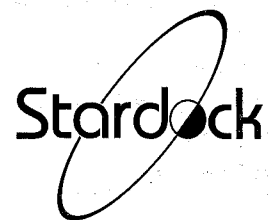


TRIALS OF BATTLE

Player's Guide

(c) 1996 Shadowsoft Entertainment Software
(c) 1996 Stardock Systems, Inc.



Stardock Systems, Inc.
7977 Ronda Drive, Suite B
Canton, Michigan 48187
Phone: 313-453-0328
Fax: 313-453-1480
Email: info@stardock.com
WEB: <http://www.stardock.com>



Table of Contents

1) HARDWARE REQUIREMENTS

2) SOFTWARE REQUIREMENTS

3) INSTALLING THE GAME

4) STARTING THE GAME

- Game Type Dialog
- Game Setup Dialog
- Load/Generate Pilot Dialog
- Server Name Dialog

5) THE HANGAR VIEW

- The Hangar Monitor
- The Combatant List
- The Equipment List
- The Status Window
- The Round Countdown Timer
- The Action Buttons

6) ENTERING THE ARENA

7) VEHICLE CONTROLS

Appendix A: PERFORMANCE AND GRAPHICS SETTINGS

Appendix B: IF YOU HAVE PROBLEMS

Credits.

The Shadowsoft Gang:

Game Design & Programming: Dean & Sondra Iverson
Music & Sound: Eric Heberling
Art, 3D Modeling & Animation: Timothy G. Wilcox

The Stardock Gang:

Project Managers: Michael Duffy & Alexander Antoniadis
Additional Game Concepts: Brad Wardell

1) **HARDWARE REQUIREMENTS**

Trials of Battle is a leading edge game that requires a certain minimum level of hardware performance in order to provide an enjoyable gaming environment. There are, however, many options that can be adjusted to achieve acceptable performance. What follows is what we consider to be the minimum hardware needed to run Trials of Battle at an acceptable level.

Minimum hardware requirements:

- 486DX4/75 CPU
- 12MB RAM (16MB for Warp Connect or Warp v4)
- DIVE compatible video card running at 256 colors
- DART compatible audio card (to play with sound enabled)
- 14.4k bps modem (for multi-player games)

To provide a more enjoyable experience we recommend the following hardware configuration.

Recommended hardware:

- 75MHz Pentium CPU or better
- 16MB RAM
- DIVE compatible video card running at 256 colors
- DART compatible audio card (to play with sound enabled)
- 28.8k bps modem (for multi-player games)
- OS/2 compatible joystick

2) **SOFTWARE REQUIREMENTS**

Trials of Battle requires the following software be installed prior to use:

- OS/2 Warp V3 or better (OS/2 Warp V4 recommended)
- IBM's OS/2 Joystick Driver (if you want to use a joystick)
- DIVE compatible video drivers for your video card
- DART compatible audio drivers for your sound card

If you have OS/2 Warp v4, you should already have DIVE and DART compatible drivers installed and you SHOULD NOT install the DART DLLs included with this game. Most other video and sound drivers already support DIVE and DART also so you may not have to worry about installing or upgrading these drivers separately.

Note: OS/2 Warp Connect (or equivalent) or a modem is required for multi-playergames.

3) **INSTALLING THE GAME**

Trials of Battle requires approximately 35MB of space on your hard drive for a full installation. If you choose a minimal installation, most of the large data files will remain on the Trials of Battle CD-ROM and you will only need approximately 8-10 MB of free hard drive space. The full installation will lead to better performance, especially on computers with slow CD-ROM drives.

To start the installer, insert the Trials of Battle CD into your CD-ROM drive and type:

x:\install

where x is the drive letter of your CD-ROM. Follow the instructions on the screen to complete the installation.

4) **STARTING THE GAME**

To start the game, either double click on the Trials of Battle program object on your desktop or open a command prompt, change into the directory in which Trials of Battle (TOB) was installed and type "tob" (without the quotes).

The introduction movie will start to play. The movie can be interrupted at any time by either clicking on the movie window or by pressing a key. When the movie stops the Game Type Dialog will be displayed.

Game Type Dialog:

The first dialog box that appears is the Game Type Dialog. This box is used to specify whether to start a single player game or a multi-player game. The only difference between a single player game and a multi-player game is that more than one person can participate in a multi-player game, but training rounds can only be conducted in a single player game.

Single Player Game:

A single player game is played by only one person with all opponents being controlled by the computer. When a single player game is selected, TOB takes care of starting the server executable without additional user input. After this option is selected, the Game Setup Dialog will appear.

Join Multi-Player Game:

Once a TOB server for a multi-player game has been started, this option allows additional clients to connect to the server. After this option is selected, the Load/Generate Pilot Dialog will appear.

Start Multi-Player Game:

A multi-player game can be played by one or more players with each player running a TOB client on a separate machine. In addition, one TOB server must be started, on either a separate machine or on a machine with a TOB client, to which all of the TOB clients connect. The Start Multi-Player Game option will start a TOB server to which other players can connect. It will also automatically connect the current client to the TOB server. After this option is selected, the Game Setup Dialog will appear.

Alternatively, a TOB server can be started directly from an OS/2 prompt by typing "tserver" (without the quotes). This allows the server to be started separately from all clients. This method is not as user friendly as starting the server from the client, since it involves several command-line arguments. However, it is the only way to start a game server on a dedicated machine.

There should be only one TOB server running on any given machine.

Game Setup Dialog:

The Game Setup Dialog allows the user to control a variety of items. For a single player game the only items that need to be set are the total number of combatants and the difficulty level. When starting a multi-player game, additional information is required about the number and types of connections to allow.

Number of Modem Players:

This spin button determines the number of modem connections to allow to the TOB server. Since TOB supports up to four comm ports, up to four modem connections can be specified. Modem options must be specified for each modem connection allowed (see Comm Port, Speed, and Init String below). When modem connections are allowed, the total number of combatants is limited to six.

Number of LAN/Peer Players:

This spin button determines the number of connections allowed via network (LAN or Peer via Warp Connect). Connections on a TCP/IP network should be specified with the Number of TCP/IP Players option, rather than this one. When starting a multi-player game, one LAN/Peer connection is required to connect the client to the server. Although the actual connection is done automatically, the connection must be included in the total number.

Number of TCP/IP Players:

This spin button determines the number of TCP/IP connections allowed to the TOB server. Use this spin button for a TCP/IP network or to play over the Internet.

Total Number of Combatants:

This number determines the total number of combatants in each combat round. It can range from 2 to 12, but must be greater than or equal to the number of connections specified in all of the spin buttons above it. This total includes the client that is starting the game. Computer-controlled combatants will be used as necessary to keep the total number of combatants at the desired level.

Comm Port:

When modem connections are allowed, the modem options must be specified for each modem connection. The modem options include the comm port, the speed, and the initialization string. The comm port can be any port number that has a modem attached to it.

Speed:

After selecting a valid comm port, this option is used to specify the modem speed for that comm port. Most players should be able to select 57600. Selecting a speed setting of "Unused" will prevent the comm port from being used by TOB.

Init String:

The third part of the modem options is the initialization string. This string can be up to 40 characters long. Refer to the documentation that came with the modem for more details. Depending on the modem, it may be possible to leave this field blank.

Difficulty Level:

The difficulty level controls how good the computer-controlled opponents are and how many supplies are initially scattered around the Arena. The difficulty level does not affect the rules of the game, just the difficulty of staying alive.

