AAR of Pavia: Climax of the Italian Wars

Pavia is a little village in Italy about 20 miles south of Milan. In the year 1525, it was the focal point of a major battle in the Italian Wars. The combatants were the Kingdom of France against Spain and the Holy Roman Empire. Previously, France, allied with Venice, had been defeated by Spain and the Holy Roman Empire in the battle of Bicocca in 1522. Francis I, King of France, ordered an invasion of northern Italy in late 1523, but was again defeated in the Battle of Sesia. Francis I and the French Army successfully advanced into Milan in 1524 and then decided to press onward into Pavia. Failing in the assault on the city, Francis attempted to starve out the city by siege. On 24 February 1525, the Imperial Army, led by Viceroy Carlos de Lannoy, attacked. What follows is a replay of that battle.

Opening positions

On the southwestern part of the map lies the fortress of Pavia. The French siege line is in place, but the French are prohibited from attacking the fortress during the course of the game (it would require preparations far beyond the scope and scale of the game). Antonio Leyva’s Imperial garrison, on the other hand, can sortie into the playing area anytime after turn one (smuggled messages from Lannoy had allowed Levy time to prepare). The Vernacula River runs through the center of the map along with a fairly large swamp. Francis I’s Army is deployed within the boundaries of a hunting preserve protected by insur-
mountable walls. This means that there are only a few places where the Imperial Army can enter the preserve. Francis' main body is encamped on the north end of the battlefield. Francis I and the Gendarme cavalry are deployed there along with Francois de Lorraine and Suffolk’s troops.

Flourance, Tiercelin and de Pole’s men are deployed on the southern end of the hunting preserve in the eastern camp, guarding a gate through the walls, while Montmorency has a small force deployed in the southern camp to watch the siege line. Off to the west, is D’Alencon’s command, which can enter anytime after turn one. Unfortunately, there is a penalty if any of these units remain on the map at the end of play (he has to rush in, then rush back to cover his portion of the siege line).

Meanwhile, Charles Lannoy has his main body of troops entering play from the northeast. General del Vasto leads the Imperial Advance Guard, which has broken through the walls near Genesio. The Vanguard is headed by Pescara and these along with Bourbon’s Division are striking the walls from the east. A weak rearguard has been left behind to guard the Imperial earthworks and artillery emplacements.

Turn One: 24 February 1525, 6:30 am (Mist)

On turn one the game begins with mist covering the battlefield. This has an a bearing on the effectiveness of fire combat due to the poor visibility. The Imperial player has the initiative and possibly surprise so he will be the first player during the course of the game. The Advance Guard, led by General del Vasto, has already breached the hunting preserve. The Ripalda Regiment and Light Cavalry use the road to the stream near the Castel Mirabello. Then the Quesada company marches along the western side of the road. The Imperial Center marches in along the road from the north and is intent on hitting Flourance’s Camp from the rear. Lannoy brings his cavalry through the gate into the hunting preserve. These formations drive as far as they can along the road toward General de la Pole’s position. The infantry formations are much slower, but these gather toward the northern gate.

Imperial troops from the east march toward the southern gate. Bourbon’s formation moves to the Imperial earthworks. Pescara orders his loose shotte units to attack the southern gate. The French have the
gate covered by a loose shotte unit with Flourance himself. Pescara’s unit suffers an attacker disordered in the melee and has to retreat.

In the French turn, Francis I decides to bring his cavalry around the south of his camp toward the road way. Lorraine’s infantry takes up the center to defend the camp. Suffolk’s loose shotte holds the left flank. Meanwhile de la Pole swings his formation around to face Lannoy’s advancing troops. Flourance has the southern gate defended. Since the French player gains victory points for capture of the Imperial artillery, Montmorency orders his troops out of the French earth works and toward the Imperial Rearguard. He splits his force in an attempt to maintain the siege of Pavia. There is no fire combat due to line of sight and there is no melee attempted.
Turn Two: 7:00 am

The field has cleared of the fog and mist. This will remain the case for the rest of the game. Lannoy continues to advance toward de la Pole’s position but cannot make contact yet. The infantry is advancing quite slowly. There is no combat with the center. The Advance Guard also maneuvers on Francis’ camp, but del Vasto is not in contact with the enemy either.

