

The Battle of Quatre Bras

Friday, June the 16th, 1815

This DLC contains five scenarios covering this battle where the French left wing under Marshal Ney attacked the Allied forces under the command of the Duke of Wellington.

The Battle of Quatre Bras was one of a pair of battles fought by Napoleon's Army of the North on June 16, 1815, on second day of the Waterloo Campaign. In order to force apart the two Coalition armies that faced him, on the evening of the previous day Napoleon had divided his army into two wings. The Left Wing, the nearly 28,000 men of the II Corps and the III Cavalry Corps under the newly-installed Marshal Michel Ney, was intended to push forward quickly past the crossroads at Quatre Bras to block the approach of Wellington's Anglo-Allied army from Brussels to the north. This would enable Napoleon's Right Wing-68,000 soldiers under combined the III, IV, and VI corps and Cavalry Reserve under Marshal Grouchy, with the added weight of the Napoleon's 20,000-man Imperial Guard in reserve-to crush the Prussian army as it approached from the east. Napoleon would then combine his entire army and turn it toward Wellington in front of Brussels.

Ney, however, had failed to push through the Quatre Bras intersection on the evening of June 15, and contented himself with massing his troops on the morning of June 16, squandering hours when he outnumbered the 8,000-man Anglo-Allied contingent more than two to one. Ney's attack did not start forward until 2:00 p.m., and an hour later the 5th British Infantry Division (7,400 men) and the 3rd Dutch Light Cavalry Brigade (1,400 men) arrived to even the odds for Wellington, who arrived in person to take command of the Allies. The 7,900 men of Jerome Bonaparte's 6th French Division arrived next, soon balanced on the Allied side by the appearance of the black-uniformed Brunswick Corps (9,200 men), and fighting became heavy all along the line. At 5:00 p.m., the 7,500 men of the British 3rd Division

arrived, and tipped the weight of numbers permanently in favor of Wellington's army.

Ney now sent for the I Corps of d'Erlon, which had marched toward the Battle of Ligny, being fought at the same time by Napoleon's Right Wing a few miles to the east. Before the counter-marching I Corps could arrive, however, the Battle of Quatre Bras ended. Wellington's Anglo-Allied army had lost 4,800 men to Ney's 4,000, but most importantly, Napoleon's Left Wing had been unable to either advance toward Brussels or aid Napoleon's Right Wing in its attempt to crush the Prussians at Ligny. Both Coalition armies had survived the French June 16 attacks, and would combine two days later to put an end to Napoleon's career at Waterloo.

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