

# The GRUNWALD SWORDS

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When Grand Duke Gediminas died c. 1316, Lithuania was split between his two sons, Algirdas and Kęstutis. Algirdas retained the title of Grand Duke of Lithuania; Kęstutis's piece of the pie was called the Duchy of Trakai. When Algirdas died in 1377, his son Jogaila became Grand Duke. Jogaila was probably fifteen when this happened, though he may have been as old as twenty-five. As is usually the case in these kind of situations, both Kęstutis and Jogaila saw the other as an obstacle to his own ideal, unencumbered rule.

These tensions would flare into a full-fledged civil war in 1381. The inciting incident was a secret treaty between Jogaila and the Teutonic Order, where he promised not to intervene should the Teutonic Order attack Kęstutis. Jogaila was accompanied on his trip by Kęstutis's son, Vytautas. Jogaila was permitted to make a token effort to assist Kęstutis if not doing so would raise his uncle's suspicions, which I find hilarious. He needn't have bothered, though; when the Teutonic Order did invade Kęstutis's territory, they cheerfully announced the existence of the treaty. Vytautas told his dear old dad that no such treaty existed, because medieval families are the best. Kęstutis decided to declare war on his nephew.

At first, things didn't look so hot for Jogaila, as Kęstutis seized the throne in 1381. The following year, Jogaila raised an army to bring Kęstutis to the table to negotiate; once he was there, Jogaila threw him in a dungeon. His uncle was found dead shortly thereafter. Convenient!

But not really; Kęstutis's son Vytautas was more than a little sore about it, and the ensuing decades would see Jogaila and his cousin see-saw from allies to enemies and back again several times, with Vytautas opportunistically throwing his lot in with the Teutonic Knights. They in turn had soured on Jogaila when he didn't hand over lands he promised in return for their help against Kęstutis. Vytautas was generally little more than an irritant; Jogaila's real problem was the Teutonic Order, who would not stop their campaigns in Lithuania while it remained pagan. The solution, of course, was for Jogaila and his court to convert to Christianity. Jogaila also needed to marry, not only to produce an undisputed successor to the throne (and thus

avoid another civil war), but also to forge an alliance with one of Lithuania's stronger neighbors. Since he would have to convert as a condition of any marriage to a Christian queen or princess, it made sense to wait until he found the right girl. Jogaila's mother pushed him toward a marriage in Moscow, but an Orthodox conversion wouldn't cut the mustard for die-hard Catholics like the Teutons. Overtures came from nobles in Poland, eager to wed an experienced ruler to the eleven-year-old Queen Jadwiga. They tied the knot in 1386; Jogaila was baptized as Władysław II Jagiełło, the name he would use for the remainder of his life, and that we'll be using for the rest of this narrative.

Władysław was legally adopted by Jadwiga's mother, so that he would inherit rule of Poland should Jadwiga predecease him (which she did, within a month of giving birth in 1399, aged 25). Eventually, Władysław made Vytautas Grand Duke of Lithuania, with the caveat that he be subordinated to Polish suzerainty, and that the title pass to Władysław's children, not Vytautas's. As for the Teutonic Order, well, they couldn't very well go on crusade against the pagan state of Lithuania after it had converted, right? Right?

You probably know where this is going. "Conversion of the pagans" was, in the end, a pretext for their subjugation; the Teutonic state was always more of a political and corporeal entity, than a spiritual one. War continued between the Order and Lithuania, interspersed by the usual periods of peace bought through concessions, and allegiances against common enemies.

In 1409, hostilities broke out once again. The casus belli was Lithuania's support for an uprising in Teutonic Samogitia. The Order threatened to invade Lithuania; Poland pledged to support Lithuania; the Order declared war on both of them. A truce was brokered between all concerned a mere two months later by Wenceslaus, King of the Romans (well, Bohemia, anyway), set to expire in June 1410. This time was used by each side to build up their respective armies, and build them they did, resulting in one of the largest and most famous battles in medieval history.

*(Continued on back page)*

## Battle Rules

### Teutonic Player (First Set-Up)

All Units set up on High Ground hexes. For a strictly historical set-up, place the White Wing on the left, Gray on the Right, and Dark Gray behind the other two.

The Teutonic Player has the three Gray Command Markers. He may issue **2 Commands to 1 Wing** of his choice.

### Allied Player (First Turn, Initiative)

All Units set up between the dotted set-up line and the Woods. For a strictly historical set-up, place the Orange Wing on the right, the Yellow Wing in the center, and the remaining two Wings on the left (Red in front, Pink in rear).

The Allied Player has the three Red Command Markers. He may issue **2 Commands to 1 Wing** of his choice.

The Allied Player should place the **Retreat Marker** on the "1" space of the Lithuanian Retreat Track.

### Victory Conditions

Each Player scores Victory Points, typically for Eliminating enemy Units:

- 2VP for Light Horse and Veteran Units
- 3VP for Heavy Horse Units
- +2VP for Crown Units per Series Rule 13.1
- x VP for Lithuanian Reform (Special Rule)

Each Player checks for Victory at the end of his opponent's Player Turn (*before* that Player has a chance to Declare Initiative or Reform).

