

The Action at Essayer

Being a True and Accurate account of the recent Action at Essayer on the Northern Marches of the Kingdom of France in the year 1708 between the forces of his most Catholic and Treacherous, Majesty King Louis XIV of France and our Gallant Heroes of the Grand Alliance under Command of the Mighty and Reasonable Lord Cadogan.

Several years ago, Sam Mustafa authored *Grande Armée* for the Napoleonic Wars at the grand tactical level.

Although an innovative set of rules, I could not find anyone else interested in trying at that time so they gathered dust on my shelf. Sam has now released *Might and Reason* (MR) for the wars of the mid-18th century. There is also (thankfully¹) a variant covering the War of Spanish Succession, “Sun King”, by Greg Savvinos (a Melbourne lad!) available at the MR web site (<http://www.sammustafa.com/mr.html>).

The simple approach to the rules with heavy emphasis on Command Control at the Army level immediately sparked my interest.

Rather than just provide a critique of the rules, I decided to provide an annotated account of my first reading and play test of the rules as this will illustrate the flow of the game and assist my learning. You will see an occasional light bulb flash on as understanding breaks through the cloud of confusion that normally accompanies my first reading of a new set of rules.

I started, not surprisingly, by looking at the many lovely colour pictures² in the rulebook. The rulebook appears to be of good quality. It was disappointing to find that the quick-reference sheet is bound into the rules, but you can download an extra copy of it from the MR website.

After satisfying myself that the colour photos were in fact very nice, I started to actually read the rules. The language, sequence and layout are clear and logical with plentiful illustrated examples – some using those very nice colour photos I may have mentioned.

Once I had a working knowledge of the rules (i.e. I thought I knew where to find stuff) the first thing was to build the armies using the system set out in the rules, augmented by the lists in the “Sun King” variant. I came up with the following armies:

¹ I have been collecting my War of Spanish Succession armies for about 3 years. To date I yet to find a set of rules for the period I actually like. Hopefully I now have...

² Featuring Eureka Miniatures’ new SYW range of Prussians and Austrians.

The Grand Alliance

Commander	Rating	Unit	SP	Type	Notes	Pts	Used	Total
Cadogan	Good	Commander in Chief						
		Artillery				10	2	20
Subordinate	0	British Guard/Grenadiers	8	RI	No AT	12	1	12
		British Foot	7	RI		10	2	20
Subordinate	0	Dutch Guard/Grenadiers	7	RI	No AT	11	1	11
		Dutch Foot	6	RI		9	3	27
Subordinate	0	British Horse	7	HC		10	1	10
		Prussian Horse	6	HC		9	2	18
		British Dragoons	5	HC		8	1	8
Subordinate	+1	Dutch Horse	6	HC		9	4	36
		Dutch Dragoons	5	HC		8	1	8
								170

France

Vendome	Good	Commander in Chief						-
Subordinate	-2	Swiss and Irish Regiments	6	RI	No AT	9	3	27
Subordinate	0	French Regiments	6	RI		8	3	24
		Artillery				10	2	20
Subordinate	-1	French Regiments	6	RI		8	2	16
		Italian and Cologne Regiments	5	RI		7	2	14
Subordinate	0	Maison du Roi	8	HC		11	2	22
		Chevauxleger	6	HC		9	2	18
Subordinate	+2*	Chevauxleger	6	HC		9	3	27
		Dragoons	4	LC		6	2	12
								180

A couple of explanatory notes regarding the above lists will be helpful at this stage:

- a. The army's "base points" are determined by the grade of the commander. So, I gave each side a "Good" commander, but the Grand Alliance gets 170 points for their Good general, whereas the French get 180 points. Not sure why there is this discrepancy at this point, however, the mechanism to link a commander's capability with the available troops is a neat play balance mechanism³.
- b. The *maximum* number of subordinate commanders is determined by dividing the total number of units by three (rounding down). I chose the number of subordinates based on what felt right. Which means I probably got it wrong! However, the factors to bear in mind are that the CinC uses his Command Dice (CD) to influence the behaviour of his subordinates. Therefore the more sub-ordinates, the more thinly spread the CDs. However, the fewer subordinates, the less flexible your army.
- c. The Rating for Subordinates Rating is their effect on CD and is determined randomly for each commander *after* the armies have been organised into "Forces" (roughly

³ Some of the special rules applicable to various lists influences the base points. For example, British and Dutch infantry get advantages in Musketry and certain French units likewise in Combat.

