IMPERIAL
BAYONETS

1870
SEDAN

We Were Not Cowards

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We Were Not Cowards: Sedan 1870 Exclusive Rules

IMPERIAL BAYONETS - We Were Not Cowards: Sedan 1870 & the Fall of the Second Empire
Exclusive Rules by Ray Weiss
Developed by Matt Ward

1.0 INTRODUCTION

These are the exclusive rules for *Imperial Bayonets – We Were Not Cowards: Sedan 1870 & the Fall of the Second Empire. We Were Not Cowards* **(WWNC)** simulates the decisive but understudied Battle of Sedan, which unceremoniously ended the first phase of the Franco-Prussian war. The battle itself was a hopeless situation for the French, with the Prussians having encircled the Army of Châlons while they rested at Sedan. Two days before the Battle of Sedan (August 30th, 1870), the French were surprised in their quarters by a Prussian attack further to the southeast, at the town of Beaumont. Already exhausted from being pursued by 3 Prussian armies, the French effected a forced march/withdrawal to the northwest, adjacent to the Belgian border near the ancient fortress city of Sedan.

At this point in the campaign, the French were fairly roughed up. They had started to become careless about reconnaissance, which consistently gifted the Prussian forces the operational element of surprise. Had the French retreated further west, they would have chosen a much more enviable position at Mézières with more modern facilities, and access to internal lines of communication further to the west. They instead ended up in Sedan, a relative backwater of France notable for its multiple peaks and valleys, with the city situated at the lowest point of the valley.

Unlike the French, who were fairly slow to react, the Prussian army was keeping tabs on the French throughout their retreat. The Prussian forces had trained their cavalry in reconnaissance tactics, because of their relative uselessness in the traditional shock role during the American Civil War. On the other hand, the French had maintained their proud tradition of heavily armored cavalry trained in shock. The following morning, August 31st, German cavalry scouts reported to the German high command the state and position of the French forces bivouacked at Sedan. Helmuth von Moltke the Elder, the main strategist of German forces, immediately recognized the opportunity being given to him on a platter, and quickly created and detached a new army to encircle the French to the west of Sedan. This movement to the left of the French position essentially pinned the French between the majority of Prussian forces to the south and east, Belgium in the north east, and the new Prussian army along with the formidable Meuse river at their back.

Several of Louis Napoleon's generals were extremely nervous about their position relative to the Prussian army and wanted to immediately move the army west towards Mézières. This was unlikely for several reasons, given the exhausted condition of the soldiers and the fact that Napoleon III was

still in command. Hearing the enemy army was near Sedan, he made his way from Paris by rail, suffering with a painful bout of gout, to the French position at Sedan. The army ultimately resolved to spend the day and night resting at Sedan, which, given the lack of adequate reconnaissance, allowed the Prussian forces to completely encircle them.

After it became clear on September 1st that the planned movement west was now impossible, and given the sudden appearance of an entire Prussian army to their rear, Napoleon III gave command of the army to General Patrice de MacMahon. After making a rousing speech to his men the following morning, Louis Napoleon marched with his army to meet the Prussians and hold their ground in and around the towns surrounding Sedan. What ensued was a bloody and obviously fruitless battle, but one which saw the French fight fiercely. To quote one of Napoleon's generals, Auguste-Alexandre Ducrot (roughly translated), "We are in the chamber pot and about to be shat on." After fruitlessly trying to get himself killed several times, Napoleon III surrendered to the Prussian army in order to prevent the wholesale slaughter of his men. The mountains surrounding Sedan had made things all too easy for the Prussian artillery to rain hellfire into Sedan.

The Franco-Prussian war would rage on for another five months with republican elements in Paris resisting a Prussian siege, while armies mustered in the hinterlands in attempts to break them out. Most assume that the conclusion at Sedan was foregone, but had the Imperial Army taken less time resting and begun its movement west towards Mézières, a meeting engagement with roughly equal forces was likely to occur west of Sedan. If the French were able to reach the west side of the Meuse before the Prussian encirclement, they would have forced a river crossing over one of the most unmanageable rivers in western Europe. *We Were Not Cowards* examines both the historical battle and this exciting hypothetical, which allows the French forces to attempt to react on the 31st of August, prompting a less one-sided engagement with Prussian forces.

