

BLUCHER'S DARING DASH

ROCK THE KATZBACH

After the disastrous Russian campaign of 1812 and a spring of fresh campaigns, both the French Empire and its enemies (Russia and Prussia) were exhausted. A nine-week truce (the Armistice of Pläswitz) was agreed, allowing both sides to rearm. Napoleon was relying on Austrian neutrality, but Emperor Francis II chose to join Russia, Prussia and Sweden in their fight against the French, bringing 200,000 troops to the fight.

Napoleon had to divide his forces amongst his Marshals against this new threat. Giving each specific instructions, he sent Laurent de Gouvion Saint-Cyr to Dresden, Oudinot to Berlin (to face Bernadotte), Davot to Hamburg and Macdonald to Katzbach (to face Blucher). The plan was for each of the armies to converge on Berlin to take the Prussians out of the war. Napoleon initially moved against Blucher (the first battle of Katzbach), but the wily Prussian general simply withdrew deeper into Silesia. With an Allied advance on Dresden, Napoleon chose to join Saint-Cyr there (leading to the Battle of Dresden on the 27th August). Macdonald's orders were to check the advance of Army of Silesia, but not to engage it.

Macdonald had four corps under his command, the III Corps under Ney, the V Corps under Lauriston, IX Corps under Gerard and the II Cavalry Corps under Sebastiani. Ney was recalled by Napoleon and initially the entire III Corps withdrew until the mistake was realised (Napoleon wanted just Ney, not his III Corps) Southam was placed in charge while Ney was away.

The Army of Silesia consisted of a combined Russian and Prussian force consisting of the 8th and 11th Russian Corps and the 1st Prussian Corps.

The river Katzbach (Kaczawa in Polish) is a tributary of the Oder in Lower Silesia. Normally it would not be a major obstacle to cross, but in late August 1813, it was swollen with flood water. As Macdonald approached, Blucher again withdrew. Macdonald took this a sign of weakness and saw an opportunity to defeat Blucher. If he crossed the Katzbach and pinned the Allied force, flanking forces could sweep around and catch Blucher in a *manoeuvre sur les derrieres*. He expected Blucher to retreat. Sebastiani suggested that his cavalry forces perform a reconnaissance, but Macdonald refused. He thought he didn't have enough time - the temporary departure of III Corps



Russian artillery deployed and ready to fire.

had meant they needed time to reorganise and the weather was gradually getting worse.

Macdonald's plan was as follows: The IX Corps, supported by the II Cavalry Corps would cross the Katzbach and climb to the top to the plateau towards Eicholtz (Warmatowice), the V Polish Corps would cross towards Weinburg (Winnica), while the III Corps would march north to Liegnitz (Legnica). This is where the plan started to unfold, crossing the Katzbach was slow due to flooded river and the steep bank on the other side slowed the advance. There was only one road suitable for artillery.

Meanwhile the Allied army watched and waited. Blucher saw an opportunity – wait for the French to cross part of their forces and then attack before they had a chance to deploy their entire force. The French would be forced into retreat against the steep sided river. As it happened, the weather would also play into the Allies favour.

THE BATTLE

The battle opened on the 26th August 1813, when the French crossed the Katzbach. The battle itself can be broken down into two separate engagements as the



Von Sacken's Russians charge the French while they are still wet from the thunderstorm.

Würthende Neisse (Nysa Szaiana) tributary lay between the heights of Eicholtz and Weinburg, splitting the battlefield in two. Like the Katzbach, it too was flooded and impassable in all but a few places. Our scenario concentrates on the northern half of the battlefield.

THE HEIGHTS OF EICHOLTZ

Set Up

The table size will depend on what scale you intend to play at, but bigger is generally better. For 28mm, go for at least an 8ft x 6ft table to allow enough manoeuvring. Alternatively, halve the forces involved per corps. A map of the battle can be found here: <http://bit.ly/2bA56jf>.

The table itself should be hilly, with hills in both the Coalition and French deployment zones. In addition, the town of Eicholtz should be on the Coalition's deployment area on their right flank. The rivers Katzbach and Würthende Neisse lie off table to the French rear and right flanks.