- divisions, as units represent brigades) according to a table tailored for each army. The eagle eyed amongst you will have noticed that one of the French Cavalry Commanders has an asterix after the +2 rating. This indicates that he rolled as “Exceptional” which means he has better Command Control than the average Joe. It also indicates that I threw two sixes in a row.
- d. Artillery can be organised into separate commands (if Russian) or assigned to Forces or retained under the CinC’s direct command. For the Allies, I chose to assume that Colonel Blood (of Blenheim fame) was on hand to assist Cadogan and hence retained the Artillery under the CinC’s direct command. Also, I wanted to see the effect of differing command structures.
 - e. Infantry and Cavalry are all 2 stands strong (representing 4 battalions or 10 squadrons respectively) and Artillery units a single stand (representing 16 Heavy Guns). Units are rated for:
 - SP - Strength Points determined by a combination of morale and training. It also represents the number of hits a unit can take. MR does not use any single figures, but rather units are removed when units lose their last SP; which can be frightening fast in Combat!
 - Type - This includes Regular Infantry, Heavy Cavalry, Light Cavalry, Artillery as well as various irregular types not used in this play test game.
 - No AT - “No Attack Test” denoting that certain special infantry units do not have to take an Attack Test to charge enemy infantry.
 - Points - the Points value of the units (Duh!)
 - f. An army’s breakpoint is calculated based on the sum of Infantry and Cavalry units plus Artillery units divided by 3 and rounded up. When an army reaches its breakpoint it tests by throwing 2 D6 and adding turn number plus the number of units broken above its breakpoint. If the total is 14 or less, the army fights on, but re-rolls at the end of every subsequent turn.

The next step is to determine “Scouting” which influences choice of terrain and deployment. Scouting is calculated by the side with greater total based on Commander rating (in this case it was equal) and the number of Light Cavalry units. So the French Dragoons gave the French the advantage.

The terrain was selected using the MR Army Builder (scenario generator) system. I threw a pair of threes resulting in a fairly open game board with ridges to the northeast (all directions will be described from southern, Allied, table edge) and northwest. A stream crossed from the southwest to the northeast ending in a swamp. Two villages were located in the central portion of the board on opposite sides of the stream, one close to the southern table edge. You can, by the way, vary this a bit, but I chose to keep things simple.

At this stage I determined the time of day that the battle starts (D6 on a table) resulting in the game starting in the Late Morning or on Turn 2. As the day was overcast in June, the battle would last a minimum of 7 turns. It should be noted that each turn can comprise from 1 to 4 “Pulses,” during which each side moves, shoots and fights - so in more common wargames rules, the game has a maximum length of 28 “turns.” But, after the game reaches its Basic Length (in our case, at the end of Turn 7), there is no guarantee the battle will continue so the “turn” is really a device to manage the overall length of the game rather than regulate the sequence of play.

The French, with their “Local Advantage”, got to choose which table edge was their baseline and the Grand Alliance had to deploy first. A fairly significant advantage derived for 2 brigades of second rate Dragoons!

Cadogan (with no knowledge of the French intentions) deployed:

- The Dutch Cavalry leading the right toward the gap between the swamp and the edge of the world. First line in FF⁴ and the second line in MF⁵.
- In the centre deployed the British infantry Force all in FF, with 2 brigades up and one in support.
- On the left the Dutch infantry deployed with 2 brigades in FF with the Artillery in their centre and 2 brigades in support; again in FF.
- In reserve, the Anglo-Prussian Cavalry Force deployed in MF.

Vendome, sensing that the Grand Alliance advance would be slowed by the restrictive terrain to their front and would have difficulty shifting troops to their left, loaded his right flank for an echelon attack he had read about in the Paris Daily.

- On the French extreme right flank the Maison du Roi deployed in MF for a rapid advance to turn the Allied left flank supported by the Swiss and Irish Infantry (the worrying “-2” CD modifier for the Swiss and Irish infantry was playing on Vendome’s mind, but he decided to risk it – especially as he didn’t really know the effect under the rules).
- The French centre (leaning more to the right flank) has held by the French Infantry Force with their guns deployed to resist the British Infantry’s anticipated advance over the stream.
- On the extreme French left, separately by a significant gap, the Franco-Italian infantry force held the heights above the marsh. Their confidence was bolstered by their strong position and the possibility of being ignored.
- Finally, Vendome deployed his mixed Chevauxleger/Dragoon force in reserve positions to become the armies left flank guard if the Franco-Italian infantry were wrong and they were driven off the board.

I will now walk through the first three turns in detail:

First Turn

Both players roll for Command Dice (CDs)

Depending on their rating, CinCs throw a number of D6 to determine the number of CDs for the Turn. As both Vendome and Cadogan are “Good” they both threw 3 dice. Vendome threw 10 and Cadogan 11.

Roll to determine Initiative for the first Pulse.

Both players throw 2 D6. One player also throws a D4 (doesn’t matter which) and the higher score chooses to move first or second. If the scores are tied, the player who cast the D4 gets the initiative, otherwise his opponent. Also, if the D4 is lower than the Pulse just finished in that turn, the Turn ends. Cadogan won the Initiative, but chose to allow Vendome to make the first move.

⁴ FF: Fighting Formation. Both elements deployed in line. Allows units to fire, but movement is much slower.

⁵ March Formation. One element wide column. Quicker than FF, but can not shoot and suffers from negative combat modifiers.

1st Pulse

Musketry in Initiative order

As everyone is well out of musket range, 2BW⁶, there was no shooting. It is important to note that musketry is in Initiative order and casualties inflicted by the first player are effective before the second player shoots.

