

Moss Vale Men's Probus

Prepared by Allen Fudge Oct 004

WAR GAME FOR THE BATTLE OF WATERLOO

From time to time the Moss Vale Probus Club Military History Group re-lives significant battles by conducting war games. This is where two sides play the role of the opposing commanders. In this instance Napoleon and Wellington.

THE GAME

Both sides were issued with the same opening narrative one week prior to the exercise, then each side received different narratives during the exercise. The aim was to give each commander sufficient scope to change the course of the battle by not repeating the mistakes made in the actual battle 150 years or so earlier.

In this war game the opposing teams did not fully come to grips with the mistakes made (possibly due to a weakness in the narratives but you can judge for yourselves), consequently there was no change to the outcome. The major errors committed by the original commanders were

Napoleon

1. Advanced on too narrow a front when crossing the river Sambre into Belgium
2. His own command structure was seriously flawed during the advance phase in that he assumed direct command of only one wing of his army.
3. He failed to communicate clearly to Ney about the need to capture Qatre Bras quickly and before he attacked The Prussians.
4. He diverted one corps from Ney's command without telling him. This corps then marched backwards and forwards making no contribution against either the British or the Prussians
5. Even though he appreciated that time was the essence he then wasted a complete day reviewing his troops before following up Wellington after Qatre Bras.
5. He started his attack at Waterloo too late in the day and then underestimated the skill of British rifleman by conducting a series of frontal attacks against them most of which failed.
6. His command structure permitted Ney to commit the bulk of the French cavalry, unsupported by French infantry, against the British squares.

Wellington

1. His appreciation of Napoleon's intentions and timings was poor and this affected the early deployment of his army.
 2. He failed to appreciate the tactical significance of the cross roads at Qatre Bras and was ill prepared when Ney attacked. His reputation however saved him.
 3. His decision to deploy 14000 men on his extreme right flank was questionable. They could probably have been better used as a reserve closer to the actual battle.
 4. He failed to win the confidence of the Prussian Chief of Staff due mainly to his autocratic manner. Hence their unduly late arrival on the day.
- On balance Wellington made less mistakes than Napoleon.

NARRATIVES

Three for each of Wellington and Napoleon follow. "

MOSS VALE PROBUS CLUB MILITARY HISTORY STUDY GROUP WAR GAME OCTOBER 2004

OPENING NARRATIVE FOR BOTH SIDES (ISSUED ONE WEEK PRIOR TO THE EXERCISE)

On 1 March 1815, Napoleon stepped onto French soil after his escape from Elba. Many were surprised at the warmth of his reception, particularly the courageous cavalry officer Marshal Ney, one of his best Grande Armee commanders who when sent to arrest Napoleon vowed to bring him back to Paris in a cage trussed up ready for execution. To cut a long story short, Ney, put his bad memories of Napoleon's conduct during the retreat from Moscow behind him and instead backed him with his 30,000 men corps to take over the reins of power from Louis XVIII with a minimum of blood letting and fuss.

Coincidentally, at about the same time the Congress of Vienna had just gone into session to determine how to realign the borders of Europe now that Napoleon was safely incarcerated on Elba! News of Napoleon's return jolted the Congress into forming the Seventh Coalition. War was declared immediately, not against France but against Napoleon personally. Napoleon's emissaries were rebuffed at every border and an invasion of France was agreed upon which would stretch from the Channel to the Alps and involve more than 600,000 men converging on Paris. The plan envisaged an Anglo-Dutch force of 150,000, a Prussian Army of 120,000, 150,000 Russians and 200,000 Austrians all to be in position on the French borders by the end of June. Accordingly Wellington, who attended the congress, went directly to Brussels on 5 April to take command of the Anglo-Dutch force which was due to concentrate in Belgium by mid-June

One of the most intractable problems facing Wellington in the forthcoming campaign was the unreliability of the Dutch and Belgium soldiers who made up one third of his army. Only a year before, many had been serving under the French Eagles as Belgium had been part of France and they still wore French uniforms although the eagle badge had been removed from their shakos. Another major problem was that the young Prince of Orange, because of the size of the Netherlands troop contribution and because he was King William's son, had to be appointed to a senior command despite a proven reputation for tactical incompetence.

