

This is a discussion that we started having last week until we realized we'd already stopped recording. It's also something I've been trying to talk about to people in person for a while, but in my usual manner have been somewhat unskilled at making people understand what I'm talking about.

Basically, the idea is that classes and upgrades in common video games such as Overwatch, DOTA, TF2, World of Warships, World of Tanks, Fractured Space, etc. are all decently well balanced versus each other, and tend to provide a decent entry point for new players with one of them. X-Wing Second Edition claims to bring more balance to the game, but will this balance also make the game easier for new players to pick up while simultaneously giving more experienced players room to learn and grow?

The first topic here is classes. These are basically represented in X-Wing by different ships. In X-Wing, there's also the flexibility of having cheaper vs. more expensive ships, where in a video game everyone is usually just one thing so they all must cost the same.

Insert a part here where you imagine your favorite game and compare the classes to the different ships in X-Wing. Snipers are ordnance, spies are arc dodgers, brawlers are range 1-2 turrets or something, whatever.

But the main point here is that most games have a "heavy" class that's also the most boring and easiest to play. And often the best. My example is the Colossus in Fractured Space, which is a terrible example because so few people actually play that game, but it's a good example. The stock upgrades are very easy to understand and the competitive Colossus players usually just use the stock upgrades still. It's super cheap in game and usually included in the rotation of free ships, so it's what you'll often start with. It's also the best ship, or it was for a long time, and was sort of in that "OP pls nerf" territory. The question is, why can't X-Wing have the same thing?

The answer to that is that it can - X-Wings and TIE Fighters could be the "heavy" of X-Wing. They do a simple thing and do it well, and all the new players have them. Scum it seems is more of a skilled players' faction, and it's unlikely anyone wants to start the game with scum right now, especially since they have no core set options.

Now for older players, this creates an immediate problem: why wouldn't I just always play the heavy and win? Well, the answer is that the heavy is technically the best but can also be outplayed and can only do so much. So, if I want to prove my skill and have fun, I will play something else. And that's proven in video games too, where even very competitive players usually don't pick the heavy because it's so boring. All the other ships in the game should be technically worse than the X-Wing and TIE Fighter for players of equal skill, but also be such that a player of higher skill will see more incremental advantage over lower skill players with different (more interesting and flexible) ships, thus making all the ships competitively viable.

Second topic: upgrades. X-Wing doesn't have stock upgrades. Or does it? If done correctly, quickbuild cards should provide reasonable "stock" upgrades. Basically, the quickbuilds should provide not necessarily the "best" or most "meta" builds, rather they show you what is the easiest and most fun version of a ship. This doesn't guarantee new players a great list, but it avoids the problem 1.0 had where every new player invariably used Marksmanship on Wedge or something at some point, since it's in the core set. As a new player, you can build lists by sticking quickbuilds together until you're just under 200 points, play it, and then in the next

games, slowly experiment with trading out one card at a time and see if it made it better or worse.

All this analogy works better for a game wherein you pay in-game currency (or I guess real-world currency if you play microtransaction games) to unlock more ships. In games such as TF2, the classes all start with everything but the upgrades unlocked so you don't have to think "oh, I only have the heavy, so that's all I can play." But still, the way X-Wing works is very similar to the online game in that it's sort of like buying the base game (core sets) and various DLCs (expansions) to collect all the bits that you need. And it's a lot closer to that level of fairness now that FFG has promised that all factions will have access to all upgrades.

Will this sort of idea be implemented in 2.0, or will we be sitting around in September saying "3.0 when?" We don't know for sure, and X-Wing 2.0 will likely still be a very enjoyable game either way, but hopefully there was some nugget of wisdom in this rant that you cared about.