

TACTICAL SERIES BATTLES: BICOCCA

by Albert A. Nofi

Many of the readers of *MOVES* and *S&T* own one or more of the Tactical Series Games developed by Simulations Publications over the last couple of years. This series attempts to recreate small unit combat at various periods in history. At present, the series comprises games covering the following periods of Western military history: *Phalanx* (500 to 100 B.C.); *Centurion* (100 B.C. to 700 A.D.); *Dark Ages* (700 to 1300 A.D.); *Renaissance of Infantry*, generally known as *Tac-14* (1150 to 1550 A.D.); *Grenadier* (1680 to 1850); *PanzerBlitz's* predecessor *Tac-3*, and *Combat Command*, which simulate operations in Europe in WWII; and *Grunt*, which deals with Vietnam. In all of these games, a number of different scenarios or situations are presented to the players. Usually, these give a general outline of the events as they occurred and provide information on order of battle in terms of the particular game's unit counters; general

set up rules; minor modification to the basic game rules; and victory conditions. Most players pitch right in and try these situations out, feeling that they are recreating history. But some players are more particular and we often receive letters noting that one or more parts of a particular scenario are apparently incorrect in light of the actual situation or that the deployment notes are too vague to permit an adequate recreation of the events.

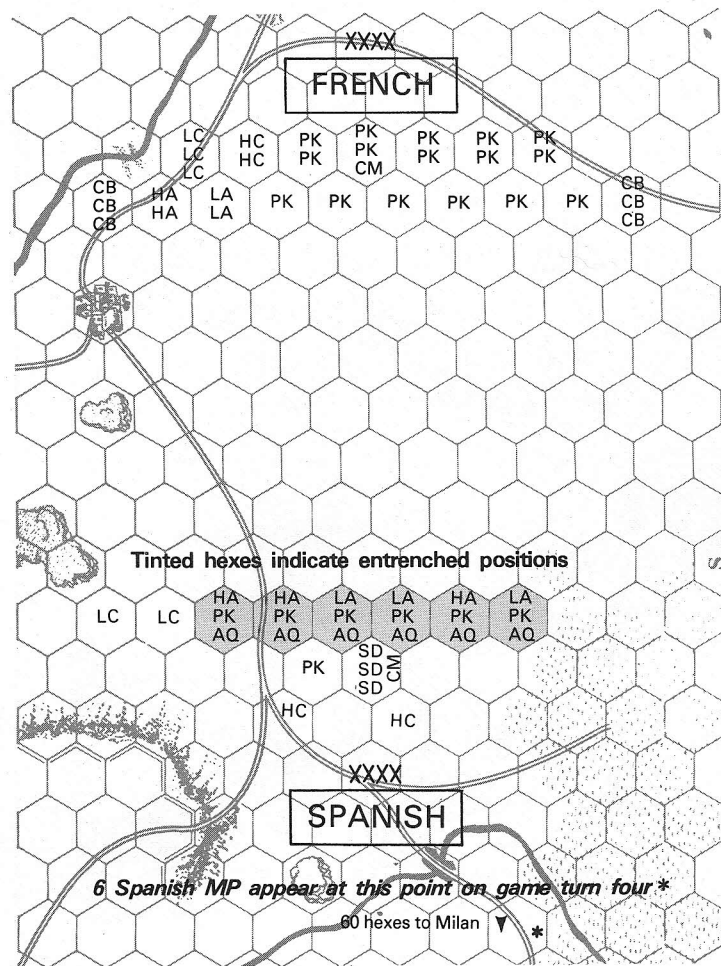
As a result of this we would like to institute an occasional series, usually no more than one or two pages, expanding particular scenarios. Each short article would be devoted to presenting a fairly brief examination of one scenario selected from one of the games. The article which follows, on the *Tac-14* BicoCCA scenario, is the first such and the readers are asked to indicate their feelings on this type of article in the *Feedback*.

In early 1522 the French, undaunted after nearly thirty years of unsuccessful efforts to subdue Italy, again launched an invasion of that country, with the intention of conquering the Duchy of Milan, which was at this time a Spanish satellite. The Spanish and their Italian allies objected. The key battle in this campaign was that at BicoCCA, about four miles northeast of Milan. The French, reinforced by their Venetian allies, some Italian mercenary troops, and their Swiss client states outnumbered the regular Spanish and Milanese troops so the latter took up position in the "Park of BicoCCA."