Although protesting peaceful intentions on the political front, Napoleon was in desperate haste to mobilise. His experience in 1814 had been that the vast coalition armies arraigned against him were cumbersome and slow, their efforts were usually uncoordinated and they were vulnerable to surprise, speed and defeat in detail. Therefore he needed to be ready quickly to make a pre-emptive strike against the Anglo-Dutch and Prussian forces, which were the first to start their concentration in Belgium to his north.

His preparation was completed with typical efficiency. The majority of survivors of the old Grande Armee volunteered for service in the new Army of the North, albeit encouraged with improved pay and conditions, and sailors, with similar inducements, were recruited from the redundant fleet. Six foreign regiments also volunteered for service. Workshops in Paris operated around the clock with a daily production rate of 1250 uniforms and 2000 muskets. 12 million cartridges and more than 300 cannon were manufactured in eight weeks. It was like old times again. Thus by early June Napoleon had a fully equipped field Army comprising 124,000 men, cavalry and 370 field guns and what's more 90 percent of the men were fanatical Frenchmen.

Napoleon now had his sword. How to use it? Was the next question. Napoleon planned a pre-emptive strike in the northeast to first crush the Anglo-Dutch and the Prussians who had conveniently spread themselves out from Ostend to Liege before the Russians and Austrians could concentrate their forces on the Rhine. It would take allied units in the northeast up to a week to march from one extremity of their deployment area to the other. Even to complete a concentration in the centre would require 48 hours. Another key factor was that the supply bases of the English and the Prussians were located in opposite directions; one on the coast at Ostend and the other over the Rhine in Germany. Armies that were defeated invariably fell back towards their base, towards supply and reinforcement. In this case it would mean the Allies splitting even further apart. Together the Anglo-Dutch and Prussian forces outnumbered Napoleon two to one. Separately,

Napoleon was stronger than either and in any event Napoleon was a past master at defeating superior strength armies in battle.

As for the Prussians, Napoleon knew that General Blucher, nicknamed “Papa Blucher”, although a brave cavalry commander, at 73 was now well past his prime.

Nevertheless, the Prussians could probably muster four corps comprising 120,000 men plus 300 guns but they were similarly over extended between Charleroi and Liege.

On 7 June the French frontiers along the rivers Sambre, Rhine and Moselle were sealed. There must be no whisper (apart from mis-information) as to where or when Napoleon would strike.

NOTES ON 19TH CENTURY TACTICS AND ARTILLERY

TACTICS

1. During the advance phase in open country, cavalry would lead on a broad front acting as a protective screen.
2. Most attacks occurred during daylight which resulted in heavier casualties but which afforded commanders better control.
3. British and French infantry countered cavalry attacks by forming squares. These squares were rarely breached by cavalry.
4. Infantry units would meet opposing infantry attacks by forming file over a broad front. This achieved maximum fire effect.
5. Cavalry would charge opposing cavalry at any time but cavalry really came into its own when used against individual enemy infantry units when they were caught deployed in line or when caught retreating in disorder from a battle field.
6. In mobile warfare, infantry rarely had time to dig in to face an enemy infantry attack therefore whilst waiting for the attack Wellington often made his troops lie down on reverse slopes and then move forward at the last moment to face the attack. Besides providing some concealment and an element of surprise this tactic reduced the heavy casualties caused by direct enemy artillery covering fire tasks. We should remember that one cannon ball could kill 10 to 15 men as it ploughed down a single line of infantrymen.
7. Both sides would use skirmishers (usually light infantry units) either in front of their forward defensive lines or ahead of attacking infantry to unsettle the enemy and to create initial casualties.