Initial Points:

If a multi-player game is being started, there will be an option to control how many Kill Points a new pilot will start with. Increasing the number of Kill Points allows the players to purchase more equipment initially.

Show All Equipment:

If a multi-player game is being started, there is an option to show all of the possible equipment immediately instead of only showing the equipment appropriate for the player's rank.

Quit Game:

Selecting this button exits the game.

Back:

Selecting this button returns to the Game Type Dialog.

Start Game:

Selecting this button saves the entries on this dialog and continues on to the Load/Generate Pilot Dialog.

Load/Generate Pilot Dialog:

The Load/Generate Pilot Dialog is used to select and load a previously created pilot or to generate a new pilot. It is also used to save or delete an existing pilot. On the left side of the dialog box is a list of all pilots currently in the save file. The right side of the dialog box contains the vital statistics of the selected pilot.

This dialog can be accessed either when starting a new game or from the hangar view during a game. In order to leave this dialog, an active pilot must be selected or a new pilot must be generated.

Available Pilots:

This list box shows all of the pilots currently inhabiting the pilot save file. Selecting a pilot from the list will cause information about that pilot to be displayed in the Pilot Information area to the right of the list.

Pilot Information:

This area displays the currently selected pilot's statistics. This information can't be changed.

Generate Pilot:

Clicking on this button allows a new pilot to be generated. To complete the generation, the new pilot must be given a name and a call sign by entering the information in the secondary dialog box as requested. The call sign is the name that is associated with the pilot during combat. After providing the name and call sign, the new pilot will be generated, and the game will return to the Hangar View. All new pilots are Human pilots and start at Gladiator, 3rd Rank with a Light Hovertank.

Save Current Pilot:

This button saves all information about the current pilot, such as number of kill points, equipment on the vehicle, and current damage. The pilot data is automatically saved each time the pilot enters and exits the arena. However, any changes made after returning from combat will be lost if they are not saved before exiting the game. Pressing F2 in the hangar view will also save the pilot data. This option is only active when the Load/Generate Pilot Dialog is accessed from the hangar view.

Delete Pilot:

Selecting this button will delete the pilot currently selected in the pilot list.

Server Name Dialog:

If the Join Multi-Player Game button was pressed in the Game Type Dialog, the Server Name Dialog will be displayed. This dialog requests the name of the server to which the client should connect. To connect to a server running on a LAN/Peer network simply specify the name of the network machine in the Server Name field. To connect to the server via a modem, enter a '#' followed by the number to dial. To connect to the server via TCP/IP, enter a '@' followed by the address or host name of the server. TOB stores the names of the last five servers to which the client connected. Click on the down arrow to the right of the Server Name field to access the list of past server names.

Modem Options:

When connecting to a server via modem, the proper modem options must be specified. See the section titled "Game Setup Dialog" above for details.

Back:

Select this button to return to the Game Type Dialog.

Join:

After specifying a server name, click on the join button to attempt to connect to the server.

5) THE HANGAR VIEW

The Hangar View consists of six different areas: the hangar monitor, the combatant list, the equipment list, the status window, the round countdown timer, and the action buttons.

The Hangar Monitor:

The Hangar Monitor displays a view of the player's vehicle in the hangar as it is prepared for combat. As equipment that is externally visible is added to the vehicle or as the player progresses in rank, the Hangar Monitor will be updated accordingly.

Clicking on particular areas of the Hangar Monitor allows the player to access additional information or perform certain actions.

Clicking on the vehicle will display the Vehicle Equipment Inventory Dialog. Clicking on the equipment storage door will display the Storage Equipment Inventory Dialog. Clicking on the repair robot will display the Vehicle Repair Dialog. Clicking on the lockers will access the Load/Generate Pilot Dialog. Clicking on the computer panel will access the Options Dialog. Clicking on the door to the arena signals that the player is ready for the next combat round.

Vehicle Equipment Inventory Dialog:

This dialog displays a list of all of the equipment currently installed on the vehicle. This list displays the name of the equipment, its current damage level, and its current value if it were to be sold.

Points Left:

This is the total number of Kill Points available to spend.

Mis./Can./Mine(Missiles/Plasma Cannon/Mines):

Each of these buttons displays a dialog box with information about that particular type of ammunition. This dialog box allows the player to sell or store ammunition by specifying the number of items to remove from the vehicle and pressing the appropriate sell or store button. If one of the buttons is disabled, then the vehicle is not able to carry that particular type of ammunition.

Sell:

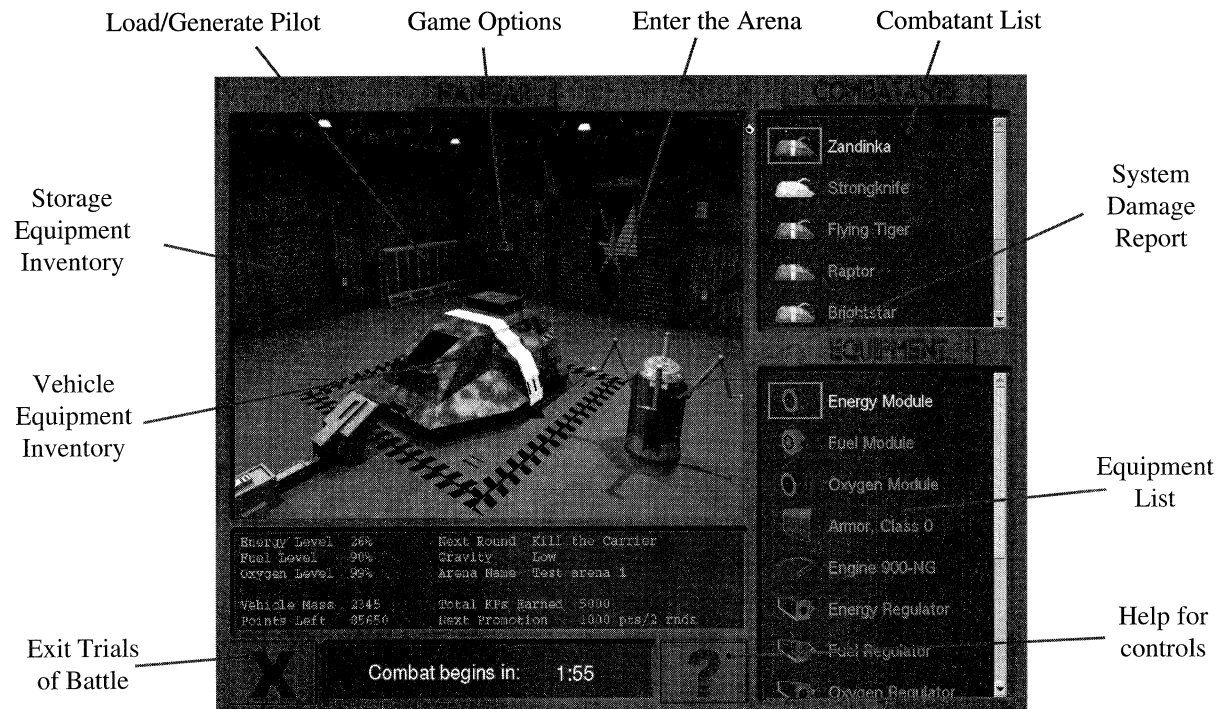
The player can sell one or more pieces of equipment by selecting the unwanted items in the equipment list and clicking on the sell button. The player will be awarded with kill points equal to the specified value of all items sold.