Simultaneous Artillery

Guns have a maximum range of 8BW. Both sides concentrated their artillery on a single enemy brigade and both score a single hit. Remember each unit can take the number of hits equal to its SP.

First (Vendome) Side Phasing 1st Pulse:

Control Segment

As Vendome was happy for his centre and left to remain stationery, only 2 CD were issued to both the Maison du Roi and the Swiss-Irish Infantry Forces.

Each Subordinate then takes a control test by rolling 2D6 plus any CD issued by the CinC and selecting any 2 to give their Control Test Result:

- Maison du Roi threw a 1, 2, 6 and 6. A score of 8 was selected resulting in "Active" (Can make any legal move the player wishes).
- Swiss-Irish threw 2,3, 4 and 6. Again a score of 8 was selected resulting in "Active".
- French Infantry threw 1 and 4 (on CDs) that resulted in "Inactive" (basically no move).
- Chevauxleger/Dragoon threw 1 and 6, a score of 7 or "Active".
- Finally the Franco-Italian Infantry threw 5 and 6 or 11. Or, in other words, disaster as a score of 11 means an Attack order and they must advance⁷ towards the enemy hence leaving the protection of their heights!

Movement Segment

During the movement phase you move your units, again distances expressed in BW, and, if eligible, recover SPs – rally troops.

Vendome pushed the Maison du Roi and Swiss-Irish Forces straight ahead towards a flanking position on the Cadogan's Left. The Centre and Reserve remained stationery in stunned amazement as the Franco-Italian Infantry surged forward!

Also, the brigade that took hits during the Artillery Segment recovered 1 SP by rolling less than the number of hits it currently had.⁸

Vendome, deciding to leave the Franco-Italians to their own devices, shifted himself to his right⁹ (cost 1CD to move the CinC).

Combat Segment

As no units had contacted the enemy, there is no "Combat".

Second (Cadogan) Side Phasing 1st Pulse:

Control Segment

Cadogan was rather perplexed by the apparent double envelopment taking place and allocated the Dutch Infantry 2 CDs to sure a fast response. To ensure the British Infantry got moving, they also received 2 CDs. Neither cavalry force received any CDs.

Each Subordinate then takes a control test by rolling 2D6 plus any CD issued by the CinC:

⁶ All distances in MR are expressed in Base Widths (BW). Musketry has a range of 2BW, which as my bases are 100mm wide, is 200mm.

⁷ MR uses a rather unusual expression for "Attack"; that is "toward the greatest number of enemy units." This is somewhat ambiguous, in my opinion, but I think the intention is that you may ignore a small force to your flank but trundle on towards the mass of the enemy.

⁸ Units outside 3 BW of all enemy units throw D6 (stationery throw 2 whereas moving units only 1) to attempt the recovery of SPs.

⁹ The further a Subordinate is from the CinC, the more expensive it is to transfer CDs to him. So the CinC needs to be close to the action.

- The Dutch Infantry threw 3, 4, 4 and 6. A score of 8 was selected resulting in “Active”.
- The British Infantry threw 2, 2, 5 and 8. A score of 8 was selected resulting in “Active”.
- The Anglo-Prussian Cavalry threw 3 and 5 (move). A score of 8 resulting in “Active”.
- The Dutch Cavalry threw 1 and 3. A score of 4 or “Inactive”.

Movement Segment

The Dutch moved to occupy the town on their left and face the flanking French, whilst the British infantry, watched by the immobile Dutch Cavalry advanced against the Franco-Italians.

Meanwhile the Anglo-Prussian Cavalry Force moved up behind the British Infantry to cover the gap left by the move towards the Franco-Italians on the right flank and threaten the French Centre. Cadogan obviously set great store in the redoubtable Dutch Infantry.

The Dutch brigade that took a hit attempted, but failed, to recover a SP by rolling 1 D6, as the roll was greater than its current SP Strength.

Combat Segment

As no units had contacted the enemy, there is no “Combat”.

Remove Suppression Markers from Artillery

Roll to determine Initiative for 2nd Pulse and proceed to 2nd Pulse, or if Turn ends check whether battle ends.

Both Vendome and Cadogan rolled 2 D6 each and their scores were tallied 6. However, the D4 came down in Cadogan’s favour securing him the Initiative for the Pulse. However, as Vendome had thrown double 3, he received 4 (the score on the D4) bonus CDs.

Cadogan chose to go first to make sure the Dutch had time to realign against the flanking attack.

2nd Pulse

Musketry in Initiative order

Again as everyone is well out of musket range there was no shooting.

Simultaneous Artillery

Both sides concentrated their artillery on a single enemy brigade but without success.

First (Cadogan) Side Phasing 2nd Pulse:

Control Segment

Cadogan wanted to make sure that the Dutch redeployed the threat to his left flank, so gave the Dutch Infantry 2 CDs. Knowing that Vendome had just received 4 Bonus CDs, he retained his other CDs.