ARTILLERY

1. Napoleon was the first field commander to use massed artillery against an enemy. He favoured the 12 pounder smooth bore field gun, which was named after him. It fired;
 - Solid shot. This was used against constructed defences such as forts. Effective up to 2000yards
 - Spherical case. Also called case and shrapnel. Could be timed to explode over its target. This was the forerunner of today’s proximity fuses. Used against infantry and cavalry in the open. Effective up to 1500 yards.
 - Shell. Exploded on impact or after a brief pause. Used against earth works or against infantry and cavalry in the open. Effective up to 1500 yards.
 - Canister. Used against infantry and cavalry at close quarters. Usually in the final stages of their assault or charge. Effective up to 500 yards. At ranges less than 200 yards double canister was normally used.
2. The British and Prussians had similar field artillery to the French but theirs were not called “Napoleons”. The allies did not concentrate their artillery, as did Napoleon, at this time.

Allen Fudge
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MILITARY HISTORY STUDY GROUP
WAR GAME
OCTOBER 2004

NARRATIVE 1 for WELLINGTON

You are the Duke of Wellington. Commander in Chief of the Anglo Dutch Army. The date is Thursday 15th June 1815. The time is 1600 hrs. You are in your quarters in Brussels having just placed your seal on a despatch to Whitehall. This despatch expressed your concern about the tardiness of Whitehall in sending the remaining fourth infantry corps promised earlier and re-emphasising the very real possibility of a pre-emptive strike across the Sambre by Napoleon in the next few days. You also enquire whether the Russians and Austrians will be concentrated as planned by the end of June.

For the past few weeks rumours have been rife with where and when Napoleon will strike with his newly created strike force, the Army of the North. Your intelligence staff estimates Napoleon has at least six infantry corps plus four cavalry corps and more than 340 guns. Total strength about 125,000. Your own Army, presently comprises two under strength infantry corps and one under strength cavalry corps and 150 field guns. The two infantry corps are 1 Corps under the command of the Prince of Orange and 2 Corps under the command of General Hill. Your Cavalry Corps is under the command of Lord Uxbridge. These three corps are still about 30 percent below war time establishment but many, including the Guards Division, disembarked in the past week and are on the road Ostend-Brussels. These troops are not expected to reach Brussels until tonight after a day long forced march. Your third infantry corps, the Reserve Corps, under the command of General Sir Thomas Picton is planned to reach Brussels on the afternoon of 16 June. When all are in place your total strength will be about 90,000 of whom only about 35000 are your preferred British troops.

Aware of your build-up situation General Blucher, whose Prussian force was up to establishment, had kindly offered earlier to cover the most likely crossing points over the river Sambre at Charleroi and Namur. The Prussians will also keep watch on ford areas further south across the river Meuse. Meanwhile 1 Corps, a mixed bag comprising Dutch, Belgium, Nassauers (German) and Hanoverians with an inexperienced commander has responsibility for covering the other likely crossing over the river Sambre at Mauberge, west of Charleroi. 1 Corps has a regiment of light cavalry under command. Headquarters 1 Corps is at Braine le Comte. The overall situation is shown on the attached map.

You desperately need time for your fourth infantry corps to arrive in Belgium and you are silently praying that Napoleon will not attack before it arrives.

After afternoon tea you decide to rest before the Duchess of Richmond's ball organised for that night. You recall that most of your senior commanders have also received invitations to the ball and you are rather apprehensive about this.

Later that afternoon at 1800 hrs an ADC awakens you and advises that Napoleon attacked Belgium, crossing the Sambre at Charleroi at 1230 hrs. The ADC explains that a senior Hanoverian officer, responsible for passing the information, became distracted and held onto the message inadvertently. You curse the incompetence of your Allies then appreciate you need more information before

deciding on the deployment of your army. You do however order most formations to concentrate and place them on an hours notice to move.

You are still uncertain whether the attack on Charleroi is the main thrust or a feint and whether Napoleon will also approach via Mons. The information you need to make this judgement eventually reaches you at 2200 hrs, just as supper is about to be served at the Duchess of Richmond's Ball. The Prussians, severely mauled at Charleroi, are now falling back towards Ligny. You discuss the situation and dispositions of 1 and 2 Corps and your cavalry corps with the Prince of Orange, General Hill and Lord Uxbridge and ask them to return to their formations with all possible haste after taking some supper. You further direct your staff to ensure that any reinforcements, which arrive in Brussels during the night 15/16 June, are to march for the front at first light on the 16th. You then ask your staff to be ready to depart Brussels at 0730hrs on Friday 16 June and warn them to get adequate rest (as if!).