#### The Teutonic Player wins if

- He has scored 30VP, and at least 10 more than the Allied Player.

#### The Allied Player wins if

- He has scored 35VP.
- He has captured the Teutonic Camp (special rule).

### Special Terrain

The Woods on the map are provided for historical interest only, and have no effect on gameplay. If any of the Allied Player's Units occupies a Teutonic Camp Hex when he checks for Victory, he wins.



### Bombards

The Teutonic Order possessed bombards at the battle. When the Teutonic Player declares Initiative, he rolls one die:

**BOMBARD TABLE**

Result	1 - 3	4 - 5	6 - 7	8
Losses	0	1	2	3

For each Loss, the Teutonic Player chooses a full-strength enemy Unit that is adjacent to one of his own to take a step-loss. Obviously, reduced-strength and/or non-adjacent units do not qualify.

### Lithuanian Retreat & Reform

Until the first time the Allied Player Declares Initiative, at the end of every Allied Player Turn, he must advance the Retreat Marker one square on the Lithuanian Retreat Track. The Allied Player cannot Declare Initiative until the Retreat Marker occupies the "4" space on the track; if the marker occupies the "8" space of the track during the Initiative Phase, the Allied Player *must* Declare Initiative.

When the Allied Player does Declare Initiative for the first time, *instead* of taking a second turn, he performs the following Lithuanian Retreat Procedure:

1. All Orange Units that are not in EZOC are removed from the map and placed in a pool at the side of the board. *These are not Eliminated.*
2. For all remaining Orange Units (i.e., those in EZOC), the Allied Player makes a die roll. If the roll is higher than the number of enemy units exerting its ZOC on that Unit, the Unit is removed from the map as in Step 1. If the roll is less than or equal to the number of enemy units exerting ZOC, it is Eliminated, scoring 1VP for the Teutonic Player (regardless of Unit Type). *Example: if a Unit is in the EZOC of one enemy unit, it has to roll 2 or more to retreat. If the Unit is in the EZOC of three enemy units, it has to roll a 4 or more.*

Note that per the *Lengvenis* special rule that there is an important exception to the above.

Once this Procedure has been performed, place the **Reform Marker** on the "1" space of the track. At the end of each subsequent Allied Player Turn, *after* the Teutonic Player checks for Victory, the Allied Player will *either* Reform his Orange Wing (if he chooses to do so, and is eligible) or advance the Reform Marker one space along the track.

The Orange Wing is *eligible* to be Reformed if the Reform Marker occupies a space equal to, or greater than, one-half (rounded down) of the space occupied by the Retreat Marker, e.g., if the Retreat Marker is on "6", the Reform Marker must be on "3" or greater; if the Retreat Marker is on "7", the Reform Marker must be on "4" or greater, and so-on. If the Reform Marker occupies the same space as the Retreat Marker, then the Orange Wing *must* Reform.

When the Orange Wing is Reformed, the following Lithuanian Reform Procedure is performed:

1. All Units that Retreated re-enter the map, moving up to three hexes, from its East Edge (edge that abuts against the Woods hexes and the Retreat Track), at full-strength (even if they were reduced before the Retreat).
2. The Allied Player immediately scores the VP that is indicated on the track for the space currently occupied by the Reform Marker (e.g., if the marker is on "5", it's 6VP; if it's on "6", it's 9VP).
3. If he does not currently possess the Initiative Marker, he may take it from his opponent. If he already has it, he keeps it.
4. He may, at his option, now Declare Initiative. Nifty!



### Lengvenis

The Orange/Red Unit represents men under the command of Lengvenis, brother of Władysław II. Lengvenis and his men did not flee the battlefield with the rest of the Lithuanians. Prior to

Lithuanian Retreat, this Unit belongs to the Orange Wing. The effects of Lithuanian Retreat are not applied to this Unit; it doesn't run, and it doesn't get Eliminated by die roll. For the remainder of the game, this Unit belongs to, and activates with, the Red Wing.

As a designer who has an interest in the middle ages, I'm always looking for battles that have a "hook", some unique set of circumstances that I can build a proper and playable game around. There are lots of medieval battles that basically boil down to, "the two sides lined up, and then bashed the heck out of each other until one side cried uncle", and you can't really tell that story over and over again, or expect gamers to purchase it over and over again. There needs to be something, even if it turns out to be something rather subtle and lovely, that can be modeled in the game, and that merits the game existing in the first place. I was fortunate that the Battle of Grunwald came with more than one hook, and that those hooks are big, obvious game-changers.

For one, there are an awful lot of horsies; cavalry overwhelmingly dominates the line-up for both armies. This makes it an ideal battle to show off S&S II's new division of cavalry into Heavy Horse and Light Horse types, and the subtle advantages (and disadvantages) of each. If you ever thought, "man, I wish this battle had way more horses," then this is the one for you! Many battles of the period can be fairly static, but this is one with a much stronger emphasis on mobility. It's not just about bashing the other guy; it's about leaving yourself enough room to maneuver, and limiting your opponent's ability to do the same. The Teutonic Player absolutely must prevent the enemy from breaking through and getting in the rear, while the Allied Player has to guard against getting outflanked and bottled up. This is especially true of his red and pink wings, which can be left in an extremely precarious situation when the Lithuanians retreat.

