

Great Northern Powder

Black Powder rules adaptations for the Great Northern War

Black Powder is a ruleset intended to cover the entire horse and musket period, basically the era in which the musket was the most important infantry weapon. As stated in the rulebook, it roughly covers the 1700-1890 range.

I feel that the Great Northern War, while chronologically still within the purview of these rules, nevertheless falls just outside of the range for these rules. This war, more so than the contemporary War of Spanish Succession (the Marlburian wars), really straddles the 'pike and shot' era on the one hand and the 'horse and musket' on the other. Both parties still carried around pikes, yet the units they were organised in were classic horse and musket battalions as opposed to pike and shot tercios or their later Protestant versions, while the musketeers had bayonets.

So, we came up with a number of adaptations to the rules to enable them to cover this period, using our preexisting GNW armies.

Units: numbers and basing

Our infantry battalions are based 18-20 on three stands. A 'standard' infantry unit is thus in this range of figures (18-20). For the Swedes, one of these stands is a pike armed stand. For the Russians, all three are musket armed but we use a fourth stand with pikes as a marker for those units that had pikes.

Cavalry squadrons are based 6 to two bases. A 'standard' cavalry unit is thus 6 figures.

There are no skirmishers in this period. Undoubtedly, units did fight in skirmish order, but the concept of formal skirmishers or light troops did not exist yet. So, no skirmishers and no mixed formations.

Formations

There are only two formations for infantry and cavalry: line and march column. There are no attack columns or squares (but see pikes).

Shooting

Use one die of firing per musket stand. For our troops, that works out as two dice for the Swedish and three for the Russians. If your troops are based differently, it also works out as the ratio of musket to pike in the units. Swedish had a third of their

battalions as pikes, so they get 2 thirds of normal fire, i.e. 2 dice. Units that are all musket armed get +1 on their fire (so would without other circumstances hit on 3+ instead of 4+).

As the fact that you're firing from a live firing platform that tends to shy away from loud noises is much more important than what you're actually firing with, I'm giving cavalry on both sides (most of which were armed with a carbine) the standard 1 dice in fire.

Hand to hand

This is an area where it is important to differentiate the Swedish and Russians correctly to keep the historical flavour. For those unfamiliar with the period, the main Swedish characteristic in this war (apart from a propensity for half — or fully — rotten fish) is their aggressiveness: they trained to close with their enemy and engage in hand to hand, as opposed to the linear firefight type of combat all other infantry was trained for. So that needs to be reflected. Pikes, which both sides still used, also add to the hand to hand capability of a unit.

I decided to give Swedish infantry a 7 for hand to hand combat value, and Russian infantry a 6. Further differentiation can be done using unit special properties. I selected 7 vs 6 as opposed to 6 vs 5 for two reasons: the pikes and the fact that I like things to move on, and I'm guessing they will with higher factors.

Cavalry in this period, again with the exceptions of the Swedish, were not intended to be battle winning chargers. Their main function was to eliminate the other side's cavalry and then fall upon the flanks of the infantry line. Only the Swedish cavalry was trained to aggressively



Figure 1 The Swedish and Russian armies face each other across a stream

close with and destroy the enemy. So, I'm giving Swedish cavalry 8 in hand to hand with the Russians at the standard 7. I'm also not differentiating between different types of cavalry. Whether they were termed 'Horse' or 'Dragoons' or whatever did not matter much - they pretty much performed the same function on the battlefield, so they get the same factors.

Pikes

The hand to hand effect of pikes is factored into the relative hand to hand scores of the units (part of the 7 for the Swedes is to reflect the greater number of pikes they had). For the anti-cavalry effect of pikes, we reuse the 'Form square' rules (see p.75 of the rulebook). Any unit with pikes which is frontally attacked by

cavalry may (not must) attempt to form their pikes in an anti-cavalry formation (i.e. spread the pikes across the frontage of the unit as opposed to having them in the center only). The dice roll to do this and the effects if it fails are the same as that for the Form Square rule on p.75. If the roll succeeds, the unit forms up with pikes to the fore in an anti-cavalry formation.

For a unit in this formation, the same rules as squares count: cavalry charging the unit bounces off (as with squares) if the unit is not disordered or shaken, and the unit gets a +3 on the melee winning score should it get to fight after all.

There are however two major differences with squares:

- The units fight with their full HtH score, not 2
- Forming pikes is always optional - the unit may choose to deliver closing fire instead

Unit stats

The table below lists a number of suggested unit stats for selected Swedish and Russian units.



Figure 2 General Lewenhaupt leads Swedish infantry into battle

Unit	Type	Armament	HtH	Shooting	Morale	Stamina	Special
Swedish Infantry Battalion	Regular Infantry	Musket & pike	7	2	4+	3	First Fire, Elite, Ferocious Charge
Swedish Guard Battalion	Regular Infantry	Musket & pike	7	2	3+	3	First Fire, Reliable, Elite, Ferocious Charge
Swedish cavalry squadron	Regular Cavalry	Carbine, Swords	8	2	4+	3	Ferocious Charge
Russian Battalion	Regular Infantry	Musket & pike	6	3	4+	3	First Fire
Russian Guard Battalion	Regular Infantry	Musket & pike	6	3	3+	3	First Fire, Reliable, Elite
Russian Cavalry Squadron	Regular Cavalry	Carbine, swords	7	1	4+	3	

Table 1 Suggested unit stats