

Project Ludus
HIGH LEVEL CONCEPT

Concept

A ground level & management Gladiator experience in a simulated world.

Genre

Action/Management/Sandbox/RPG

Target Audience

Ages 25-40 / Male / Hardcore + Action + Simulation gamers / 16/18+ Age Rating

USP

Dynamic, creative combat with showmanship + fame element / story generator gameplay via sandboxy systems / Spectacle Management

DESIGN

Core Inspirations

Management: Football Manager / Crusader Kings

Sandbox World: Battle Brothers / Drox Operative/ Wartales / Sid Meier's Pirates

Combat Gameplay: Mordhau - Chivalry / Dark Messiah of Might and Magic

Game World

World is a mix of biomes, filled with countries taking after several historical culture types.

Possible proc-gen at campaign start with player set parameters for world features & AI behaviours.

No matter what form the world takes the resulting setting highly prizes gladiatorial combat. It is the primary entertainment of the world, often tied to festivals, political events, and religious ceremonies.

Player Experience

The player is a singular fighter or Lanista (head of a Gladiator school) in an exaggerated historical setting. The game should use a variety of intertwining systems to allow coming to grips with and overcoming obstacles to be thoughtful and rewarding.

As a fighter. Intricate, immediate, and creative combat mechanics should instill a feeling of resourcefulness and gradual mastery. With strong kinetics providing catharsis for landing blows or pulling off clever manoeuvres. With stats adding long term decision making and variety.

As a sandbox/management game. There should be a feeling of growth and politicking, allowing a player to feel part of a moving world where they can use their knowledge to get ahead or their wits and resources to respond to and even influence proceedings. There should always be something to grow, to gain, or to guide, ideally several somethings at once competing for attention. With exciting push and pull.

Results of these two branches of gameplay should interact. With play in one contributing to the other.

Game POV

- First/third person in Arena/Combat scenarios / Free Camera when spectating
- Overhead/Strategy view in overworld

Visual Style

- Mordhau Visual aesthetic. Realistic artstyle in a historical setting.
- Overworld reminiscent of Wartales or M&B Bannerlord.

Tone

- Reality adjacent with dry/dark comedy. Satisfying & tough combat with understated slapstick & amusing voice lines, with dry comedy in text. World must feel cohesive and like it believes in itself.
- *For writing example: Crusader Kings, these are cynical, cutthroat games where you and everyone else are vying to get ahead, while sardonic writing keeps the experience from being too bleak.*
- *Meanwhile combat is harsh, but when a guy tumbles off a platform screaming, only to plant on spikes. The ideal reaction should be both "That was brutal" and "That was hilarious"*

Game World Fiction (as presented to player)

The player is involved in the business of Gladiatorial games (either as a participant, manager, or both) in a time blended setting. Several analogues for historical times & places, but all with a culture fixated on such games

DETAILED GAME DESIGN

Core Loops

There are three core loops. The player can choose to begin at any of these levels and move between them as their campaign develops.

Prisoner: In this mode. The player has no control over what matches they participate in or their position in the battle. They have limited control over their equipment and training. They may be in a fighting pit, an arena, or purchased by a Lanista. They may advance out of this via receiving freedom from their Lanista, escape, or by special event. (Ie. Reward for exemplary performance in a match witnessed by a powerful figure)

This mode is for the player who wants to start from the bottom and earn their way up. Play as an underdog facing greater challenges. Or else just wants to engage in combat quick play style and not have to interact with any of the higher level systems. The threat of falling to this should add tension and a failure state alongside death.

Free Fighter: At this level the player has some autonomy and can engage with overworld systems such as travel, shopping, and equipment. It is up to the player to travel to arenas, participate in events, earn their own money and construct their own fame.

The player may also enter a contract with a Lanista to join their Ludus. Which can allow entering bouts their own fame and/or reputation couldn't achieve. Joining a Ludus should also act as a middleground. Allowing more freedom than the prisoner, but more structure (and consistent pay) than being independent.

This mode is for players who wish for more freedom than the prisoner but without the management systems of the Lanista. Players who just want to focus on a single gladiator and their career/fame/reputation. Or players who wish to work their way up to Lanista over time.

Lanista: This is where the game pivots into a more managerial form. The player is tasked with acquiring gladiators, keeping them fed, equipped. And Ferrying them to events to participate. The Lanista must administer his stable. Allowing wounded fighters time to recover, looking out for potential fresh hires. Trying to buy out contracts for famous/talented gladiators already under a rival Lanista. Working with fellow schools or reaching out to Arenas to organise bouts. As well as taking requests from political figures, nobles, and other powerful people to supply fighters for events.

The Lanista can construct a school or stable. Either by purchasing land in a city or putting one up elsewhere on the overworld. (with differing incentives for each decision)

This allows a permanent base to house gladiators. Training grounds to improve or keep stats stable. Storage for equipment and facilities to keep them in repair. As well as hire help like cooks, healers, security, and transport to help keep their fighters fresh between shows and make travel easier. The schools fame and recognition may pull fighters to come and request to join where you may find promising fighters at a lower rate than scouting.

The player can also construct their own arena from which host their own events, lease the ground out to others, and with a tile editor create their own arena layouts.

This is for players who want to engage in more strategic gameplay alongside or instead of controlling gladiators in battle. There is far greater room for earning money and having effects in the overworld.

The player can not only recruit but play as gladiators in fights, allowing for them to experience a mix of builds. Or simulate and watch the battles.

By building their own arena they can set their own events and customise their own grounds. Trying to entertain the crowd a safe distance from the bloodied sand.

A player may retire their character or return to fighting at their discretion, perhaps selling their school off to another Lanista, or handing off the reins to one of their retinue.

A good overall loop to think about that is similar is Mount & Blade. The Combat and Overworld gameplay feed into and support one another.

Objectives and Progression

As a prisoner, the player has to survive. Scavenging what equipment they can from battles and using their limited training time to stay match fit. They have to fight and earn their freedom. Retiring a fighter post this stage may work as an end goal, or just fighting until age stops them, or they may continue...

As a free fighter, a player may continue to grow stats, gather an inventory of diverse equipment. And through battling grow their renown to take part in greater and greater events. Eventually winning invites to events and other festivities.

The free fighter may seek to join a stable with a strong reputation or join and win glory for a small one. They may eventually retire rich and famous, or they may decide to try their own hand...

As a Lanista. The player should always be looking for opportunities to participate and expand. Keeping an eye on the calendar for any upcoming exhibitions and tournaments, as well as holidays and religious events they may participate in around the world. While responding to requests for appearances or trying to set up their own events and inviting others to participate.

All the while looking to accumulate greater resources and be on the hunt for promising fighters to add to their own strength. Through making connections with political, religious, and business figures and gaining recognition for their school they will be able to participate in larger events.

With enough funds and/or connections they can purchase or construct their own schools or arenas. Allowing them to host their own events and hire out the grounds to others for further profit and prestige.

Game Systems Support Order

World Generation / Character Creator + RPG System / Event + Arena Generation / Combat System / Notability System / AI Behavioural Profiles / Overworld + Locations / Travel / Random Events / Inventory & Shopping / Ludus Management

WORLD GENERATION

- The player may select from a list of preset worlds, generate one to their tastes, or play it totally random. This should add longevity to the game and allow a player to tune the world closer to what they want out of their experience.

- The Civilisation games should be a basis with some simplifications to fit the theme.

Features such as landmass type (ie. standard/islands/single continent/random etc.) Resource amount, Water level, rainfall, world age. Travel will be an ongoing concern for Free fighters and Lanista's with water, forests, and elevation providing extra challenges.

Key Options

Number of Countries: ?-?

- Countries can share a culture type, with some behavioural modifiers to make them distinct.

Culture type will determine the aesthetics their cities/arenas while behaviour modifiers change their approach to diplomacy. As well as what arena events they prefer.

Frequency of Settlements: Rural/Low/Standard/High

- Can be set by country or totally randomised

Independent Settlements: None/low/standard/High

- Independent settlements are dwellings which don't belong to a parent country.

World Prosperity: Meagre/Poor/Standard/Thriving/Prosperous

- Determines the average "wealth" of the world. With lower wealth leading to more deprived towns with more ramshackle events.

- Higher wealth leading to glamorous cities with larger and more furnished arenas.

Aggression: Pacifist/peaceful/standard/aggressive/total war

- Determines the average aggression of countries and how frequently they go to war. (Note: Countries will have differing aggressions as standard due to Country traits, this affects base aggression)

Banditry: None/Low/Standard/High

- Determines the number of criminal or dangerous elements in the world. From standard bandits to highwaymen and barbarian tribes. Makes travel more dangerous but provides a source of unusual fighters (perhaps these sorts still appear in jails to keep them available to a Lanista)

Ironman: On/Off

- Standard fare, manual saves unavailable, game saves at consistent junctures. No take backs.

Random events: None/Uncommon/Standard/Extra/Brutal/Extra Brutal

- Determines number of standard events the player encounters in locations and during travel. (perhaps could be split into sliders for event types)

- While random events can have negative outcomes, by default none should result in death. Brutal allows for random events with much harsher consequences. For those who like having that bit of extra uncertainty.

Static World: Off/On

- Off: Settlements and countries will develop over time. Shrinking, growing, getting wiped out and new ones appearing as the world progresses. (this is default)

- On: The world will remain as it is from initial generation. Wars may be fought, but no territory will ever change hands nor will any settlement be removed from play.

Standardised Settlements: Off/On

- Off: Settlements may lack certain features. Making travel to new lands more perilous.
- On: Settlements of all sizes will always feature an inn, an armoury, a healer, a general store, and at least one fighting pit or arena

Ageing: Off/On/Immortal Player

- Determines if characters age over time, with fresh agents (overworld characters) appearing over time to replace the old.
- With immortal player, every character but the PC ages over time.

Procedural Arena Generation: Off/On/Random/Insane/random Insane

- *The game should use a tile based system to generate arenas to enhance longevity. Using a safe degree of randomisation to keep matches fresh and let the player depend more on skill and quick thinking than rote memorisation of layouts and approaches.*
- *Toggled off the arenas will use a pre-set batch of arena layouts set per arena/city/culture type. For the player who enjoys memorisation of layouts and approaches or finds the generation unsatisfying.*
- *Toggled on the arenas will procedurally generate. Following an algorithm that produces navigable but novel layouts.*
- *Toggled insane the generation will be a lot less sensible and more extreme, giving way to far more outlandish and potentially unfair layouts.*
- *The random toggles will have some arenas using pre-sets and others randomly generated to add some unpredictability. Insane Random has some arenas which utilise insane layouts.*

(Perhaps option on proc-gen and insane arenas to save a layout post match, adding it to the pool for campaigns with it turned off, or allowing a player to revisit this layout in a quick match or multiplayer game)

Advanced: Disable/Force Traits | Modifiers | Behavioural profiles | Disable Equipment

- Allows a player to toggle whether certain arena/country traits, round modifiers, and AI behavioural profiles are disabled or forced on. They can also disable equipment they do not like.