DISCUSSION POINT 1

As the Duke of Wellington

1. What do you consider is Napoleon's strategic objective?
2. What, in your opinion, are Napoleon's immediate tactical objectives and how do you think he will go about achieving them?
3. What instructions did you give to the Prince of Orange, General Hill and Lord Uxbridge about their corps dispositions before they departed the Duchess of Richmond's Ball in Brussels?
4. What is your preferred area to do battle with Napoleon's Army of the North?

TIME FOR CONSIDERATION

20 minutes

MILITARY HISTORY STUDY GROUP WAR GAME

OCTOBER 2004

NARRATIVE 1 FOR NAPOLEON

You are Napoleon. Commander-in-chief of the Army of the North. The date is 14th June 1815. The time is 2100hrs.

Your army is just completing its concentration, in total secrecy, just south of the river Sambre close to the town of Beaumont. All formations should be concentrated around Beaumont by 2230hrs.

Your order of battle is;

1 Corps Gen d'Erlon 21,000 men and 46 guns
2 Corps Gen Reille 25,000 men and 46 guns
3 Corps Gen Vandamme 17,000 men and 38 guns
4 Corps Gen Gerard 16,000 men and 38 guns
6 Corps Gen Lobau 10,300 men 32 guns
Imperial Guard Gen Drouot 20,000 96 guns
1 Cavalry Corps Gen Pajol 3100 men 12 guns
2 Cavalry Corps Gen Exelmans 3300 men 12 guns
3 Cavalry Corps Gen Kellerman 3700 men 12 guns
4 Cavalry Corps Gen Milhaud 3000 men 12 guns
Total 122,400 men 344 guns.

Coincidentally, this day is also the anniversary of your great victory at Marengo. Your Order of the Day, to be read to every regiment prior to operations on 15 June proclaims this auspicious fact.

Intelligence reports indicate that Blucher probably has four corps with a total strength of about 120,000. 1 Prussian Corps has responsibility for protecting the crossing over the river Sambre at Charleroi. Its headquarters is believed to be at Ligny. 2 Corps at Namur and 3 Corps, is responsible for crossings over the river Meuse. There are no reports on the whereabouts of 4 Prussian Corps which is probably in the area of Liege. It also appears that the Anglo-Dutch force under Wellington, which is not yet fully concentrated, has two corps of infantry and one corps of cavalry, a total strength of about 80,000. Your staff have received reports that the Prince of Orange was seen at Braine le Comte which means that the British 1 Corps is probably responsible for protecting the crossing at Mauberge. British light cavalry units have also been sighted in this area. Agents reported heavy cavalry units disembarking at Ostend two weeks ago as were soldiers believed to be part of Wellington's third corps. All dispositions are shown on the attached map.

You have already decided your army's grouping and order of march for 15 June. The advance guard will be 4 Cavalry Corps, a division of infantry from 3 Corps plus engineer detachments with river crossing equipment and field artillery. The main body of infantry will comprise three wings. The left wing, commanded by Marshal Ney, comprising 2 Corps (General Reille) and 1 Corps (General d'Erlon). You (Napoleon) will command the centre wing comprising 3 Corps (General Vandamme), less one division, and 6 Corps (General Lobau). The right wing will be 4 Corps (General Gerard). The rear guard and army reserve will be Imperial Guard (General Drouot) which will be part of the centre wing. The left and right wings will each have cavalry as flank guards and all wings will have field artillery in support

Tonight, at dinner, you plan to discuss in detail your campaign against the Anglo-Dutch and the Prussians as a prelude to your re-instatement as Master of Europe.

DISCUSSION POINT 1

As Napoleon;

1. What is your strategic objective?
2. What are your tactical objectives for 15 and 16 June and how do you see them being achieved?