- The Dutch Infantry threw 2, 2, 6 and 6. A score of 8 was selected resulting in “Active”.¹⁰
- The British Infantry threw 2 and 6. A score of 8 resulting in “Active”.
- The Anglo-Prussian Cavalry threw 1 and 2 (move). A score of 3 resulting in “Inactive”.
- The Dutch Cavalry threw 2 and 2. A score of 4 or “Inactive”.

A poor result for Cadogan!

Movement Segment

The Dutch Infantry continued their redeployment and the British Infantry pressed forward toward the Franco-Italians, both watched by their stationary Cavalry.

On a positive note, the now stationary Dutch Infantry brigade recovered one of its previously lost SPs.

Combat Segment

As no units had contacted the enemy, there is no “Combat”.

¹⁰ Note that if the Dutch had not had the extra dice from Cadogan, their score would have been 4 – or “Inactive” and would have been unable to respond to protect their flank.

Second (Vendome) Side Phasing 2nd Pulse:

Control Segment

Vendome, buoyed by his extra CDs, allocated 2 to the Maison du Roi, the Swiss-Irish Infantry and the Chevauxleger/Dragoon. The latter to ensure they redeployed in time to face off the threatening Anglo-Prussian Cavalry.

- Maison du Roi threw a 4, 4, 5 and 6. A score of 8 was selected, resulting in “Active”.
- Swiss-Irish threw 1, 2, 3 and 6. A score of 8 was selected, resulting in “Active”.
- French Infantry threw 2 and 5, a score of 7, so “Active”.
- Chevauxleger/Dragoon threw 2, 3, 5 and 5. A score of 8 was selected resulting in “Active”.
- The Franco-Italian Infantry threw 1 and 5 totalling 6, or “Inactive”.

Movement Segment

The Maison du Roi and the Swiss Irish started shaking themselves out of MF. The now “Active” French Infantry pushed forward slightly to threaten support for the flanking forces with the Chevauxleger/Dragoon shifting to their left¹¹ in readiness for any cavalry assault in their direction.

The luckless Franco-Italian infantry waited meekly in their somewhat exposed position.

The French failed to recover any CDs.

Combat Segment

As no units had contacted the enemy, there is no “Combat”.

Remove Suppression Markers from Artillery

Roll to determine Initiative for 3rd Pulse and proceed to 3rd Pulse, or if Turn ends check whether battle ends.

Cadogan threw a 7 and Vendome an 8, but, as the D4 rolled (does a D4 roll?) a 2, (i.e. equal to or less than the Pulse just completed, the turn ended. As it was turn one and both players rolled greater than that on their CD rolls, the game proceeded to Turn 2.

Second Turn

Both players roll for Command Dice (CDs)

Vendome threw 18 and Cadogan only 11. The French were obviously keen to press their attack!

Roll to determine Initiative for the first Pulse.

Vendome threw 8 for initiative, as did Cadogan. However, Cadogan was casting the D4 and it came up even so he won the Initiative and let the French move first.¹²

1st Pulse

Musketry in Initiative order

Everyone is still out of musket range so there was no shooting.

Simultaneous Artillery

With Cavalry in MF now in range and arc¹³, both sides shifted targets: the Allies without success, but the French scored 2 hits on the lead British Cavalry unit.

¹¹ Units, representing Brigades, may move directly forward, echelon up to 45 degrees, slide directly to either flank at half speed, wheel or change formation.

¹² Vendome could have chosen to expend a CD to reroll one of his dice, but wanted to horde those valuable CDs to press his attack.

¹³ 45 degrees to both left and right of the front corners of the Artillery base.

First (Cadogan) Side Phasing 1st Pulse:

Control Segment

Aware that he had substantially less CDs than Vendome, Cadogan gave the Dutch Infantry 2 CDs to, hopefully, guarantee that they would complete their realignment against the French flanking force. Cadogan retained the rest of his CDs to allow a response to further coming events.

- The Dutch infantry threw 5 and 6 with their base dice and 1 and 6 with their CDs this being able to select a 1 and 6 for an “Active” result. If they had been obliged to use their base dice, their score of 11 would have seen them switch to “Attack” and leave the cover of the stream and town.
- The Anglo-Prussian Cavalry threw 5 and 6 - “Attack”. Opps!
- The British Infantry 1 and 6 - “Attack”
- The Dutch Cavalry threw 1 and 2 that resulted in "Inactive" (again).

Movement Segment

The Dutch completed their redeployment, but failed to recover any SPs. The British infantry continued their advance towards the Franco-Italians coincidentally making room for the Anglo-Prussian Cavalry to deploy from MF to FF, as they are obliged as their first response to an Attack order.

The Dutch Cavalry continued to watch events unfold.

Combat Segment

As no units had contacted the enemy, there is no “Combat”.

Second (Vendome) Side Phasing 1st Pulse:

Control Segment

Vendome was satisfied to leave the Franco-Italians and the French Infantry to their own devices, however he allocated 2 CDs to the Chevauxleger/Dragoons to ensure they completed their deployment and 2 CDs to the Swiss-Irish but denied the Maison du Roi any CDs as the Dutch had now secured their stream line and charging Cavalry across a Stream appeared foolish even to me.