World Continuity + Retirement

- When the player ends a run. The world does not go with their character. The world persists and if the player wishes they may re-enter it as someone else.
- A character may be quit or retired. If quit they simply become an NPC, with image swapped out for the closest fitting AI behavioural profile/stats would suggest. They will continue to act as a free fighter or lanista and may be encountered until they die or retire.
- If a PC is retired. The player may choose how. With choices dependent on stats, money, fame, and world relations. A trainer at a ludus? A wandering merchant who may catch one of your games? Or simply settle down and exit the game.

World Generation Conclusion

- The player should be able to find a baseline experience via default settings and perhaps a default map. Then tune the game to be closer to their ideal gladiator fantasy.

Character Selection

- Once the world is generated a map will be visible to the player. It will generate settlements and characters. The player may click on settlements to get lists of fighters, or find them on the overworld, and choose to take control of them, ala. Crusader Kings

- If the player wishes to make their own character however. They pick a spot on the map and begin Character Creation.

CHARACTER CREATOR

- Cosmetic appearance options for facial structure, hair options, skin tone, and gender.
- Build should have some mechanical effects to add variety to gameplay, with build buffing some stats and subtracting from others.
- *On the one hand this is to add visual clarity so players can start eyeballing foes, but in a manner more reserved than classic big/slow and small/fast foes. Could have issues however with stats contradicting build.*

- Afterwards, players can allocate points in stats. With stats operating on a 1-100 slider, talent ranges determining growth or decay potential. Adequate points for good intended start would require testing (or perhaps setting starting stats by questionnaire?). But points would need to account for both setting a base stat and talent ranges.

(Let players create a godly powerful starting character at the cost of disabling achievements as CKIII's ruler creator does)

RPG SYSTEM Part 1: Fighter Stats & Traits

- Stats in this game should be differentiate how the player utilises their fighter(s) and how an AI acts during a fight with higher stats having greater influence on approach. In the case of two stats overlapping the AI will function based on a mix of stat preference and/or Behaviour Profile.

Health

Health determines the amount of damage a fighter can take before they're incapacitated or killed.

AI influence: N/A

Strength

Strength influences the damage dealt by attacks to enemies and objects. As well as determining knockback and knockdown on hits. It also influences attack speed on heavier weapons, the speed of thrown weapons, and lessens movement speed loss in heavier armours. (Larger builds grant a bonus to strength, leaner ones incur a penalty)

AI Influence: Strength priority leads to fighters who focus on powerful attacks. They'll break through obstacles to close the distance. And wilfully attack into blocks hoping to force their way through. In objective modes high strength fighters will prioritise objectives requiring strength.

Overworld Effect: Strength effects how much inventory the player can move on the overworld without penalty.

Stability

Stability is resistance to guard break, knockback, knockdown, and having ones weapon hit from their grasp. (Larger builds grant a bonus to stability, leaner ones incur a penalty)

AI Influence: Stability priority leads to fighters who stand their ground and will primarily block as their defensive measure. In objective modes they will prioritise guarding objectives.

Overworld Effect: Stability lessens fatigue penalty from moving inventory during travel

Agility

Agility determines base movement speed. As well as influencing the speed of dodges, ducking, climbing/clambering, and standing up after knockdown. It influences attack speed on all weapons, with a lesser effect on heavier weapons. (leaner builds grant a bonus to agility, larger builds incur a penalty)

AI Influence: Agility priority leads to fighters who will attempt to dodge and feint more often in battle. They will move to higher ground and take movement based shortcuts to get around the arena.

In objective modes high agility fighters will prioritise objectives requiring speed.

Overworld Effect: Has minor effect on overworld movement on foot

Dexterity

Dexterity determines the speed of changing weapons, picking up and manipulating objects. The accuracy of thrown weapons. It also influences attack speed of precision weapons and thrust attacks. (leaner builds grant a bonus to dexterity, larger ones incur a penalty)

AI Influence: Dexterity priority leads to fighters who hang back, preferring hit and run or harassing tactics. Using thrown objects and weapons to soften an opponent and only closing the gap on weakened opponents or when it becomes the safest option.

Endurance

Endurance determines stamina. Which is consumed when attacking, blocking, dodging, sprinting, climbing, carrying heavy objects, moving when overencumbered, or moving with low health.

AI Influence: Endurance priority lead to fighters who play aggressively, overwhelming and trying to tire opponents with relentless attacks.

Overworld effect: Determines how long a unit can travel before it needs to rest.

Recovery

Recovery determines how quickly a fighter recovers from wounds received during battle.

AI Influence: Lower recovery fighters will surrender faster, while higher recovery fighters will hold out longer.

Overworld Effect: Quicker recovery from fatigue built up during travel.

Appeal*

Higher appeal leads to greater fame for successful bouts, lower fame decay, and lessens reputation loss for defeats. Higher appeal fighters are also judged less harshly for dishonourable conduct in arenas which care for it while lower appeal fighters are more heavily scrutinized.

AI Influence: High appeal fighters tend to draw the greatest aggro. Especially from low appeal fighters with the Jealousy or Glory Hunter Behaviours.

Overworld Effect: Fame and Appeal have an effect on the random events one may experience on the overworld.

**Also a Lanista Stat*

Fighter Traits

- Traits can be purchased at character creation for set amount of points and NPC fighters may possess these. Ideally traits should have both a benefit and a drawback to make them more interesting and further differentiate fighters as having strengths and weaknesses to account for, as well as where appropriate doubling as AI Behavioural profiles. Examples below:

One to Watch: The audience is naturally drawn to you. This grants an appeal bonus, increases fame gain and range, and exaggerates reputation gain and loss as your actions are far less beneath notice. This also draws the ire of other fighters, making you more likely to be targeted by those who are jealous and making positive interactions with other fighters who don't share this trait less common. It also the consequences of dishonourable play in matches where fair conduct matters.

Beneath Notice: All but the most ardent of spectators can't bother to watch you. This incurs an appeal and fame penalty. However audiences are less likely to notice and scrutinise dishonourable actions like backstabbing or cowardly, reserved play.

Ragdoll: Ragdoll massively lowers Stability, making getting knocked flat far more likely. It also lowers the damage received when getting knocked down, and a player can ragdoll on command, drastically lowering fall damage.

Iron Grip: Iron grip makes it far harder for a weapon to be knocked from a players hand. This unbreakable clasp also slows changing weapons and interacting with objects.

Pugilist: You were born too early for your true sport, grants bonus damage to fists and fist weapons while slowing attack speed with all other weapons and raising speed penalties for medium armour and up.

Relentless: The best defence is a great offence. Stamina loss for attacks are halved, while stamina costs for blocking and defending are doubled. (*inverse trait Untouchable*)

Survival Sense: There are eyes in the back of your head. Offers a visual warning when an out of view attack is coming your way, and highlights distant ranged attackers aiming in your direction. This focus on your own survival comes at the cost of a good deal of information. You cannot see the location of objectives and your allies health.

Berserker: After taking sufficient damage you can enter a berserker rage. During which you swing faster, hit harder, tire slower, and become near immune to knockdown. However, in this crazed state, you lose the ability to track your wounds or stamina. Your UI is hidden and indicators of being hit are muffled. Your heightened state lasts a minute, and your UI won't return until the match is over.

Objectivist: You excel in objective modes. Refunds some stamina when attacking the elephant or breaking statues, lessens stamina loss for pushing the boulder and lessens speed penalty when carrying the flag. But lowers damage towards other foes in such modes.

Great Potential: You possess limits beyond most people. Your talent ranges can go from -30/+30 But you have to push yourself more to maintain your strengths. Increases rate of stat decay and lessens time before decay begins.

Long Lived: You have a great constitution, and will age slower than most. However, you will develop slower in turn. (only available with ageing on)
Delays fighter ageing by 10-15 years, decreases stat growth. No effect on stat decay.

RPG SYSTEM PART 2: Manager Stats

- Management stats primarily influence the overworld and Lanista portions of the game. During Character creation points for these skills should be from a separate pool.

Appeal

Appeal is broadly charisma. Having an effect on most social checks. Combined with your own fame as a Lanista, it can help you get into events and get your fighters into positions otherwise above their station. Higher appeal also draws more people and fighters to your school, and allows you to better negotiate their contracts to be more to your benefit.

Command

Command is your ability to keep things moving. High command keeps fighters loyal, lessens the effect of fatigue during battle, and raises the damage your fighters will endure before surrendering unless told not to.

Intuition

Your ability to size up people and situations. Higher intuition gives you more accurate and detailed information on the stats, talent ranges, and traits of others.

Navigation

Navigation is the ability to travel. Finding faster routes and making greater time across the overworld. Maps of an area can boost Navigation skills depending on the quality.

Healing

Your ability to treat wounds and make remedies. High healing aids recovery in fighters under your care. And can be useful when a dedicated healer isn't available.

Trainer

Your ability to raise the fighter stats of others through dedicated tutelage, raises the rate of stat gains for those receiving training.

Manager Trait Examples

- As with fighter traits, these can double as AI Behavioural traits, but for the behaviours of Lanistas. These mainly focus on the types of schools one excels in managing. Examples below:

Warden: Prisoner management is in your cells. Eases negotiation for buying prisoners. Makes it easier to take defeated bandits prisoner, and lessens reputation penalty for keeping Prisoners beyond the point they have been deemed to have "earned" freedom. This trait makes free fighters harder to negotiate with.

Tight Knit: Less is more is your motto. As long as you keep five fighters or less you have large bonuses to their stat development, fame gain, recovery, and suffer less from the effects of fatigue. This is for the player who only wants to focus and get the most out of a small selection of fighters. Going above 6 has rapidly loses these benefits as they invert into negatives, worsening for each additional fighter.

Smooth Operation: In your world, nothing goes good, it goes great or it doesn't go at all. The stats/efficiency of your fighters, healers, trainers, smithies, and transport are all increased as long as moral is high, and drastically fall should morale drop.

RPG SYSTEM Part 3: Talent Ranges

Talent Range is an attribute each fighter and Lanista stat possesses. Each character has differing base stats (randomly generated for NPCs and potentially for the player, who may also build their character) and tied to each is a talent range, determining how far it can travel from its base. With maximums of -20/+20. A fighter with a Base strength of 60 and a talent range of 10/20 may through inaction decay to 50, and through Training grow to 80. Wounds and status ailments however may knock it below the talent range.

At character creation, raising a base stat should cost more than setting talent range. And furthering how much a stat can degrade via range should refund some points.

In a non-OP intended set up a player should be thinking of what kind of fighter they want to be, not about maxing all stats in a single playthrough. This should also lend variance to a Ludus and give a Lanista player incentive to seek out a variety of fighters.

Learning someones current stats is done through interaction, but learning their skill ranges takes more time. This ambiguity should hopefully lead to some surprises over long play sessions as repeat bouts with the same gladiator may surprise. And a Lanista can only learn a fighters true potential after meaningful scouting. Lending more longevity and personal involvement to seeking fresh talent. Finding a Gladiator with great potential should feel like a big moment by itself.