At the southern gate, Pescara’s loose shotte make another effort to break through the gate. This will require melee using the fire factors. This attack is repulsed for a second time and the unit is forced to retreat.

In fortress Pavia, Levya tries to break out through the eastern gate. While this fails, the French have failed to cover the northern gate and a number of units pour out to threaten Montmorency’s camp. The reaction fire has no effect and the melee results in NE.

The Imperial rearguard fires its cannon at Montmorency’s loose shotte formations as they advance toward the earthworks. One of the bombardments manages to force a unit to retreat. The other salvo has no effect. At this point everything seems uneventful.

The French continue to form their lines. Lorraine’s infantry is positioned on the northern side of the hunting preserve. These move forward into contact with some of the Advance Guard light cavalry. The Imperial cavalry retreats before combat and the French infantry unit advances. Then General de la Pole forms up his troops into a defensive line north of Flourance’s camp. One of Flourance’s loose shotte is placed on de la Poles right flank. Meanwhile, Montmorency drives his troops into the Imperial entrenchments. The opposing loose shotte units exchange fire. As a result, all except the right flank of Montmorency’s line retreats.

Turn Three: 7:30 am

The Advance Guard redeploy but it is still unable to get into a position to attack. Instead, General del Vasto covers the Imperial right and retains control of Castel Montabello. Lannoy’s cavalry attempts a charge into de la Pole’s ranks. This is successful and Flourance’s loose shotte unit is destroyed.

Pescara makes another attempt to break through the southern gate of the hunting preserve. He is foiled again and his infantry routs. Flourance’s defending units suffer disorder and retreat. At the very least Pescara has tied up some of Flourance’s units, keeping them from going to the aid of de la Pole.
Montmorency is targeted with artillery fire from the Imperial artillery but there is no effect. Leyva resumes his sortie from Pavia into the French rear. This has mixed results. One of his attacking units is routed but Montmorency’s units are pushed back toward their camp too.

In their turn, the French began an advance. Lorraine moves his forces into contact with the Imperial troops at Castel Mirabello. On the southern side of the Castle, the French units enter melee, causing one of the Quesada companies to rout. Meanwhile, Tiercelin and de la Pole fall back to defend Flourance’s camp. Then another unit is moved to defend the southern gate into the hunting preserve. Both of Montmorency’s positions fire on the Imperial troops. Nothing has any meaningful effect, but the clock continues to tick.

**Turn Four: 8:00 am**

Lannoy’s infantry continues to march along the main road through the center of the hunting preserve, still out of contact. On their right, the Advance Guard fires with the loose shotte units and this leaves one of Lorraine’s infantry formations disordered. It is hit again and forced to retreat. Lannoy’s cavalry presses on against de la Pole’s retreating forces.

There is more action at the southern gate of the hunting preserve. Pescara’s men enter melee with Flourance’s loose shotte. The attack is turned back a fourth time and Pescara’s unit routs. The French unit holds the gated wall.

Now we move to the Imperial player’s earthworks. Here the artillery fires on the remnants of Montmorency’s light units. As a result the loose shotte unit is forced to retreat. This puts it back into command though. Montmorency cannot successfully attack here while simultaneously defending the rear from Leyva’s sally. Leyva attacks again to no avail. One of his loose shotte units routs and the rest achieve neutral results. Overall Montmorency is defending his camp well.
Francis I leaves Lorraine and Suffolk in charge of his camp and attempts to strike Leyva's force in the flank near Pavia. He doesn't quite get into contact though. De la Pole remains quiet as the Imperial cavalry does not dare to tackle the infantry units north of Flourance's camp. Montmorency charges the Imperial entrenchments and manages to dislodge one of the rearguard units, leaving an artillery unit exposed. Since this was with fire combat, there is no advance after combat. This will allow the Imperials to garrison the artillery again.

**Turn Five: 8:30 am**

The Imperial Advance Guard continues to hold the right flank near Castel Montabello. Lannoy's infantry is still making its way southward along the main road through the hunting preserve. There is no contact yet. Lannoy's cavalry holds the left flank. Meanwhile some of his loose shotte fire at de La Pole's position but this has no effect.