- Maison du Roi threw a 3 and 3, a score of 6 resulting in “Inactive”.
- Swiss-Irish threw 1, 3, 3 and 5. A score of 8 was selected resulting in “Active”.
- French Infantry threw 4 and 2, a score of 6, so “Inactive”.
- Chevauxleger/Dragon threw 1, 3, 4 and 5. A score of 8¹⁴ was selected resulting in “Active”.
- The Franco-Italian Infantry threw 1 and 7 totalling 7, or “Active”.

Movement Segment

The Swiss Irish Infantry pressed forward, echeloning their lead units to expand the scope of their advance, whilst the Maison sat watching as did the French Infantry. Meanwhile the Chevauxleger/Dragon shook themselves out into FF. The Franco-Italians, feeling the British Infantry were now committed to attacking them made a retrograde move¹⁵.

Combat Segment

As no units had contacted the enemy, there is no “Combat”.

Remove Suppression Markers from Artillery

Roll to determine Initiative for 2nd Pulse and proceed to 2nd Pulse, or if Turn ends check whether battle ends.

¹⁴ I would like to point out that a score of 7 through 10 will generate an “Active” Control Test result, but as I can simply copy the phrase “A score of 8 was selected resulting in “Active”.” I have chosen to do so to save keystrokes.

¹⁵ A Retrograde move is a move to the units rear but it can not end in contact with the enemy, is only a half move.

Vendome threw 9 and Cadogan 7. Due to his somewhat limited CDs, Cadogan declined the opportunity to roll a CD to possibly affect the outcome.

Vendome chose to move second – the cunning Frenchman!

2nd Pulse

Musketry in Initiative order

Again as everyone is well out of musket range there (still) was no shooting.

Simultaneous Artillery

Both sides continued to bombard the enemy cavalry – this time the Allied Artillery secured a single hit on a French cavalry.

First (Cadogan) Side Phasing 2nd Pulse:

Control Segment

Cadogan was happy enough to let his brigade commanders sort things out for themselves and issue no CDs.

- The Dutch Infantry threw 1 and 1. A score of 2 resulting in “Inactive”.
- The British Infantry threw 4 and 6. A score of 10 resulting in “Active”.
- The Anglo-Prussian Cavalry threw 4 and 5. A score of 9 resulting in “Active”.
- The Dutch Cavalry threw 2 and 6. A score of 8 or “Active” (at last!)

Movement Segment

The Dutch Infantry sat waiting the enemy while the British Infantry continued their advance. The Anglo-Prussian Cavalry continued their advance losing 1 BW in movement crossing the stream with the Dutch Cavalry on the move at last being moved up behind them to form, hopefully, decisive cavalry mass in the centre.

Combat Segment

As no units had contacted the enemy, there is no “Combat”.

Second (Vendome) Side Phasing 2nd Pulse:

Control Segment

Vendome determined to press his attack issuer 2 CDs to both the Swiss-Irish and the French Brigades. Sensing the Maison were in the wrong spot expended an additional 2 CDs to boost the their Control test. The rest of the army was left to their own devices.

- Maison du Roi threw a 1, 3, 6 and 6. A score of 7 (for a change) was selected resulting in “Active”.
- Swiss-Irish threw 1, 3, 5 and 6. A score of 8 was selected resulting in “Active”.
- French Infantry threw 1, 2, 3 and 4, a score of 7, so “Active”.
- Chevauxleger/Dragoon threw 2 and 5. A score of 8 was selected resulting in “Active”.
- The Franco-Italian Infantry threw 3 and 5. A score of 8 was selected resulting in “Active”.

An excellent display of precision die rolling!

Movement Segment

The Maison du Roi reformed to march toward their now threatened centre. The Swiss-Irish continued toward the Dutch with the French infantry coming up on the left flank. The Chevauxleger/Dragoon shifted slightly to align with the mass of Anglo-Dutch Cavalry and the Franco-Italian Infantry continued to fall back, slowly, in the face of the British Infantry.

Combat Segment

As no units had contacted the enemy, there is no “Combat”.

Remove Suppression Markers from Artillery

Roll to determine Initiative for 3rd Pulse and proceed to 3rd Pulse, or if Turn ends check whether battle ends.

Again the D4 flipped a 2 ending the turn. The game proceeded to Turn 3.

At this stage, the armies were set to clash. Several battle reports have the armies engaging earlier than turn 3, however, as both sides had refused one flank, which was being attacked, I believe this slow development of the game is the result of the tactical situation rather than the rules. It is also worth commenting that Vendome had only used 10 of his 18 CDs. Perhaps this meant I was over cautious allocating CDs, but if the Turn has extended into a 3rd Pulse, these would have ensured that Vendome was left with many options. Cadogan, through judicious allocation of CDs had 7 of his original 11 CDs.

Third Turn

Both players roll for Command Dice (CDs)

Vendome threw 16 and Cadogan 13.