Store:

The player can store one or more pieces of equipment by selecting the unwanted items in the equipment list and clicking on the store button. Due to the bulkiness of Armor, only one set may be kept in storage at a time. Multiple pieces of the other equipment may be stored. However, the total storage space is limited.

Storage Equipment Inventory Dialog:

This dialog displays a list of all of the equipment currently in storage. This list displays the name of the equipment, its current damage level, and its current value if it were to be sold. It works essentially the same way the Vehicle Equipment Inventory Dialog does except with storage.



The main Arena screen is controlled by clicking on different parts of the screen.

Repair Vehicle Dialog

This dialog allows any damage to the vehicle or equipment to be repaired. This dialog works as follows:

System Damage Report:

This area lists all of the equipment currently installed on the vehicle along with its damage status and repair cost.

Point Total:

This is the total number of Kill Points available to repair the vehicle.

Do Repairs:

To initiate repairs on the vehicle, select one or more items from the System Damage Report list and click on the Do Repairs button. This button will be disabled if there are no repairs to be made. Clicking on the Do Repairs button without first selecting an item to repair will cause all of the damaged items to be repaired starting at the top of the list. The items will be repaired one at a time until either all of the items have been repaired or the kill points left is insufficient to do the needed repairs.

Load/Generate Pilot Dialog

This dialog box is the same one used when initially starting the game. See the above section entitled "Load/Generate Pilot Dialog" for a full description of this dialog box.

Game Options Dialog

The Game Options Dialog allows the player to set the game options, graphics features, and input devices for the computer. The game options are as follows:

Graphics Options:

These control the graphics complexity for the game. In general, the more graphics options selected the slower the game will run. These options control the resolution at which the terrain and cockpit are rendered, which parts of the game world are rendered with texture maps, whether to use flat or smooth shading, and whether or not to show the frame windows.

Sound Options:

These check boxes determine whether to play sound effects, engine sounds, and music. In order for engine sounds to be turned on, sound effects must also be turned on. The volume for the sounds can also be controlled by adjusting the slider bar.

Game Options:

The Team Color field is primarily for use during multi-player games. The selected color will be displayed around the bottom of the vehicle during combat. This helps differentiate one vehicle from another similar vehicle. Computer players do not use team colors.

The Priority field allows TOB to run at a higher priority than normal, which can potentially allow TOB to run more smoothly and be more responsive to user input.

Single Player Options:

During a single player game, the Training Session option can be controlled. When the Training Session option is checked the player's vehicle is invincible. It can not be damaged or destroyed. The player also has the ability to get free refills during simulation by pressing the 'I' key. This causes the energy, fuel, and oxygen supplies to be refilled. However, the player will not receive credit for the round or for any kills acquired during the round. Energy, fuel, and oxygen levels are also not reset after the round.

Combat Msgs:

Clicking on the Combat Messages button, causes the Setup Combat Communication Dialog box to be displayed. This dialog allows up to five different messages to be entered. During combat, the predefined message will be broadcast to all players when the corresponding function key (F5 - F9) is pressed.

Input Config:

Clicking on the Input Config button causes the Configure Input Devices Dialog to be displayed. This dialog works as follows:

Additional Input Devices:

The player can select to use either the joystick or the mouse to control the vehicle during combat. If neither of these buttons is selected, then only keyboard control will be allowed.

Mouse/Joystick Actions:

This area contains a description of which vehicle actions correspond to which mouse/joystick actions.

Calibrate Joystick:

A joystick must be calibrated before it can be useful. To calibrate a joystick click on this button and follow the instructions on the screen.

Throttle Control:

The Throttle Control Dialog allows the player to determine whether the up/down arrows keys or the f/d keys control throttle. The other pair of keys will control pitch. When checked, the Auto Stop feature will automatically bring the vehicle to a halt when the throttle keys are released.

Ready For Combat

When a player is ready to enter the Arena and begin combat, the player clicks on the door to the arena. This notifies the server that the player is ready to begin combat and causes the player's vehicle icon to change to reflect this status. Once a player has sent the ready signal, no further changes will be allowed to the vehicle. This includes new purchases as well as repairs. When all combatants indicate that they are ready to enter the arena, combat will begin regardless of how much time is left on the round countdown timer. See "Entering The Arena" for details on starting the combat round.

The Combatant List:

This window lists all of the combatants who will be participating in the next combat round. It displays their call signs and an icon showing what type of vehicle they will be using. A vehicle icon with an open door or cockpit means that the combatant has not yet indicated that they are ready for combat. If the vehicle icon has a closed door or cockpit, the combatant has indicated that they are ready to begin combat. Once all combatants are ready, the round will begin.

Clicking the second mouse button on the combatants window will bring up a context menu with two options: display the Pilot Information Dialog or send a message to the pilot (computer controlled pilots will ignore any message sent to them). The Pilot Information Dialog can also be displayed by double clicking on a vehicle icon.

If a player joins a multi-player game and the combatants are currently in the arena, no combatant list will be displayed. In this case the round countdown timer displays the time left until combat ends (see the section entitled "The Round Countdown Timer" for details).

The Equipment List:

This window displays a list of all of the equipment currently available to the player. The equipment available changes with the rank of the player. As a player is promoted, a dialog box will notify the player of what additional equipment has become available. However, not all of the vehicles can use all of the equipment. All equipment is included in the list, even if it can not be used with the current vehicle, so that the player can obtain information about equipment that might be used by an opponent.

Clicking the second mouse button on the equipment list will bring up a context menu with two options: display the Equipment Description Dialog or purchase the piece of equipment. The Equipment Description Dialog can also be displayed by double clicking on the icon for a piece of equipment.

The Status Window:

The Status Window displays a variety of information in four sections.

The first section of information contains the current level of energy, fuel, and oxygen for the vehicle. A level of 100% is completely full. A lower percentage indicates that the vehicle could hold some more of the supply. If a vehicle runs out of energy, the lasers will not work. However, energy will recharge. If a vehicle runs out of fuel, it will stop moving and become an easy target. However, the weapons will still work. If a vehicle runs out of oxygen, the pilot will black out.

The second section contains information on the mass of the vehicle and the points left to spend upgrading or repairing the vehicle. The mass of the vehicle is useful for determining the size of engine that is needed to move the vehicle at an acceptable speed. The points left is increased as kill points and bonus points are earned during a combat round. They are decreased as equipment is purchased or damage is repaired. The points left can also be increased by selling equipment.

The third section contains information on the next combat round. The type of combat round, the gravity level, and the arena name for the round are displayed. This information is useful in deciding how to outfit a vehicle for the next combat.

The fourth section contains information on the player's current status. It displays the total number of points earned by the player. This total includes both kill points and bonus points. Normally, this value continually increases. However, if a player is demoted, the number of kill points will be decreased. The section also shows the minimum number of kill points and combat rounds needed to be promoted to the next rank.

The Round Countdown Timer:

The round countdown timer displays the time left until the next combat round begins or the current combat round ends. If the timer is counting down to the beginning of the next round, it will display the text "Combat begins in:" next to the time. If a player joins a game while the other combatants are in the arena or if the player leaves combat early, the timer will display the text "Combat ends in:" next to the time. The time is displayed in minute: seconds format and the timer is updated every five seconds.

The Action Buttons:

The two action buttons at the bottom of the Hangar View are for quitting the game and for displaying the help screen.

Exit Button (red "X"):

Pressing this button exits from TOB after receiving a verification.