Now change your hats back to members of the Moss Vale Probus Club Military History Group. Be prepared to comment on Napoleon's grouping and command structure which was identical to that used on 15 June 1815.

You should also be prepared to comment on Napoleon's choice of using only one crossing point at Charleroi for his entire Army of the North.

TIME FOR CONSIDERATION

20 minutes

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NARRATIVE 2 NAPOLEON

Over supper on the night 14/15 June Napoleon stressed the importance of destroying the more formidable Prussian force at Ligny first and then concentrating on the weaker Anglo-Dutch force.

Speed, surprise and the Anglo Dutch situation should deny the two enemy armies the opportunity to concentrate as one. Then Brussels will be ours for the taking, perhaps even by Saturday. “Imagine gentlemen” Napoleon says “the effect this will have on the Coalition’s plans to destroy me. This will show them who is the real Master of Europe.

Napoleon’s outline plan is for the left wing under Ney to “brush aside” any resistance he may encounter from the British at Quatre Bras and then to attack the Prussian right flank at Ligny and to drive them east. The centre wing will advance along the road Charleroi-Ligny and attack the 1st Prussian Corps from the southwest. The right wing, after crossing the Sambre is to protect the army’s right flank and to intercept any Prussian force advancing west from Namur.

The time has now advanced to 1400 hrs 16 June and Napoleon is observing the Prussian positions south west of Ligny, all of which are on forward slopes clearly visible to all. (An aside. When Wellington visited the Prussian Chief of Staff two hours previously, he commented upon the Prussian order of battle in his characteristically bluff way saying “If I were to deploy my men like that I’d expect them to be damnably mauled” To which Gneisenau replied” We Prussians like to see who we are fighting”)

Napoleon estimates there are probably two Prussian corps plus cavalry opposing him. As he is about to give the order for his artillery to begin their bombardment prior to launching his infantry he hears the rumble of artillery fire from the direction of Quatre Bras. Surely Ney would have started his attack on the British well before this he thinks.

This reminds him that Ney really doesn’t need two corps to dispose of a British brigade at Quatre Bras and he Napoleon now needs an additional corps quickly to come onto the Prussian right flank at Ligny to finish them off as was discussed last night over dinner. If Ney is committed he obviously cannot come so it must be d’Erlon. Napoleon immediately orders an ADC to ride with all speed to find General d’Erlon, Commander 1 Corps, who should be in the proximity of Frasnes, and to instruct him to take the quickest route to support the centre wing at Ligny by attacking the Prussian right flank. He can be guided by the sound of the guns.

DISCUSSION POINT 2 NAPOLEON

As members of the Probus Club of Moss Vale Military History Group what comments, if any, do you have on this turn of events including Napoleon’s last order.

TIME FOR DISCUSSION

10 Minutes.

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NARRATIVE 2 FOR WELLINGTON

You are Major General Constant de Rebecque, Chief of Staff 1 Corps. You are in your Headquarters at Braine le Comte. The time is 1530 hrs 15 June 1815. You are an old Etonian personally appointed by Wellington mainly because of your proven military ability and secondly to keep a rein on “Slender Billy” as the Prince of Orange is known.

A staff officer, covered in dust, has just galloped into your Headquarters area and is demanding to see the Prince. After calming him down you tell the staff officer that the Prince of Orange left in his carriage earlier that morning destined for Brussels to attend the Duchess of Richmond’s Ball. Out of breath and perspiring heavily, the messenger quickly recounts to you the situation at Charleroi earlier that morning and reports that a French force of at least two corps with cavalry and about 80 guns is advancing north on the road Charleroi-Quatre Bras. You try to look calm by casually pouring two stiff brandies, one of which is for the messenger. You tell him to shut up and to enjoy his brandy after he asks “What are you going to do sir. There’s no time to be lost”? You sit

down and start thinking about some crucial decisions which may have to be made in the next few minutes.