Some stats, such as Recovery and Appeal develop differently. Recovery builds then tapers off over time, but in the short term recovery can be directly influenced. Recovery suffers if a wounded fighter has to train, travel, or continue fighting when health is below max.

Meanwhile rest or a visit from a doctor shortly after receiving a wound hastens recovery. In the midst of a tournament medicines may get a fighter back in fighting shape temporarily, with a potentially worse crash when they've worn off.

Meanwhile Appeal isn't gained the same way. Random events, promotions, worn gear, and behaviour in battle can grow or weaken appeal. And over time high appeal fighters fall out of fashion with the public.

Manager Stats decay at a far slower rate than fighter stats. Where a fighter may atrophy in weeks, it takes months for manager stats to drop to any notable degree.

- Wounds can have a negative impact on talent range. Worsening a fighters floor and hurting their ceiling.

RPG System Part 4: States

- States are extra modifiers which have an influence on other stats.

Fatigue: Builds during travel (at a rate determined by terrain, method, and encumbrance). High fatigue saps all stats, with a heightened impact on Endurance and Stability.

Age: With ageing on, fighters grow older as time progresses. With Fighter stats beginning to diminish as they age into their 40s and rate of decay accelerating from there. The point at which decay begins and its rate is different for each fighter, with wounds hurrying along the effects of ageing.

Morale: The general happiness of your school. At lower morale people may start requesting extra money or items to remain or begin to leave the school. Even breaking contract at low enough morale. Morale also influences fatigue gain, as unmotivated fighters are less willing to exert themselves.

Morale is maintained primarily through winning events and staying busy. And can be helped by buying good food and keeping the men entertained at taverns and inns.

Drunkenness: Buying drinks is an easy way to give a shot to your morale, and may have strategic benefits, but the risks are heady. Being drunk offers some damage reduction, but slows swing speed and makes you more susceptible to knockdown. Drink responsibly, and preferably not just before a match.

Relationship: This is a per-actor inter-character status possessing a variety of contextual effects.

- A merchant who likes a player may offer better prices whereas one who dislikes you will raise them or refuse to deal with you whatsoever.

- An Arena proprietor who likes you may lower fame requirements so you can join his games. While one who dislikes you will raise them, or try to make sure you don't hear when his arena announces an event.

- A fighter who likes you may run to your aid should you come into trouble on the overworld, while a fighter who dislikes you will ignore your plight or even cause problems via random events.

Relationship is gained and lost through social interactions and random events. Characters of similar reputation have better relationship gain.

RPG SYSTEM PART 5: TRAINING & STAT GROWTH

Training

Training is an overworld action in which a player trades time to maintain or raise stats. When training, a player chooses which stats to focus on. With a basic training action a fighter can maintain up to 2 stats, or raise 1. If a stat isn't maintained it begins to decay within its talent range.

Training Gear boosts efficacy. Different Stats require their own training gear. (*ie. Weights for Strength*) and the quality effects how much it boosts the efficacy of training said stat. Use of training gear allows for maintaining 3 stats or raising 2 if the player possesses all the needed gear.

Training Grounds are better yet. At a training ground you can maintain 4 stats or raise 3. The quality of the equipment impacting if a stat is raised. The same tiers of Training Ground equipment to Training Gear are more effective.

One character can also *Receive Training* from another. This aids the growth of the recipient and has a positive relationship effect on them both. The effect they have is based on a mixture of their Trainer Stat and their own proficiency in the stat being trained.

Training raises fatigue and hurts recovery, potions from doctors may increase its efficacy or lessen its downsides.

Raising Manager Stats

Manager Stats cannot be trained. These require books or tutelage. Books can be purchased from archives and read during travels. Books have a stat limit depending on how helpful they are. Easier books can be read faster but have lower caps. While harder texts require higher stat floors to comprehend and are slower to grasp.

Tutelage can be provided by another, but unlike fighter stats where someone can still train a person stronger than them in the relevant stat. The tutor has to be more knowledgeable on the subject, and can only tutor someone up to their level.

Goals

This approach to stats is to add questions to time management on the overworld. Time should be cost food and for Lanistas, money. So a balance must be struck. Where days are occasionally spent so a fighter can stay match fit. Fighters of great potential may need extended periods of training while the rest of a school picks up the slack.

Meanwhile, a solo free fighter may have to miss out on more gainful opportunities to become stronger. But this will also turn what could otherwise be dull periods into a boon! A string of time with no matches, food topped up, nothing to do? Ideal time to train!

ARENA + EVENT GENERATION

Overview

- Depending on the size, wealth, and culture of the arena the selection of events will vary. Fighting Pits, backrooms, and small, less wealthy arenas can only put on straightforward events like brawls, duels, and last man standing rounds. With little to no gimmicks in layout. Meanwhile larger, well off arenas will more often host objective based games, as well as more complex layouts with hazards and traps for gladiators to utilize or fall victim to.

There will also need to be other sets for special events: Backrooms for inns/taverns. Town square arenas for festivals and public ceremonies. Palatial interiors for parties and social events, wilderness and roadside maps for fighting off attacking criminals while travelling between settlements. (different geography, architecture, and aesthetics between biome and culture types)

Event Generation

- Arenas will regularly put on single matches, show days, multi-day tournaments, and multi-arena leagues lasting in-game weeks or even months. These will be one off matches or strings of varying lengths with different scoring types. Seeded brackets of individuals/teams, points, elimination. Some events will only accept free fighters or schools, others will be mixed. Often there will be prisoner only positions. Fighters and Lanistas are scored separately depending on individual or school performance.

- During certain tournament types a player may opt out of matches. This comes at the cost of score but allows time for recovery, or perhaps they struggle with certain event types and it is tactical to withdraw. Lanistas will pick which of their fighters participate when and where. Filling roles as they see fit.

- When an event is announced free fighters and Lanistas in the overworld will travel to fill spaces in the event. The player will have to make their way over while spaces still permit. Invites may be sent ahead of announcement to those the arena proprietor wants participating.

- A free fighter or lanista with sufficient fame or money may also hire the arena to put on their own events at potential loss or profit. Hiring an arena will limit you to event types and layouts the arena supports.

- Any event a player doesn't attend will have its outcome simulated based on stats.

- Events will have set coin prizes per place, but a bonus pot is rewarded for skilled play (*dodges & parries, earning a lot of knockouts, trap kills, not getting hit, long range headshots etc.*)

- The winner gets the greatest prize, with runners up getting smaller rewards

Arena Generation

- Arenas come in various shapes (circle/square/rectangle/octagon) and sizes.

(pit/small/medium/large/grand), with aesthetic differences dependent on arena culture type.

- Utilise a tile/block setup (similar to Fortnite in construction) to have arenas composed of doors, breakable wooden walls, unbreakable stone walls, cover, structures, stairs, ladders, and elevated walkways. Should be able to reliably generate sensible arenas, as well as be easily understood so a player can design their own layouts. Generation may be subject to arena traits & round modifiers

- Interactive elements such as torches, hazards (e.g. spike pits, fires, oil slicks), traps (e.g. spinning blades/crushers/pusher walls) and fixtures/turrets (catapults/ballistae/hwachas)

Hazards may be constant, intermittent, or delayed. Traps may be automatic or manual, and the player and AI should be able to interact with these via triggers such as levers and pressure plates.

(*Evil Genius a good basis for simple trap logic*)

- Items strewn about the arena for use as impromptu weapons (sticks, stones, smashed objects, vases)

Match Types

- Duel: A one on one between fighters.
- Spectacle Duel: Multiple duels staged simultaneously
- Endurance Duels: Multiple duels staged simultaneously, with winners going on to face each other until just one is left.

- Last Man Standing: Last fighter standing wins
- Last Team Standing: The last team standing wins

- Deathmatch: Several teams (of between 2-10) enter one at a time as the prior is defeated. Last team standing wins

- Commander: Each time has a commander to defend, if the commander is incapacitated or surrenders the match is over

- Statue Smash: Each team has a statue they must defend, a team loses when their statue is destroyed

- Capture the Flag: Capture the enemy flag, don't let the enemy capture your flag.

- Boulder Roller: A large, circular boulder is placed in the centre of the arena, the first team to roll it through the enemy gate wins the round. The arena is split into two teams between all participating members, with 4-16 active participants at a time.

- Horde: A wave of lightly equipped prisoners are sent at a team of free fighters.
- Man Vs. Beast: A team of humans must survive against nature. Bulls, lions, wolves, and other dangerous fauna are set against man. Surrender is not an option here.

- Elephant/Rhino/Hippo Hunt: A large beast is unleashed in the arena. All active participants of an event are split into two teams, and the team to do the most damage to the animal within the time limit wins
(Deathmatch rules used for respawning)

- Play: A recreation of a famous story or historical event. Participants will be given a script to act out and judged on their accuracy. Players will need to attack in time, dodge in time, shout their lines, and hit their marks.

Starting Position

- A player of sufficient fame may not only enter an event, but choose their starting position.
- Like entering the event itself, positions have differing fame costs and you may be denied if a fighter of greater prominence or their Lanista petitions for it.
- Different positions come with differing levels of interest from the crowd, boosting potential fame gains. Meanwhile some positions may have set equipment or none at all. A majority of positions will reject prisoners while some will be prisoner only.

- In modes like Deathmatch, you can petition for your position on the queue. Or as a Lanista try and place fighters in competing teams. Earlier positions earn greater fame for surviving to the end, while later placements are much safer. In Spectacle Duels you can attempt to pick your opponent.

- *The goal with this is to keep combat feeling fresh for longer and offer a further feeling of growth. Some bouts will have designated main characters, and maybe one day you'll get to be one. But you've got to earn your way to them.*

Arena Trait Examples

Traits which modify every match at an arena. Some Round Modifiers may double as Arena Traits.

Rowdy Crowd: The crowd is more than willing to participate. Stones, bottles, and other debris will be thrown at fighters, making the edges of the arena perilous

No Surrender: More common at seedier/criminal venues. Surrender is not respected here.

Prisoners no surrender: A death pit for the unfortunate, any prisoners made to fight here will not have their surrender respected.

Death Before Dishonour: Dishonourable play may prove deadly. Enough violations and your surrender will no longer be accepted for the rest of the event.

Trapless: This arena abhors traps, and will not utilise them in their games.

Simple: This arena uses very simple, stark layouts. (few if any walls, no elevation, minimal traps if any)

Equipment ban: This arena has a ban on one or more equipment types (E.G. traps, spears, shields, flails, bows, helmets, etc.) finding them unsporting or uninteresting to watch

Free Fighters Only: Only fighters not registered to a School may participate in this arena.

Schools Only: Only Lanistas may register their fighters to participate in this arena.

