

# Battle of Nachod - 27th June 1866

## Steinmetz the “Lion of Náchod”

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The following scenario was developed for Volley & Bayonet by Martin Soilleux-Cardwell. It has been updated for Volley & Bayonet – Road to Glory by Keith McNelly.

### THE HISTORICAL BATTLE

The Austrian C-in-C Benedek had left two corps of North Army to close the mountain passes from Silesia into eastern Bohemia above Glatz. These were Gablenz's X Corps and von Ramming's VI. Both were badly defeated on the same day. Archduke Leopold's VIII Corps was within easy supporting distance of Ramming and had the two officers co-ordinated their movements, the Battle of Nachod might have had a very different result. Ramming and Gablenz were ordered to slow down the advance of Prussian Second Army and cover St Josephstadt from the east while Benedek turned the bulk of Austrian North Army west. It was Benedek's intention to throw back Prussian First Army before turning about once again and stopping Second. But the Prussians advanced too quickly for Benedek.

In the early morning darkness of 27th June, Prussian V Corps of Second Army under General der Infanterie von Steinmetz advanced through the almost undefended frontier town of Nachod and began to debouch from the Methau valley. His advanced units pushed aside a few Uhlans and some horse guns. The Austrian VI Corps under FML Baron von Ramming endeavoured to close the defile and hold the Prussians back. VI Corps could have started out from Opcno several hours earlier and gained the dominating high ground before Steinmetz deployed his leading division but there was an inexplicable delay at Benedek's HQ of over 5 hours before the order for Ramming to move was despatched. Having set off at 06:00, at approximately 09:00 Ramming's 2nd brigade (Colonel Hertwegh, Hertweg or Hertwek depending on spelling variation) advanced on the leading elements of GM von Loewenfeld's Prussian 9th Division who were already in possession of the Wysokow Heights. Ramming was at Skalitz, having ridden ahead and set up his headquarters on the main road out of Wysokow towards St Josephstadt. He intended his forces to pass across the Prussian front and secure Wysokow town, on the same road and rail line to Skalitz. Ramming watched horrified as Col Hertwegh turned his brigade too soon to face right and assault directly up the face of the Wysokow ridge where his leading battalions were mown down by intense Needle gun fire. Hertwegh made the classic mistake of a subordinate by ignoring the big picture and attacking the enemy closest him. Ramming made the classic mistake of a commander of assuming Hertwegh could grasp the lay of the land as he did - he compounded that error by not clarifying Hertwegh's orders.

The second Austrian brigade to arrive from Opcno behind Hertwegh's 2nd, was Colonel Jonak's 4th. Seeing Hertwegh's units faltering, Jonak led his formation up the hill through the stalled first attack to reach the village of Wenzelberg (modern Vaclavice) right in the centre of von Lowenfeld's position, where his men despite terrible casualties and with incredible valour, took the churchyard but were slowly forced to give ground as Prussian counterattacks continued to grow in strength and their reserves dried up.

For two hours the Prussian vanguard, an advanced column assembled from a few picked units of the division under Loewenfeld's personal direction, was able to hold off the two Austrian brigades and upon receiving support from the balance of 9th Division, coming up in the later morning, finally succeeded in throwing them back.

Some 2,000 casualties lighter, Hertwegh and Jonak were back once again at the bottom of the hill, their two brigades unable to do much more.

At 11:30 another Austrian brigade, the 3rd, commanded by GM Rosenweig arrived and Ramming made sure this officer was clear on his task. He directed this to move north and assault Wysokow town itself, the intent being to both secure the main Nachod-Skalitz road and relieve pressure on Hertwegh's and Jonak's exhausted men. To the south, 2nd and 4th brigades rallied and joined in the attack. Rosenweig's men went in in columns, the Hoch-und-Deutschmeister regiment bursting through the town, the Prussian infantry piling out the other side, only to be met by artillery fire on the higher ground beyond and thrown back. The supporting assaults by Hertwegh and Jonak were too weak to distract the Prussians and von Kirchbach's 10th Division arriving in the very nick of time was able to concentrate exclusively on shooting to pieces half their number of tired Austrians. Ramming's corps artillery had still not come up at this point.

