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| Ludi Gladiatorii Testing ReportGriffin DeanFeb 17, 2013GAT212S13-AOverviewLudi Gladiatorii was tested with three different individuals on three different occasions. Testing focused on character creation, combat, and the Path of the Gladiator mini adventure. Two of the three testers are extremely familiar with pen and paper roleplaying games; as a result, they may not be the best judges of rule clarity as they can infer a lot of information from years of previous experience.The designer was the Arena Master for all three play tests. Only in one test did the play tester read through the gladiator creation rules and create his gladiator without the designer’s assistance. In the other two cases the designer walked the play testers through the gladiator creation process for the sake of brevity.The First TestIn the first test the play tester created a Thraex gladiator. This test occurred before players could freely switch between gladiator classes. The player proceeded to fight a match against a Hoplomachus gladiator followed by a match against a Murmillo gladiator. The play tester took well to the combat system and felt that it was fun. Despite this fact several issues arose. The first major issue arose during the Hoplomachus match. It had to do with the “Advance Movement Action.” This issue puts Hoplomachus gladiators at a severe disadvantage. The Hoplomachus relies on his spear to keep his opponent at a distance. However the rules for the Advance Movement Action allowed other classes (Like the Thraex) to effortlessly move past the Hoplomachus’s Spear in a single action. This was not only imbalanced but also unrealistic.In response, the designer expanded the Movement Action rules to ensure that combatants cannot easily pass through an opponent’s “guard.” Under the new system a combatant must block, dodge, or parry to Advance past an opponent’s guard.The second major issue arose during the Murmillo match. Less than two rounds into the fight it became painfully clear that the tester could not win. The Murmillo shield was essentially impenetrable. At the time the “Follow-up Action” rules were incomplete. It was clear that lighter gladiator classes such as the Thraex and Retiarius need ways to reduce or disable the defensive capabilities of the heavier gladiator classes such as the Murmillo and Secutor.It was this play testing data that lead to the addition of the Knockdown, Wrestling, Ensnare, and Flanking rules. These rules give the lighter gladiators ways to force their heavyweight opponents to fight on their terms.The Second Test In the second test the play tester created a Murmillo gladiator. This test revealed critical weakness in the skill system that could be exploited by allocating all of ones skill points into a single skill. At the time of the play test the player received 12 skill points to spend on skills. Each skill level cost only one skill point. A skills level is added to die rolls using said skill. The play tester allocated all 12 of his skill points into his Weapon (Tower Shield) Skill. This gave him a +12 bonus to attacking and defending with his Scutum tower shield. This essentially made the play tester’s gladiator invulnerable. Fighting a single match against a Retiarius, he simply used his +12 shield skill to bludgeon his opponent to death.To address this critical flaw the skill system was overhauled. The player is now given between 12 and 24 skill point to create their gladiator. Now, upgrading a skill costs a number of skill points equal to the player’s current level in said skill + 1. It now costs a player 67 skill points to reach level 12 in a single skill. This creates a system that encourages a player to diversify through diminishing returns.The play tester also tried to game the system by allocating all of his stat points into his Endurance stat. His goal was to try to create the ultimate “Tank Gladiator.” However, this did not work out as he had hoped The play tester’s character had a significant amount of health, but struggled to perform any strength or dexterity related actions. This was by design, but has since been made irrelevant by the new class system.Under the new class system the player qualifies for gladiator classes by meeting their stat and skill prerequisites. If a player stacks all of his stat points into a single stat, he significantly restricts his class options. This is the player choice, but the system is designed to discourage this behavior.The Third Test In the third test the player tester created a Retiarius gladiator. This final test focused on the “Path of the Gladiator” mini adventure and lead to a lengthy discussion about the adventure’s interest curve. This mini adventure was designed to sever as a basic “Tutorial” for new players. The play tester asserted that the game should be action-oriented and focused on team-based arena combat. The first major issue of the playtest was pacing. The amount of historical exposition presented at the start of the adventure killed the interest curve. The player was clearly at a loss as to how to progress. The player tester, who is an avid role player, felt that the game needed to meet players’ expectations of gladiators by get them into combat as quickly as possible.As a result the adventure was reworked to immediately pit the players against each other in an unarmed combat match. This non-lethal combat gives the players a safe place to learn the basic combat rules. Once they have sufficiently beaten the tar out of each other, they advance to wooden weapons, and finally to the final test. Hopefully this will create a much stronger intensity curve.This was almost a complete 180 from the game’s previous goal of creating a deep roleplaying experience punctuated by combat. While the designer believes that the “deep roleplaying experience” can still be pulled off, the core rule system is devoted to providing a historically accurate experience that still meets people’s expectations. |