

# BONEY WAS A WARRIOR... INTRODUCTION

Welcome to Annual 2023, featuring *La Bataille de Kulm* 1813. Designer Lembit Tohver again brings us another epic struggle from the later years of Napoleon’s Empire. This time, one of Boney’s longtime associates, Dominique Vandamme, a querulous sort whose sharp tongue denied him a Marshalate, is matched (actually overmatched) against three parts of the Sixth Coalition – Russia, Prussia, and Austria. The two-day struggle is both violent and valiant as the hunter becomes the hunted. Can you succeed where Vandamme failed? A baton might be granted to you where it was denied him.

Wait, there’s more! Besides the main articles, we’ve brought in some of our regular folks to take you on a Napoleonic Cook’s Tour of our Boney-fied games, harking all the way back to issue four! Not only that, but we lurk in Cromwell’s Dark Shadow (as opposed to Barnabas Collins’ Dark Shadows) to see the legacy of the man who mastered the Royalists during the English Civil War. An appendix gives us insights into how Napoleon lost an army in Russia and rebuilt a new one virtually from scratch as he determined to battle for Germany against his old foes, joined by his erstwhile Marshal Jean-Baptiste Bernadotte, now a Swedish count. But to begin, we contrast the two main commanders at Kulm, Vandamme and Count Osterman-Tolstoy of Russia. Both had odd paths toward the culmination of their careers at this one battle.

We have a lot of great items in this issue, including a bit of business in the Vendée, so saddle up, draw your saber and charge into an action-packed issue with lots of extras that you have come to expect from *Against the Odds*. As always, thanks for buying and stick with us, there is a lot more to come.

Andy

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A Journal of History and Simulation  
Against the Odds Annual 2023  
published July 2025

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### Exordium:

## VANDAMME and the Cover-Boy

by KEVIN DUKE



**Dominique-Joseph René Vandamme**  
(1770-1830)

Vandamme had enlisted in the French Army in 1786 at age 16. He was sent to Martinique in 1789, but with the French Revolution blossoming, he deserted and joined a revolutionary regiment. Though his desertion cost him the sergeant’s rank he had before, with a blend of courage, intelligence, and utter ruthlessness, he rapidly rose through the ranks. By 1792 he was captain of a company that called themselves the “Chasseurs of Vandamme,” and the next year he was ordered to form a battalion, with the rank of Lieutenant Colonel, soon rising to brigadier general. He fought in early campaigns in the Low Countries and along the Rhine, where we add to his list of attributes an amazing ability to quarrel with nearly anyone, but most frequently with his superior officers. He was court-martialed for “looting” and reinstated because the French needed fighting generals. As a division commander he fought at First Battle of Stockach, where his flanking attack nearly pulled off a French victory against 3-1 odds, but was then relieved for “imposing contributions from the citizens of Wurt-

temberg for his own personal profit and tolerating the misappropriations of others under his command.” Reinstated again, he was then shuffled off again after constantly bickering with his commander, Jean Moreau. Vandamme joined the Army of the Rhine in 1800, fighting well but being returned to France “to answer questions about administrative irregularities.” (Do you see a pattern here?) With the reorganization under Napoleon, he became a division commander in Soult’s Corps and was part of Soult’s attack which captured the Pratzen Heights at Austerlitz for which he was decorated. He had a...distinctive relationship with Napoleon, and once said: “*So it is that I, who fear neither God nor the Devil, tremble like a child when I approach him.*” The relationship worked both ways.

Napoleon is said to have told him, “*If I had two of you, the only solution would be to have one hang the other.*” But on the flip side, Napoleon later also commented: “*If I were to launch a campaign against Lucifer in Hell, Vandamme would be at my back.*”

He spent much of the 1806/07 campaign besieging Breslau and was made “Count of Unseborg” after the Silesian Campaign. In the campaign of 1809, he led a small allied corps from Wurttemberg in the battles of Abensberg, Landshut and Eckmühl.

In the Russian Campaign, Vandamme was made deputy corps commander for Jérôme Bonaparte’s VIII corps but was relieved in July. Clearly, bickering with a commander like Jérôme (who left the army himself a few weeks later!) was to be expected, although the official charges were “looting and *armed robbery!*” Given the standard French ‘foraging’ practices, one wonders what it takes to be called “looting.” (But remember “looting in Russia.”)

Vandamme cooled his heels back in France until recalled in March 1813, to take over two divisions for some minor operations, where he then was placed in command of a whole corps of conscripts, and tried to practice the “training while marching” routine on his way towards Dresden, which proved a poor substitute for experience at Kulm. Those disastrous results are explained in full in the main article, but they remind us of the danger of trying to “bag” a retreating enemy, such as is seen in *ATO’s* Pocket Battle Game *Stand at Mortain*, or more fully in Issue #27 *The Pocket at Falaise* (available as game only). When you are trying to cut off an enemy force that is highly motivated by trying to escape, you had better be strong and well-placed. Vandamme was neither, and even more handicapped because the escaping enemy knew a lot more about his positions than he knew about theirs.

As we shall soon see in the main article (spoiler alert, sorry!), Vandamme was captured at Kulm, and the immediate aftermath is described there. He was imprisoned and not released until July, 1814, where he went home to resume his cantankerous