Roll to determine Initiative for the first Pulse.

Vendome threw 7 for initiative and Cadogan 4 (3 and 1). However, Cadogan chose to spend a CD to reroll the 1 and promptly threw a 4 resulting in a tie, but as the D4 was even and cast by Vendome, Vendome had the initiative and chose to move first.

1st Pulse

Musketry in Initiative order

Musketry at last! As Vendome holds the initiative he fired a Swiss and an Irish unit at the Dutch inflicting a single hit, but it was long range, only to receive 2 in return.

Simultaneous Artillery

The French continued to bombard the British cavalry inflicting a single hit whereas the French were unsuccessful.

First (Vendome) Side Phasing 1st Pulse:

Control Segment

Vendome was concerned to press his attack, but was wary of expending his CD too quickly. Hence, the Swiss-Irish receive a single CD each and the Maison 2 CDs. No other CDs were issued.

- Maison du Roi threw 1, 1, 2 and 5. A score of 7 was selected resulting in "Active".
- Swiss-Irish threw 1, 2, and 3. A score of only 5 was selected resulting in "Inactive".
- French Infantry threw 2, 4, and 5. A score of 7 was selected resulting in "Active".
- Chevauxleger/Dragoon threw 2 and 5. A score of 7 resulting in "Active".
- The Franco-Italian Infantry threw 1 and 3 totalling 4, or "Inactive".

Movement Segment

The Swiss-Irish were halted, however, this allowed the French Infantry to complete their alignment on their left flank. The Maison reached the centre; in MF meaning they needed a Pulse to shake themselves out into FF.

The Chevauxleger/Dragoon and Franco-Italians braced themselves for the Allied assault.

Combat Segment

As no units had contacted the enemy, there is no "Combat".

Second (Cadogan) Side Phasing 1st Pulse:

Control Segment

As the Dutch were well entrenched in the town and behind a stream, Cadogan decided the time was ripe to strike with the Cavalry and consequently gave the Anglo-Prussian and Dutch Cavalry 2 CDs each. The British Infantry also received 2 CDs to press the Franco-Italian Infantry

- The Dutch Infantry threw 5 and 6. Total 11 or "Attack". What were these Dutch thinking!
- The Anglo-Prussian Cavalry threw 3, 3, 4 and 4. A score of 8 was selected resulting in "Active".
- The Dutch Cavalry threw 1,3, 5 and 6. A score of 8 was selected resulting in "Active".
- The British Infantry threw 1, 1, 2 and 6 A score of 8 was selected resulting in "Active".

Movement Segment

The Dutch were obliged to move to Combat with the French. 2 Brigades in FF waded into the stream to close with the somewhat surprised French as the rest of the Brigade formed up in support.

The Anglo-Prussian cavalry thundered into contact with the first line of French Cavalry, a Brigade of French Infantry and a battery of Artillery closing supported by the first line of Dutch Cavalry.

The British Infantry in far more sedate system closed the gap with the Franco-Italians.

Combat Segment

There was now combat aplenty, so I dive back into the rulebook to refresh my memory on the mechanics.

The first thing to consider is whether the French Cavalry should evade - this was quickly discounted as this would have taken them off the board as an evade move must be a full move.¹⁶

The next issue I considered was the French Artillery. In MR, Artillery never fight a combat but must always seek to flee. Two d6 are rolled to determine the success or otherwise of this manoeuvre. It failed allowing the Prussian Cavalry to continue on to the next unit of Artillery with similar result.¹⁷

The first combat involved the British Dragoons against a unit of Chevauxleger. Combat is resolved by adding the unit's current SP plus the result of D6 (the number of dice and the score may be modified by the tactical situation. The British Dragoons rolled 5 plus SP 7 for a total of 12. The French Chevauxleger rolled 1 plus SP 6 for a total of 7. Vendome chose to expend a CD to reroll a D6 and promptly rolled another 1! So, final score 12 to 7. However, to "win", one side must double its opponents, therefore the combat was considered "Inconclusive". Consequently, the British Dragoons as attacker took 1SP and fell back 3BW whilst the French held their ground taking 2 SP.¹⁸

The next combat involved the British Horse against another unit of French Chevauxleger. Although the British Horse's SP 7, they are carrying 4 hits, where as the French are fresh at 6SP. The British threw a 1 for a total of 4 and the French 6 for a total of 12¹⁹. Cadogan immediately expended a CD to try and save his cavalry, but only scored a 2 for a revised total of 5. The British Horse was "Decisively" beaten and the Brigade destroyed!

Finally, another unit of Prussian Horse had contacted a French Infantry Brigade frontally. The French with 6SPs threw a 6 for a total of 12 whereas the Prussians with 6SPs only threw a 2. As the best a roll could achieve is a tie (12 all) and ties always go to the Defender, Cadogan wisely chose not to expend a CD for a reroll.

As units that fall back after an inconclusive combat must clear any friendly units to their rear, both the British Dragoons and one unit of Prussian Horse were far removed from the action behind their supports - and safe, but no out of the Command Radii of their Commander; a cardinal sin in MR!