At the southern gate, Pescara tries to make a breach again with a melee combat. Both sides are disordered and consequently retreat. This leaves the walled gate temporarily undefended. Just a bit farther south, the battle between Montmorency and the Imperial rearguard continues. One of the French loose shotte units routs after enduring point blank artillery fire. Nearby more melee occurs and another of Montmorency's units routs. The French attack on the Imperial earthworks has failed.

Near Pavia, Leyva's detachment attacks the rear units in Montmorency's force and these retreat. Leyva's troops are near to capturing Montmorency's camp. The French can make another effort to defend it though.

Flourance redeploy a unit to defend the southern gate of the hunting preserve. Montmorency regroups his men toward the French earthworks. As this plays out, Francis I has his cavalry poised to charge into the rear of Leyva's formation near Montmorency's camp.

A French Gendarmes unit is pummeled with reaction fire during its charge and is disrupted. This jeopardizes the charge. Then Francis I leads another Gendarmes unit in a second charge against Leyva's troops. This time it is effective. Leyva's loose shotte unit is forced to retreat. Montmorency's troops also fire at Leyva's position but this has no effect. Over at Francis' camp, Lorraine's tercio recovers its order.

**Turn Six: 9:00 am**

Note: The Turn Record Track skips number 6 and reads seven. I am ignoring this and continuing to use the correct sequential turn numbers as they should read for this report. No big deal.

Lannoy's Center advances a step closer toward General de la Pole's position. They are now in limited contact along the main road. The French cavalry
give some ground in the face of the Imperial infantry’s strength.

Pescara tries to break the southern gate again. This has been futile thus far. After a limited melee attack, both sides retreat in disorder. Bourbon’s formation now has the Imperial left to the southern edge of the map area. He marches toward the French earthworks. Leyva regroups himself and manages an attack on Montmorency’s position in the camp. The melee forces the French unit to retreat and Leyva captures Montmorency’s camp. This secures a shift in the victory level at the end of the game in favor of the Imperial Army.

Turn Seven: 9:30 am

Near Pavia, Leyva launches into another melee against Montmorency’s formation. This yields some results and manages to put the position in further disarray. At the southern gate, Pescara fails in another attempt to crash the gates into the hunting preserve. Regardless, he is detaining two of Flourance’s loose shotte units which otherwise could be used farther north against Lannoy’s attack.

In the center, the Imperial Army attacks General de la Pole’s position. Loose shotte fire manages to hit the Black Legion unit which suffers disorder. Then the Imperial infantry melees and this forces the Legion to give ground.

On the Imperial right flank, another melee breaks out and the Imperial forces suffer disruption and retreat. The French infantry is also disordered and General de la Pole is killed. Another formation of infantry plows into the disordered troops but the combat result is NE.
Montmorency has his troops fully deployed where they started in the French earthworks. Francis I tries another charge with his Gendarmes into Leyva’s forces outside the walls of Pavia. This successfully dislodges the enemy but leaves Francis’ gendarmes disordered. Another gendarmes cavalry unit also charges one of Leyva’s loose shotte formations. This fails to produce any results and the French cavalry suffers disorder.

Unfortunately for the French, Flourance’s position in the center is crumbling. Flourance orders his loose shotte units to fire on the Imperial line. This causes a disordered result.

**Turn Eight: 10:00 am**

In the center, Frundsberg leads an attack with his infantry against the French Landsknecht infantry. The French formation routs and the Imperial infantry suffers disorder. The left side of the French line is failing.

At the southern gate, Pescara is repulsed yet again by Flourance’s loose shotte. Leyva also attempts some skirmishing with Francis and his Gendarmes, gaining only limited results.

The French player wants to eliminate some enemy units. Flourance’s troops in the center fire at the Imperial infantry but this has no effect. Then the infantry attempts melee with the disrupted troops. This causes a rout.

Near Pavia, Montmorency’s loose shotte troops fire on Leyva’s position. This has no effect and the troops remain in position. Francis I decides to move away from the enemy to recover the order of his gendarmes.

The game comes to an end here. The Imperial forces have won a minor victory based on casualties. This is shifted to a major victory due to the temporary capture of Montmorency’s camp. The French never had much of a chance to capture the rearguard’s gun placements, which could have neutralized this effect. The French player probably should have made another attempt to capture the Imperial artillery. General de la Pole was killed, but all the other leaders survived. In the historical battle, both de la Pole and Lorraine were killed, and Francis I was captured.