2.0 EXCLUSIVE RULES

The following rules apply for all scenarios in *WWNC*:

2.1 Stacking Limits

The normal stacking limit is two units of any type, only one of which may be an infantry division (xx) or brigade(x) except:

- 2 infantry brigades of the same division may stack together in addition to one additional non-

infantry unit of the same division.

- In hexes occupied by an Officer or Leader, up to two infantry divisions along with up to three non-infantry units of the same corps, or up to three infantry brigades and up to two non-infantry units of the same corps may stack together.
- Infantry units with an SP value of 1 do not contribute towards stacking limits and may stack freely.

2.2 Division Breakdown and Recombination

During a player's own movement phase, before a force spends any MP, units with a yellow circle with a number inside are breakdown units that the player may attempt to deploy. The Prussian player may always breakdown or recombine divisions (from full-strength brigades only) before spending any movement, by simply exchanging the larger units for their component units. They then may spend MP and operate as normal. The Prussian player may set up their units as either brigades or divisions at their discretion.

All French units start the game as divisions. French units may attempt to breakdown before spending MP by making an initiative check. If passed, the unit breaks down successfully, otherwise the unit loses 2 MP and then may move with its remaining MA.

2.3 French Chassepot Fire

Prussian units pay +1 MP to enter a French ZOC. *(This simulates the French approaching fire given their superior rifles.)*

2.4 Mitrailleuse Support

When used in combat against an adjacent opponent, French artillery units multiply their SP value by 1.5. This bonus does not apply when defending in combat alone in a hex (see 2.5.1). *(The French would place their* Mitrailleuses *with their artillery, but they were in reality more effective as direct infantry support.)*

2.5 Artillery Range & Spotting

French artillery have a range of 4 hexes and halve their SP when firing at targets 4 hexes away. Prussian artillery has a range of 6 hexes and halve their SP when firing at targets 6 hexes away. Given

that both types of artillery can fire beyond their range of sight, units beyond the LOS of an artillery unit must be "spotted" by a friendly unit in the same division/corps within 3 hexes of the artillery unit. (Clarification: division-level artillery must have targets spotted by friendly units of the same division, corps-level artillery can have targets spotted for it by any units in the same corps.)

2.5.1 Artillery Defending Alone

Whenever artillery defends solely in a hex, not stacked with any other friendly non-artillery unit, their defense strength is halved.

2.5.2 Krupp Steel

When Prussian artillery bombards a target within a range of 2 hexes, they receive a +1 DRM on the bombardment. Remember that artillery which bombards may not be used in combat.

2.6 "Death Ride" Charges

When initiating a cavalry charge with an eligible cavalry force, the phasing player may declare the charge to be a "Death Ride" Charge before performing the charge. Once inside the enemy hex, the charging player rolls on the charge table as normal, however there are only 2 possible outcomes. An OR result causes the defending forces' elimination. For each unit eliminated through a "Death Ride" Charge, roll a die. On a result of 1-4, they are eliminated and placed in the Units Awaiting Recovery box, otherwise they are permanently eliminated. Attacking cavalry which fails to eliminate a defending force during a "Death Ride" are permanently eliminated.

2.7 River Crossings

Normally, units may not move through major river hexsides; however, if an infantry unit which starts its movement adjacent to a major river hexside expends all of its movement, that unit may cross the major river hexside. Starting the following turn, so long as the unit which crossed the major river hexside does not move, that unit may function as a bridge for other forces allowing them to cross at a movement cost of +1 MP (even in Road March). *Both armies had access to pontoon bridges, they took some time to deploy and stabilize.*

3.0 SCENARIOS

The following scenarios comprise several various situations related to the battle of Sedan. They include the Historical Day of Battle, What-If Approach to Battle, and Free Setup scenarios. The French always setup first, followed by the Prussian forces. Setup instructions are given as follows: **Corps w/i # hex of #.** This translates to: all units of a stated corps are placed within so many hexes of the hex or hexes specified. Remember that all French forces must setup as divisions, while Prussian forces may set up as brigades or divisions at their option. A divisional OOB player aid is included to help players organize their divisions and brigades off-map before the game begins.

