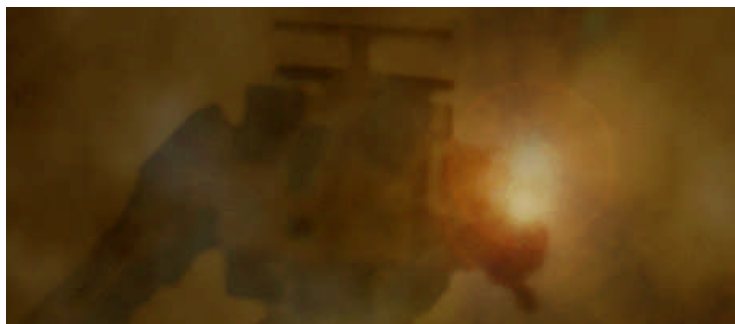


Battletech Arenas

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Before the FASA game of Shadowrun even existed there was Battletech. I actually attribute my initial interest in Shadowrun to the Battletech game simply because I purchased my first SR book when it appeared in the same section of the store. It never occurred to me to have any kind of Battletech crossover rules until the existence of Battletech Arenas was established in the Seattle Sourcebook. Although I don't think I ever got around to including aspects of Battletech and the arenas in my game the following is probably how I would go about doing it. Remember, you still use the normal Battletech rule system for all tournament combat. The opposing forces can be controlled by the GM or controlled by other Battletech players who don't play Shadowrun.

Skills

If a runner wishes to partake in a Battletech tournament they must have the necessary skill. I've narrowed it down to only one: the Battletech Skill (No concentrations or specializations exist). The actual SR/BT skill conversion is simple:

Piloting = 10 - Battletech Skill

Gunnery = 11 - Battletech Skill

The Battletech Arena

I seriously doubt Battletech combat in Shadowrun involves the use of actual Battlmechs and probably still exists in the simulator format. But I perceive it as being a hell of a simulator.

A Battletech arena is structured similarly to a small to medium sized sports stadium, but with a smaller "field". Located in this central field are six or eight "cockpits". Placed around the stadium are a vast number of extremely large trid screens depicting various cockpit views, an over head view, various perspective shots, and condition read outs portraying the virtual reality combat situation as well as images of the pilots. There also exists an enormous sound system blasting the aural aspect of the battle as well as various pieces of action related music and a "mood" lighting system designed to enhance the chaos of battle with flashes and strobing. Any number of spectator seats encircle the central field and each seat is equipped with a miniature trid screen and headset unit which can be switched between various shots or pilot conversations. Several areas include datajack ports so the spectator can jack into the virtual battle environment and move freely through it through the utilization of simple hand controls. Tickets run from 10 nuyen for Green tournaments to 100 nuyen for good Elite seats. Four control booths are spaced around the upper decks of the stadium from which all computer and production aspects of the arena are controlled.

Inside each simulation "cockpit" is a representation of the Battlemech's controls which may be custom configured to the mech being used and the pilot's preference. A datajack is required and simulates the neurohelmet used in the Battletech world. Although the datajack receives various commands from the pilot, no information is relayed back to the pilot. Although it would be possible for a pilot equipped with the right headware to simply view everything right in his head, this is strictly forbidden by the rules. This is also the reason why control rigs will not work as they require the user to both relay commands and receive information to function. All images and information is displayed on the various trid "windows" located at the appropriate places throughout the cockpit. The cockpit itself is located on a complex hydraulic and gyro system which imitates the bumps and crashes the pilot experiences in the virtual environment.

The Mechwarrior

Those who pilot a battlemech in the Battletech simulator are known as Mechwarriors in both the Battletech and Shadowrun world. (In the interest of keeping things simple I would probably forget about the clans for now.)

Tournaments

Tournaments exist for several levels of skill and can be played between teams or individual Mechwarriors. When a Mechwarrior or team enters a tournament for the first time they are classified as "mercenaries". The warrior may request admittance into an established mercenary group or they may form their own, which involves nothing more than giving yourself or your group an impressive name. Entering a tournament isn't exactly cheap and the cost is determined by the weight category of the mech you choose. The costs are as follows:

Light: 500
Medium: 1,000
Heavy: 2,000
Assault: 4,000

If you were to enter as a group then add up the total cost of your mechs. A "lance" with two medium and one heavy mech would cost 4,000ny to enter into a tournament. The individual mech you use is up to you. Warriors or groups of warriors are matched with opponents based on the total calculated strength of their units (There's a chart for that somewhere in a Battletech book but if you can't find one just wing it.) The victorious warrior or unit wins a prize equal to the total of both side's entry fees and moves to the next grade (see below). So if two medium mechs went up against two medium mechs the prize would equal 4,000ny. (The arena obtains all of their money through ticket sales.) If the warrior or unit so desires they may challenge a group with a higher strength than their own in the interest of obtaining a larger prize. No warrior or unit can ever challenge somebody out of their own class. Also, if a warrior or group is victorious they must move up a class, they cannot stick around in a lower one honing their skills by blowing away inferior pilots.

Speaking of class levels, there are four: Green, Regular, Veteran, and Elite. Within all classes EXCEPT elite there are also four grades: Simply, 1-4. When a combatant is victorious they move up one grade. If they are defeated, they move down one. If they win a tournament while at grade 4 the class rolls over to the next highest level. All prizes and entry fees stay the same until the combatant reaches the Elite level. That's when things get interesting.

Elite Mechwarriors

When a combatant or unit reaches the elite level several things happen. First, all normal prize money is QUADRUPLED. Second, Elite matches often offer a significant prize purse paid for by corporate sponsors. Third, since there are no grades in elite, if you lose a battle you are not only knocked down to the Veteran class but also knocked to the BOTTOM of this class. And, fourth, the unit or combatant may be offered a position in a "house" unit. Five house units exist, representing the five Inner Sphere houses. (Although recent developments in the Battletech world have ripped the Inner Sphere into little pieces I'd probably fall back on the five original houses, again for the sake of simplicity.) All of the five house units are corporate sponsored and although the traditional entry fee and prize system still exists the monetary figures are insignificant when compared to what the companies pay the Mechwarriors to keep winning. A shadowrunner Mechwarrior would sooner die than hook up with one of the house units. At least I'd hope they would.

Shadowrunners And Battletech

It is well known on the streets that many of the Battletech mercenary groups are comprised of shadowrunners. No form of identification is required to enter a tournament, only the entry fee. There is no physical examination because the computers are programmed to sense abnormalities attributed to the use of illegal 'ware and nobody minds if the Mechwarrior never takes off his or her helmet. Battletech combat is the perfect opportunity for a runner to disgrace a corp in complete anonymity. One of the greatest corporate disgraces of all time resulted from a Battletech Tournament when a shadowrunner manned mercenary group, The Corp Crushers, defeated Aztechnology's Ancient Empire, winning a 1 million nuyen purse sponsored by Aztechnology itself.

Other Notes

If you want to use a specific mech there is a one time 1000 nuyen fee otherwise your mech is chosen randomly within the selected weight category. If you want to use a custom mech, i.e. one you designed yourself, there is a 10,000 nuyen one time fee. If you "buy" a mech in this way you are given an data chip with all of that mech's information on it allowing you to move from arena to arena and still use the same mech. (Stolen chips containing the data relating to superior mech designs are a high priced commodity on the black market.) Damage done to a mech does not carry over from battle to battle. The exception to this rule are rare games known as Campaigns in which a unit, always elite and usually corporate sponsored, fights several opposing units on the same day.