Being one of the few senior officers in the entire Anglo-Dutch Army to appreciate the tactical importance of the cross roads at Quatre Bras (something not even considered by Wellington at this stage) you asked the Prince of Orange earlier for permission to deploy Prince Bernard of Saxe-Weimar's 2nd Brigade (about 3000 infantry from the 2nd Netherlands Division) to the cross roads at Quatre Bras four days ago. You also provided Prince Bernard with all the guns you could spare which was a solitary battery of horse artillery (8 guns). Slender Billy (also an old Etonian but much junior to you) argued strongly against your deployment request because he was certain Napoleon would advance on Brussels via Mons therefore Quatre Bras was not tactically significant. He finally relented when de Rebecque threatened to resign and return to Wellington's staff.

It now looks like Napoleon will not be advancing on Brussels via Mons, thought de Rebecque. This was the very reason for our deployment to Braine le Comte in the first place. Though de Rebecque still had that nagging doubt that this latest move by Napoleon could be a feint. 1 Corps only had two of its four divisions. The remaining two were due to arrive 16 June.. 1st Division was deployed at Mons and the two remaining brigades of 2nd Netherlands Division at Braine le Comte about 12 miles to the west of Quatre Bras.

DISCUSSION POINT 2 WELLINGTON

As General Constant de Rebecque what crucial decisions do you make, if any, in the light of this latest information and in the absence of your Corps Commander who will not return from Brussels until 16 June?

TIME FOR DISCUSSION

10 Minutes

MILITARY HISTORY STUDY GROUP WAR GAME

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NARRATIVE 3 FOR WELLINGTON

It is now 1000 hrs on 17 June and you appreciate that Quatre Bras, which can too easily be outflanked, is not the best place to fight a major defensive battle with Napoleon particularly without your fourth infantry corps. Therefore you order a withdrawal to ground of your own choosing which is the ridgeline at Mont St Jean just south of Waterloo.

You find it difficult to believe that you can undertake your withdrawal without undue pressure from Ney but these are the vagaries of war. How are you to know that Napoleon is reviewing his army to celebrate his successful encounter with Ziemen (Prussian 1st Corps) the previous day. Much of Saturday morning was also taken up by writing despatches announcing this victory to the world at large. About 1100hrs there is a bad storm, which makes the follow up of your force by the French difficult. Bivouacking conditions for the night 17/18 June will be intolerable. There will be little rest for anyone including your enemy.

You consider Napoleon's order of battle. The only changes are that Ney lost about 4000 casualties at the battle of Quatre Bras, as you did, and then Napoleon lost 11,000 at the battle of Ligny fighting the Prussians who lost at least 20,000. You are also aware (from light cavalry reports) that Napoleon's centre wing is returning to the centre line at Quatre Bras with the exception of General Gerard's 4th Corps which remains on the right flank presumably to pursue the defeated Prussian army many of whom were last sighted withdrawing east. For this task 4 Corps has been reinforced to 30,000.

You consider Napoleon's battle track record in considering your own defensive plans. He is a master of the feint and out flanking his opponents positions and at the moment you appreciate Brussels could be vulnerable because of Gerard's position on your left.

You also wonder now about Blucher's earlier promise to assist you in the forthcoming battle.

DISCUSSION POINT 3

As Wellington be prepared to discuss the following

1. Other than adopting the standard defensive position at Mont St Jean with skirmishers in front of your defensive line, divisions in depth and on reverse slopes where possible, cavalry on flanks and in depth positions, guns in the centre protected by infantry what other steps, if any, could you take to defend the integrity of the Anglo Dutch Army at Mont St Jean.
2. What is your basic strategy for the conduct of this battle?
3. What time do you think Napoleon will attack? But what time do you hope he will attack.?

TIME TO CONSIDER

10 minutes

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NARRATIVE 3 FOR NAPOLEON

It is now 2100 hrs on 17 June and it is still raining. Napoleon is discussing his battle plans for the 18th over dinner with his commanders. Napoleon is supremely confident in his manner, perhaps over-confident and perhaps he has had a little too much wine. Napoleon said that if Wellington made a stand at Mont St Jean his ragtag inferior strength army would be smashed to fragments with massed frontal attacks and cannonades the like of which no one would have seen before.