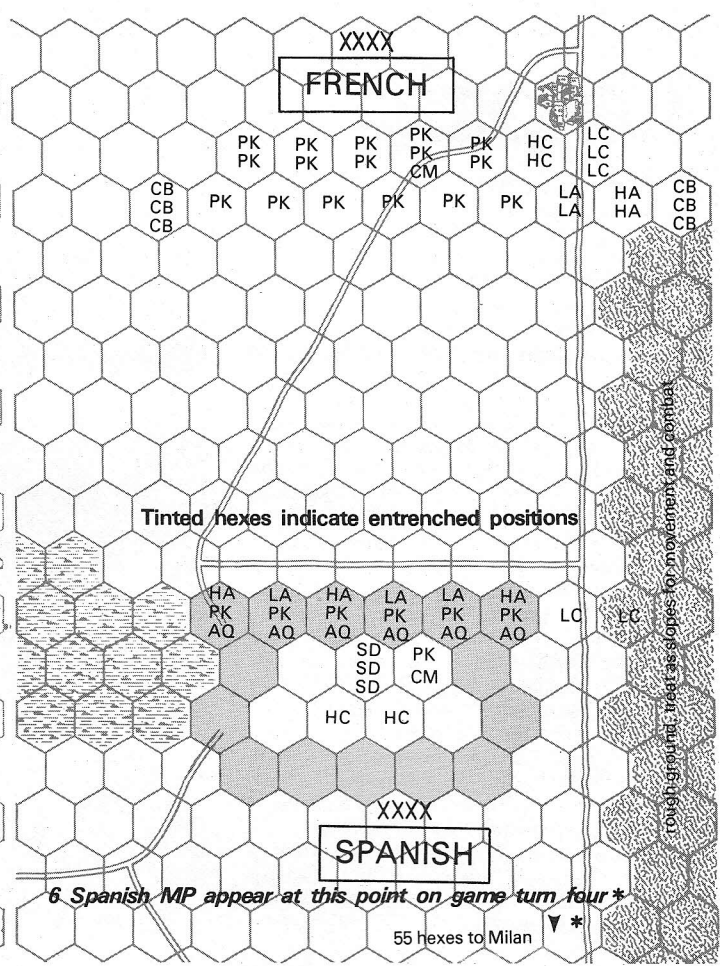
This "Park of BicoCCA" was a private luxury garden about 600 by 400 yards, surrounded by a wall and ditch. It was large enough to permit the entire Spanish force to be deployed within the shelter of the walls. To its left there was a sizeable marsh and to its right there was some farm land which was not conducive to rapid maneuver. In Map A based on the actual *Tac-14* mapsheet, some liberties have been taken in recreating this position. Thus, the marsh is to the right and the mixed terrain to the left, while the walls and ditch are represented by a row of trenches, and only on one side of the position. The hill immediately on the Spanish left flank, however, provides some measure of protection, similar to the actual wall and ditch on that flank. Map B is a new map, based on the actual terrain.

The actual armies involved, with their equivalents in *Renaissance of Infantry* unit counters, are given in the accompanying tables.

Map A



Map B



The deployment shown takes up the battle after the preliminary skirmishing between light cavalry forces ended and just before the Swiss pikemen of the French made the principal attack of the day. In the actual battle some 8,000 Swiss in two massive columns several times tried to storm the park. Casualties were enormous, some 1,000 Swiss falling to cannon and arquebus fire before even reaching the ditch and another 2,000, including most officers and senior enlisted men, fell in trying to get out of the ditch and onto the walls. Finally the Swiss gave up and fell back. The Spanish commander decided against a pursuit on the reasonable grounds that the French still had plenty of Swiss left, and the Swiss were famed for ferocity in defense. The French commander, meanwhile, threw some Italian light troops into action to cover the withdrawal of the battered assault troops. The next day, the remainder of the Swiss decided to march home, leaving the French commander with no option but to go home himself. Another round in the seemingly interminable series of Franco-Spanish wars for the mastery of Italy was over.

Could the outcome have been different? Well, while it is true that the Spanish position was excellent, the arrogance of the Swiss undoubtedly helped to defeat them. The French commander had wanted to try to turn the Spanish position and threaten Milan, thus forcing the Spanish into a pitched battle or, at least, getting them onto terrain less favorable to the defense. The Swiss, however, threatened to go home immediately if an attack was not made, and arrogantly stated

that the Spanish would not stand before them. They were wrong. If the French had threatened the Spanish links with Milan — represented on the accompanying map by the two roads leading off the “southwest” edge of the map, the Spanish would have had to shift front to face them, taking up positions less favorable to the defense. Since the Spanish were outnumbered in total manpower, considerably so if one excludes the militia, (although they did have an edge in firepower)

the battle would have been a bit more even in such a situation.

That, in brief, is the Battle of Bicocca. It is suggested that all regular *Renaissance of Infantry* rules apply to this recreation of the battle.



ORDER OF BATTLE

BICOCCA

27 APRIL 1522

THE FRENCH ARMY

troops
 16,000 pikemen
 1,000 heavy cavalry
 1,500 light cavalry
 6,000 crossbow & arquebusiers
 artillery
 c. 28,000 men

combat units
 16 PK
 2 HC
 3 LC
 6 CB
 } 2 HA
 } 2 LA

*These arrive at the beginning of the Spanish player's fourth movement turn behind “Bicocca” on the edge of the full mapsheet.

THE SPANISH ARMY

troops
 7,000 pikemen
 3,000 swordsmen
 6,000 militiamen*
 1,000 heavy cavalry
 1,000 light cavalry
 6,000 arquebusiers
 artillery
 c. 27,000 men

combat units
 7 PK
 3 SD
 6 MP
 2 HC
 2 LC
 6 AQi
 } 3 HA
 } 3 LA

Obviously, for pikemen, militiamen, swordsmen, crossbowmen, and arquebusiers the ratio is one unit counter per 1,000 men, while for cavalry it is more like one per 500 men. Artillery, of course, is separate from these figures. Some liberties were taken in arranging these orders of battle. Thus, the French missile armed infantry is equipped exclusively with crossbows when in reality they had a mixture of crossbows and arquebuses. In the game, however, there is no functional difference between the two types. The Spanish, on the other hand, were given improved arquebuses, largely because of their 30 years of experience with this weapon.