

Spartacus: Blood and Sand on Facebook

Game Concept



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Summary

Spartacus: Blood and Sand on Facebook is a social networking game that will bring the drama and excitement of the TV series to Facebook. The game is true to the series with visceral, brutal gladiatorial action along with a sexy and sexually charged environment between the gladiatorial events.

Each player plays a Roman citizen who owns and runs a gladiator house (a *ludus*) somewhere in the Roman Empire. The player acquires, trains, equips, and fights gladiators, seeking to amass a fortune and raise the glory of his or her house to epic levels. Do well, and the player can become the most famous gladiatorial house of Rome itself, hobnobbing with the Emperor! But players must beware—plots and betrayals between rival houses can throw down even the most powerful houses, reducing a player to a miserable outpost on the barbarian frontier, wagering a handful of coins on gladiators fighting in the pits.

As in most social networking games, there is no ultimate victory or assured defeat. Instead, players constantly compete and cooperate with one another striving for wealth and status.

Game Play

Each player starts with a small gladiator house, limited wealth, a couple of gladiators, some fighting equipment, and various modest accessories and decorations. One key way to advance in the game is for players to pit their gladiators against those of other houses (including other players and AI houses) at various arenas. The glory of each house and the size of the arena determine the size of the crowd that gathers for the event and thus the amount of coins the players can win.

Gladiators

Players start with a couple of gladiators and can purchase others over time. Each gladiator is rated in these areas:

- **Skill:** This is the overall fighting skill of a gladiator. Each starts with an innate level of skill, which can be increased through training and through experience by winning matches.
- **Morale:** The morale of the gladiator is quite important. Low morale means a chance of fighting poorly, below skill level, while high morale allows for greater performance. Players who neglect morale can watch it sink to rebellious levels, which can threaten the glory and even safety of the gladiatorial house itself. Morale can be raised by treating gladiators well, spending money on them and providing women for them.
- **Honor:** Gladiators gain honor by winning matches and lose honor by losing matches (include throwing them via intrigues). Honorless gladiators must fight in the Pits.
- **Type:** Gladiators can have a specific type, such as:
 - Gauls (*Galli*) with lances and small shields.
 - Shield fighters (*Hoplomachi*) with brimmed helmets, spears, swords, and shields.
 - Net fighters (*Retiarii*) with nets, tridents, and daggers.
 - Thracians (*Thraeces*) with large helmets, shields, and curved swords.
 - Etc.
 - (Mixed types will also be allowed.)
- **Health:** This tracks the overall health of a gladiator and how seriously a gladiator is injured in matches. Those with low health fight poorly, while those with very low health cannot fight

at all and must spend long times recovering, thereby depriving the house of income from them.

- **Fatigue:** Gladiators become fatigued when fighting in matches. If given rest between matches, they recover from fatigue. If not, they tire and fight poorer.

Gladiators can be equipped with a wide range of gear: various types of helmets, shields, weapons, arm guards, greaves, body armor, etc. The equipment influences the attack and defense abilities of the gladiators.

A player can select one gladiator to be the head trainer (*doctore*). The trainer is not allowed to fight in matches but instead boosts the ability of other gladiators in the house to train. A trainer can only help gladiators whose skills are lower level than the trainer's, so the player must decide whether his or her highest skilled gladiator is best used as a fighter earning money or as a trainer helping everyone else.

Managing gladiators is crucial to player success in the game. Gladiators who win and heal faster can level up faster, earning more money and glory. Gladiators who lose and take longer to heal do not gain much for money or glory. Dead gladiators, of course, are a wasted investment and need to be replaced.

Maintaining a good stable of gladiators can be expensive, as training costs money. A player unable to earn enough money to pay for training may see future earnings, and glory, plummet.

Events

An event occurs at an arena and consists of one or more matches. Each match pits one or more gladiators against either one or more opposing gladiators (controlled by other players or the AI) or against wild animals (AI only). Gladiator vs. gladiator matches can be to the death, which can earn the player the most money but risks the life of the gladiators, or to surrender, which reduces the chance of death and serious injury but brings in less money. The winner of the match earns coins for the player and glory for the player's house.

Players can also wager on their gladiators in the matches and attempt to earn more money that way. The odds are based on the skill and honor of the gladiator and the glory of the house.

Players can challenge their friends to gladiatorial events. The event can occur in arenas based on the average glory of the two players. Players can also fight AI-controlled gladiatorial houses. These events occur in arenas based only on the player's glory.

Not all gladiatorial events consist of prestigious matches. Gladiators without honor must fight in the Pits. These matches are purely for money—large profits can be earned for successful fights, but the brutal, relentless combat can quickly kill or incapacitate a gladiator. Pit fighting does not allow surrender, and the consecutive matches allow no time to recover from fatigue between matches.