This is the other "hook", and one that the whole game really turns around. The Allied Player needs to know when to call for the retreat, and when to reform. If the Lithuanians leave the field too early, they're not going to make much of a difference when they come back. If it's put off for too long, there's not going to be many of them left, and the Teutonic Player may have an insurmountable lead. Likewise, if they reform too early, the VP isn't going to be worth it, but if they wait too long, the battle might end before they can get back. A successful Allied Player will do both at just the right time, but "right" is highly contextual, changing from one play to the next, and perhaps only really identifiable in retrospect. I really dig this kind of thing, as it tends to make for a very tense and replayable scenario.

I hope you and yours enjoy *The Grunwald Swords*, and the other *Shields & Swords II* titles coming down the pipeline.

Tom Russell

*(Continued from front)*

The Teutonic Order was expecting to be attacked separately by the Poles and Lithuanians, and so was surprised when a single massive combined army comprising Poles, Lithuanians, Ruthenians, Tatars, Czechs, Moldavians, and Russians crossed the Vistula. As usual, troop estimates vary tremendously, but there may have been as many as 39,000 men, most of them on horseback, fighting for Władysław and Vytautas. By contrast the Order, under the command of Grandmaster Ulrich von Jungingen, had somewhere around two-thirds to three-quarters as many men, pulled from some twenty-two Germanic nations.

The two armies met on a field near Grunwald and Tannenburg (the latter an alternate name for the battle). The Teutonic Order took a strong defensive position, and waited for their enemies, who occupied the nearby wood, to come out and form their own battle line. And waited. And waited.

And waited.

After several hours, von Jungingen sent envoys to Władysław with two swords, a common invitation to commence battle. But these plain, unadorned swords were unworthy of a king, and were accompanied with insults. The envoys explained that they were meant to help the Poles and Lithuanians to stop cowering in the woods, and to come out and fight. "Maybe you're worried there's not enough room? We can move back to make more room for you." As if on cue, the Teutonic forces moved back. "Or if there's somewhere else you want to fight, that's fine, too. Wherever you want us to beat you, we'll go there, not a problem." (Paraphrasing, of course.)

Władysław took the swords, and soon their line was formed. The Polish heavy cavalry were on the left, and the lighter Lithuanian cavalry under Vytautas were on the right, with a smattering of foot soldiers in the center. The action began on the right, where Vytautas's forces clashed with Teutonic heavy horse. Fairly early on, the Lithuanians made a run for it, leaving the Poles to face the enemy alone. The fighting was fierce, and closely-fought, but it appeared that the tide was turning in the Order's favor. That's when Vytautas returned, appearing on the Teutonic flank. (Whether the retreat was real panic, or a strategic feint, as Vytautas claimed, can't be reliably ascertained.) By sheer weight of numbers and momentum, the Polish-Lithuanian army smashed their Teutonic counterpart to bits. Most of the Teutonic leadership, including von Jungingen, were slain, and their camp was sacked. As is usually the case with medieval battles, the loser took more casualties during the rout than during the fighting. Thousands were taken captive.

Grunwald, along with the Battle on the Ice some fifty years earlier, is commonly seen as the decisive defeat that broke the "invincible" Teutonic Order. But as is usually the case, it's not quite as cut-and-dry as all that. The war itself dragged on until the Peace of Thorn early the following year, due to a failure on the part of the Poles and Lithuanians to capitalize on their victory by quickly advancing on the Teutonic capitol. The terms of the peace released the knights that Władysław had taken prisoner in exchange for the equivalent of 44,000 pounds of silver, to be paid over the course of four years. This was a huge sum, necessitating heavy taxes and borrowing that crippled the Teutonic state and drained it of its wealth and resources.

It managed to limp on, in one form or another, for the next hundred years or so, going to war against Poland several times before it was transformed, in 1525, into the Duchy of Prussia, a secular (and Protestant) state under Polish suzerainty.

Perhaps the most lasting effect of the Battle of Grunwald was psychological. It remains one of the most celebrated events in Poland's long and checkered military history, and a decisive part of the tapestry of the Polish "Golden Age" that began with the reign of Władysław II. Likewise, the Teutonic Order's humiliating defeat cast a surprisingly long shadow over the various states that would coalesce into Germany. So much so that five centuries later, Hindenburg framed Germany's 1914 victory at the Battle of Tannenburg as revenge, even though *that* battle took place some thirty miles east.

As for the two swords that von Jungingen sent to Władysław as an insult? They became instead a point of national pride, forming part of Poland's crown jewels for some four hundred years. To keep them out of Russian hands during the November Uprising, they were entrusted to a priest in 1831, who hid them in his house. Upon his death twenty-odd years later, the Russians searched the house and found the swords. Their whereabouts today remain a mystery.

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