hears the roar of cannon blowing in the wind.

Dumouriez had detached his Advanced Guard under General Dillon to hold the pass of Les Islettes that blocked the road from Verdun. However it is conceivable that they would have been recalled in the event of a serious allied assault on the French position even if only to avoid being cut off. If you want to include Dillon's force in the battle use the following procedure:

- Starting at the end of the turn after Clairfayt's force arrives roll one die. On a roll of 4+ Dillon's Avant Garde arrives at the E9 table edge

3. French Artillery.

For a battle renowned as a cannonade I had a devil of a time finding detailed information on the composition of the French artillery at Valmy. The scenario OB reflects my guestimate based on the snippets I could glean from Louis Phillipe, Phipps, the Annual Register (1793), Lynn and various historical maps of the battle that depicted battery positions.

For instance Louis Phillipe mentions that "a strong battery of heavy artillery was stationed at the windmill of Valmy". I interpreted this to mean two 12pdr batteries, perhaps supported by some 8 pdr foot artillery.

Likewise I gave Stengel two 8 pdr Horse batteries on the strength of Louis Phillipe's claim that Stengel had under his orders "two companies of horse-drawn artillery" and Lynn's evidence that nine batteries of horse artillery had been formed by April 1792. It seemed churlish not to give the French any horse guns and given that Louis Phillipe's translator kept referring to rifles when the original probably meant muskets it didn't seem to be implausible that "horse-drawn" probably referred to horse artillery.

Anyway to get to the point, if you feel that I have been too generous with the French artillery do the following:

- Remove all French 8 pdr foot batteries and increase the strength of the infantry brigades in the force they belong to by the appropriate number of strength points (i.e. 2 SPs per battery)
- Reduce the French Army break point by one
- Sing a few verses of "Oh my Richard" and finish off with three hearty cheers of Vive Le Roi!!!

4. Playing for high stakes.

The strategic situation for both armies was precarious to say the least with neither having a secure line of retreat. Historically this was a major factor in Brunswick's decision not to press the issue and the French reluctance to move out of their defensive position. To reflect the added stress this would have placed on the two armies use the following modification:

- Treat each army as "shaky" and reduce the break point of each by one.

Labels for the Valmy Scenario

French

Dumouriez (Good)

Chazot 3 / 4"

L/1 Matzen SK1 MX

L/2 Dampierre SK1

L/Cav HC

L: 12-pdr Foot ____

Kellerman (V) Cautious 4 / 14"

C/AG Desprez-Crassier SK1 MX

C/1/1 SK1

C/1/2 SK1

C/1/C Chatres HC

C/2/1 SK1

C/2/C LC

C/R/1 Grenadiers SK1

C/1/C Carabineers HC

C: 12-pdr Foot A ____

C: 12-pdr Foot B ____

C: 8-pdr Foot A ____

C: 8-pdr Foot B ____

C: 8-pdr Horse ____

Le Veneur 3 / 4"

R/1 Dietman SK1

R/2 Stettenhoffen SK1

R/3 Hangest HC

R: 8-pdr Foot ____

Stengel 3 / 3"

S/1/1 Light SK1 MX

S: 8-pdr Horse A ____

S: 8-pdr Horse B ____

Buernonville 3 / 3"

B/1 SK1

B/2 Miaczynski SK1

B/C Dujoux LC

Dillon 3 / 3"

AG/1 Lamarche SK2

AG/2 Roseries SK1

AG/C Ch & Hussars LC

Prussian

Brunswick (Average)

Hohenlohe-Ingelfingen 3 / 5"

AG/1 Wolffradt SK0

AG/2 Hertberg SK0

AG/3 Kliest SK1 MX

AG/4 Hussars LC

AG: 6-pdr Horse ____

Schonfeld 4 / 4"

1L/1 Romberg SK0

1L/2 Borch SK0

1L/3 Thaden SK0

1L: 6-pdr Foot ____

Courbiere 3 / 4"

2L/1 Wittinghof SK0

2L/2 Prince Royal SK0

2L/3 Baden SK0

2L: 6-pdr Foot ____

Lottum 3 / 4"

C/1 Weimar HC

C/2 Norman LC

C/3 Tschirsky LC

C/4 Ilow HC

Kohler 3 / 3"

K/1 Kohler SK1 MX

K/2 Eben SK1 MX

K: 6-pdr Horse ____

Tempenhof 3 / 5"

AR: 12pdr Foot A ____

AR: 12pdr Foot B ____

AR: 6pdr Foot A ____

AR: 6pdr Foot B ____

AR: 6pdr Foot C ____

Clairfayt 3 / 8"

R/1 Jordis SK1

R/2 Miremont SK1

R/3 Boros LC

R: 12-pdr Foot ____