Help Button (the orange question mark):

Pressing this button displays the Information Dialog which contains a list of vehicle controls and descriptions of the various round types.

6) ENTERING THE ARENA

Combat will begin once all combatants have indicated that they are ready to enter the arena or when the round timer reaches zero and at least one human-controlled combatant is ready. When combat begins, the Hangar View will disappear and, after a short delay, be replaced by a view of the appropriate vehicle cockpit. Initially, all vehicles will be placed at a predetermined spot near the exterior walls of the Arena. Once all vehicles have signaled that they are ready, vehicles will be free to move about and begin combat.

If a player enters the Arena after combat has already begun, the player's vehicle will be placed at a random location within the Arena.

Appendix A: PERFORMANCE AND GRAPHICS SETTINGS

There are many factors that affect the graphical performance of TOB. Among these are processor speed, video bus speed, screen resolution, and color depth. For optimum performance, TOB is designed for 640x480, 256 color displays. TOB may be run at higher resolutions and color depths, but a performance penalty will be incurred.

There are also several graphics settings that can be used to tailor TOB's performance on a particular machine. The following table lists the recommended graphics options for a variety of processors (local bus video is assumed):

	486DX2	486DX4	Pentium 75	Pentium 90	Pentium 133
High Resolution			X	X	X
Low Resolution	X	X			
Terrain Texture Maps					X
Wall Texture Maps				X	X
Vehicle Texture Maps			X	X	X
Smooth Shading		X	X	X	X

Appendix B: IF YOU HAVE PROBLEMS

This section explains some of the common problems that may be encountered when running Trials of Battle, and their possible solutions.

Problem: There is no sound or sound stops after only a short time.

Trials of Battle uses a new sound technology in OS/2 Warp called DART. The first thing to check is that you have sound enabled. Click on the computer panel in the hangar view and make sure the sound options are checked and that the volume is turned up.

If you are not using OS/2 Warp v4, then you will need to install the DART DLLs that are included on the Trials of Battle CD-ROM in the file dart.zip. Unzip the file and follow the instructions in the readme file.

If you still have trouble with sound, you may need a new driver for your sound card. Check with the manufacturer of your sound card to obtain the latest version of the drivers.

It is also possible to adjust the number and the size of the sound buffers that TOB uses. This may solve a problem that some sound cards, most notably the Pro Audio Spectrum, have with small sound buffers on OS/2 Warp v3. To adjust the sound buffer parameters, start Trials of Battle with the following command line switch:

tob -sXXX,YYY

where XXX is the number of sound buffers (the default is 6) and YYY is the size of the sound buffers (the default is 2048). For example, a good value to try if you're having problems is 8 buffers and with a size of 4096. So you would start tob by typing: tob -s8,4096. You do not have to use the -s switch every time you start the game. Once the buffer settings have changed, the game will remember them until they are changed again.

Problem: The game pauses or "hangs" periodically.

There are usually two main causes of this problem. First, there may be a background utility, such as a CPU monitor, that runs periodically and takes processor time away from TOB. This is a fact of life when running in a true multitasking environment. However, the problem may be reduced by running as little as possible in the background while TOB is being played. In addition it may be possible to reduce the priority of the utilities in their settings notebook. Finally, you can also increase the priority of TOB by clicking on the computer panel in the hangar view and setting the priority option.

The other common cause of this problem is outdated video drivers. You can contact the manufacturer of your video card to make sure that you are using the most recent version of their video driver.

Problem: When going into combat, the screen becomes distorted or is completely black.

These are symptoms of an incompatibility between TOB and the EnDIVE implementation on some video cards. For now, the problem can be fixed by disabling EnDIVE on your video card. Check the documentation that came with the video driver for details.

If you encounter a problem that is not covered above or if you still have problems after trying the above solutions, you can obtain support in one of the following ways:

Telephone: (313) 453-0328 (9am to 4pm)

email: support@stardock.com

Web: http://www.stardock.com

CompuServe: GO STARDOCK

Visit Stardock's website often to retrieve free updates and enhancements to Trials of Battle!

Please include as many details as possible about how to reproduce the bug, your hardware/software configuration, and anything else that you feel may help to isolate the problem.

© ShadowSoft and Stardock 1996

The Arena of Zha Duun

Combatant's Handbook

Intendant's Welcome

Welcome, human. The Seekers have judged your potential and have brought you to us. Here you will represent your species in Zha Duun, the Trials of Battle.

To survive the Trials and prove your worth, you must defeat the best pilots, chosen from three other species as well as your own, in armed combat. Only the most elite pilots will persevere long enough to rise to the rank of Battle Master. To be among them you will need courage, skill, discipline, and quick thinking. These qualities will prove that you are indeed worthy of our high expectations for you. If you do not possess them, you will fail. Either way, it will be much better for you if this is determined here and now.

There is no greater honor than being chosen to represent your race in Zha Duun. Guard that trust well, human. Fight well and die honorably.

Introduction (First Edition)

To the combatant,

I am called Vasca de'Rial, known as Adder, Champion, Third Rank. I was taken from Earth in the year 1853 and brought here. I was among the first Humans ever allowed to take part in the Trials. I was defeated in combat only three times, including the last when I suffered permanent injury and was not able to continue. Since I have advanced the farthest of any of my peers, it has been requested that I be the one to write the Human edition of this book in an effort to better prepare those who are to follow me.

What you will face here is like nothing you have previously encountered. The machines are far beyond what we have on Earth. I find myself still unable to comprehend all of what it means to be able to travel among the stars. I am sure you will experience similar misgivings. Fear not, for our keepers, we call them the Intendants, have gone to considerable trouble to ensure that all who compete here have an equal chance at success. No matter their physical stature or the level of advancement their civilization has achieved, all are seen as equal in the Arena.

No matter which craft you choose, however strange it may appear on the outside, it is constructed for human beings on the inside. You will be given time in which to learn the workings of your craft, and may you learn them well. It is my sincere hope that you will be able to use the information I impart in these pages to surpass my own small accomplishments. Remember that here, you represent us all. Sincerely and hopefully,

The Adder

Introduction (New Edition)

Greetings,

The name is Darien McClane. My call sign is Dart and I held the rank of Weapon Master, First Class. That is the highest rank achieved by a Human pilot to date. Something to be proud of, I suppose, but still hard to swallow when I have

to sit and watch everyone else fire up their engines and charge their weapon systems. When you find yourself addicted to the Trials, remember that your luck can run out and the clock can tick down.

Not that you have to fear for your life, of course. Very few have actually died in combat or as a result of injuries sustained in combat. That doesn't mean you can be careless. I have seen more than a few good pilots injured to the point that they are unable to continue. Though that is not as bad as being "retired" when your chances in the Arena have come to an end. Trust me on this one, I speak from experience.

Since I am not overly busy these days (the Intendants have tried, but it is just not the same once you've tasted combat), I have taken upon myself the task of revising this handbook. Much has changed since Adder's days here and I will strive to make this revision as useful to you as his original was to me.

Yours,
Dart

The Trials: An overview

Nobody knows exactly what purpose the Trials serve or why the "Intendants" go to so much trouble and expense to keep them going (the expense of replacing all of the damaged or destroyed vehicles and equipment must be enormous). This may be some kind of sport, or perhaps a proving ground, or even some sort of test for the species involved. Perhaps if you reach the rank of Battle Master you may learn the answers to some of these questions. We can't say for sure since no human has ever made it to Battle Master.