After my first Combat phase I felt I had learnt a lot - unprepared assaults are extremely risky. This is in fact a huge plus, in my estimation, for the rules.

Remove Suppression Markers from Artillery

Roll to determine Initiative for 2nd Pulse and proceed to 2nd Pulse, or if Turn ends check whether battle ends.

¹⁶ The decision to evade or not is actually taken as soon as contact is made.

¹⁷ A salutary lesson - don't mass artillery too closely!

¹⁸ At first this didn't feel right, but these are Brigades and both units were fresh. Conclusion (this is one of those light bulbs), soften the enemy up first and/or get in a superior tactical position. I am happy with that. Also, as the rerolling of a D6 using a CD, in this circumstance could change the overall result (i.e. the French would be less, but not doubled, it was a waster of perfectly good CD.

¹⁹ As the winner's result was even the French suffered no SP loss. If it had been odd, they would have suffered a single SP loss.

Vendome threw 7 and Cadogan 5. Cadogan was keen to seize the initiative so expended a CD to reroll 1 D6 however his score remained unchanged. Vendome had the initiative and chose to move first.

2nd Pulse

Musketry in Initiative order

With the Dutch blundering forward, a sharp musketry exchange occurred resulting in 2 Hits on one Dutch Brigade and 5 (!) on the other. In return, the Dutch failed to inflict any hits.²⁰

Simultaneous Artillery

The Allied Artillery considered the French Infantry Brigade that had seen off the Prussian Cavalry in the previous Pulse 2 Hits. There were no French guns left on the field.

First (Vendome) Side Phasing 2nd Pulse:

Control Segment

Wishing to press his advantage over the Dutch Infantry and see off the allied Horse, Vendome issued 2 CDs to the Swiss-Irish, the French Infantry, the Chevauxleger and Dragoons and the Maison exhausting his CDs.

- Maison du Roi threw a 2, 3, 4 and 4. A score of 8 was selected resulting in "Active".
- Swiss-Irish threw 2, 5, 5 and 6. A score of 8 was selected resulting in "Active".
- French Infantry threw 2, 2, 2 and 3. A score of 5 was selected resulting, sadly, in "Inactive".
- Chevauxleger and Dragoon threw 1, 2, 3 and 6. A score of 8 was selected resulting in "Active".
- The Franco-Italian Infantry threw 1 and 3. A score of 4 resulting in "Inactive".

Movement Segment

As the Swiss-Irish do require an "Attack Test, they closed with the now reduced Dutch Infantry whilst their French Infantry supports bravely cheered them on (what are mercenaries for anyway?) Meanwhile, the Maison redeployed into FF and the Chevauxleger and Dragoon ganged up on the Prussian Cavalry stranded after seeing off the French Artillery in the previous turn. The Franco-Italians patiently waited for the British Infantry to close.

Combat Segment

Although the Irish were bounced by one Dutch unit, the Swiss made short work of the badly shot up Dutch Infantry unit which was destroyed.

The Prussians lost, but despite being flanked managed to pull off an inconclusive combat result falling back behind their support Dutch comrades.

Second (Cadogan) Side Phasing 2nd Pulse:

Control Segment

Cadogan determined to press forward with the British Infantry (2 CDs), the Dutch Cavalry (2 CDs) whilst the Anglo-Prussian Cavalry reorganised itself (nil CDs) and the Dutch Infantry (nil CDs) leaving Cadogan with 3 CDs to influence the coming combats.

- The Dutch Infantry threw 5 and 6 (again). Total 11 or "Attack". What were these Dutch thinking last Pulse; they obviously hadn't changed their minds.
- The Anglo-Prussian Cavalry threw 2 and 6. A score of 8 resulting in "Active".
- The Dutch Cavalry threw 1, 2, 5 and 6. A score of 11 was selected resulting in "Attack". If it is good enough for their Infantry cousins, why not the Horse?
- The British Infantry threw 4 and 6 a score of 10 resulting in "Active".

²⁰ Remember that Casualties inflicted by the first firer are implemented before the return fire and that the number of shooting dice is equal to remaining SPs. So the French threw a total of 18 dice to 9 (when allowing for superior Dutch fire drill) and that the Dutch infantry wading the stream are vulnerable so the French hit on 5+ whereas the Dutch required a 6 to hit.

Movement Segment

The Dutch Infantry and Cavalry both manoeuvred into contact wherever possible. The Dutch line infantry had to take an Attack test, which it promptly failed, however, the nearby Dutch Foot Guards were not required to take Attack Tests so stormed straight in.

The Dutch Horse, supported by the British Dragoons and a unit of Prussian Horse thundered into the French Cavalry. The Dutch Cavalry reserves moved up to support.

The British infantry moved forward into close musketry range of the Franco-Italians.

Combat Segment

The Dutch Foot Guards and the Swiss Infantry fought an inconclusive Combat resulting in the repulse of the Dutch.

