

GRAND BATTERY

MINOR BATTLES OF THE NAPOLEONIC WARS

NO. 2 Battle of Mariazell November 8 1805

Von Merveldt was ordered to march towards Styria to assist the retreat of Archduke John's army into Austria. Von Merveldt's force was attached to Kutusov's Russians at the time. Horrified that Von Merveldt had detached to comply with orders, Kutusov was even more alarmed at the fact that Von Merveldt was marching straight towards the advancing French. After receiving news from Kutusov of the danger, Von Merveldt began retracing his steps only to realise he would be caught. He opted to make a stand at Mariazell.

Von Merveldt had around 6,000 troops at his disposal. He was attacked by the advance units of Davout's force under the command of Heudelet de Bierre (around 3,500 men). The Austrians held out for about two hours before they collapsed. The engagement cost them 200 killed and upwards of 3,000 captured.

Wargaming Mariazell

The Austrians are standing in the way of the main French advance. The battle gets underway shortly after 0600; the French have been marching since 0400.

Von Merveldt set up his army to the east of Mariazell. He made good use of the terrain in his deployment. The French were eager to brush him aside and de Bierre sent the 13th Legere against the Austrian centre position, the 108th Ligne against the Austrian Grenzers and the 12th Chasseurs against the Austrian positions to the south of the town. The first three attacks were successful and it looked as if the Austrians had already been beaten and would withdraw.

Incredibly, the Chasseurs were routed and the Grenzers counterattacked the 108th. The second battalion of the 108th was committed and this time two battalions of Grenzers were swept aside, the last battalion of Grenzers fell back in good order towards Mariazell, overrunning the French artillery as they did so.

Meanwhile, the 13th Legere had moved north to destroy the Austrian positions, they managed to eliminate a whole Austrian battalion with their first volley. Von Merveldt, undeterred, realised that there was a chance of victory and ordered a general counterattack. The French down to just three battalions of infantry and with their cavalry and artillery gone decided that discretion was the better part of valour and withdrew.

Feldmarschall-Leutnant Count Maximilian von Merveldt's Austrians

Von Merveldt	Able
4 th Line (3 battalions) (1800)	Veteran Steady
4 th Line Grenadiers (Grenadier battalion) (450)	Veteran Steady
57 th Line (3 battalions) (1800)	Elite Confident
12 th Grenzers (3 battalions) (1200)	Veteran Steady

There is one foot artillery battery (6pdr) with the 4th and with the 57th.

Général de Brigade Heudelet de Bierre's Force

Général de Brigade Heudelet de Bierre'	Able
14 th Chasseurs a Cheval (4 squadrons) (520)	Experienced Steady
Horse artillery (6 or 7 pdr)	Experienced Steady
13 th Ligne (2 battalions) (1650)	Experienced Arrogant
108 th Ligne (2 battalions) (1500)	Experienced Arrogant