There have been Battle Masters from some of the other species that compete here, but they eventually seem to be taken somewhere else. We do know that if you are unable to continue either due to injury or retirement you will stay here. I have never heard of anyone being returned to Earth so you may as well get that thought out of your head right now. Of course, if you weren't the adventurous type, the Seekers probably wouldn't have brought you here in the first place. That seems to be one thing we all have in common.

Your initial rank will be Gladiator, Third Class. Each rank has a particular color associated with it. This color is displayed on a rank stripe located on the sides and top of your vehicle.

Below is a table indicating the color of vehicle for each rank and race:

Rank	Stripe Color	Race	Vehicle Color
Gladiator	White	Human	Gray
Warrior	Green	Strahk	White
Champion	Blue	Ostulari	Green
Weapon Master	Red	Dreyvani	Brown
Battle Master	Black		

All ranks, with the exception of Battle Master, are subdivided into three classes. Third Class is the lowest and First Class is the highest. Your rank is determined by a combination of the number of battles you have fought and the number of Kill Points you've earned. Kill Points are awarded for each opponent you destroy during combat. The higher the rank of the opponent, the more Kill Points are awarded.

There are two types of Hovertanks and a Hovercraft that you may pilot during the Trials. All Gladiators will start out with a Light Hovertank but as you progress in rank, you will earn the right to choose your own vehicle. The Hovertanks are ground based vehicles. They can use heavier armor and weapons than the Hovercraft, but they are not as fast or maneuverable. The Hovercraft is an airborne vehicle which means its movement is not as hindered by ground obstacles. However, the Light Hovertank can fly for a short period of time if equipped with Jump Engines.

You will be given as much time as you need to train in the vehicles. During this time you will not receive credit for the rounds you take part in or the kills made during these rounds. This means you will not be able to advance in rank or upgrade your equipment based on your performance in training sessions. They are strictly simulations of the real thing.

If you are defeated in combat (your vehicle is destroyed or you run out of oxygen and are forced to withdraw from the Arena), you will be penalized by losing half of the Kill Points you have accumulated during the round and you will possibly be demoted. You can only lose rank classes, not whole ranks. In other words, once you reach Warrior you

can never be demoted back to Gladiator. A Warrior, First Class can be demoted to a Warrior, Third class, though.

It takes a minimum of 30 combat rounds before you can be considered for the rank of Battle Master. Life can get pretty boring around here if that happens to you. So take my advice, try not to get yourself blown up and always look for the big kills.

There are currently three other races besides humans taking part in the Trials. The Ostulari, the Strahks, and the Dreyvani. All races will choose from the same types of vehicles. While the interiors of the vehicles have been modified to accommodate the needs of each race, their exteriors are very much the same except for the color. Each race has a unique color designation.

As you progress in rank, the combat rounds will become increasingly more difficult. This is due mainly to two factors: you will be matched against more advanced opponents and you will become a more desirable target due to your increased Kill Point value. Therefore, in order to survive, you will need to purchase more advanced weapons, armor, and equipment. These items are obtained by trading in the Kill Points you have earned. Using Kill Points to purchase equipment has no effect on the total used to determine your rank.

In the next chapters we will get into the details of each race, the weapons and equipment you can use, and each of the vehicles you can choose from.

The Opponents

The combatants for each round are chosen randomly from a roster of available pilots that are at roughly the same rank level. No preference is given for pilots of similar race. This means that you may find yourself in a variety of interesting situations where the mix of pilots may or may not be favorable. So a little knowledge of each of the races competing here can go a long way toward anticipating what to expect from a given group of combatants.

Humans:

The other humans you will meet here come from many different parts of the Earth. Nearly all of the different cultures and countries that comprise our world seem to be represented. There is probably not much I can tell you about your human opponents. In most cases, Earth prejudices and animosities are set aside in the face of even stranger beings and new challenges. However, here as on Earth, you cannot trust everybody. Don't count on fellow humans to come to your aid if you're being pounded into dust by a group of nasty aliens.

Strahks:

The Strahks are a very fierce race. They are known for their straight ahead, guns blazing combat style. They prefer the Heavy Hovertank for it's superior fire power and ability to take a beating. Strahks very seldom retreat or break off once they are engaged. If you lock up with one, expect to take it all the way to the finish.

Strahks tend to keep to themselves. It is quite rare that they will team up with another pilot, no matter what race, during combat.

Ostulari:

The Ostulari are a very interesting race. They seem to favor stealth and speed when in combat. Their vehicles of choice are either the Hovercraft or the Light Hovertank. They tend to work together in groups and have been known to work with combatants from other races on rare occasions. Be warned, though, the Ostulari are not generally known for being trustworthy.

Dreyvani:

The Dreyvani are an honorable and philosophical people. They have some very interesting notions about the universe and the natural order of things. There doesn't seem to be a particular pattern to the vehicles they choose, although I believe they tend to choose the Heavy Hovertank less than other vehicles. Dreyvani will work together often and can be deadly opponents.

The Arena

The Arena is where all of the action takes place. It is a huge enclosed area where terrain, obstacles, and gravity levels change from one round to the next. Knowing how to use the terrain features to your advantage can be as important as

knowing your vehicle in determining your success in combat.

Terrain

The terrain can vary from being fairly flat to extremely rough. Some slopes can be so steep as to be impassable to Hovertanks. The ground in the Arena appears rocky and barren, much like the surface of this moon that it's built upon. The exact composition of the Arena surface is unknown but it is not affected by the weapons on your vehicles.

Obstacles

There are two types of obstacles present in the arena: walls and towers. The walls are there mainly to provide cover to vehicles in need of a little extra protection. The towers, on the other hand, can play a major role in combat as they will fire lasers at any vehicle that is at or above the topmost portion of the tower. This means that they can be a particular nuisance to Hovercraft flying at high altitudes.

Special Regions

There are three types of special regions on the terrain that you should be aware of. They are differentiated from normal terrain by their colors.

Interference regions are patches of red energy fields that will interfere with your scanners and transponders. This not only renders you invisible to enemy sensors, and them invisible to yours, but also takes away your ability to fire guided missiles. You must turn off your missile guidance in order to be able to fire missiles in these regions. Of course, any missile fired this way will not track enemy vehicles.

Gravity wells are energy fields that emit a blue glow. If your vehicle passes over a gravity well your maximum speed will be reduced. Your vehicle will be affected by a gravity well no matter how high it is when it passes over the region. You will also find that you will fall faster and, if you are flying over it, you will gain altitude slower but lose it faster.

Exit areas are green fields that act as exits from the Arena. If you are carrying an exit key when you enter these regions, you can activate the energy field and be returned to your hangar to repair damage, resupply, or upgrade equipment.

Round Types

There are several different types of combat rounds that you will need to master to be successful. Each requires slightly different tactics and strategy both before and during combat.

Free For All

There are no special objectives or bonuses. Consider every pilot to be a potential enemy.

Kill the Carrier

You can accumulate bonus points by picking up and carrying the Battle Token for as long as you can.

King of the Hill

All pilots occupying an Interference Region accumulate bonus points for as long as they are able to stay in the region. The number of points awarded decreases rapidly as the number of pilots in a given region increases.

Blind Courage

A large Interference Region renders all radar and scanner units useless and there are lots of walls to hide behind. There is a 50% Kill Point bonus for all kills.

The Equipment

There are many ways to configure your vehicle. Your choice of the best combination of armor, engine, weapons, and equipment will be a large factor in determining your success in combat. The following descriptions will give you a look at all of the available options for your vehicle.