- *These traits may be overridden in the case of a league using the arena for ongoing events.*

Round Modifier Examples

Stipulations impacting individual rounds, if they do not contradict they may run in parallel, for instance 'Set Equipment' and 'Non-Lethal' could appear together.

Some arena traits may double as round modifiers.

Timed: This round will have a time limit. With the victor decided by points or remaining health.

Fistfight: Bare fists only, all throwable weapons and improvised weapons removed from arena.

Brawl: Only fists and improvised weapons

Set Equipment: The player will not be allowed to use their own gear, all equipment will be supplied. Equipment may vary by starting position.

(note: some positions may have set equipment even in ordinary matches, particularly prisoner only roles)

OSP: No one can bring in their own equipment, weapons will be strewn about (or thrown into) the arena for fighters to procure mid-match

(note: as above: some starting positions may not be allowed starting equipment and need to scavenge their own gear)

Non-lethal: Only non-lethal weapons are allowed.

No surrender: Surrendering is not an option. *(often pairs with non-lethal)*

No Holds Barred: Actions which would usually incur honour loss are overlooked. Backstabs, attacking downed opponents, overuse of traps. No reputational penalties will apply. *(AI more aggressive?)*

COMBAT SYSTEM

Overview

Combat inspired by Mordhau/Chivalry/Dark Messiah/Mount & Blade/We Who Are About to Die. First and third person, with cursor motions determining attack and defence directions. At its core is a merger of philosophies from Mordhau and Mount & Blade/WWaAtD. Mordhau should be looked to for variety of easily accessed actions:

kicks, combo swings, feints, morphs, parries, ripostes, chambers and so on. The control scheme should emulate its qualities of being easy to pick up but with room for mastery. However given the single player focus, this should be loosened to refocus on emergent moments.

From Mount & Blade and WwaAtD. Blocking is still a feature on a majority of weapons and is directional, matching an opponents swing direction is needed unless using a shield. Tapping the block button allows for a parry ala Mordhau

This gives the player options in a fight. Parrying is omnidirectional and it allows a player to more quickly retaliate but is timing dependent, with a large wind down if mistimed. Meanwhile blocking has less counterplay but also less risky.

Like Dark Messiah, ragdolling foes should be possible by using hazards as well as well timed or strong attacks. Furthermore arenas may contain objects available for the player to pick up and use as melee weapons or thrown missiles. Ideally a middle ground between these titles should be met.

Power Attacks

One addition is Power Attacks. These could be added in three ways

- Held: Holding the attack button leads to a longer wind up with a harder hit.

(This could create issues as part of learning Mordhau style brawling is recognising hit timings to parry or chamber, which feints, drags, and accels already exist to throw off, could add another dimension to blocking however)

- Double tap: At the apex of a windup, a second click turns it into a harder hitting power attack. *(Could be more satisfying, add an extra element to attacking ala. Ex-act in DMC)*

- Shift-Key: Holding another key turns all attacks into slower power variants *(kind of flat but adds room for stuff like power kicks, power parries etc)*

Note: Power attacks should incur greater stamina penalty, and/or greater wind down on miss (potential susceptibility to being ragdolled if hit during this state?)

Voice Lines / Gestures

The game should have a selection of voice commands. Counter Strike/EDF style. Despite being a single player focused game these should have some utility. Broken down into four basic types.

Orders: Calling for help from allies, guiding them to an objective. How and if they're heeded is based on your appeal, reputation differential, and position within the battle

Showmanship: These are addressed to the audience. If done mid-fight, post defeating a foe, or taking an objective they can have a positive effect on fame gained. But also heighten potential reputation loss if you wind up losing. Appeal influences potential gain.

Taunts: A selection of insults, taunts, and rude gestures. Which can draw aggro from other fighters or bait them into fighting more aggressively if you need another way to open up a turtling foe. NPC fighters should ideally have particular insults that work (or don't work) on them. Losing to a taunted foe incurs a heavy reputation loss.

Summons: Used to alert a fighter to your presence. Useful to avoid backstabbing a foe.

Surrender

At any point a participant in a fight can withdraw and exit the match. This is not an instantaneous/automatic action. The player/fighter has to manually vacate the match. Surrendering should be an expected part of the game with high difficulty encouraging this pragmatism. With the world fiction and NPCs demonstrating in text and through their actions that surrendering is a necessary and respected aspect of the games. With death in combat being possible but not the intended outcome.

If a fighter surrenders but has fought well/sustained a lot of damage. The audience still respects their efforts, and done well will actually receive more respect for surrendering than being incapacitated, adding incentive and risk? (A player on low health may know it's smarter to fold and take what they can get, but think they might pull through and take the risk!) Alongside this, attacking a surrendered fighter is penalised with reputation loss.

Example Idea for surrendering at various states.

0-10% health: 90% of total potential fame gain, positive reputation influence, and bonus coin earned

10-25% health: 75% of total

25-50% health: 65% of total

50%+ health: 30% of fame gain and coin. Suffer reputation loss

Incapacitation: 50% of fame and no bonus coin, minor reputation loss

Incapacitation leading to death: 100% of fame, base coin paid to Lanista if fighter belonged to school.

- This should also likely be influenced by performance in a fight up until this point. If a player has taken down a good number of other fighters, taken objectives, or if the match is approaching its end, then the audience will be less harsh on them quitting.

- Fake Surrender: A player may retract their surrender if they haven't left the arena. This fake out however is considered a disgraceful and often unlawful action. Which can result in a heavy reputation loss, disqualification, or even banishment from the arena in question. The only time it is allowed is if a fighter continues attacks you post surrender, in which case you can return to the fight to put them down.

Incapacitation

If a player does fight until their life bar is emptied. They will be incapacitated. Here, three things can happen. They may survive (guaranteed if taken out with a non-lethal weapon). They may be wounded. Which can worsen a player's ability to perform certain actions and harm stats+talent ranges, perhaps even permanently

Or they may die outright, with certain stats and age determining the likelihood.

Incapacitation costs more to your fame, reputation, and maybe even cash prize than surrendering at most health thresholds.

Once again, the fiction and action of the crowd and fellow fighters should frame surrender not as embarrassing. But a sportsmanlike and respectable decision which shows deference to the sport and fellow fighters. And I think this will give the game a very unique identity.

Example Wounds

Busted Shoulder: Reduces speed and damage of overhead attacks, increases stamina cost for blocking overhead

Nicked Leg: Reduces Agility talent range/movement speed

Ugly Scar: Lowers appeal and exaggerates reputation loss

Handsome Scar: Heightens appeal, you got off lucky.

NOTABILITY SYSTEM

The Notability System Comprises three parts: Fame, Reputation, and Image. Making up how well known the player is in the world and how they're seen.

Fame

Fame is a measure of how well known a Fighter/Lanista is. Higher fame will lead to more invites to events, and many stadiums will have a base fame requirement to enter unless you're well liked by someone involved in events or are able to grease some palms.

Fame should lead to a tangible increase in the size, scale, and variety of events. Lending progression to a campaign. Low fame means slugging it out in tiny backwater arenas and at best doing a bit part in a big tournament. High fame means headlining events and taking part in grand tournaments.

The player should have means to fight above their fame through connections and politicking done on the overworld. Jumping the queue this way has risks, but a skilled fighter can manage them.

Earning Fame

Fame can grow from random events, being well liked by a famous figure, or being accepted into a famous School, but most fame will be won through participation in events.

The amount of fame earned will be based on several factors. The size and renown of the Arena. The size and type of the match taking place, the fame of each participant, if there are any important spectators in attendance such as leaders, merchants, diplomats, or other famous fighters or Lanistas. And of course the players gear, appeal, position in the event and their performance. With successful dodges, parries, and other complex techniques adding to a total fame gain.

As each event has entry positions. Some positions are of greater importance and may require greater fame and reputation (or politicking) to be considered for, which in turn have higher payoffs for victory and greater losses for defeat. Events also have a **Fame Cap**. A player can't just stomp endless small events to become the most well known, they need earn their way up to and enter more high profile events to grow beyond a certain level of popularity.

Fame Growth

Fame should not just be a universal, linear 0-100 style counter. But measured by area/country and with a dynamic growth. Fame will radiate out from the place at which it is gained. The radius expanded by the size of the event where it was won, the size of the town, how connected or isolated it is, weakened by country borders, and then influenced by the players appeal and sheer amount of fame earned.

However, fame will also travel. Anyone who witnessed matches you took part in will carry your name with them. If you win a battle witnessed by a visiting diplomat from another country, they may spread word of you back home. And you will see pockets of fame and recognition growing far from where you've ever fought.

The intent of this system is to keep fame more dynamic and interesting and make sure the player will always have something to build or maintain, rather than just hitting a fame cap and then having to never consider it again beyond the possibility of fame decaying over time.

It could add exciting possibilities, like suddenly being invited to a match in a far off land with a big prize pool and getting to go on an adventure to somewhere you might not have otherwise considered. Seeing new towns and arenas as you go, and from there your fame will dynamically spread further.

Reputation

While Fame only covers how known someone is, reputation is a reflection of how you're seen. reputation is how recognised you are for winning and losing, and how you get there.

It can cut you off from certain events and positions within said events, while less scrupulous arenas (and people) may like you and cut you deals if they think you're useful because of such a low reputation. While you can still gain fame from a loss, your reputation may suffer. How much is determined by a multiplier depending on factors like starting position, your opposition, and just how many people witnessed the outcome. reputation should be more turbulent and temperamental than the far steadier fame. Growing and shrinking in a shorter time frame, however reputation gets stickier on the extreme ends while moving faster in the middle.

If you imagine reputation as a 0-100 scale. With 0 being a rotten reputation. A fighter who relentlessly fights dirty and/or loses disgracefully. And 100 being a pure reputation. A fighter known for winning and losing respectably. It's easier to get stuck in a bad or good reputation and be more fluid in the middle

0% |-----| 25% (slow) 25% |-----| 75% (normal) 75% |-----| 100% (slow)

Fame + Reputation Multiplier Example

Say you were entering a *Last Man Standing Event* with 12 positions. 10 of them are set equipment, and come out into an open area of the arena to face each other. Meanwhile 2 people come out on a bridge suspended above the arena to fight one on one, and are able to use their own equipment.

The multiplier will be X1 for the 10 fighters. Meanwhile for the 2 big players, it will be X2 or more. Making both victory and defeat more memorable. Adding risk to putting yourself in the spotlight. Relative positions also have an impact. If a fresh-faced aspirant with only stadium gear manages to topple a famous gladiator decked out in his best one on one. The newbie will get a huge boost to his reputation while the famous gladiator will suffer a significant loss of face. If the outcome is reversed however. The newbie won't suffer a great deal for the loss, and the well known gladiator won't gain much for his win.

Reputation Loss Actions

In most situations, less than honourable or embarrassing actions can also cause you to lose reputation regardless of winning or losing, such as:

- Repeatedly getting hit by traps
- backstabbing opponents
- Attacking downed/ragdolled foes
- Losing to an opponent that you have taunted
- Attacking surrendered opponents
- MAJOR: Incapacitating surrendered opponents

The game will reward honourable play with high reputation. The difficulty of combat however should make playing underhandedly to win enticing, something a player has to weigh up in the heat of the moment. And ideally both should have benefits so there is gameplay in either direction.

