

THE SECOND BATTLE OF EL BRUCH, 14 JUNE 1808

THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK

After the disastrous first battle of El Bruch, Duhesme, rather annoyed by such a reversal, decided to take a hammer to crack the nut in El Bruch. He ordered the First Division to mobilise in order to force the valley and its pass.

By Eoghan Kelly

Général de Division Joseph Chabran, a veteran commander of troops throughout the Revolutionary and early Empire years, instructed his two brigades to get ready. The two Généraux de Brigade had originally had eight battalions between their two brigades, but the losses of the 6th had meant the Swiss battalion was unable to take to the field. In their haste to carry out their orders, Chabran neglected to bring either cavalry or artillery with him...

THE GAME

This is a generic scenario designed for most Napoleonic rule sets. This

will work for larger games (such as *Black Powder* or *Over the Hills*), but could be adapted to skirmish games (such as *Chosen Men* or *Sharp Practice*) if the French come on in waves (advanced guard, main body, and reserves). As before, the ratio used is 20:1 in order to have reasonable numbers on the board. The Spanish numbers are obviously very low using this system – so be careful!

The French force is marching up the road in march column. The 1st Demi-Brigade is leading, with the 16th Régiment de Ligne in the lead. The 2nd Demi-Brigade follows. What can't fit on the board starts as reserves entering by the road.

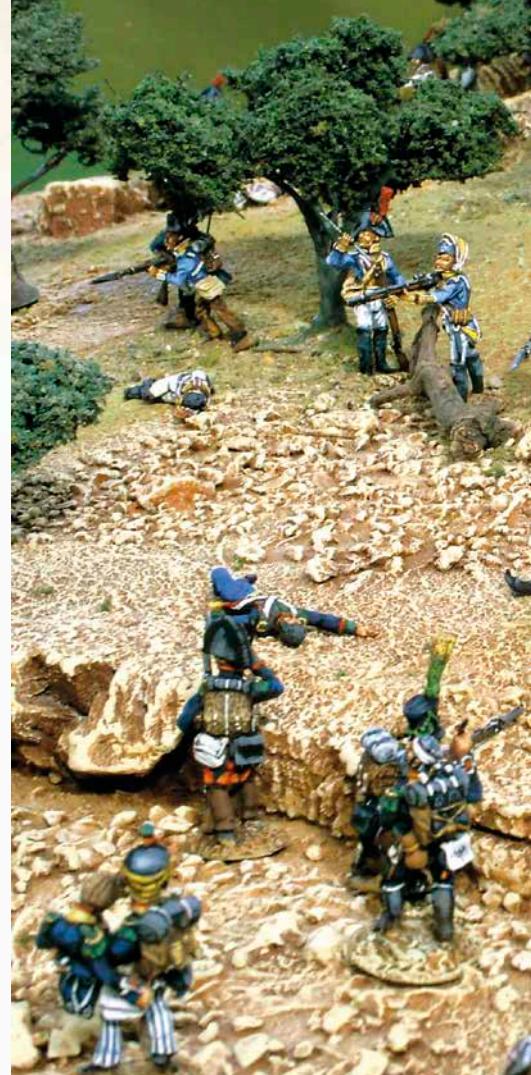
The Spanish skirmishers occupy the village and the main body is marching down the road towards the village.

French objectives

Initially: Advance across the village and exit from the north-west corner of the board. Drive off native forces.

Once a French unit breaks, this changes to:
Burn the village and ruin crops, and then retreat back the way you came.

French infantrymen in the Peninsula, ca. 1812, by Denis Dighton.
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Spanish objectives

Kill the French. Break the French forces.

Scenario rules

All the Spanish troops are stealthy – they are considered to be in hard cover as long as they are in any terrain other than a road or open grass space. Even in the open field they can claim soft cover. Additionally, French troops cannot fire on a Spanish unit that has not already shot at them unless the Spanish are on the road itself.

Chabran had been hamstrung by his own commanders giving him conflicting orders. He was ordered simultaneously to advance up to open El Bruch pass and at the same time to protect the approaches to Barcelona to prevent being cut off by irregular forces. He tried to square this circle but failed, and as a result his troops advanced cautiously up the valley, aware that this was near the previous fiasco less than ten days previously. French forces may only move at normal speed when advancing up the valley (heading towards the village and the NW corner of the board).