The Austrian 1st Reserve Cavalry division appeared on the field at about midday, and moved to the north to threaten the Prussian right at Wysokow. The Austrian Corps guns are first mentioned as being in action about this time, but principally employed not preparing the way for a renewed attempt to secure Wysokow town, but shoring up the collapsing right flank brigades of Hertwegh and Jonak. These 56 guns were thus committed in a manner that may well have saved the Austrian right from breaking, but lost the Austrian left the chance of breaking through to Nachod.

The Prussian 9th Division had been doing all the fighting thus far, but at 12:00 GL von Kirchbach's 10th Division arrived and deployed into line to the right (north) of 9th Division, just in time, as noted above, to stop Rosenweig. The Prussians were holding the line of hills and woods to the east of the valley. To the north of the Prussian line, a cavalry action developed at Wysokow.

The Austrians were repulsed all along the line, but were able to rally on the lower slopes. At approximately 13:00 von Ramming ordered a final, all out assault. This was led by his last intact formation, the newly arrived 1st Brigade of Colonel Waldstatten which had the second Kuirasiers brigade of 1st Reserve Cavalry Division attached to it. Elements of Waldstatten's command were unreliable, however, particularly the 79th Infantry Regiment which comprised Venetians recruited in Pordenone. Several days earlier the men of the 79th had staged a minor mutiny and emptied their cartridges into a stream beside the road, declaring they would not fight against the Kingdom of Italy's ally, Prussia. This unit was formed at the rear of the brigade and the cavalry were ordered to keep a careful eye on them.

Despite some hesitation from the 79th, Waldstatten's attack went in and again reached Wysokow. Bloody house-to-house fighting broke out and the fighting was renewed along the whole Prussian line in an attempt to give Waldstatten all possible support. The Austrians however were too disorganised now to throw the Prussians off their position. By about 15:30 the Prussian Reserve artillery deployed in a position to dominate Wysokow town and upon this the Austrians gradually retired, their good order breaking down in several regiments,

particularly Hertwegh's exhausted Poles who had been fighting all day after marching all morning with no decent rest the night before and no food since yesterday midday.

The Prussians had secured an entry point into the eastern Bohemian plain.

The defeat was a failure of the Austrian command ability. The big mistakes were made at the very top by Benedek who left too weak and too dispersed a force to watch the mountain passes. And who issued late and imprecise orders. He also gave Ramming and Gablenz no idea of what strength enemy they were facing. Ramming was then responsible for extremely poor command control. He rode on ahead of his corps and took up a post at Skalitz, effectively almost on the other side of the Prussian V Corps from the bulk of his slogging infantrymen. His early direction of the action was non-existent and later command decisions were fixated on continuing attacks on Wysokow by which time it should have been plain that his corps was spent and needed to fall back and consolidate. Thirdly the brigade commanders showed no grand tactical finesse at all, most of them merely ordering their units to head straight at the nearest enemy without any consideration of what the corps commander's plan might require their brigades to do. Lastly the regimental commanders showed immense gallantry and vigour, repeatedly rallying their men and keeping hot, tired and hungry foreign soldiers in the ranks and at their tasks.

Losses were 1,122 Prussians to 5,719 Austrians, including many missing and prisoners - five times the Prussian losses. To the north west at Trautenau Gablenz' X Corps was similarly brutally chewed up employing the same tactics (5,000 casualties to 1,300). Benedek was later to attach two complete battalions from the Josephstadt garrison to bolster up Ramming's dented corps.

## **GAME LENGTH AND VICTORY**

The battle begins with the 09:00 turn and ends at the conclusion of the 15:00 turn for a total of eight turns.