Armor

Armor provides your vehicle with a tough outer skin to give added protection during combat. The amount of protection given decreases as the armor takes damage. However, this armor is capable of regenerating itself if given enough time. Armor comes in a variety of strengths that will be available as you achieve greater status.

Engines

The size of the anti-gravity engine installed in a vehicle determine its speed and maneuverability. The NG rating is designed to give combatants an idea of the maximum vehicle mass an engine can support in normal gravity at an acceptable performance level.

Weapons

Lasers

HECC Lasers

High Energy Cross Coupled lasers are the standard weapon on all new vehicles. Lasers can be fired more rapidly than either missiles or plasma cannons. Firing lasers depletes your vehicle's energy supply.

MACE Lasers

The Maximized Active Charge Emission laser uses a revolutionary precharge chamber design to produce an extremely powerful beam. Unfortunately, this design also drastically increases energy consumption.

Rear Laser

The Rear-Fire Laser can give some protection against pursuing vehicles. The Rear Laser gets its power from the vehicle's main lasers and so will increase in power as the main lasers are upgraded.

Missile Launchers

Missiles are a good way to soften your target's defenses before you close in for the kill. The Missile Launcher allows vehicles to carry and launch missiles at enemy vehicles. The number of missiles the launcher can hold varies depending on vehicle type.

Plasma Cannon

The Plasma Cannon fires rounds of super-heated ionized gas, or plasma, at opposing vehicles. It can be a very deadly weapon at close range but, due to space requirements, it is only available for use on Heavy Hovertanks.

There are four types of plasma rounds that vary in intensity from I to IV. Each vehicle has different capacity of holding a rounds of each Plasma type.

Mine Layer

Mine layers provide a good means of defense and can discourage opponents from following too closely. When a mine hits the ground it will dig into the terrain and become virtually invisible. Dropping a mine from the air allows a crude form of "bombing" the vehicles on the ground.

Sensors

Short Range Sensors

Short Range Sensors provide data on enemy vehicles detected within a limited area around your vehicle. This data is fed to the radar and scanner displays in the cockpit. Vehicles running with Stealth Technology on will be more difficult to detect. Sensors are required before guided missiles can be fired since they provide data to the missile guidance system.

Long Range Sensors

Long Range Sensors provide data on enemy vehicles detected within a large area around your vehicle. This data is fed to the radar and scanner displays in the cockpit. Vehicles running with Stealth Technology on will be more difficult to detect. Sensors are required before guided missiles can be fired since they provide data to the missile guidance system.

Supply Sensors

Supply Sensors allow your vehicle to receive and interpret the beacon sent out by all supplies and ammunition currently in the arena. This information is superimposed on the terrain map to make it easier to locate needed supplies.

Transponder Decoder

All vehicles are equipped with transponders that constantly broadcast the vehicle's position to the Arena's monitoring computers. Any vehicle equipped with a Transponder Decoder can intercept these broadcasts and determine the locations of all other vehicles in the Arena. The vehicle locations are shown by superimposing them on the cockpit's terrain map display.

Miscellaneous

Oxygen Module

These octagonal modules plug into the Oxygen System on your vehicle to provide breathable air to Human pilots during combat. The number of Oxygen Resupply modules that can be held varies by vehicle type.

Oxygen Regulator

The vehicle's Oxygen System provides the pilot with breathable air during combat. An Oxygen Regulator can greatly increase the efficiency of the Oxygen System. If damaged, the regulator may develop leaks which will lead to the increased consumption of the remaining Oxygen.

Energy Module

These octagonal modules plug into the Energy System on your vehicle and act as energy storage devices. Energy Modules will gradually recharge themselves if given time. The number of Energy Modules that can be held varies by vehicle type.

Energy Regulator

The vehicle's Energy System provides energy for the vehicle's systems and weapons during combat. An Energy Regulator can greatly increase the efficiency of the Energy System which will allow your Energy Modules to recharge faster. If damaged, the regulator may develop leaks which will lead to increased energy consumption.

Fuel Module

These octagonal modules plug into the Fuel System on your vehicle to provide fuel for the vehicle's engine. The number of Fuel Resupply modules that can be held varies by vehicle type.

Fuel Regulator

The vehicle's Fuel System provides fuel for the vehicle's engine during combat. A Fuel Regulator can greatly increase the efficiency of the Fuel System. If damaged, the regulator may develop leaks which will lead to the increased consumption of the remaining fuel.

Jump Engines

Jump Engines allow the Light Hovertank to fly for short periods of time. However, the use of Jump Engines greatly increases the Light Tank's fuel consumption.

Radar Jammer

The Radar Jammer overrides your vehicle's EM signature with a powerful interference pattern that makes you invisible to enemy sensors, transponders, and missiles. The Radar Jammer will drain a significant amount of energy from your vehicle while active.

Exit Key

Having an Exit Key present on your vehicle will allow you to activate the green Exit Areas in the Arena. This enables you to return to your hangar during combat without suffering any penalties.

Side Cameras

Purchasing Side Cameras will allow you see what is happening to the left, right, and rear of your vehicle during combat. When you toggle your cockpit's terrain display to camera mode you will be able to select a real-time camera feed from one of the three Side Cameras.

Laser APC

Automatic Pitch Control will adjust laser shots up or down to match the height of a target. When installed, the APC unit will activate itself when there is an enemy vehicle close to the HUD crosshairs. APC only works with the front lasers

Battle Token

The Battle Token is used to keep score or as a special marker in some combat rounds. All Battle Tokens are dropped when a pilot leaves the Arena in order to keep them in play.

The Vehicles

It is critical that you are intimately familiar with your vehicle and its capabilities. There are three vehicles currently being used for combat.

Light Hovertank

The Light Hovertank features good speed and maneuverability plus the ability to use some of the heavier weapons, armor, and equipment. While it is a ground based vehicle, it can fly for short periods of time if equipped with Jump Engines. This makes it a very potent and flexible fighting machine.

Limitations: Cannot use Plasma Cannon

Maximum Laser: MACE-2000

Maximum Engine: 2100-NG

Missile Payload: 16

Mine Payload: 24

Maximum Armor: Class 4

Mass: 850

Plasma Payload: None

Heavy Hovertank

The Heavy Hovertank can use all weapons, armor, engines, and equipment. This vehicle is not designed to be fast or maneuverable but a fully configured Heavy Hovertank can pack some awesome firepower and withstand a tremendous amount of damage.

Limitations: Cannot use Jump Engines

Maximum Laser: MACE-4000

Maximum Engine: 2250-NG

Missile Payload: 24

Mine Payload: 32

Maximum Armor: Class 5

Mass: 1000

Plasma Payload: 32

Hovercraft

The Hovercraft is a very fast and maneuverable vehicle. The ability to hover as well as fly give it a distinct advantage over ground based vehicles. However, it is a bit more limited in the types of equipment it can use and number of weapons it can carry.

Limitations: Cannot use Plasma Cannon or Jump Engines

Maximum Laser: MACE-2000

Maximum Engine: 1700-NG

Missile Payload: 12

Mine Payload: 16

Maximum Armor: Class 3

Mass: 600

Plasma Payload: None

Cockpit Displays

The cockpits of the different vehicles are arranged slightly differently but they all have the same instruments and displays. In the center of the cockpit is a large viewport that gives you your view of the terrain in the Arena. Above the viewport is a row of status indicators that will warn you of various events and give you the status of certain vehicle systems. Below the viewport is a cluster of instruments that display necessary information to the pilot. See the Quick Reference Guide (tobqref.txt file) for a complete list of controls.