The French and Spanish skirmishers duel with each other on a sparsely wooded, rocky slope.

French units will suffer a drop of one level to their morale if a friendly unit breaks anywhere – this is a permanent, one-off drop.

Once a French unit has broken, the French objective changes as above.

Non-regular Spanish troops can be deployed as skirmishers in the village or elsewhere in the woods. They cannot be deployed east of the village.

Crops and vineyards block line of sight but they only provide light cover once a unit is spotted.

A unit must have an officer to rally.

Officer characteristics

Excellent: This officer gives both a combat and morale bonus to the troops in his direct command (i.e. more than one unit).

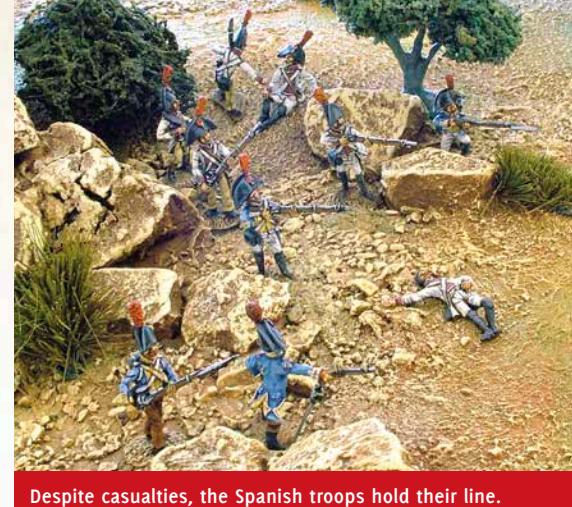
Good: This officer gives his troops a bonus in combat and when checking morale.

Average: This officer leads the unit but confers no extra benefits.

Stubborn: This officer can always re-roll failed morale checks.

Responsive: Units commanded by this officer will get a free move and a free fire when an enemy unit moves within their line of sight.

Indecisive: This leader will cause his troops to roll twice for morale and choose the worst result.



Despite casualties, the Spanish troops hold their line.



Spanish Walloon Guards manage to hold on to the hilltop.

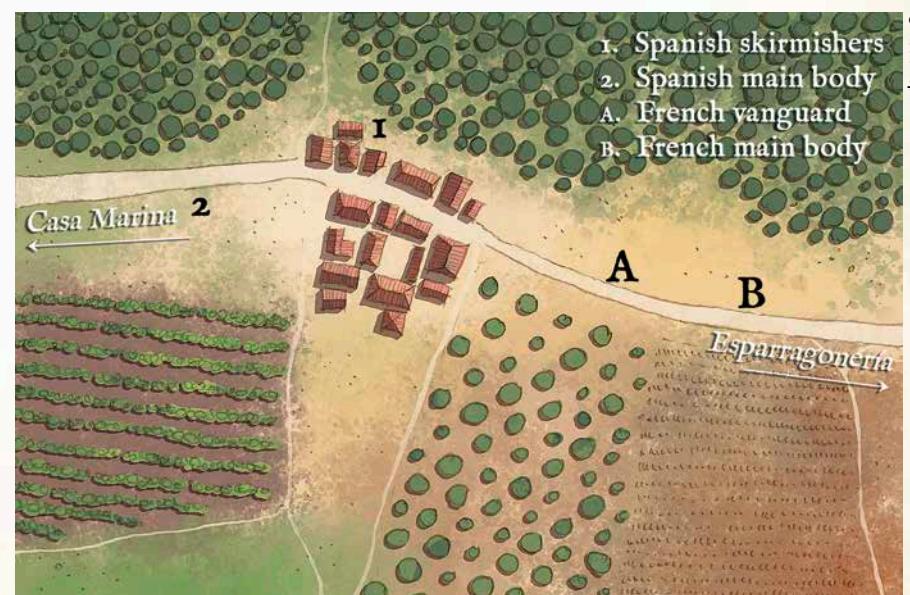
Events

Weather: The weather is fine and there is little wind. The ground is dry, and the grass is now dry enough to burn.