Example benefits of Low reputation

- Easier access to backroom arenas / - Less honourable figures may pay you to throw fights or target/kill specific fighters for money / - cowardly fighters will try to ignore you / - No reputation loss for betting on fights

Example Benefits of High reputation

- Easier invites from prestigious arenas / - Easier time petitioning for important positions in events / - More invites to public ceremonies / - easier relationship gain with high rep agents

Image

Image serves multiple functions. The player facing functions are adding personality to fame & reputation, making it appear the crowd is reflecting on how you fight. And some have benefits and drawbacks to boot. Non-player forward functions are determining what AI Behaviour your character will take on as an NPC.

Example Images

Criminal of (country): You're a recognised criminal of (country), and can only participate in unofficial events, Capture will see you sent to prison.

- *This is earned by being an escaped prisoner, random events, or killing a surrendered foe and being found guilty of murder. This will disappear with time. (fame influenced)*

Clean: You never take the easy way in battles. You take fights head on and do not fight dirty. You're the very image of a gladiator, and people want to see more. Lowers fame requirements for joining high-reputation arena events. Increases reputation penalty for dishonourable actions.

Dishonourable: You're often told to get a spine, you've often found you get many. Lessens reputation loss for disreputable actions like backstabbing or hitting downed opponents as by now it is expected of you. Increases frequency of shady offers.

This is a hard reputation to shake, and honourable actions will similarly have less of an effect on positive reputation gain.

Jealous/Gloryseeker: The Bigger they are, the harder they fall... To you. It has been noticed how often you seek out challenges well above your grade. Lessens reputation loss when you lose to fighters of higher fame or face defeat in matches above your fame requirement. The people love a trier.

Note: Name is reputation dependent. Low rep is jealous while high is Gloryseeker

Bully/Dream Crusher: You don't pick fights with people your own size, you pick them off before they can grow. Causes reputation loss for taking out weaker fighters.

Big Mouth: You talk *a lot of trash*. Increases efficacy of taunts while diminishing those of commands and Showmanship. Increases reputation penalty for losing to a taunted foe drastically.

Undefeatable: A winning streak of 20 matches draws heads. You'll receive bonus fame gain as long as this continues. As well challenges from fighters who want end your run.

Quitter: You surrender a lot, and long before most audiences think you ought to. They don't believe you're committed to the game, they don't believe they paid full price to see a match cut short, they don't believe in you. Lessens reputation loss for premature surrender and reputation gain for victories. Results in more offers to throw fights early from less scrupulous figures.

Exotic: A clear outsider. The manner you dress and means by which you fight excite crowds... For a time. Fame and reputation are affected by the relationship between two countries.

(Earned by using gear associated with one culture in another, or if you're from an unusual background E.G. a captured barbarian tribesman)

Rivalry: You and (fighter) have been in enough matches that the crowd have started to enjoy the competition you have. Lowers fame requirement for the less famous gladiator to enter events attended by their rival. The two fighters also start growing eachothers fame, causing word to spread of the other as they travel.

AI BEHAVIOURAL PROFILES

Overview

A way to add further variance to AI behaviours for fighters and Lanistas. Some are shared with traits and reputations a player can possess and in these cases the NPC will be subject to the benefits and drawbacks of said trait, others are unique to the AI to add variance to the world. A bot may possess more than one, as long as the profiles do not contradict

To give an idea of this mechanic in action, look at Perfect Dark's bots.

Fighter Behavioural Profile Examples

Plays to Strengths: The most common behavioural type. Above all, this fighter plays to their strengths. *(behaviour is based on stat influence)*

Clean: Fights honourably, gives warning before striking a foe from behind, and will never purposefully hit a downed foe.

Dishonourable: Opposite to the above, your death comes before their dishonour. This fighter will take every opening with little care for their reputation.

Jealous/Gloryseeker: This fighter naturally seeks out the most well known opponent sharing the arena. Should they happen to be the most well known, they will seek out the 2nd most well known.
Overworld Behaviour: This fighter will try to enter tournaments above their level of fame.

Bully/Dream Crusher: Seeks out the least well known fighters.

Overworld behaviour: Even if this fighter accrues fame, they will regularly enter tournaments far below their stature.

Punisher: Seeks out the lowest reputation fighters. You break the rules, this man breaks you.

Pugilist: A cestus fighter, prefers fisticuffs above other weapons. Pugilist AI are more naturally drawn to each other. *(and the player should they possess the trait)*

Objectivist: In objective modes this fighter prioritises playing the objective above all else.

Vengeful: This fighter will prioritise those who've defeated them before

Shorttempered: This fighter is especially susceptible to taunts, and will not let a slight go.

Evenheaded: This fighter is immune to taunts.

Quitter: This fighter throws in the towel early, regardless of their recovery stat. It takes little for them to take their leave.

Never Surrender: This fighter won't give up until they go down... These brave souls tend not to last long unless they're especially fortunate. *(rare)*

Evil: This fighter is especially cruel, disreputable actions are as natural as breathing to them, and they will even intentionally attack surrendered opponents. *(rare)*

Fighter Overworld Behavioural Profiles

Criminal of (country): Criminals will attempt to avoid areas where they are wanted, sticking to predominantly lawless settlements or fleeing the country where they're wanted.

Sedentary: This fighter prefers to stick to a country, a region, perhaps even a specific city. They don't travel far if at all and only fight in their place of choice.

Roamer: The road calls to this adventurer, they rarely stay in one spot for long, preferring to seek out fresh challenges as far as they can go.

Note: These behaviours should exaggerate standard travel behaviour. Where NPCs may have a preferred "home" area that they'll travel out of should they agree to an invite or have motivation to do so.

Gambler: This fighter loves a bet. Preferring whatever venue will easily allow one to spice up the games a little. They're more likely to approach others with deals to throw fights or target strong fighters to take them down.

Religious: This fighter partakes in the games for religious motivations. They will charge very little for their services, requiring little more than a roof above their head and a full belly.

However they will only participate in specific events, and are quick to leave Lanistas who force them into profane events.

Lanista Behavioural Profile Examples

- By default, most Lanistas will field a school as big as their resources and fame allow, and travel reasonable distances from their home region to take part in games.

Warden: This Lanista employs and utilises a lot of cheap prisoners over free fighters.

Tight Knit: This Lanista keeps a small company. They will prefer elite fighters. Quality over Quantity

Criminal/Sedentary/Roamer: Similar to how they function as a Fighter trait. Fighters with contradicting traits will quickly leave Lanistas they do not align with.

Difficulty

A sidenote to AI profiles should be difficulty. Higher difficulty opponents are more adept fighters. They attack more readily and defend more accurately. Making greater use of advanced techniques like chambering, drags, and accels to throw a player off their game and demand more.

For simplicity, higher fame opponents should generally be more difficult. With some variance and outliers to keep players on their toes. So two last examples with a few names to codify this.

Expert/former soldier/Talented Fighter/Dangerous/Beneath Notice: This fighter is far more adept than their fame suggests.

Lucky/past prime/Overestimated: This fighter is far less adept than their fame suggests.

OVERWORLD

Overview

The Overworld is primarily inspired by titles like Battle Brothers, Drox Operative, and Sid Meier's Pirates. It comprises countries filled with settlements, road networks connecting them, along with various geographical features like plains, forests, mountains, rivers, swamps, and seas.

Like all three of the listed inspirations. The player and the world are essentially playing different games. The gameworld is playing a 4X. Countries trade, war, and ally and act according to their traits. Each country has a calendar of important events to celebrate. And individual representing countries or just themselves traverse the world pursuing their agenda.

They may experience sudden resource discoveries, disease, and natural disasters. Which they'll work around in a different manner to the player.

The 4X layer is to add surprise and dynamism to proceedings. The player inhabits a Gladiator/Lanista as a part of this larger world, learning its rules and relationships and using them to their advantage to pursue their own goals as a gladiator.

Countries

Scattered across the world are countries, their borders growing and shrinking as the game progresses. The appearance of each country will be determined by its culture type. (e.g. Ancient Roman, Medieval European, Egyptian, etc.) and its behaviour determined by traits.

Example Country Traits

Expansionist: This country focuses on growth, and will resort to violence if inhibited. Tends to feature average arenas in its own cities. With only more opulent amphitheatres in its capitol.

Mercantile: This country is given to trade, with a focus on wealth and opulence.

Peaceful: This country will rarely pursue war unless provoked

Aggressive: This country is given to conflict, and will start wars more regularly

Brutal: This country is given to bloodshed. Arenas will less often host modes more complicated than straightforward fights. No surrender is a common rule and disreputable actions carry far less weight.

Strict: This country prizes the rules. Dishonourable actions carry far harsher reprimands here. Reputation loss is easier, and less scrupulous fighters are often banned from arenas.

Ludic: This country loves their games, objective modes are more common and gladiators are more often treated as celebrities. Non-lethal games are far more common. Fame gain is slower as attention is harder to grab.

Religious: This country prizes faith. Religious events will be much more common, draw more locals, and religious fighters will be easier to source.

Dry: This country does not abide drunkenness. Taverns will only exist in unaffiliated or outlaw towns within its borders. Alcohol consumption will carry with it a reputation loss.

Insular: This nation doesn't care much for outsiders, foreign gladiators here will see slower fame and reputation growth, as well as easier reputation loss.

Safe: This country has few if any criminal elements. The roads are patrolled and banditry is uncommon.

Dangerous: This country is particularly lawless. Bandits are common and the cities are far more dangerous. Unaffiliated locations will be more common

- Ideally country traits should determine how the player engages with each nation as a gladiator, affecting fights & possible random events, as well as how they act on the world map. IE. A mercantile nation will play tall with a small number of wealthy cities focused on maximising profit. So in turn their arenas will tend to be larger to reflect the wealth of their nation. Meanwhile Brutal countries will have simpler arenas which put on more straightforward events.

LOCATIONS

Across the world are Locations. Primarily these will be **Settlements**, these will come in a variety of sizes (Dwelling, hamlet, village, town, city), and depending on their size, prosperity, and the traits of the country they belong to. they'll host a variety of establishments from the following list.

Settlement Establishments

Arena: Wealthy Hamlets and most villages may have a small arena or two. With particularly wealthy villages perhaps managing a medium arena if they're on a well travelled route.

Towns are more likely to have a medium arena and/or multiple small arenas. Cities will have a large and/or multiple medium & small arenas. Country capitols are likely to have a grand arena alongside several arenas of varying sizes.

Fighting Pit: Smaller and less respectable than a proper arena. In hamlets and poor villages this may be the best you'll find to earn some coin fighting. Fame growth and range is much smaller and the events are far more simple than in an actual arena of any size.