3.1 Historical Action at La Moncelle (Introductory Scenario)

This scenario features a small section of the greater battle of Sedan on **September 1ˢᵗ, 1870** in order to familiarize players with the game mechanics. The scenario lasts from the **04:00** turn to the **12:00** turn. *This action (also called the battle of Bazeilles) was one of the brighter episodes of the day for the French. The French XII corps, the largest of the French, enjoyed an elevated position on the southeast approach into Sedan. At the same time, it was where Napoleon III ordered MacMahon to break out of the Prussian encirclement. MacMahon would be wounded right as the fighting started around 06:00. Eventually, the sheer weight of numbers forced the French to surrender but the French combatants were given honors by their Prussian counterparts for their heroism.*

3.1.1 French Setup

XII Corps & MacMahon: w/i 1 hex of 1829, 1729, 1628, 1529, 1428, 1328, 1228 (from Daigny south toward Bazeilles)

3.1.2 Prussian Setup

III Army

- **IB Corps:** w/i 2 hexes of 0430

Army of the Meuse

- **Saxon Corps & Fr. Karl:** w/i 1 hex of 1534 (Rubecourt)
- **IV Corps:** w/i 2 hexes of 1136 (Douzy)

3.1.3 Special Scenario Rules

These rules are in effect for the La Moncelle scenario only.

3.1.3.1 Playing Area Restrictions

Units on both sides may not move north of hex-row 20XX or west of hex-column XX24. If forced to do so they are instead eliminated.

3.1.3.2 MacMahon Leaves Command

On the 6 AM turn of the game, MacMahon is removed from the map and placed back in the box. The French no longer have a Commander on the map capable of ordering an officer to activate and may only activate through force/officer initiative only.

3.1.4 Victory Conditions

If at the end of the game, the French occupy Bazeilles (hexes 1228, 1328 and 1329) and Balan (hexes 1525 and 1625), they win a minor tactical victory. If the French occupy the above-mentioned towns including La Moncelle at the end of the game, they win a major tactical victory. Any other result is a Prussian victory.

3.2 Historical Day of Battle

This scenario depicts the situation at Sedan on the **1st of September 1870**. The French army is already encircled, and Napoleon III has given up command of the army to MacMahon. The situation itself is fairly hopeless for the French, but there are opportunities to do better than your historical counterpart. This scenario serves as either a good introduction to the series or a good solitaire study of the battle itself. If you are introducing the game to a new player, it's recommended the more experienced player take the Prussian side as they have the most to do.

3.2.1 French Setup:

- **I Corps:** w/i 2 hexes of 2229 and 2130 (Givonne)
- **XII Corps & MacMahon:** w/i 1 hex of 1829, 1729, 1628, 1529, 1428, 1328, 1228 (from Daigny south toward Bazeilles)
- **VII Corps:** w/i 1 hex of 2221, 2322, 2323, 2423, 2424, 2525, 2526 (from Floing northeast toward

Illy)

- **V Corps & Napoleon III:** In or adjacent to all Sedan hexes.

- **All other units may deploy onto the map with the friendly corps of their choice.**

3.2.2 Prussian Setup

Prussian III Army:

- **V Corps:** w/i 1 hex of 2621, 2722, 2822 (St. Menges northeast to Fleigneux)

- **XI Corps:** w/i 2 hexes of 2007

- **IB Corps:** w/i 2 hexes of 0430

- **IIB Corps & Fr. Wilhelm:** w/i 2 hexes of 1322

- **W Corps:** w/i 1 hex of 1811 (Virgne-Meuse)

Prussian IV Army:

- **Guard Corps:** w/i 1 hex of 2135 and 2234 (Villers Cernay)

- **Saxon Corps & Fr. Karl:** w/i 1 hex of 1534 (Rubecourt)

- **IV Corps:** w/i 2 hexes of 1136 (Douzy)

3.2.3 Special Scenario Rules

These rules must be enforced in order to properly simulate the conditions at the start of the battle.

3.2.3.1 The French V Corps

At the start of the Day of Battle scenario, the French V corps deployed into hexes inside and adjacent to Sedan may not move until attacked in combat or if they suffer an adverse result from artillery bombardment. Forces attacked by Bombardment may then operate normally **by themselves**. If any forces of the V corps are attacked in regular combat, they may all operate normally the following turn or phase in which they are active (whichever comes first). *(The French V corps had been very roughly handled at Beaumont and were in poor shape.)*

3.2.3.2 MacMahon Wounded

At the start of the French 6 AM turn on September 1st, MacMahon is wounded in combat and is

removed from the game. The French player rolls 1d6 to determine who takes command: on a 1-2 Ducrot takes command, on any other result (3-6), Wimpffen takes command. The resulting leader's AHQ counter is exchanged for their corps leader counter and also the resulting replacement corps leader is placed in the same hex. *(Historically, Ducrot initially was given command and immediately ordered a retreat. Command was instead quickly given to Wimpffen, who had been given a commission by the French to take MacMahon's place had he been injured.)*

3.2.3.2.1 Ducrot Takes Command

If Ducrot takes command, the French Victory Conditions for this scenario change so that in order to win, the French must either be able to trace an unlimited LOC (starting from any Sedan hex) or move at least 2 corps off-map via a road exiting the west edge of the map. Remember that an EZOC does not interdict a LOC, only the physical presence of an enemy combat unit can do so.