The Austrians move first and have the burden of attack. However the Prussians are also required to advance to secure certain objectives.

The Austrians must exhaust all three Prussian commands (having also collapsed at least one of them), and contest Wysokow, by the end of the 15:00 turn. If all four targets have not been met, they will withdraw in the late afternoon. The Prussians must hold all of Wysokow and have at least 1 command still fresh (unexhausted) by 15:00.

If neither side achieves their victory conditions it is an Austrian-winning tactical draw. Strategically however a Prussian victory will eventually result as other Prussian corps columns are pushing through other mountain passes further north and west and the Austrians must go back eventually.

The town of Wysokow is three town blocks; 'contesting' the town means to occupy one of the blocks; 'holding' it means to occupy all three.

## DEPLOYMENT

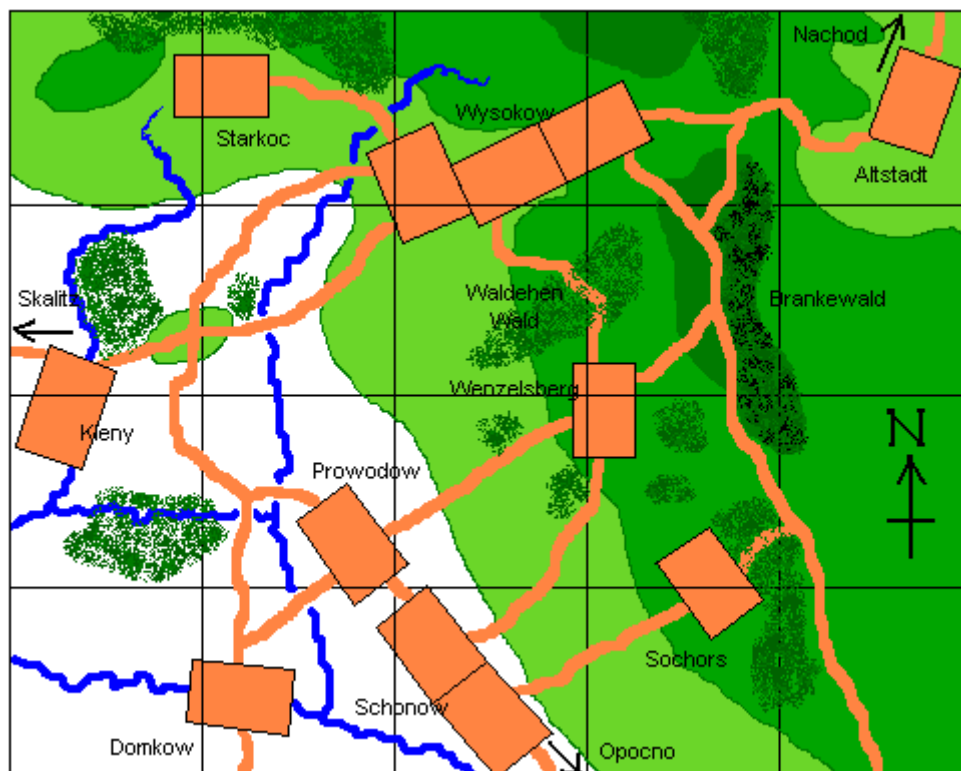
The armies are deployed as follows.

On table at the start are the Prussian Advance Guard, which may deploy anywhere in or within 6" of Wenzelberg (except to the west and south) and the Austrian 2nd and 4th Brigades (which are in or contacting but east of Prowodow and Schonow respectively). Prussian 9th Division enters from Nachod on the Prussian 09:00 turn. It's artillery must be at the rear. Austrian 3rd Brigade enters on the road to Opocno or the road south of Domkow on the Austrian 10:00 turn. Prussian 10th Division enters from Nachod on the Prussian 11:00 turn. It's artillery must be at the rear. Austrian 1st Cavalry Division(-) enters on the road west of Kleny on the Austrian 11:00 turn. Austrian 1st Brigade plus corps troops enter on the road west of Kleny on the Austrian 12:00 turn. Prussian Corps troops enter from Nachod on the Prussian 12:00 turn. All troops entering the field are in march column.

