

DRESDEN 20

DESIGNER'S NOTES

Dresden was the linchpin of Napoleon's plans for his 1813 autumn campaign in Germany. Throughout that summer, he had stockpiled supplies there in anticipation of resuming operations once the armistice with the Allies expired. Losing Dresden would have not only been a severe blow to French prestige, it would have effectively ended Napoleon's ambitions in central Europe.

When hostilities resumed, the Allied Army of Bohemia, under Austrian Field Marshall von Schwarzenberg, advanced on Dresden, but the Allied march through the Iron Mountains was slow and methodical. Instead of trying to seize Dresden quickly on the 25th, while the city was defended by only Marshall St. Cyr's **XIV Corps**, the Allies moved deliberately, as if investing the city in preparation for a protracted siege. Their ponderous maneuvers gave Napoleon time to rush back from the east with the main French army, arriving just in the nick of time.

Surprised by Napoleon's unexpected appearance, the Allies dithered and held a Council of War, allowing themselves to get embroiled in a battle they neither desired nor felt confident of winning. When heavy rains fell on the second day of the battle, the French exploited the inundated terrain, splitting the Allied army in two and utterly crushing their left wing. During the night, the Allies broke off the action and began a disorderly retreat back through the mountains towards Bohemia.

Although Dresden was Napoleon's last significant victory, it did little to help his overall strategic position. Distracted by news of French defeats at Grossbeeren and the Katzbach, the Emperor left his subordinates to pursue Schwarzenberg's retreating army on their own. Without Napoleon's supervision, the French pursuit quickly grew disorganized and lethargic, allowing the Allies a respite in which to regroup and strike back. Just a few days after Dresden, any advantage that victory may have gained the French was lost in the disaster at Kulm (29-30 August).

DRESDEN 20 introduces several new features to the **NAPOLEONIC 20** game system, most notably the concepts of intrinsic garrisons and the profound effects of weather on military operations.

Though previous games in the **NAPOLEONIC 20** Series have included rules for strong defenses, this is the first game to deal with truly robust fortifications. As the garrison rules attempt to show, these structures, even when manned by just small detachments, could hold off large enemy forces for extended periods.

While Dresden 20 allows players to re-fight the game with the historical weather, using the variable weather rules provides a much better sense of the challenges the commanders faced in

an era before weather satellites and Doppler radar.

Finally, the Standard scenario combined with the *Königstein Maneuver* rule allows players to experiment with alternate plans of attack that were actually considered but not used. The clumsy Allied actions on the 25th probably lost them their best chance of taking Dresden, while Napoleon's caution in sending only a single corps to threaten the Allied rear may well have denied him a decisive Coalition-breaking victory. By experimenting, players will gain a much better insight into the actual situation in this campaign.

- Lance McMillan

DEVELOPER'S NOTES

With a larger map, more extensive exclusive rules, and "Deluxe" packaging, **DRESDEN 20** is a step up for the **NAPOLEONIC 20** series. It introduces some important new concepts and the design delivers a challenging and invigorating gaming experience. In combination with the forthcoming *Kulm* companion game, a comparative 'macro' **NAPOLEONIC 20** simulation is going to be presented that will provide players with a near campaign-like environment for this popular wargame series.

The Historical scenario offers a chance to replay the battle without all of the potential pre-battle maneuvering, and thus provides for a shorter game. However, it's the *Standard* scenario where the tapestry of this design truly unfolds.



Consider the building of Pirna Pontoon (which can be severely impacted by variable weather and/or enemy activity), the interaction of the French **V Cavalry** and the Austrian **IV Corps** for the Meissen Holding Box (an Allied Objective), the Elite Allied **G + R** unit (and its dual nationality tag which may allow some 'bite' to be taken out of it as the cards play out over the extended contest), initial Allied Command Confusion (such die rolls perhaps shaping how the meeting engagement Standard scenario unfolds), the optional *Königstein Maneuver* (where the French player must carefully plan ahead), and then taking into full account Variable Weather (we *always* have to talk about the weather!).

With both Standard and Historical scenarios, and the *Königstein Maneuver* strategy option, **DRESDEN 20** is an immensely replayable game as the action develops over multiple 'fronts' across the map. It's always a good sign when players want to play the game repeatedly, each time to try out a new strategy.

I found **DRESDEN 20** to be an incredibly rich design, so much so that I volunteered to be its developer. Many thanks to the designer (Lance) and producer (Alan), and also to the insightful playtest team for all their dedicated efforts and input. There's much more good stuff ahead, folks.

- Steve Carey

PLAYER'S NOTES

While control of Dresden is the key to winning this game, the constricted nature of the position can make it difficult to achieve a decisive result in that arena. Often, the Allies will have difficulty massing enough strength to break into the city, while the French can find it hard to get sufficient maneuver room to conduct an effective breakout. It's not uncommon for a stalemate to develop in the battle for Dresden proper, and that's where the French flanking options become critical.

The two French flanking options each present their own unique challenges.

Crossing at Pirna puts the French within easy striking distance of Dresden, but it's relatively easy for the Allies to completely block the pontoon sites. However, blocking the pontoon *does* require the Allies to pull troops out of the Dresden fighting, making the capture of the Dresden harder to accomplish. The Pirna crossing is also subject to the vagaries of weather, and a few downpours or a storm can strand the French flanking force on the northern bank of the river – or worse, split the flanking force and give the Allies the opportunity of crushing a weak bridgehead while the remaining forces sit impotently on the opposite shore.



Crossing at Königstein is almost a full day's march further from Dresden than the Pirna pontoon, but it is relatively safe from any Allied attempt to block the bridge (due to the nearby fortress) or being shutdown by inclement weather. Königstein is a good avenue for a supporting French column to ensure that the Pirna crossing can be opened – even a weak crossing at Königstein can be sufficient to drive off an Allied blocking element away from Pirna to allow a main flanking force to build the pontoon and start to threaten the Allied rear.



When playing an Allied "Aggressive Approach" scenario, the Allied player needs to be careful. Moving rapidly forward on Dresden with too small a force can leave the assaulting force dangerously exposed to an early French counterattack (assuming the French have front-loaded their stronger units to proceed to Dresden early). But moving too slowly presents its own problems, as it allows the French to reinforce their position and makes taking the city an almost impossible task.

For the French in this "Aggressive Approach" situation, skillful use of the **V Cavalry** unit can buy you the time needed to get reinforcements into Dresden and spell the difference between holding and losing the city, but allowing the Austrian reinforcement unit from occupying Meissen as the morale loss over time can prove devastating.

Above all, for both sides, be careful not to lose focus: holding/taking Dresden is important, but it's strictly a secondary objective – your main goal is to reduce your opponent's morale level to zero!