Lanista Registration: Only available in a countries largest settlements. Allows one, for a fee, to sign up as a Lanista. (this is free to fighters of a certain fame over the age of 45). This spot also aids in the hiring of support staff.

Inn: A place to rest and recover between travel and work.

Tavern: A spot to drink and socialise.

- Players can spend money to drink and unwind, lowering fatigue.
- By socialising the player may meet travelling merchants/generals/Lanistas/proprietors, good relations helping in various ways.
- A Lanista may meet prospective fighters here
- A player can hire security to escort them to the next town, though this is less reliable than a proper guard detail.

Backroom Arena: Typically only available to less reputable inns and taverns. Inn and tavern backrooms are another way to earn a quick bit of coin for the fighter who is down on his luck and the gambler who believes he's up on his.

Training Ground: A spot with a variety of equipment to maintain and raise stats. These may be free to use or may require a fee to use for the day (*especially in mercantile nations*). The quality of the equipment effects stat gain, they may also sell training gear the player can take with them.

Note: A player can train anywhere, but most often even a meagre training ground gives you more to work with for most stats if the player isn't carrying their own training gear.

Healer/Doctor: Visiting a doctor after receiving damage will hasten recovery. A player may also purchase potions and tinctures to temporarily boost stats, increase training effectiveness, or even temporarily ignore damage (with a potential crash afterwards). Shadier doctors

Mercenary Company: The player can hire a guard detail, either on a weekly rate, or just for ferrying to a set location. The price influenced by quality, distance from starting point, and number of guards.

Temple: A place to pray and commune with ones god. Religious fighters receive a morale boost for visiting and will receive free lodging. Donations made at a temple boost local reputation gain.

Jail/Prison/Slaver: It is at a jail that a Lanista can buy and sell prisoners

Ludus: A Gladiator school, may host a variety of services, a free fighter may request to join the school, they'll often have their own facilities like training grounds, on-sight healers, and a barracks. These are closed off to people who do not belong to the school.

Stores

Market/General Store: Most any town will have a place to buy food, drink, and travel supplies.

Armoury: A store dealing in weapons, armour, ammo, and traps. Stock depends on prosperity and culture of the settlement.

Smithy: A Blacksmiths workshop. Allows for repairs on player equipment, and custom ordering weapons and armour. (*Fitted armour costs more, but reduces movement penalties*)

Stable: Allows for purchasing of riding animals and beasts of burden. The quantity, quality, and species dependent on culture/biome and settlement prosperity.

Wheelwright: A workshop specialising in making and repairing carts and wagons.

Archive: A store selling books, tomes, maps, and calendars.

Shipyards/dockyards: A place to dock watercraft. A player may requisition a boat for travel to another location or even purchase a boat outright. The variety and size of ships available differs depending on the size of the dock. From there a player will need to hire crew and maintain the ship.

Builders Allows Lanistas to construct schools and arenas

Other Locations

- Overworld locations that aren't settlements.

Arenas/Fighting Pits: These may also be established on the overworld, Typically not far from settlements or areas with a steady stream of traffic.

Prisoner Pit: A small, likely independent arena which only hosts Prisoner battles. People may gamble on fights and a Lanista may purchase prisoners from the proprietor.

Ludus: A Gladiator school, may host a variety of services, a free fighter may request to join the school, they'll often have their own facilities like training grounds, on-sight healers, and a barracks. These will often be available only to members, those liked by the Lanista, or at a marked up price.

Outpost: A military outpost, decreases bandit activity in the area. Military parties will stop here to reinforce it or take from it to bolster their own manpower.

Barbarian/Bandit Camp: The base of operations for a group of bandits. This increases bandit activity in the area until dealt with, a dangerous task best left to the military.

Inn: A roadside inn, helpful to stop and rest, safer from the elements. May have a backroom arena.

Trade Post: A small selection of stores and businesses and common stop off point for travelling merchants.

Temple/Monastery: A place to pray and commune with ones god. Religious fighters receive a morale boost for visiting and will receive free lodging.

Outlaw Town: A special kind of settlement. Will often have a fighting pit or arena and a particularly dangerous tavern or inn. A good spot to gamble, a bad place to stay, but may do in a pinch. High reputation fighters will suffer a penalty just for being here, and may come under attack.

TRAVELLING PARTIES

Overview

The world should feel alive and sensible. Nations chase their goals of growing wealth, maintaining armies, keeping and expanding borders, and making sure their people are fed and content.

To this end, parties reside and travel between locations according to their goals. The base model for this should be Sid Meier's Pirates. Where parties leaving and arriving at settlements has understandable cause and effect based on their roles. (*IE. a merchant boosts wealth, a general boosts the garrison*)

Note: The game should have a persistent roster of *agents* running arenas and heading World Parties the player can interact with. Agents may retire or die and be removed from play. Countries and settlements will periodically generate new agents dependent on needs.

World Parties

Merchants/Traders/Merchant Caravans: Merchants travel the world hawking their wares. Merchants arriving at a settlement will refresh the stock of shops in a settlement and provide a boost to prosperity.

Militias/divisions/armies: Armies patrol and in times of war move to the frontlines or defend border towns. They reduce banditry in any road they go down, and reinforce the garrison of any friendly settlement they pass through. In wars groups from opposing nations will do battle, with the stronger coming out on top.

Jailers: Jailers ferry prisoners to holding facilities and games requiring extra bodies. A Lanista may buy and sell prisoners. Breakouts may occur, or bandits may attack. Leading to a chance of increased banditry in an area.

Diplomats/Envoys/Rulers: Individuals representing their home nation. Will typically have an armed escort, the size of which depending on rank. They will travel to attend games and boost relationships between nations when they visit foreign countries.

Men of Faith: Holy men sworn to a religion. They'll travel the land to tend to religious festivals and do charitable works. They will also attend games, and may act as diplomats for religious nations.

Healers/Doctors: Travelling medicine men will offer their services to anyone they pass by. In times of disease they'll be sent to towns to try and control the spread.

Free Fighters: Fighters travel to participate in events. Groups of free fighters may move together for security. The player can join their group if they're not disliked.

Lanistas: Lanistas will travel with their fighters and anyone else in their retinue to participate in events. Unaffiliated free fighters may request to travel with them, which may be free if well liked, or they may ask for pay or a favour (*fighting with them in the next event, a practice spar, training one of their fighters, reinforcing their security*)

Travellers/immigrants/Fans/Villagers: Nonspecific people, may be headed to games.

Bandits/marauders/highwaymen/barbarians: Criminal elements. Typically preying on those weaker than them. Bandits and highwaymen can be paid off with coin, barbarians and marauders cannot. In most cases they will flee from military units and ignore well protected parties. Though they may make an exception if their target is rich or famous enough to make for an enticing prize.

OVERWORLD ACTIONS

Overview

While the focus has to clearly be kept on following and partaking in gladiatorial games. The overworld should offer its own opportunities which bolster it. Acting as downtime between more intense action. An opportunity to strategise and grow your character in other ways which feed back into the arena. And something which shapes the players own path through each career.

Overworld Actions

In Settlements

- In settlements players can utilise any Establishments and stores. As well as enter the arena to enter available events.
- Train independently of training grounds. (without training gear, often to lesser effect, different random events)
- Camp independently of an inn, less fatigue recovery and chance of dangerous random events determined by the settlement. Certain country traits may make this action illegal.
- Plot travel, for moving through the overworld to another location. / enter free travel
- Socialise with agents present in the same location (if they don't reject conversation with you) Transactions can lead to relationship change and potential random events.
- *Meeting in an establishment (i.e. a tavern) has different random events, and in some cases a positive modifier to relationship gain*

In Wilderness

- Scavenge/hunt for food if supplies run low. Leads to random events to determine success
- Camp, different set of random events, much greater danger in lawless/criminal infested zones. Safer near military outposts.
- Replot Travel/enter free travel.
- Socialise with any nearby agents who do not oppose talking to them.

Social System

The social system should be kept modular yet simple. Allow the player to easily find information and achieve their goals. Split into Questions and Actions

Example Questions

- Who are you? (*provides info on character*)
- Where are you going? (*tells you their next intended location and potentially why they're going there*)
- Is anyone going to X? (*If they know anyone travelling to this location nearby, they will tell you. Useful for finding if a rival is going to a certain event, or if you may be able to travel in a group with others*)
- Do you know X? (*can be asked of a character or location. provides their relationship with the subject and any knowledge they have on character/place. Letting the player learn stats, traits, AI profiles etc.*)
- What's going on in X? (*X may be a settlement or a country, can be used as a way to learn of upcoming arena events, festivals, or social events*)

Example Social Actions

(universal)

- Trade: allows trading items
- Converse: Attempt to improve relations with subject. Can lead to random events.
- Antagonise: Attempt to harm relations with the subject. Can lead to random events
- Offer: Offer services to the subject (guard work to travellers/merchants, assistance training to a fighter)
- Request: Request something from the subject. (travel with them to a location, training from a fighter/Lanista, sparring with a fighter, food from anyone)
- Steal: Rob an item from someone, loud or stealthy. (can be an item or an animal, or a cart or carriage)

(Lanista exclusive)

- Hire: Attempt to recruit a fighter to your stable.
- Transfer fighter: Attempt to recruit a fighter already under another Lanista. May require buying out the fighters contract, and/or favours.

You can also give them one of your fighters for a relationship boost.

- Trade fighters: Trade a fighter for another with another Lanista
- Arrange Event: With an arena proprietor, you may try to arrange your own events. The event type (single match, tournament, league), match types, roster size, and arena size will effect the base coin cost. They will also take varying levels of relationship with the arena proprietor, as well as a certain level of fame. *(though enough money can buy past such a requirement)*
- The prize pot offered influences how many fighters/lanistas see it fit to attend. Spend too much and you'll be out of pocket, go too cheap and no one will turn up, and your reputation will tank for a failed event.

TRAVEL

Overview

Travel should be simple but flexible, straightforward but exciting. With any complications coming from potential time management, multiple tournaments, a simple food/danger system to add excitement & stress without bogging down the core gameplay.

Travel Controls

From a location (or the overworld) the player may Plot their travel. Setting a destination then choosing roads to follow and/or setting waypoints to determine their course. The player may also enable free travel, which acts more like Mount & Blade/Battle Brothers click and move design. With pathfinding magnetising the party to road infrastructure where possible.

Travel in a Party

The player may be travelling under a party, in which case they determine the players movement. The player may be moving with travellers. Have bought passage to a location. Or been hired as a guard for a merchant caravan.

In these cases the player follows their travel path. Ending when the target is reached or when the player breaks away.

Travel Speed

Travel speed is influenced by multiple factors. Stats, inventory. Use of a riding animal, pack animals, wagons, carts?

Are you moving as part of a party? In the case of Lanistas morale has an effect on speed, and you'll only ever be as fast as your slowest member.

The quality of the ground also matters. Paved road is easier to navigate than deep woods.