Von Ramming is present at 09:00 and begins the game on the Skalitz road exit point. Von Steinmetz may enter with either Prussian 9th or 10th Divisions.

Note that Prussian GM Loewenfeld commands all of 9th Division, including the Advance Guard, drawn from it. He starts the game with the Advance Guard.

## BATTLEFIELD



Each square on the map represents 12" or 1200 yards.

All streams are fordable and where roads cross them they are bridged. All woods are open. I have used a darker stippling to show the Brankewald more clearly against the darker contour

shading but this is also an open wood. Note that the northeastern most town block of Wysokow is uphill of the south western two blocks.

The gap between Prowodow and Schonow is too small to allow infantry or cavalry to pass but will permit an artillery unit through (that is it is more than 1.5" wide but less than 3").

## SCENARIO NOTES

In this battle I would recommend treating the Austrian line infantry marked with an asterisk (\*) as shock, to encourage historical tactics. I would also recommend using the "Poor Prussian 1866 Artillery Tactics". The rules can be found [here](#).

Note the 4th Hoch-und-Deutschmeister and 79th Pordonne Regiments have been up- and down-graded respectively.

A feature of this first corps-level action of the war was that despite only being required to hold their ground and keep the exit from the mountain pass blocked, the Austrians threw their whole energy, throughout the day, into a series of brave, even foolhardy counterattacks which were repeated time and again. The Prussians' job fell to only two things: keeping the men steady in the line and deciding where the next Austrian charge would hit and trying to make their line tough enough at that point.

The street fighting for Wysokow flared up toward the middle and end of the battle, as the emphasis of the fighting drifted northwards. The initial deployments and arrival of fresh units should mean that this northward flow of the action is a feature of the refight.

Note there is no Prussian corps artillery. If it were here it would be a 2-4 rbl-fld, hse; a 2-4 rbl-hvy; and a 2-4 sb-hvy. However the accounts I have do not mention any reserve artillery arriving until very late in the day (15:00) by which time the Austrians were starting to withdraw. If you wish to bring it on, feel free to do so but I think it will be superfluous. If it does arrive, scenario end time will be extended until dark, 21:00. The scenario is written however to represent the arrival of the Prussian reserve guns in the mid-afternoon, whose deployment signals the end of the action.

If by this time the Austrians have not secured their aims they will be unable to do so. If by this time they \*have\* secured all their objectives, the Prussians will call off the move via Nachod and withdraw, shifting the weight of their advance via Eipel and Trautenau.

Attached to Austrian VI Corps HQ was a Rocket Battery. These were conventional tube pieces with black powder propellant missiles, similar in design to the Congreve type, fired from the barrels. I have no data on how this weapon was used, or any technical specifications. The arrangements sound uncomfortably like a child's firework launched from a milk bottle lying at an angle. Perhaps there was a guide or tampion inserted in the muzzle to allow some form of aiming. If anyone has any information on how this weapons system worked or how effective it was, I'd love to be enlightened. I have subsumed it's 8 pieces into the other corps level conventional tube batteries.

Attached to Austrian VI Corps was the 10th Uhlan Regiment. In practice 1 Sqn was attached to each brigade for local patrol and liaison work. I originally assembled the regiment at corps as a 1-5 lt-incr, sk capable linear stand. But then on reflection I deleted it. My reasoning is

that it spent the battle divided up in tiny packets around the corps and to concentrate the 500 men at one place would give the Austrian player a striking unit his historical counterpart never had. Feel free to re-instate the unit if you wish although the lack of a formed body of cavalry was a problem for the Austrians until their heavy cavalry arrived in the afternoon.