3.2.3.2.2 Wimpffen Takes Command

If Wimpffen takes command, there are no extra effects other than placing his Army Commander counter and his Corps Replacement Officer counter on the map.

3.2.3.3 March Orders

The Prussian player may issue 2 March Orders per turn. The French player may only issue 1 March Order per turn, and it may only be issued by Napoleon III or MacMahon, or MacMahon's replacement.

3.2.3.4 Napoleon III

Once during an attack and once while defending, any force stacked with Napoleon III receives a beneficial shift in combat. This bonus only occurs on the first attack **and** defense (so potentially 2 combats) in which Napoleon III participates. However, if Napoleon III's force is eliminated, forced to retreat or subject to an EX result, roll 1d6. On a 1-4 and nothing happens, and Napoleon III is displaced to the closest friendly force. Otherwise Napoleon III is considered killed/captured and the game ends in a Major Victory for Prussia. *(While he was suffering from gout and fairly unimposing at this point, Napoleon III still carried the Napoleonic tradition and inspired his army to perform admirably under the conditions at Sedan.)*

3.2.4 Victory Conditions

Victory can be determined either during a turn if certain conditions are met, or at the end of the game. If Ducrot has not taken command (see 3.2.3.2.1), the French may only win the battle if at the end of the September 1st 20:00 turn, none of their forces are demoralized **and** they have a lesser total of eliminated SP than the Prussian player. The only type of victory the French can achieve in this case is a minor tactical victory which essentially means that they have won the battle but will still lose the war, likely with Napoleon III surrendering that night or the day after to save his troops more bloodshed.

On the other hand, if Ducrot has taken command, the French can achieve a major strategic victory by exiting 2 non-demoralized corps and Napoleon III off the west edge of the map (this includes their respective depots). They can achieve a minor strategic victory by maintaining a LOC from Sedan to any road off the west edge of the map (getting all the brandy safely to the west). Any other result other than those mentioned above is a Prussian major strategic victory given they have encircled Napoleon III, who has no choice at that point but to surrender.

3.3 What-If Approach to Battle Setup

*This scenario takes on the possibility that the French could have begun to retreat towards the west on **August 31st, 1870**. It was assumed by many French on the ground that they would only be in Sedan temporarily to begin with and didn't allow the soldiers to dig in and set up entrenchments. All that being well and good, the French had just made it to Sedan after a grueling pursuit following the loss at the battle of Beaumont, arguably the last chance the army of Chalons had to reach Bazaine back in Metz. It was much easier said than done to get the French infantry in any sort of marching order. They had arrived in Sedan heavily disorganized and demoralized. Accounts exist of French soldiers banging on doors begging for rations while officers dined in restaurants, though the French restlessness was gradually reduced thanks to a healthy supply of Brandy within Sedan.*

In addition, the Prussian army on the way to Sedan ran into numerous traffic issues. Many of their officers, while talented, could be a little over-anxious and big-headed, which often led to one army blocking the other's main line of communication for hours at a time. This most significantly happened at Wissembourg at the start of the campaign where a large group of Prussian forces sauntered into the town without much knowledge or regard for one-another and led to relatively high Prussian casualties, especially given the meagre detachment of French forces left to defend that position. Additionally, adding to the command-confusion, the commander of all German forces (von Moltke the Elder) had split up his forces on the fly upon realizing the French army was sitting still with the intention of encircling and attacking the French, cutting them off from any potential retreat west. The What-If Approach to Battle scenario can produce a number of different outcomes and is more balanced than the historical scenario. Accordingly, it is better for opposed, competitive games.

