

The Battle Of Bergen

April 13, 1759
by Chuck Hamack and Erik Engling

In the western theatre of operation, Ferdinand of Brunswick unexpectedly opened the 1759 campaign season early by moving his Allied Army of Observation out of winter quarters and toward Frankfurt-am-Main in April. The French army under the command of Marshal de Broglie was unprepared but gradually recovered and concentrated near the towns of Vibel and Bergen, ready to meet Brunswick's force. Broglie moved his artillery over the pontoon bridges at Vibel and deployed on the ridge between the two towns.

As the French army took up a defensive position between Vibel and Bergen, Brunswick opened the hostilities at 10AM with an attack by Freytag's light troops and the Erbprinz's column. Freytag captured Vibel and destroyed one of the pontoon bridges. The Erbprinz's initial attack was beaten back by French infantry and guns, but a renewed attack by the Brunswick grenadiers carried the Allied army to the first sunken road. Broglie counterattacked, driving the Brunswickers away from the sunken road but were in turn counterattacked by additional Brunswick troops which drove the French all the way into and out of Bergen. Broglie brought up his reserves and counterattacked yet again, driving the Brunswick troops out of Bergen, though by now the French were too exhausted to pursue.

Ferdinand attempted to retrieve this reverse by committing Isenberg's column to the attack near the orchard of Bergen but they were pounded by French artillery and Isenberg was killed in the fighting. Coupled with the Brunswickers who had retreated into the orchard from Bergen earlier, the entire force retreated, pursued by French cavalry. Only a timely charge by allied cavalry saved the infantry from a thorough defeat.

Brunswick had been thoroughly beaten. He established a defensive line awaiting a massive attack by the French army which he felt was certain to occur in the afternoon. Broglie only launched a half-hearted probe by his Saxon division near Vibel, in effect a minor skirmish. Brunswick slipped away later that day and the French army chose not to pursue.

The battle had moderate casualties for the size of the forces engaged: 2,000 – 3,000 losses for the French and nearly the same for the Allied army.

The Scenario:

The weather is sunny. Start on Turn 2. Basic Length is 7 turns.

Terrain notes:

All woods are rough. The two pontoon bridges near Vilbel can be destroyed by the Allied player (these represent supply and retreat options for the French army). For each turn that an Allied player is adjacent to a pontoon bridge, roll a die. On a 3+ the bridge is destroyed. For each Pontoon Bridge destroyed, decrease the French Break Point total by 1.

Each village is represented by 1 town block. The river which the pontoon bridges cross (Nidda) cannot be crossed by any units. The sunken roads in the French line are treated as field cover giving a 3+ for fire and combat. The orchards in front of Bergen are rough terrain. They do not confer any cover save.

Map Scale: 1:100

Free Deployment Rules

See Map.