Austrian infantry are armed with rifled muskets. Prussian infantry are armed with the Dreyse needle gun which is a cartridge rifle.

The following abbreviations are used in the Orders of Battle:

sb = Smoothbore artillery

rml = Early Rifled Artillery (rifle muzzle loading)

rbl = Advanced Rifled Artillery (rifle breech loading)

hse = Horse artillery

fld = Field

hvy = Heavy

lt = Light

md = Medium

lncr = Lancer

\* = Shock

s = Skirmisher or may detach a skirmisher

ss = Skirmisher Sharpshooter

## AUSTRIAN ARMY

### VI Corps: FML Baron von Ramming (AC)

#### *Corps Troops:*

2 4# RML Btys	M5 [ ] [ ] [ ] rml-fld
2 8# RML Btys	M5 [ ] [ ] [ ] rml-hvy
2 8# RML Horse Btys	M6 [ ] [ ] rml-hvy, hse
1 Rocket Bty not represented: see notes	
10th Uhlans not represented: see notes	

#### *1st Brigade: Col von Waldstatten (DC), Ex = 9*

9th Infantry	M5 [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]*
79th Infantry	M4 [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]
6th Jaegers	M5 [ss] [ss]
1st Brigade Bty	M5 [ ] rml-fld

#### *Cavalry Brigade Solms, Unknown, Ex = 2*

4th & 6th Kuir, 8th Uhlans	M5 [ ] [ ] [s] hvy
8# RML Horse Bty	M6 [ ] rml-hvy, hse

#### *2nd Brigade: Col Hertwegh (DC), Ex = 8*

41st Infantry	M5 [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]*
56th Infantry	M5 [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]
25th Jaegers	M5 [ss] [ss]
2nd Brigade Bty	M5 [ ] rml-fld

#### *3rd Brigade: GM Rosenweig (DC), Ex = 8*

4th Infantry	M6 [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]*
55th Infantry	M5 [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]
17th Jaegers	M5 [ss] [ss]
3rd Brigade Bty	M5 [ ] rml-fld

#### *4th Brigade: Col Jonak (DC), Ex = 7*

20th Infantry	M5 [ ][ ][ ][ ][ ][ ]*
60th Infantry	M5 [ ][ ][ ][ ][ ][ ]
14th Jaegers	M5 [ss][ss]
4th Brigade Bty	M6 [ ] rml-fld

#### *1st Reserve Cavalry Div(-): FML Prince Schleswig-Holstein (DC), Ex = 2*

9th & 11th Kuir, 4th Uhlans	M5 [ ] [ ] [s] hvy
8# RML Horse Bty	M6 [ ] rml-hvy, hse

## PRUSSIAN ARMY

### V Corps: Gen von Steinmetz (AC)

#### *Corps Troops:*

5th Pioneer Btn M5 [s]

#### *Advance Guard (drawn from 9th Div): GM von Lowenfeld (DC), Ex = 6*

Fusilier Btn, 37th Inf Regt M5 [s] [s]  
58th Inf Regt M5 [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]  
5th Jagers(-) M5 [ss]  
4th Dragoons M5 [s] md  
2 Light Foot Btys M4 [ ] [ ] rbl-fld

#### *9th Division (-), Ex = 7*

37th Inf Regt(-) M5 [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]  
7th Grenadiers M5 [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]  
5th Jagers(-) M5 [ss]  
2 Heavy Foot Btys M4 [ ] [ ] sb-hvy

#### *10th Division: GM von Kirchbach (DC), Ex = 15*

6th Grenadiers M5 [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]  
46th Inf Regt M5 [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]  
47th Inf Regt M5 [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]  
52nd Inf Regt M5 [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]  
1st Uhlans M5 [s] lt-incr  
2 Light Foot Btys M4 [ ] [ ] rbl-fld  
2 Heavy Foot Btys M4 [ ] [ ] rbl-hvy