Marshall Ney listened to Napoleon's diatribe without comment but he knew, as did some others at the table, that no frontal attack against any of the Duke's armies in any previous war had ever succeeded. Surely he thought, Napoleon must also be aware of this fact.

To Marshal Soult, his chief of staff, who had the temerity to raise the issue of the British infantry's musketry skill and high rate of fire compared with their own troops, Napoleon was insulting "Because you have been beaten by Wellington, you consider him a great general. And I tell you that Wellington is a bad general, and that the English, what there is of them, are bad soldiers, and the whole thing will be a walkover for us. We will sleep in Brussels tomorrow night Soult, mark my words."

Napoleon's outline plan for the battle on the 18th was as follows;

Phase 1. General Jerome's three divisions to attack and capture the farm at Hougomont on Wellington's right flank at 11.30 hrs.

Phase 2. A frontal assault on the Anglo-Dutch line aimed at Wellington's left and centre at 1330 hrs by General d'Erlon's Corps of four divisions organised into four huge columns comprising 32 battalions. Three corps of cavalry to be prepared to support this assault once the British line had been broken and then to pursue the remnants

Phase 3. General Lobau and remaining infantry to attack Wellington's right Front if necessary on success of Phase 2. Probably not before 1530 hrs.

All phases to be preceded by an intense cannonade,

When Napoleon had finished speaking, Ney surprised him by saying. “Sire, I appreciate that the ground will be sodden tomorrow making movement difficult but would it not be prudent to start Phase 1 earlier than 11.30 hrs. Starting three or more hours earlier will give us more time to consolidate after the battle so that we are better prepared to meet Blucher should he arrive.” To this Napoleon replies.” There is no need. Blucher was defeated soundly at Ligny and Gerard has already confirmed the remaining Prussians withdrew towards Liege.” Not put off, Ney continues “Finally Sire, whilst I too have the utmost confidence in our soldiers to break the British line in their frontal attacks, even though we never managed this in Spain, should you not consider a flanking movement to cut off and destroy stragglers fleeing from the battle. Such a move may also have the added advantage of unsettling Wellington’s front when he repositions his troops. We certainly have the numbers to do this.” To this suggestion by Ney he replied. “ I do not see the need but I shall sleep on it. Good night gentlemen”. The rain was intensifying.

It is now 0500hrs on 18 June. It has stopped raining at last. You meet your commanders in one hour for breakfast. You have slept fitfully on both of Ney’s impertinent suggestions but there is always that inward nagging doubt before any battle. But you reassure yourself. You know that Ney is a fearless leader, if only you had more like him, but his tactical skills do not always match his bravery. The way he handled Quatre Bras while you were defeating the Prussians at Ligny was just another example of his poor generalship. Which reminds you, you must speak further about this but it can wait until you have defeated Wellington. Nevertheless, as Napoleon you must decide before breakfast. Do you go ahead with your original plan or do you change it as Ney suggests? To change makes you look weak and not in control. It is also a loss of face particularly after the way you spoke to your commanders last night, an act you are beginning to regret. God save you the humiliation.

DISCUSSION POINT 3 FOR NAPOLEON

If you do decide to change your mind what is your revised plan to defeat Wellington at Waterloo?

TIME TO CONSIDER

10 minutes

BATTLE OF WATERLOO
SEQUENCE OF EVENTS

DATE	TIME	EVENT
14 June	1600	Napoleon had concentrated 125,000 men, cavalry and guns around Beaumont to strike into Belgium, across the Sambre at Charleroi. Marshal Ney was to command the left wing, Napoleon the Centre and Marshal Grouchy the right wing. At the same time Blucher had only 75 percent of his Army concentrated at Ligny. Wellington began the day with only a Dutch and a Nassau brigade to the left of and at at Qatre Bras and less than 30,000 of his men within a few hours marching distance of Qatre Bras
15 June	1600	Wellington learns that the French had crossed the Sambre at Charleroi and pushed the Prussians back from thre river that morning. It was long after dark that he received sufficient information to determine his concentration point. He then ordered his divisions to march to Nivelles-Qatre Bras at first light on 16 th June. I shall meet him here pointing to Qatre Bras and if that