Winning

There are fourteen turns in the game.

There are ten flammable buildings in the village, plus the church. To set a fire, a French unit must start its move-





The French break and retreat in the face of Spanish fire.

ment in contact with the building; the church takes two turns of contact. To put out the fire, a Spanish unit must start in base contact with the burning building (again two turns for the church) and they must be in contact no more than two turns after the fire is started. For each one set on fire the French gain a VP, and if it's burnt to the ground (burns for more than three turns) they get an additional 2 VP. The Spanish get 2 VP for each building not set on fire and 1 VP for each fire they put out.

ORDER OF BATTLE

FRENCH FORCES

First Division of the Corps d'Observation des Pyrenees Orientale, commanded by Général de Division Guillaume Philibert, 1st Count Duhesme.

Advanced column

Divisional commander: Général de Division Joseph Chabran (good)

1st Demi-Brigade – Général de Brigade Antonio Goulas (average)

7th Régiment de Ligne, 1st and 2nd battalions – 45 figures each; Morale: good; Quality: good; Led by Colonel Pierre-Gabriel Aussenac (excellent, stubborn)

16th Régiment de Ligne, 3rd battalion – 40 figures; Morale: good; Quality: good; Led by Colonel Jacques-Barthélemy Marin (good)

Main body

2nd Demi-Brigade – Général de Brigade Jean Nicolas (good)

2nd Régiment de Ligne, 3rd battalion – 30 figures; Morale: good; Quality: good; Led by Colonel Jacques Delga (average, responsive)

The French gain one VP for every Spanish company routed while the Spanish gain four VPs for every French Brigade routed. The highest VPs wins. In the unlikely event that the French are still on the first objective, then they win if they exit the NW corner of the board. The Spanish automatically win if they drive all French units from the board.

HISTORICAL OUTCOME

The French troops advanced into the valley. Aiming to carry on past the

village, the hesitant advance ran into problems as snipers and skirmishers in the village began to take their toll. As they passed into the village, they ran into well-positioned regular troops, whose volley caused the French attack to falter completely. As they withdrew, they set several buildings on fire before they were given the order to retire to Barcelona. El Bruch pass was safely in Spanish hands – the French would have to find another way to attack Girona... **WS&S**

37th Régiment de Ligne, 3rd battalion – 40 figures; Morale: good; Quality: good; Led by Colonel Jean-Joseph Gauthier (good)

Reserve

56th Régiment de Ligne, 4th battalion – 40 figures; Morale: good; Quality: good; Led by Colonel Louis Thomas Gengoult (good)

93rd Régiment de Ligne, third battalion – 38 figures; Morale: good; Quality: good; Led by Colonel Rémy Grillot (indecisive)

SPANISH FORCES

Colonel Joan Baget i Pàmies (good, stubborn, responsive)

Two companies of regular line infantry no. 28 'Extremadura' – ten figures each; Morale: excellent; Quality: good; Led by Lieutenant Pablo Morillo (good)

Two companies of volunteers (Sometens de Manresa) – ten figures each; Morale: excellent; Quality: good; Led by Captain Maurici Carrioi Serracanta (militia volunteer) (excellent)

Two companies of Walloon Guards (Guardias Walonas) (grenadiers) – ten figures each;

Morale: excellent; Quality: excellent; Led by Captain de Bruyne (good)

Three companies of regulars: d'Igualada del Regiment Suís núm. 1 Wimpffen – fifteen figures each; Morale: excellent; Quality: good; Led by Tinent don Franz Krutter Grotz (good)

One mixed volunteer unit – fifteen figures; Morale: excellent; Quality: average; Led by Antoni Franchi Estalella (average)

One mixed volunteer unit – five figures; Morale: excellent; Quality: good; Led by Captain José Viñas (excellent)

One mixed volunteer unit (residents of Sallen) – five figures; Morale: good; Quality: average; Led by Padre Ramón Mas (indecisive)

One mixed volunteer unit (patriots of Catalonia) – five figures; Morale: excellent; Quality: average; No leader

One battery of five three-pounder guns; Morale: good; Quality: indecisive