However, a unit of Dutch Horse doubled the score of a Dragoon Unit (remember Vendome has no CDs left to try and reroll the Dragoons poor die rolling) resulting in the Dragoons being destroyed. But the rest of the Dutch Cavalry failed to score any successes and ended the turn driven back by the French Cavalry.

Remove Suppression Markers from Artillery

Roll to determine Initiative for 3rd Pulse and proceed to 3rd Pulse, or if Turn ends check whether battle ends.

The D4 flipped a 1 ending the turn. The game proceeded to Turn 4.

The rest of the battle, actually just one more turn, broke down into a war of attrition on the Allies left which resulted in the Swiss and one unit of Irish being destroyed along with the first two units of the Franco-Italian force set upon by the British Infantry. This tipped the French over the edge of their Army Morale level and they obligingly failed their first Army Morale test (2D6 + Turn + Units beyond Break Point totally more than 14 – Vendome threw double 6.). However, as the French had a greater number of Light Cavalry (1 Dragoon) there was no pursuit.²¹

In the warm after glow of my first successful MR battle (well it was a solo game) it is time to check a few things that I think I got wrong or forgot. And not surprisingly there were a couple:

1. When moving into contact, the attacker halts at the first point of contact. If the defender is infantry, the attacker then squares up to the defender, however, if the defender is cavalry, the defender squares up to the attacker.
2. Officers in danger – I simply forgot this rule altogether. There are several occasions set out at various points in the rules and summarised in Section “J: Retreat, Loss and Recovery” (nice touch that) when you should test whether an officer has become a casualty:
 - a. Attached Officers are at risk if Valorous in Combat.
 - b. Officers moved through by enemy units.
 - c. When an officer is with 1BW of a unit that breaks
3. When 2 units attack a single Defender, the Attacker makes one attack adding all his SP and then gets any modifiers for the whole combat (not separate as I had been playing!)²²

Still, that appears to have been only 3 minor errors that for a first outing is not too bad, well at least for me.

I would like to close with some observations.

²¹ The ability of Light Cavalry to cover retreats and their scouting capacity makes them extremely valuable. This makes Light Cavalry, including Dragoons *the* must buy troops. Not a bad thing actually.

²² I actually clarified this ruling by dropping a message to the Might & Reason Yahoo Group. Sam Mustafa clarified the rule personally. This really does illustrate Sam’s commitment to supporting his rules and, for me at least, reinforces the power of the World Wide Web as an information-sharing tool.

- First and foremost, I like it. The feel for the period is very good encouraging players to fight in line, yet the rules simple enough that the real focus is on the overall situation.
- This simplicity ensures the game flows and things are happening from the very start. The game is fast moving, but once units get into FF and close to the enemy, the fancy manoeuvring is replaced with a very linear battle. Good result Sam!
- Combat appears at first to be a bit “dicey”, however, experience tells me that you need to prepare your assaults with a combination of artillery fire and tactical positioning. In short, if you fling in unprepared unsupported assaults expect to get repelled.
- I really like the way Cavalry battles sway back and forth; deploying cavalry in several waves not only makes sense, but is well nigh mandatory!
- Musketry is a true mincing machine. Infantry cannot stand trading volleys at close range for very long – especially not against British and Dutch battalions in the Marlburian period. Units get quickly exhausted through lose of SPs and are subsequently very brittle in Combat as their Combat factor is principally their remaining SP – the lower the remaining SP, the higher the chance of units being double and hence destroyed.
- Artillery is frustrating – as it should be. The Artillery pieces represent batteries of 16 Heavy guns and so are far and few between. Hence you will not get massed batteries in the Napoleonic sense. You will not see units regularly decimated by artillery, but when the enemy gets into canister range or presents a column in MF, the results can be devastating.
- There are several aspects of MR that are familiar. After wargaming for thirty odd years, this is hardly surprising, but there are a number of unique mechanisms that really make MR stand out – the CD and Control Test mechanisms work well building command friction and tension. Those aspects that are familiar I consider a development and have been applied judiciously and appropriately.

Regarding the “Sun King” variant for MR, I have to admire the work that Greg has poured into this module and I am truly grateful that this allows me, in conjunction with MR, to play the big battles of the War of Spanish Succession. It is worth noting that this trial game pitted approximately 28,000 allied troops against 34,000 odd French troops, so for the period was a major, if not huge engagement. As I am still very new to the system and I am sure I yet to fully appreciate the subtlety in the lists, it is presumptuous to make any definitive assessment of the lists. But, they do feel right and that, to my mind is the main thing.

In short, I will be using these rules and complement Sam and his team on a job well done.

Captain Williams²³

Late of the most Gallant & Illustrious Regiment of Royal Northern Dragoons

²³ Rumours circulated by the gutter press and pamphleteers of London that Captain Williams was forced to retire when he fell from his horse before the first shot of the battle was fired are base lies! Mostly. He hadn't actually mounted and his horse trod on his foot; crushing it. But he was present at the action at Essayer, just at the surgeon's tent getting his foot amputated.