- fails here drawing a thumb line along a ridge just south of Waterloo at Mont St Jean.
- 16 June 0500 British troops start marching to Qatre Bras.
- 0800 Duke and his staff ride out of Brussels for Qatre bras
- 16 June 1000 Wellington arrives at Qatre Bras but nothing much had happened. Ney's orders were "to brush aside" Wellingtons troops at Qatre Bras and then to fall on Bluchers right flank while Napoleon attacked his front at Ligny. But Ney hesitated because he over estimated the strength of Wellington's force at Qatre bras, which was in fact only 4000 Nassau and Dutch most of whom were hidden on a reverse slope.
- 1000 Ney did not attack as he should but waited until the whole of General Reille's Corps were in position. He was concerned about Wellingtons reputation
- 16 June 1030 As his own front was quiet, Wellington rode over to Ligny and spoke to Bluchers chief of staff and commented on the fact that that Prussians were positioned on the forward slopes prior to their own battle
- 16 June 1345 Ney attacks at Qatre Bras.
- 1400 Wellington returns to Qatre Bras
- 1400 Sir Thomas Picton's 5 Division arrives at Qatre Bras
- 1430 Napoleon attacks the Prussians at Ligny. The tragedy of the day for the French was that D'Erlon, who commanded the reserve, spent the whole of the 16th marching and countermarching under orders and counterorders when his presence on either battlefield would have been decisive. A similar mistake was made two days later at Waterloo with Grouchy.
- 16 June 1430 Ney receives Kellerman's cavalry.
- 1500 Wellington's British Division arrives at Qatre Bras. Finally the Guard's Division arrived after a long forced march but with enough punch to drive the French back to where they had started. Ney was therefore unable to assist Napoleon at Ligny. On the other hand Ney had prevented Wellington going to Bluchers aid. Blucher lost 20,000 to napoleon's 11000.
- 17 June 0500 Napoleon failed to follow up either Army but instead spent the morning gossiping and reviewing his troops in celebration over his success against the Prussians. He wa certain the Prussians were finished and fleeing towards Liege. Napoleon eventually sent Grouchy with 30,000 men to follow them up much time was wasted on the Namur road when in fact the Prussians were rallying on Wavre where reinforcement awaited them.
- 17 June 1000 Wellington withdrew his troops towards Mont St Jean.
- 1500 Napoleon at last sent his cavalry in pursuit of Blucher and Wellington It was too late especially as there was was a terrible thunderstorm with torrents of rain which made movement difficult and conditions for bivouacking that night poor. Many of the French units die not close up until after 2400 night 17/18 June.
- 18June 0300 Wellington was up preparing despatches
- 0500` Wellington rode out to inspect his troops (67,661 and 156 guns manned by 5645.) Against this Napoleon could muster 74,000 veteran troops armed with 246 guns. assembling in their positions at Mont St Jean. A day's march to his right Wellington had another 14000 men to guard against a flanking movement
- 18 June 1130 to

1330 French artillery opened a very heavy cannonade and then three divisions under Jerome Bonaparte attacked Hougoumont.. These and further attacks against the farm went on the whole day without success.

1330

1530 D'Erlon's Corps, an imposing sight of 32 battalions drawn up in 4 vast columns attacked the centre. Beaten back and attacked by British cavalry as they withdrew. Counter attack by French cavalry successful.

1530 to

1800. Prussian cavalry arrive on Napoleons right flank Napoleon sends two brigades of cavalry and Lobau's division to guard his flank.

Further attacks on Hougoumont and the centre at La Haye sainte by D'eron and Reille surviving infantry.

1600

1800

Ney leads a series of major cavalry charges 77 squadrons against the British and Hanoverian squares which hold.

1800 to 1930 Blucher arrives with 29000 men and 64 guns. French infantry attack again and capture La haye Sainte.

1930 until dark. Everything left was thrown in incl the Imperial guard.. This failed. Cavalry pursue. Blucher and Wellington meet at La belle Alliance.

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