3.3.1 French and German Setup

This scenario starts on the 04:00AM turn of **August 31st,** 1870. Set the French up as stated in **3.2.1** with the following exceptions: Napoleon III is kept in the box and place "Asleep" markers on every French Leader except Ducrot. The German forces are set up off map next to the following hexes:

III Army

- **V & XI Corps:** Hex 0114
- **IB Corps:** Hex 0134
- **IIB Corps & Fr. Wilhelm:** Hex 0122
- **W Corps:** With any other corps.

Army of the Meuse

- **Guard Corps:** Hex 2044
- **S Corps & Fr. Karl:** Hex 1444
- **IV Corps:** Hex 0137

3.3.2 Scenario Special Rules

The following special rules are enforced in order to properly simulate the game situation.

3.3.2.1 Prussian Traffic Jams

Whenever entering the map, the Prussian player must roll 1d6 for each division (unit type color) entering the map. On a result of 1-4, that division may enter the map normally (including march orders and/or road march). On a result of 5-6, that division must roll again to enter the map on the following turn. Remember that movement points spent moving onto the board are cumulative, meaning units which are unable to enter the map must wait until the following turn to enter the map (one reason to use Road March when entering units onto the map.)

3.3.2.2 French Command Chaos

These rules attempt to simulate the lack of a strategic objective on the 31st. At the start of the game, all French leaders (with the exception of Ducrot) have Asleep markers placed on them. While on top of a leader, Asleep markers prevent the leader and all of their subordinate forces from taking any actions during their turn. At the beginning of the French movement phase, the French player rolls 1d6 for each lead-

er with an Asleep marker, subtracting 1 for each unsuccessful attempt. Rolling a 1 (or modified 1) suc-ceeds in awakening the leader and his subordinate forces, who then may act normally that turn. A French force (that is an individual stack or unit) may automatically activate once an enemy force moves within LOS of that force or is attacked/bombarded.

3.3.2.2.1 French Attrition

When a leader (or unit) is awakened, all forces under the command of that leader are Disorganized for that turn.

3.3.2.3 March Orders

The Prussian player may issue 2 March Orders per turn. The French player may only issue 1 March Order per turn which must come from MacMahon, or his replacement.

3.3.2.4 French V Corps

At the start of the game, the French player rolls 1d6 and adds 6 to the result. Place the French V Corps Morale marker that many turns in advance on the Game Turn Track. Until the beginning of that turn, all units of the French V corps are Demoralized.

3.3.2.5 (Optional) MacMahon Wounded

At their mutual agreement, players may choose to use the rules stated at **3.2.3.2**.

3.3.3 Victory Conditions

The victory conditions laid out in **3.2.4** apply in this scenario also.

3.4 Variant What-If (Optional)

As an option, the French player may ignore the Asleep markers and activate their units as normal at the start of the game.

3.5 Free Setup

As an option, players may choose to setup units however they like, with the French setting up first followed by Prussian forces. Players may choose the appropriate victory conditions and other special

rules as they like in order to experiment with different possible scenarios.

4.0 DESIGNER NOTES

This was the first game I had ever designed years ago, and it's gone through many changes. As I'm sure you've noticed, it's heavily derivative of Kevin Zucker's *The Library of Napoleonic Battles Series* with changes to the sequencing of play, among other nuances. Kevin I'm sure would and will disapprove of some of the design choices I made, such as Disorganization as a separate status given it would be an extra layer of chrome for little real effect and given his experience, he has a point. With that said, I didn't want to produce an exact clone of his game, and I found Disorganization to be a useful way to add granularity to ranged artillery tactics which were definitely more pronounced in this period, especially in the case of Prussia. Nonetheless, when I first designed this game 3-4 years ago, Kevin very graciously answered likely annoying questions from me constantly, and still continues to do so to this day, so this series and especially this game in particular, is dedicated to Kevin Zucker of Operational Studies Group. The habits and standards I've developed in terms of design are no doubt a result of his mentorship.