Historical Deployment Rules

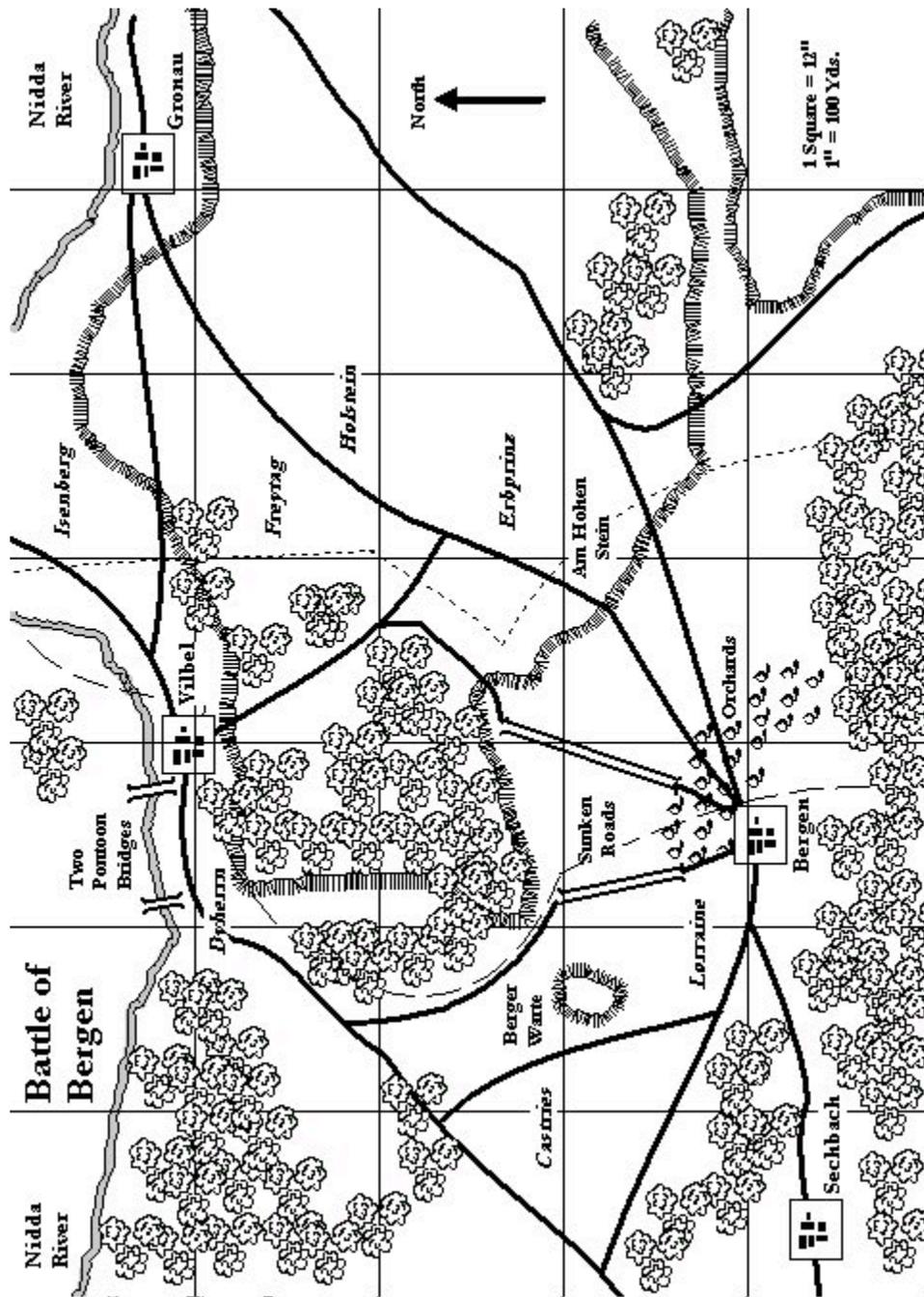
See Map

Special Scenario Rules

The Brunswick Grenadiers are 8SP, No AT, RI. Isenberg's Column cannot move until turn 3 as he was lethargic.

Brunswick was fearful of French reinforcements and attacked in piecemeal due to his sense of urgency. Brunswick was fixated on Bergen and to a lesser extent Vilbel. For this scenario, there will be an additional floating BP for the Allied Army should they take either town. When determining the Allied army's morale, increase by 1BP if they hold Vilbel (have a unit in the town or next to it with no French forces within 2BW) and 2 BP for Bergen. Should the French player take these towns again, eliminate the temporary BP bonus for the Allied Army.

The Bergen Battlefield:



The Allied Army
Ferdinand of Brunswick (Great)
Army Break Point: 4

Column Erbprinz von Braunschweig *
(+1) V

1 x Brunswick Grenadier
2 x Brunswick Infantry
1 x British Guard Cavalry

Light Column Freytag (+1) V
1 x Hanovarian Jaegers

Column Isenberg (0) V
1 x Hanovarian Foot
1 x Hessian Musketeer
2 x Hanovarian Cavalry

Column Holstein-Gottorp (+1) V
1 x Prussian Dragoons
1 x Hessian Grenadier
1 x Hessian Musketeer

Free Deployment:

1 x Brunswick Grenadier (10)
2 x Brunswick Infantry (18)
1 x Hessian Grenadier (9)
2 x Hessian Musketeers (16)
1 x Hanovarian Foot (10)
1 x Hanovarian Jaegers (5)
1 x British Guard Cavalry (11)
2 x Hanovarian Cavalry (20)
1 x Prussian Dragoon (10)

Total Free Deployment: (109)

The French Army
De Brogile (Average)
Army Break Point: 7

Right Wing Camil de Lorraine (-1)
4 x French Foreign Infantry (2 Swiss/2 German)
2 x French Infantry

Center Wing Marquis de Castries (+1) V
1 x French Foreign Infantry (German)
1 x French Infantry
1 x Volontaires Light Infantry
3 x French Cavalry Regiments
1 x French Dragoons
2 x French Heavy Artillery

Left (Saxon) Wing von Dyherrn (-1)
3 x Saxon Regiments "In Exile"
1 x Saxon "other" Light Horse

Free Deployment:

5 x French Foreign Infantry (40)
3 x French Infantry (21)
1 x French Volontaires Light Infantry (6)
3 x Saxon Regiments "In Exile" (18)
3 x French Cavalry Regiments (27)
1 x French Dragoons (5)
1 x Saxon "other" Light Horse (6)
2 x French Heavy Artillery (20)

Total Free Deployment: (143)

What If?

Brunswick Coordinated

The Battle of Bergen did not show the Allied army at its optimum efficiency. Because Brunswick feared French reinforcements, he launched uncoordinated and piecemeal attacks against De Bogile. In this option, ignore the special scenario rule for Isenberg's column limitations and the activation rules. However, start the battle on Turn 3 instead.

Additional Allied Forces

Brunswick's army did not use its artillery effectively and had detached cavalry that could have been of use. In this option, add the following elements to the Allied Army:

1 x Prussian Hussar (to Erbprinz's Column)

1 x Heavy Artillery (to Isenberg's Column)

This will raise the Break Point total for Brunswick's army to 5

Lobositz Avenged

The Saxon forces in French service were poor troops and not well maintained. Morale and capability were simply poor through most of the war. In this option, assume that the capability of the Saxon forces is improved and that the Saxons are the troops who burn with vengeance for their comrades who surrendered following their surrender after Lobositz in 1756.

Left (Saxon) Wing von Dyhern (-1)

3 x Saxon Musketeers (1756)

1 x Saxon Chevauxlegers

Note that this would have given De Bogile a stronger counterpunch on the left wing counterattack near Vibel in the afternoon. The French Army's Break Points do not change.

Brunswick's Fears Realized

In this option, assume that General St. Germaine's forces arrive on time on the map edge opposite Vibel and can cross the two pontoon bridges over the Nibba River. Two units can cross per pontoon bridge but crossing requires their entire movement and they are treated as vulnerable on the turn they march over the pontoons. Afterwards, they may move normally.

This option raises the French Break Point total: 9

French Column St. Germaine (+1) V

2 x French Foreign Regiments (Walloon, German)

4 x French Infantry

1 x Heavy Artillery

1 x French Cavalry Regiment