Food

People need to eat, so a sufficient food supply is needed during travel. For solo fighters a lack of food rapidly builds fatigue and starts draining health. For Lanistas no food quickly causes morale and relationship with your gladiators to plummet. Leading to desertion or mutiny.

Banditry

The world isn't safe. Criminals roam the wilderness. Travelling solo is risky due to the danger such groups present. (heavily encouraging looking for people headed the same way as you and sticking together except in very safe areas).

Encounters with bandits may be resolved with coin, evaded or talked through with random events, or may result in a combat scenario. There's limited reason to fight bandits however except for Lanistas who wish to press gang free prisoners.

- Bandits may be visible on the overworld, or they may be hiding, with forested areas and mountains making them harder to spot.

TIME

Passage of Time

The model for the passage of time should follow that of Mount and Blade. However slightly sped up for scale. Days pass quickly. Travelling between towns can be a days long affair. Crossing from one country to another weeks. Surpassing multiple in game years in a single play session should not be an unrealistic possibility, and dedicated players should ideally have Gladiators live out full, not cut short, careers.

The player should be given good time estimates so as to not miss events.

Time Consuming Actions

- Training, drinking, camping, and scavenging/hunting consume a day.
- Multiple social actions can be undertaken in a day, unless they lead into another time consuming action or a random event causes a day to be lost. Only so many agents can be met within a day.

Non-Time consuming Actions

- Shopping and asking questions of agents does not incur any time advancement.

Arena Events & Time

- Participating in an arena event does not consume a day. Multi-Event days do. Tournaments and Leagues will take place over weeks and months, typically with days to rest between events. And with leagues taking place in multiple arenas within one or more countries. Ample time will be given between matches to allow for travel.
- *Perhaps arranged transport and fighter villages set up for people in certain leagues?*

RANDOM EVENTS

Overview

The purpose of Random Events is to expand the player's story and add enjoyable unpredictability and breadth to possible events. Random events should be kept simple. Utilising text, portraits of relevant characters, and maybe an illustrative picture to give the player a mental image to work with and further understand proceedings.

Many interactions in the game should have the possibility to trigger a random event, which the player can use to get a surprise benefit, an opportunity to roleplay, or if unlucky, an upset to recover from or new dangers to overcome.

There are two mechanical types of events, though a random event string may possess both:

ABCD Events

A standard format multiple choice question. The event is laid out for the player and they have a series of options to pick from to determine their response with differing outcomes and chances of success or failure. There should be four mechanical kinds of response.

- Stat check: The outcome is determined by relevant stats. (*ie. Knocking down a door based on strength, a social check based on appeal*)
- Trait/Image Choice: Relevant traits may add specific, typically automatically successful outcomes to select events
- Luck: The outcome is an uninfluenced dice roll (*ie. Gambling on a game of dice*)
- Certain: The outcome is definite.

Assignment Events

These are exclusive to Lanistas, this form of random event may also include an ABCD choice, but you can assign one or more of your fighters to undertake one or more relevant tasks. With their stats and your placement determining the outcome. (binary success or failure? Degree of gain or loss?)

Example Random Events

A. Hiring and Firing Off

Context: A free fighter player has been socialising with a Lanista at a tavern, and one of his fighters takes issue.

Type: Free Fighter/ABCD

Text: *Spotting (Lanista) you head over for a chat. But it appears one of his men isn't fond of your friendship. Blocking your path, he makes clear he believes you unworthy of talking to his master.*

ABCD Choice

- A. Mock this man before his master, this is not his call. (*appeal/relationship with Lanista check/Big Mouth auto success*)
- B. Hit him with an expected level of violence (*strength/agility check*)
- C. Hit him with a surprising level of violence (*berserker trait grants an outcome*)
- D. Do not lower yourself to his level, you'll have time to level him in the arena. (*exit, certain*)

Picking A

Success: Leaning past the man before you, you address the one that matters. Asking his Lanista "Does he make the decisions?". The Lanista is embarrassed, for himself, for your sake, and about the oaf in his company. He shoos him off, and you manage to salvage a conversation.

Outcome: Heavy relationship and reputation boost, successful entrance into Lanista's school.

Failure: Leaning past the man before you, you say to his boss “Who’s this knob?” The Lanista is embarrassed, for himself, for you, for the sake of the oaf in his company. He shoos you off and returns to his drink.

Outcome: Relationship and reputational loss.

Picking B

Success: Not one for words, you square up and he joins you. In the following flurry of blows you come out on top. Your opponent takes his leave, swallowing his pride, and the Lanista is impressed.

Outcome: relationship boost with Lanista and fighter, potential health loss and fatigue gain.

Failure: Not one for words, you square up and he joins you. In the following flurry of blows you are easily dropped. You lick your wounds, at least the drink dulls the pain.

Outcome: Relationship loss with Lanista and opponent, definite health loss and fatigue gain.

Picking C

Insults go poorly with you, and much worse for the ones making them. Seeing red, you summon up your rage and unleash it on the poor sap before you. The next thing you see is perhaps even redder, he’s lies beaten and bloodied on the floor, this is not the place for such spectacle.

You may have set out to impress, but all you’ve managed is distress (*relation loss/reputation loss/wound to free fighter*)

Picking D

Realising this is a waste of time and effort, you retreat. Leaving the Lanista and his lackey to their drinks, may he choke on it.

In this event, the player getting friendly with a Lanista led to a complication. Ideally this would be seen as an organic reaction to player input. Deepening their connection and giving a storyline to mechanical action. It may let the player intuit greater drama into proceedings.

B. Birch in the Road

Context: A Lanista and his fighters following a road through a wooded area

Type: Lanista/ABCD into Assignment

Text: You could lose yourself in these woods, something a good many have warned against. As the trees stretch out forever beyond the road, one has stretched upon it. Blocking your carts from making progress.

ABCD Choice

A. Investigate the tree (chosen)

B. Prepare for ambush (this would lead to everyone readying for a fight, which may happen, causing damage to fighters (potential death on brutal) if it does not happen, morale drops and time is still lost)

C. Turn back, no chance taking the risk (time loss, no risk of a fight)

Picking A

You decide to have the situation investigated.

Assignment Choice

You can assign up to eight fighters to move the tree (strength determining time/fatigue loss), and four to scout for any potential ambushers (luck based, automatic success if one has Survival Sense) The player sends out his 4 strongest gladiators to move the tree and one to scout, but this one possesses the relevant trait.

Result

Text: Sending out your men. They're making slow work of the tree. However, before the path is clear your scout calls danger, spotting archers lurking in the brush just in time. Your men are able to form up to fend them off, and deciding better of it, the bandits take their leave without a fight. You lose much of the day, but not one life. All that was felled was a bloody great birch tree.

The idea behind assignment choices is simple. It adds another dimension to being a Lanista, gives an opportunity to add non-mechanical character to their fighters, while also adding a benefit to memorising their strengths and weaknesses. It's also a push to hire fighters of varied talents. Possibility for death is present, but only enabled if Brutal random events are enabled.

C. Waste not want nots?

Context: Unlike the previous, this time the player (a lanista with a small school of 8 fighters) had come under attack by bandits. Without a guard detail, it fell to his gladiators to see them off, which they manage only a few injuries on their side. The surviving bandits are tied up and brought before the player.

Type: Lanista/ABCD

Text: These brigands thought you a worthy prize, yet save for a perhaps lucky few, all they won was death, The (*number*) survivors are tied up and brought before you. Their lives are in your hands, what do you do?

A. Take them as prisoners (*gain the number of survivors as prisoners, they can be made to fight for your school or sold to a prison*)

B. Cut them down, a warning to every bandit who roams this land. (*temporarily lowers bandit activity in the area, may gain fame if a travelling party is nearby*)

C. strip them of their weapons and send them running. (*raise fame and reputation*)

This example is for a more common situation. Most of the time you will have straightforward video-game esque options, stats or luck should not enter scenarios where it doesn't belong or only bogs down what should be a controlled situation, that will only create frustration.

Random Event Scenario Ideas

- *As above, a bandit attack not going in your favour. However you have prisoners in your school. Do you offer them freedom if they fight to help you? Can you trust them not to side with the bandits or just turn tail and run?*

- *When going to rest at an inn, you find a very married arena proprietor in a very compromising situation. Armed with this leverage, what do you do?*

- *You and many other free fighters are staying at the same inn as a tournament is in progress. Your days are spent fighting, your nights drinking and honouring the dead. The day before you and your rival are due to face off. You decide to get in a bit of early competition with a drinking contest. Do you face him head on? Offer to pay and water down your drinks? Or reject him to stay on form tomorrow.*

National Random Events

- Above the players head, the countries playing 4X games should also be tackling simplified random events. Deaths of rulers, weddings. Discoveries of resources, finding holy relics, market crashes. These have an effects on the prosperity of nations, may create sudden arena events, and lend a bit of unpredictability to the world.

EQUIPMENT/ITEMS + SHOPPING

Overview

The game should feature a variety of equipment. While most of the focus should be kept on what is relevant to gladiatorial gameplay (weapons and armours), there should still be a wealth of items which enrich overworld gameplay. This will be organised by what types of items a shop will sell, as well as any game specific notes about how Ludus will use them.

Inventory

Base inventory space should be low. A player only able to move a small selection of weapons & armour. And a few days worth of food for travel. As well as a simple camp.

Equipment by Shop

Market/General Store

Food + drink: Food should be kept simple. It is sold in small batches and in bulk. It will be consumed when travelling and spoils over time. Cheap food has a morale penalty. While good food and drink has a bonus. Drink does not count towards sustaining your party however.

Camping Supplies: Tents. Makes resting in the wilderness (and in towns) more comfortable. Improves fatigue recovery and modifies special events for sleeping in the open. Different qualities/sizes of tents available lead to different outcomes. From simple 1 man tents to pavilions only practical for lanistas with a large retinue.

Hunting supplies: Traps, lures, fishing poles, increases the efficacy of scavenging for food.

Repair Kits: whetstones for weapons and spare parts for vehicles. Can only repair up to 70% and costs time. Full repairs requiring a professional.

Armoury

Weapons and armour: Mount and Blade/Mordhau should be models for weapon variety, with regional gear for each culture type. Armour too should make up a wide variety. Ideally a player finds a weapon or type they really click with. With an overlap in general handling, but distinct feels that will appeal to different players and different builds.

Weapon categories: Knives/one handed swords/two handed swords/polearms/one handed axes/two handed axes/hammers/maces/clubs/cestus/bows/crossbows/Traps & Throwables

Weapon Stats: handling: one or two handed/ reach/speed/swing damage/thrust damage/grip/damage type (cut/pierce/blunt) / weight /Strength requirement* / Fame penalty*

Ranged weapon stats: Base Reload speed/projectile speed/damage type (pierce/blunt)/strength requirement*

*Not always applicable

Grip partly determines how easily a weapon is knocked loose from ones hands

Armour Stats: Movement Speed penalty* / Weapon handling penalty* / Protection (cut/pierce/blunt) / weight / Fame Penalty* / Grip Penalty*

*Not always applicable

- *Only gloves may possess a grip penalty. Medium and heavy armours (especially helmets) can carry fame penalties for use.*

Traps/throwables: Besides the standard array of weapons, less reputable armouries will also sell a variety of arena ready traps. Bear traps, caltrops, explosives, oil/smoke/fire pots. These will incur a reputation penalty in a majority of arenas, heavier in trapless ones.