FRENCH FORCES

Gerard had managed to deploy his artillery and infantry before Blucher attacked. The cavalry may start in reserve. The French have the following forces:

IX Corps

All the infantry are classed as regular.

Commander: Étienne Gérard

1st brigade 35th Division

- 6 x French Line

2nd Brigade 35th Division

- 4 x Italian Line

36th Division

- 4 x French light infantry
- 2 x Italian Chasseurs a Cheval

Corps Artillery

- 3 x 12lbr Foot Artillery
- 2 x 6lbr Horse Artillery

II Cavalry Corps

All cavalry are classed as elite.

Commander: Sebastiani

2nd Light Cavalry Division

- 2 x Hussars
- 2x Chevauléger-lanciers

4th Light Cavalry Division

- 2 x Chasseurs a Cheval
- 2 x Chevauléger-lanciers

2nd Heavy Cavalry Division

- 2 x Carabiniers
- 2 x Cuirassiers

II Cavalry Corps Artillery

- 2 x 6lbr Horse Artillery

THE ALLIED ARMY

The Russian 11th Corps is deployed along with half of the Prussian 1st Corps. The rest of the Prussian 1st Corps (including half their artillery) is in reserve. The Russian 3rd Cavalry Corps is in reserve and may be called from reserve two turns after the French II Cavalry Corps becomes available.

Russian 11th Corps

All infantry count as regular.

Commander: von Sacken

10th Division

- 4 x Russian Line
- 2x Russian Jaeger

27th Division

- 2x Russian Line
- 2x Russian Jaeger

10th Division Artillery

- 2 x 12lbr Foot Artillery

1st (Prussian) Korps

Prussian grenadiers count as elite. Landwehr is militia. Half the artillery is in reserve.



Victorious Russians march through Silesia. Miniatures by Warlord games.

Commander: Yorck

1st Division (Reserve):

- 2x Grenadiers
- 2x Jaegers
- 4x Landwehr

2nd Division (Reserve):

- 4x Line
- 2x Jaeger
- 4x Landwehr

8th Division:

- 4x Line
- 4x Landwehr
- 2x Landwehr Cavalry

Cavalry Reserve: 2x Dragoons

- 2x Uhlans

Corps Artillery

- 2x 12lbr Foot Artillery
- 2x 6lbr Horse Artillery

3rd Cavalry Corps

The Hussars count as elite. Cossacks are militia and marauders

Commander: Tschaplitz

Hussars

- 4x Russian Hussars

Cossack Division

- 5 x Russian Cossacks

Corps Artillery

- 1x 6lbr Horse Artillery

Blucher and Macdonald

Blucher is present and acts as a Commander in chief. Macdonald wasn't present at first, but joined the battle later when he realised how desperate the situation was. As such, the French may have a Commander in Chief after turn five.

THE WEATHER

One of the deciding factors on the day was the weather. It rained all day and at times it became thunderous. The primary effect of this was on the musketry.

Roll 2D6 at the beginning of each turn.

2-7	Cloudy with light rain – no restrictions.
8-9	Rain – all shooting becomes 'not clear'.
10-12	Thundery – No shooting. Cavalry movement halved. Command range halved.

VICTORY

The odds are stacked against the French. While they start with a superiority in both artillery and cavalry, that advantage will soon be lost with Allied reinforcements and the weather. The coalition wins if they rout a French corps, a major victory if they rout both. Any other result is a minor victory for the French. If somehow the French manage to rout an Allied corps, they may claim a major victory.

AFTERMATH

The battle in the northern half around Janowitz turned into a rout, with the French attempting to cross the Katzbach. Southam and the III Corps had marched to the sound of the guns but arrived too late to influence the battle. In the southern half around Weinburg, the battle between the French V Corps and the Russian general Langeron ended in the French being pushed back.

Macdonald's forces were badly defeated by a combination of a lack of reconnaissance, then weather and by Blucher's daring advance. With Oudinot's defeat at Großbeeren, Napoleon's success at Dresden was nullified by these losses. **WS&S**