The battle of Sedan, along with the rest of the Franco-Prussian war, was a unique event which would go on to be widely misunderstood by both the French and German participants. Like many other conflicts leading up to and through World War I, a severe disconnect persisted between the deadliness of the technology, and the willingness of armies to attack entrenched positions head-on in the open. One of the reasons it's speculated that McClellan was reluctant to engage the Confederate army at the outset of the American Civil War was because he was an observer with the British and French armies during the Crimean War, and appropriately was concerned about the growing power of defensive firepower (though, arguably, a little too concerned).
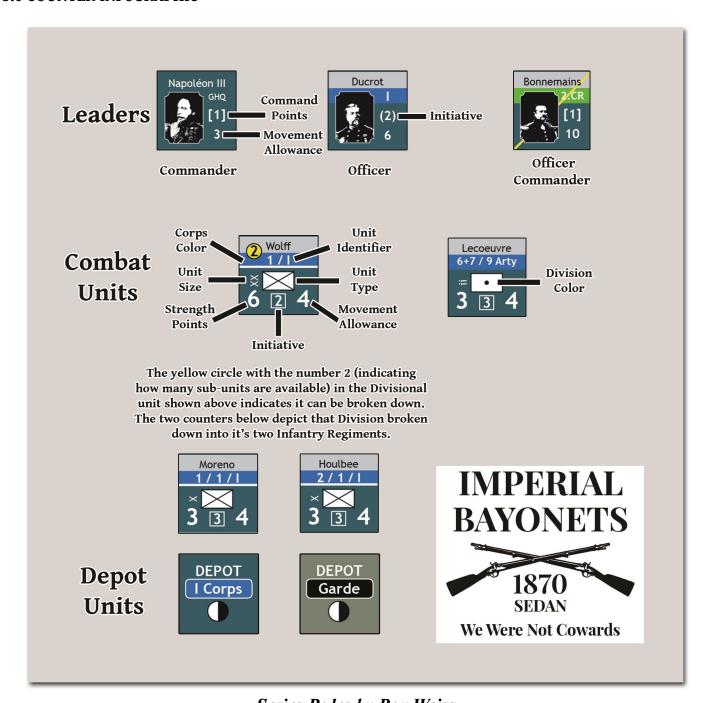
The German army heralded the victory and would try to essentially replicate the maneuver on a strategic scale with the Schlieffen plan in 1914, with the winding 1st Army acting as the heavy-handed right of the German army. Unfortunately for them, their slavish adherence to following through with the plan after running into problems in Belgium rather than adapting to the situation, is precisely why the 1st Army did what it did in 1870.

The Sedan campaign is a classic example of what loosely translates to 'Mission Command', an innovation of German tactics during this campaign. Mission Command stipulated that commanders need the ability to make decisions on the ground without having to seek approval from a higher command. Unfortunately for the average German infantryman throughout 1914, the German high command ironically ignored this vital aspect of Mission Command, dictating maneuvers around timetables which had been prepared for the better part of a decade.

The French took some wrong lessons as well, but ultimately drew the right conclusion. The French had disregarded their superior rifles and early machine guns in place of going back to the bayonet of Napoleonic yore. This obviously had catastrophic consequences for the infantrymen who took part in Plan XVII, but the French high command, energetically led by Joffre, allowed their plans to adapt and change to the situation, allowing them to mount a decisive counter-offensive during the Battle of the Marne and the subsequent race to the sea campaign.

Sedan would go on in French military history to be synonymous with disaster, as the French army was again out maneuvered in 1940 when German tanks burst out of the Ardennes and overwhelmed the French defenses at Sedan, leaving the way open to encircle the British and attack Paris. Rather than the portrayal of cowardice common in many modern stereotypical depictions of French military capacity, the French fought incredibly stubbornly and would go on to continue the war for another year in 1871, as they did in 1940-41 in North Africa after the capture of Paris. Ultimately, Sedan was misunderstood in that the armies believed that quick decisive campaigns were still possible during this age of increased defensive firepower, whereas the reality was that Sedan 1870 was unique and unlikely to be replicated on a mass scale.

5.0 COUNTER INFOGRAPHIC

Leaders

Napoléon III — GHQ — [1] — 3
Command Points, Movement Allowance
Commander

Ducrot — I — (2) — 6
Initiative
Officer

Bonnemains — 2.CR — [1] — 10
Officer Commander

Combat Units

Wolff — 2 — 1 / I — XX — 6 — 2 — 4
Corps Color, Unit Identifier, Unit Size, Unit Type, Strength Points, Initiative, Movement Allowance

Lecoeuvre — 6+7 / 9 Arty — 3 — 3 — 4
Division Color

The yellow circle with the number 2 (indicating how many sub-units are available) in the Divisional unit shown above indicates it can be broken down. The two counters below depict that Division broken down into it's two Infantry Regiments.

Moreno — 1 / 1 / I — 3 — 3 — 4

Houlbee — 2 / 1 / I — 3 — 3 — 4

Depot Units

DEPOT — I Corps

DEPOT — Garde

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