The Viewport

In the center of the viewport is a cross hair that allows you to aim your lasers and cannon. At the top is a heading indicator that will tell you your current heading. Your heading is on a scale from 0 to 360 degrees with 0 degrees being straight up on your overhead terrain map, 90 being right on the overhead view, 180 being down, and 270 being straight left.

If you have scanners installed on your vehicle, you will also see a targeting rectangle whenever the vehicle you have targeted is visible in the viewport.

You will also see various status messages and communications from other players displayed on your viewport's HUD.

The Status Indicators

The status indicators are located just above the viewport and allow you to keep track of certain vital vehicle systems and events happening in the Arena. The function of each indicator is as follows:

Damage (DMG): This indicator is solid green when your vehicle has little or no damage. Flashing red indicates that your vehicle has sustained serious damage and solid red means that your vehicle is critically damaged.

Oxygen Supply (OXY): This indicator is green when your oxygen supply is above 25%. If your oxygen supply falls below 25%, the indicator will begin to flash red. When you run out of oxygen the indicator will turn solid red.

Fuel Supply (FUL): This indicator is green when your fuel supply is above 25%. If your fuel supply falls below 25%, the indicator will begin to flash red. When you run out of fuel the indicator will turn solid red.

Energy Supply (EGY): This indicator is green when your energy supply is above 25%. If your energy supply falls below 25%, the indicator will begin to flash red. When you run out of energy the indicator will turn solid red.

Engine Status (ENG): This indicator is normally green when your engines are on and functioning. When it turns red, your engines are no longer running. This can happen if your engines are destroyed in combat, you run out of fuel, or you enter combat without an engine in your vehicle (not a very wise thing to do).

Missile Warning (MIS): The missile warning light is normally dark. When a missile is fired at your vehicle the indicator will flash red and a warning tone will sound.

Radar Jamming (JAM): This indicator is usually dark. If your vehicle is equipped with a Radar Jammer, this indicator will light up when you turn the jammer on.

Round Timer (TMR): The timer indicator will be green for most of the combat round. When there is less than one minute remaining in combat the light will flash red. When there is only 30 seconds to go the light will become solid red.

Jump Engine (JMP): The Jump Engine indicator is only present on Light Hover tanks. The light is solid green while your Light Hover tank's Jump Engines are running and is dark otherwise.

The Instrument Cluster

The instrument cluster consists of two multifunction displays, four level indicators, a radar display, and a weapons display.

Left Multifunction Display (MFD)

The multifunction display on the pilot's left is the scan/damage display. When this MFD is in scan mode, it shows the callsign and a top view of the vehicle that is currently targeted on the radar. If the targeted vehicle is carrying Battle Tokens, the number of tokens carried will be indicated at the bottom of the display. If no vehicle is currently on radar, the screen will be black when in scan mode.

When the MFD is in damage mode, it displays the text "Dmg Report" at the top of the display and an image of your vehicle with major systems drawn in either green (little or no damage), yellow (moderate damage), or red (heavily damaged or destroyed). The damage display also shows the condition of your vehicle's body and, if present, your vehicle's armor in the same green, yellow, or red color code as above. If you have system damage, the damage display will give you the current status of repairs at the bottom of the screen. If you are carrying Battle Tokens and no systems are currently damaged, the number of tokens carried will be displayed at the bottom of the screen.

Right Multifunction Display (MFD)

The multifunction display on the pilot's right is the terrain overhead/side view display. When in overhead map mode, this display shows a top view of the Arena's terrain. The terrain map is scaled to fit the width of the display. Your vehicle is always shown as a yellow dot on the terrain map. If you have purchased a Transponder Decoder, the terrain map will also show you the positions of all other vehicles. Their positions are indicated by dots colored to match the rank stripe of each vehicle. If your vehicle has a Supply Sensor you will also see the locations of all supplies currently in the Arena. You will also be able to see the locations of your mines if they are still active. In side view mode, the terrain display gives you a real-time camera feed from the left, right, or rear of your vehicle.

Level Indicators

There are four level indicators that give the pilot feedback on the current levels of fuel (F - green), engine power (P - blue), energy (E - orange), and oxygen (O - red). When the colored bars extend all the way to the top of the indicator it means that you have the maximum amount of that supply or, in the case of the engine power indicator, that you are at maximum power. When the colored bars all turn dark, it means that you have run out of that supply or that the engine power is at minimum. You will use fuel and oxygen as you move around the arena. You use energy

every time you fire your laser or when your Radar Jammer is activated. Unlike your fuel or oxygen, your energy supplies will recharge if given enough time. Your engine power will vary depending on your current speed. When your engine power is at minimum your engines will automatically maintain your current position.

Weapon Display

The weapon selection display will display an icon for either the plasma cannon, missile launcher, or mine layer depending on which weapon is currently selected. If your vehicle is not carrying one of these weapons, its icon will not be displayed. If the icon is bright then the weapon is ready to be fired. If the display is dim then the weapon is either recharging/rearming, out of ammunition, or if missile guidance is active, you may not have a target selected and locked. For more information on selecting and locking targets for missiles see the "Firing Missiles" section of the combat tutorial.

The ammunition inventory is displayed just below the weapon icon and shows how many of each type of ammunition is currently available for the selected weapon. There are up to four types of ammunition that can be fired by each weapon. These correspond to the four numbers shown on this display. If this display shows all zeros then there is no ammunition available for the weapon currently selected. If one of the numbers is greater than zero then that ammo type is automatically selected. If more than one ammo type is nonzero then you may cycle through the available ammunition types. If you exhaust your supply of one ammo type by firing your last round, the next available ammo type will be automatically selected.

From left to right, the inventory slots for each weapon are assigned as follows:

Missile: SRAM missile, LRAV missile, HEAP missile, and HEAP II missile.

Plasma Cannon: Type I plasma, Type II plasma, Type III plasma, and Type IV plasma.

Mine Layer: Energy Mine, Pulse Mine, Ion Mine, and Plasma Mine.

Radar Display

If you have installed either Long or Short Range Sensors on your vehicle the Radar Display will show you the locations of enemy vehicles and missiles relative to your current position. Your vehicle's current position is always represented by where the lines on your Radar Display intersect each other. The two diagonal lines mark the area that is visible through your main viewport. Enemy vehicles and missiles to your right or left will be to the right or left of the vertical line. Enemy vehicles and missiles in front of you will be above the horizontal line and those behind you will be below the horizontal line.

Combat Tutorial

In this section I will share some of the important tricks and techniques that have served me well for many rounds of combat. I have left much of what Adder originally wrote on this subject where the material is still applicable.

The first steps to successful combat rounds come before you even enter the Arena for the first time. Always make sure you know what type of round it will be. Different round types require different strategies. I will touch on this in more depth in the "Tips and Techniques" section. You will also want to take note of the other combatants listed for this round. Notice which races each of the pilots belong to and look over the ranks to pick out choice targets or single out who to avoid. Use this information to formulate an initial strategy and be ready to implement it as soon as you begin combat. Use the time before combat wisely, you will have precious little time for planning strategy once combat begins.

The most important thing you have to remember during combat is to always be moving. Standing still or hesitating for even a moment can be the difference between a big kill and an early trip back to your hangar to try and salvage what is left of your vehicle.