Smithy

Allows custom ordered weapons and fitted armour, quality dependent on the smithy. Armour bought from an armorer will be an imperfect fit and have greater speed penalties which fitted armour will limit or negate entirely. Weapons can be repaired here, which will take time.

Stable

Riding Animals: Horses can be rode to speed up overworld travel, or used to pull carts and wagons.

Beasts of Burden: Various animals can be used as pack animals or for pulling carts and wagons.

- *Variety of animals determined by surrounding biome of the town,*

Wheelwright

Allows purchasing of carts, wagons, and carriages. These require manpower or preferably animals to move.

Carts & Wagons: Depending on their size they allow for a much greater inventory than that of a person or singular pack animal can move.

Carriages: Carriages provide transport for multiple people, lowers fatigue and morale drain during travel, with greater effects for more lavish transports.

Prison Wagon: A caged wagon, ideal for moving prisoners.

Archive

Books/Tomes: Books can be reading during travel (faster if riding in a carriage) or when spending time in town. These can speed up gains on fighter stats, and raise Management stats.

Maps: Regional and country maps, depending on their quality they can speed up overworld navigation and aid in random events.

Calendar: Fills the player in on holidays, religious events, and yearly arena events within the country.

News: Free to read, keys the player in on events of national interest. Results of far off games, royal ascensions, announcement of wars or peace etc. (Fills player in on national random events in context)

Shipyards

Player can requisition travel, as well as buy various *ships* which allow nautical travel.

Builders

Builders construct other establishments, and for the wealthy Lanista can construct a School or an Arena within a town or the overworld. Construction will take time and significant funds. Influenced by the size and opulence of the establishment, whether it is within a city.

Healer/Doctor

Potions: Players can buy potions to offset fatigue, temporarily raise stats (with a crash later) alongside a variety of other temporary effects

Poisons: Less scrupulous practioners may supply select patients with poisons. Poisons can have various effects. From causing dizziness (increasing knockdown and ragdolling on target), to rage (increases aggression, disables surrender) to outright pain (damage over time).

Poison can allow you more control over a battle when applied to a weapon, but discovery carries heavy risks.

Lanista Registration

Lanista License: Very expensive, allows a player to act as a Lanista.

Hiring: Allows a Lanista to hire cooks, overseers, trainers, smiths, scouts, guards, and transport staff.

LUDUS MANAGEMENT

Overview

The Lanista system ought to be involved but not overwhelming. Enough depth and decision making in regards to running a school to make it come across like an actual, meaningful role in the world not taken on lightly. But without getting bogged down in details which make getting to the fun not feel worth it. The decision making paying off should be rewarding without being needlessly taxing. It's a very lite gladiatorial version of a sports manager game, mixed with Mount & Blades morale mechanics, and a bit of Battle Brothers capacity for random events to add flavour to management and in depth control over a fighters equipment & role.

Lanista Registration

From the Lanista Registration anyone can purchase a Lanista License for a hefty fee. (*free fighters over 45 with at least 10 years of fighting can acquire one for free*)

Once done you are legally a Lanista, you can now purchase prisoners manager fighter contracts, and construct a Ludus or Arena to run games.

Sourcing Prisoners

A Lanista can source prisoners from jails and prisoner wagons, or capture bandits and press them into service. The price of a Prisoner should have some correlation with their stats. 200% of the price paid becomes the prisoners debt to his Lanista

A Lanista takes 90% of his prisoners earnings which is taken off of their debt.

Freedom Rite: When a debt is repaid, when their prisoner clears enough matches, or if demanded by an authority figure, the Lanista is demanded to grant a prisoner their freedom.

Failure to do so will cause severe reputation loss. And could lead to prisoner revolts, and if done repeatedly having your license revoked or even being branded a criminal.

The Lanista may offer any of their prisoners freedom rites at any time, even before they've fulfilled their debt. The freed prisoner may retire or go on as a free fighter, and can be hired contractually.

Hiring Fighters / Contracts

When hiring a Free Fighter. The Lanista offers them a contract.

Contract

Signing Bonus: An initial upfront amount of coin paid to the fighter. Higher pay heighten the odds of agreement.

Weekly pay: How much coin the Fighter will be paid per week. Higher pay ups the odds of agreement and lowers morale degradation.

+ *Resting Rate:* A lower rate paid when a fighter is left at a Ludus. A percentage of the weekly pay from 1-100%, higher resting rate ups the odds of agreement.

Contract Length: How long in months/years the contract stands for. Longer contracts lower the odds of agreement.

Match Bonus: How much coin the fighter is paid for appearing in a match. Higher pay ups the odds of success

+ *Victory Bonus:* How much coin a fighter is paid for winning a game, can be independent or on top of a match bonus.

Buyout Rate: How much another Lanista would need to pay to break the contract early, or how much the fighter would need to pay to legally end their contract sooner. Higher rate lowers the odds of agreement.

Outside Factors: Personal relationship between the Lanista and the target fighter. The relative levels of fame and reputation. If the fighter is already under contract and their morale under their current Lanista.

Result: Depending on a combination of all of these factors, a fighter may agree, reject, or amend and make a counter offer on the proposed contract. Which the player can then accept or reject.

Employees

From the Lanista Registration a Lanista can also source members of staff. These will cost the player a set weekly rate for simplification and offer an array of bonuses.

Overseers: Advisory staff who help manage fighters. Having Overseers in a party increases your active party cap dependent on their rating. (*poor 3/average 5/excellent 10*)

Cooks: Prepares meals for fighters and for a bonus will handle sourcing food. This increases morale.

Healers: Healers will tend to fighters wounds, hastening recovery.

Trainers: Trainers will plot and oversee training for your gladiators. Following your instructions to grow and maintain certain stats per fighter and boosting the efficacy of training based on their own training stat.

Smiths: Smiths will maintain your fighters equipment on your behalf, keeping everything of theirs in good shape at all times.

Scouts: Scouts will investigate prisoners, free fighters, and other Lanistas. The longer they're allowed to investigate, the more accurate a read you'll get of their stats, and in the case of fighters, what contract will win them over.

Guards: Guards will keep an eye on prisoners, maintain security at a Ludus, and ward off bandits in your fighters stead during travel. Cheaper yet better than mercenaries of a similar price.

Transport Staff: Tend to the animals, carts, wagons, and carriages. Speeding up travel and limiting detrimental random events during transit. Also slows morale decay.

- *The player will still need to buy the animals and carts. However transport staff will advise selling off redundant animals and inventory.*

Ludus Construction

Through a building company a Lanista may also plot construction of their own Ludus, a headquarters from which they can manage their school.

It can start small and be expanded over time. A Ludus is comprised of several wings.

Office: Your quarters. A more lavish office offers grants a fame gain bonus, and impresses any visiting agents who want to propose deals.

Barracks: Barracks have a size & comfort rating. The bigger the size, the more free fighters you can house. The more comfortable, the better morale is maintained and the faster fatigue is recovered. Allows keeping fighters outside of the active party.

Training Grounds: Aids fighters in training. Different training equipment fulfills the needs of maintaining and growing stats. The quality of the equipment effects its efficacy, and trainers posted to a Ludus boost its effects further, and will keep resting fighters in at least a maintained shape.

Prison: Prisons have a size & security rating. The size determines how many prisoners can be kept. While Security lessens the chance of a breakout. Guards posted to a Ludus boost security.

Mess hall: A place for fighters to eat, requires a cook to function. Keeps them fed even when you're away and not actively buying food. Keeps morale high.

Smithy: A smithy will repair fighters equipment, and can requisition or commission specific weapons.

Active Party Cap

The upper limit of prisoners + free fighters a Lanista can keep in their active travel party is a minimum of 10.

This is raised by the command stat, and further enhanced by hiring overseers and keeping them in the active party.

There will also be slots for each staff member type, with the possible number of each determinate on the slot. (*ie. Maximum 2 overseers, 1 cook, 12 guards etc*)

Fighter/Staff Management

Fighter management should have a simple and functional menu and presets. But with advanced options for those who wish to optimise. Certain staff should allow automation of procedures if the player wants, or they can be similarly advised.

During travel, while in towns, or during downtime in ongoing arena events. The player should have some basic behavioural toggles for how to control their fighters.

Gladiator Orders

Rest: This fighter will focus on rest, aiding recovery and lessening fatigue.

Trainer: This fighter will assist other fighters in their training, boosting the gains of their training. *(can be assigned to specific fighter or will just assist automatically)*

Training: This fighter will use their downtime to train when in a state to do so. *(stat choice can be automated or set.*

Harsh Training: This fighter will use any spare moment to train, even at the cost of their wellbeing

Guard: This fighter will act as a guard. Boosting security at camp and during travel.

Arena Positions as Lanista

When you have signed your school up to an event. It is up to you to enter your fighters in matches and assign their position. The player can take direct control of one of them. But they can also give general orders during placement to determine how they should act.

Example Orders

Own Directive: No specific order, the fighter will act based on their own instincts.

Attack/Defend Objective: The fighter will play the objective

Follow X: Assign this fighter to follow and aid a teammate

Target X: This fighter will prioritise taking down a targeted fighter, and then return to a default behaviour if succeeded.

Guard Here: Designate a spot on the map, this fighter will try to maintain this position, fending off any enemies who attempt to pass through.

CHALLENGES & QUESTIONS

- What happens in the event an arena runs out of fighters? In event modes like Elephant Hunt. The entire event is split into two teams to allow fresh entries. A canny of sufficient skill may realise they could do a large amount of harm through ignoring the objective and just sniping enemies. Do we break the games own immersion/cohesion and offer respawn for just one event type?
 - *Replace with generic prisoners? Still lesser, event is delayed so wounded fighters can recover?*
 - Immersive but dull*
- Making surrender satisfying and readable. Surrendering goes against player psychology, it would be the games biggest challenge.
- AI navigation of proc-gen spaces, a special issue given a mix of complex AI parametres and behaviours in conjunction with unpredictable arena layouts.
- Sensible outlining of opening positions in proc-gen arenas, perhaps simplified with starting on higher elevation or close to centre of arena being more important, and is portrayed in game as a shared cultural value?
- Does the act of camping/sleeping at an inn work for a game moving at a Pirate's adjacent pace? Does the game need to be slowed to a Mount & Blade speed, or does camping need to be excised? What does this mean for fatigue?
- Should fame be scaled relative to the world size/prosperity. Ie. If a world is a poor world and the biggest arena is a medium size arena in a middling town, should that be 100/maximum fame with the biggest fighters, can such a measure be made?