In each match, the various qualities of the gladiators (skill, morale, fatigue, etc.) and the attack and defense abilities of their gear that helps determine the outcome of the matches. Combat is turn-based, with the player watching the action as it unfolds. The player can set a fighting style for the gladiator at the start of a match and just watch the action or decide on the gladiator's move in each turn. Moves will include basic attack and defense stances, with certain moves special to the gladiator's equipment (such as a net fighter try to net a foe). Highly skilled gladiators get special, powerful moves, like feint and slash, and finishing moves, like a stab to the heart.

Arenas and Locations

The size of a gladiatorial arena helps determine the size of the crowd that comes to the events. Each player seeks to stage matches in the best arena they can get into. The elite arenas, however, are very selective and will only allow players with high levels of glory to play there.

Players with extreme levels of glory can be invited by the Emperor to stage matches in the Colosseum at Roma itself. This is the largest, most splendid arena in the game, with the largest crowds.

The size of an arena is also used to determine its location in the Roman Empire. Location is used for backgrounds, providing rich and varied imagery for the game:

Smallest arenas: Crude arenas at army camps and garrison villages along the frontier facing the German barbarians.

Small: Basic arenas in small towns in newly conquered territory like Dacia (modern Romania).

Medium-small: Adequate arenas in large towns in well secured places like Hispania (modern Spain).

Medium: Fine arenas in small cities in Asia Minor (modern Turkey).

Medium-large: Popular arenas in important cities like Syracuse in Sicilia (modern Syracuse, Sicily).

Large: Huge arenas in large cities like Alexandria.

Gigantic: Luxurious arenas in a major city like Neapolis (modern Naples) in southern Italy.

Colossal: The Colosseum in Rome itself.

House Accessories and Decorations

Players can purchase many types of accessories and decorations for their gladiatorial school or "house." Accessories provide game benefits, like good training gear that boost the ability to train gladiators, better water (helps health), medical staff (faster healing of major injuries), etc.

Decorations provide an indirect benefit by helping to boost the glory of the house. Acquiring an elite kitchen and opulent dining hall, for example, reflect well on the house, can attract influential sponsors, and raise its glory, as can fine chariots, exotic servants from far parts of the empire, etc.

Intrigues and Favors

What do player do between match? Engage in intrigues, of course. The game will have a set of intrigue options where players can cooperate and compete with one another to help and hinder other players. Intrigues are also an important way to bring the sexy and sexually charged environment of the series into the game.

Does the House of Cassius have a near-unbeatable gladiator? Bribe him to throw his next match. (The player or players spend the money, with a chance the bribed gladiator will deliberately lose the match.)

Is the School of Livia too wealthy? Convince a Roman Senator to block the school from the larger arenas, thereby cutting into her income.

Does the House of Proximus have high glory? Gift him a bewitching slave that distracts him and his gladiators, driving down their morale.

Maybe sabotage will be effective. Or infiltrating spies into an establishment to discover a scandal there and then blackmail the house. Assassins could be hired to try to take out key members of a house, like the trainer or medics. There are many types of intrigues that can be done!

Favors are like intrigues, except they have a positive benefit. Players can gain sponsors: influential Roman citizens who can grant them favors, helping them in various ways. For example, Flavius, head of the Praetorian Guard, could sponsor a house and help the player get matches in the Colosseum.

Some favors would be things player acquire for use at houses, such as providing slave girls for the gladiators, to improve their morale.

Players can form alliances with friends, which allow a player to loan a gladiator to another player in the alliance. This can be used, for example, to bring a ringer into an event, a much higher skilled gladiator than the opponent was expecting. Alliances might be used in other ways, too, such as tracking alliance prestige based on how the members of the alliance do—this could be a community feature (and could roughly resemble the racing factions that were prevalent in Rome).

Special Characters

The game will include a number of special characters, based on the characters of the TV series. Since players will know the characters from the series, this will add special interest to game and connection to the series. Players can acquire and use these characters. For example, Onemaus (the trainer for the House of Batiatus in the series) will be an expert trainer players can gain for their house.

In addition to characters from the series, legendary characters can be in the game, too. For example, a player may make a huge offering to the gods and be granted the favor of Hercules for a match.

Social Gaming

The game will use advanced social gaming techniques to create a community that can explosively grow and to become a revenue stream.

To avoid power users dominating the game and driving away more casual players, a play throttling mechanism will be used. This will prevent a player from leveling up too quickly, but it periodically renews as time passes. This prevents power sessions while encouraging players to check back and play the game frequently over time. Many games use an “energy drink” metaphor for this; our game will use a Roman or gladiatorial-theme metaphor (to be determined).

The game will have two virtual currencies. “Coins” are earned and spent in the game as the standard currency to buy things. A second currency, “Laurels”, is given out much less frequently and is more valuable. Various rare and special-edition items can only be purchased with it. Laurels can be purchased with real-world money and thus become a revenue source. Facebook Credits (currently in beta testing at Facebook) will also be investigated for use in the game.

Players will be able to see what their Facebook friends are doing in the game, send them stories of what they are doing via Facebook, and can challenge them to matches. Friends who are not in the game can be invited to join. Players can also give their friends Spartacus gifts—items that provide a benefit in the play of the game.