You can also take advantage of the obstacles and special regions in the Arena. Hiding behind walls can give you a little break from pursuit but watch out for Hovercraft flying in behind you. Being near a low tower can provide some support against attacking Hovercraft. However, this becomes much less effective at higher levels when the lasers in the towers will be relatively weak when compared to the armor on most Hovercrafts; but every advantage helps.

The special regions can also be allies. Obviously, the use of the exit areas can be beneficial for getting out of combat with all of your hard won Kill Points in tact, or perhaps taking a quick break to upgrade your lasers. You can also use interference regions and gravity wells to your advantage as well. For instance, interference regions not only render your scanners inoperative, but will also shield you from enemy sensors. This means that opponents will not be able to launch guided missiles at you. Gravity wells can be very helpful for slowing down targets to make it

easier to aim lasers and cannons, if you can lure your opponents into them.

You should also be aware of steep slopes or pits that may be useful for blocking an opponent's path or trapping them for an easy kill.

Maneuvering Your Vehicle

As I have noted previously, you should always be moving while in combat. If you find yourself taking heavy fire don't hesitate to change directions wildly, it may buy you enough time to create an escape path. The ability of your vehicle to slide left or right and, if you are flying, up and down can be extremely useful in evasive or attack maneuvers.

Firing Lasers

To hit an enemy vehicle with your lasers, simply maneuver until the red dot of your gunsight is on the vehicle (or a little in front of the vehicle if the vehicle is moving) and press the fire button. I have found it useful at the higher levels, where each shot consumes a significant amount of energy, to fire short, controlled bursts until you find your range. To fire your rear lasers, if you have them, it is best to use your side cameras to get a rear view and then line up the pursuing vehicle in the rear sight.

Firing Missiles

There are two ways to fire missiles: guided and unguided. You can toggle between these two modes. To fire an unguided missile, simply turn off your missile guidance system and press your secondary fire button when the target is lined up. Unguided missiles fire straight ahead and each vehicle is a little different so you may have to practice a little to get used to aiming them.

To hit an enemy with a guided missile, you must first have the target visible on your radar (which means, of course, that you will need to have purchased either Long Range or Short Range Sensors). Once the enemy vehicle is targeted on your radar and displayed on your scanner, your missile can get a lock on the vehicle. When the missile is locked, the missile icon on your weapon selector will brighten and you can fire. The missiles have internal guidance systems but it helps if you are roughly facing your target when you launch them.

Some pilots are extremely good at dodging missiles so the mere act of firing will not guarantee a hit. At close range you will find that SRV missiles work the best due to their high maneuverability. For long range or slow moving targets, the LRAV and HEAP missiles can do a lot of damage.

Firing Cannons

Plasma Cannons are an extremely effective weapon at short range. At longer ranges and against quick opponents, they become less effective since it is fairly easy to dodge the relatively slow moving balls of plasma. To fire the plasma cannons toggle your weapon selection until the cannon icon is visible on your weapon display. When the icon brightens you are clear to fire. Use the gunsight on your cockpit's HUD to aim your shot in the same manner you would for a laser burst.

Laying Mines

Mines are a good way to deter opponents who are following close behind you or to set a trap for unsuspecting pilots. To lay a mine, toggle your weapon selection until the mine icon appears on your weapons display. When the icon lights up you are ready to drop a mine. Once the mine hits the ground it will dig in and become virtually invisible to opponents although you will be able to see the locations of your mines on the overhead terrain map.

In addition, if you are flying above your target, you can effectively bomb your opponents by dropping mines while flying over them. Thus, mines are not only defensive, but can be a very deadly offensive weapon for Hovercrafts and Light Hovertanks with Jump Engines.

One thing to remember though, is that only a fool drops a mine while going backwards.

Tips and Techniques

Here is a collection of tips I've picked up during my stay here. These work well for me, and I've had a fair amount of success. Just remember that there are many ways to approach the combat rounds and some things work better than others for some pilots.

Some new combatants tend to go for the security of armor right away. I would caution against this strategy. It will be a couple of rounds before you can afford a new engine and the extra weight of armor may make you a sitting duck particularly if you get put into high gravity conditions.

Selling ammunition found during a combat round can be particularly helpful when you are just starting out.

Some things you should consider purchasing with your initial 1000KPs are the oxygen, and fuel regulators. Without an oxygen regulator, the vehicles tend to use oxygen at an incredibly high rate and you will find yourself spending all your time searching for oxygen instead of going for those much needed Kill Points. An energy regulator is also nice to have although it is not as critical until you purchase higher powered lasers.

When going into combat always make sure that your engine and lasers are in good working order and that you have plenty of fuel and energy. You may need your lasers and energy right away and, of course, you are a sitting duck if you run out of fuel or your engine is heavily damaged or destroyed.

Most of the tips given so far, and many of the ones that follow, apply to Free For All rounds. There are no special rules or goals to remember. Just stay alive and watch your back. These rounds are unpredictable and may turn into huge brawls or combat may split into several smaller skirmishes.

When taking part in Kill The Carrier rounds, remember that speed can be your greatest friend, and you will be sorely lacking friends if you pick up the Battle Token. Everyone will be out to destroy you, but that's just part of the fun. So keep your vehicle fast by using a large engine or but don't disregard the usefulness of a good set of armor. Mines can also be useful against the pack of vehicles that is sure to be following you. As would be expected, a Hovercraft can have quite an advantage in Kill The Carrier since its superior speed and agility can make it a very difficult target.

King of the Hill requires a different kind of thinking. The important thing in this type of round is defense. Once you get to the top of the "hill" you need to be able to hold your position for a while in order to accumulate as many bonus points as possible. Purchase the best armor you can afford and get a good set of lasers. Remember that, in general, missiles won't be as effective in this round since you cannot launch guided missiles at or from the interference region. Heavy Hovertanks usually seem to do the best in these rounds since they can take more punishment and they can use their Plasma Cannon to deadly effect while missiles are largely useless.

Blind Courage can be the most difficult round type to survive but it is also potentially the most rewarding in terms of bonus points. Every kill made during this round is worth half again as many Kill Points as normal. For example, a kill that is normally worth 10,000 points is now worth 15,000. It doesn't take long to rack up huge bonuses, especially at higher levels. The thing to remember is that your scanners will be useless, and so you will not be able to fire guided missiles. It is often beneficial to have side cameras during these rounds to keep an eye on your tail. If someone with a powerful set of lasers manages to sneak up behind you, you can be back in your hangar before you know what hit you. So keep moving and use the numerous walls to plan ambushes and keep opponents off your tail.

In Closing

The Trials are an experience like no other. If the Seekers have done their jobs, you will soon find yourself addicted to the thrill of combat just as the many who came before you have been. This is the ultimate chance to test yourself against the best pilots in the galaxy (which, in itself, is a pretty incredible thought). Savor each minute and enjoy the challenge. When it is over, you can look back on this experience and know that you were one of the very few, the very elite, that were chosen to represent your race in Zha Duun.

I hope this handbook will get you well on your way to becoming the first human Battle Master ever. Perhaps I will rest easier knowing that, even though I can no longer reach that goal myself, I have helped the one who will eventually succeed where I fell short. Good luck and good hunting.

Acknowledgements

We'd like to thank our families for their unwavering support throughout this project. We'd also like to acknowledge all of the great ideas and contributions of the folks at Stardock Systems. To the many beta testers and friends who left their marks, whether great or small, on this project we'd like to say: Thanks guys, what a ride it has been.

-Shadowsoft