

January 4, 2024

[2:08 AM]Burns: Hey just wanted to run a few ideas by you, think about them, and get back with me if you want to discuss further or implement, otherwise you can disregard.

Bear with me, this will all come together in the end....

So of the guys I've been playing with this wipe, only Bloody and Sierra go back a ways as a friend of B-Team, and who we've played with before. Thus, the two of us have slowly over the months this wipe had the opportunity, as they present themselves, to play with some new names, I met Armed-Civilian, Rice, Mooney, this session, as well as taking on a number of new "puppies" as we call them, just strays, maybe new to the server, and bitching about needing help or wanting to run with someone.

It's really hit or miss picking up a new stray puppy. We recently picked up a kid named Cole Meyers, who turned out to be 14, and, while we like to give them a chance, and they may have the basic controls down, often the immaturity level becomes a problem in our discord.

Anyway, I tell you this because, if age and maturity isn't an initial issue, watching a number of our new puppies develop over time has been very interesting.

Rice for example, is a pretty good player, and while I'd never tell anyone 'how' to play, we've had some real frustrations with Rice because he gets terribly upset when things don't work out the way he wants them to. He started playing with us after playing with another team, but he was new to the FK server, and when he initially ran with us, he played smart, really never got frustrated or rage quit, and for a while it seemed he was going to fit in with our core group pretty well.

Then there was Mooney, who loves to start shit, loves to talk shit, and while also a good player, as his patience wore down, his game play changed more and more into a "don't give a shit" about anything style and this brushed off on Rice heavily. Now, Sierra is a bit like me, in that his old team isn't playing this wipe, so he's been on his own or now and then, mostly early on, like bloody and I, we might run with the burning Ghillies now and then. But once he started playing with us regularly, the Mooney style of don't give a shit started to rub off on him and he began to play much the same.

And don't, misunderstand, ALL three of them, to varying degrees, get mad when things don't turn out like they want. Or, more accurately, when their less than good decision making leads to results they don't like, like Rice, Mooney especially, will just up and quit without a word to the rest of us.

Ok, so the reason I'm bothering you with all this backstory is because, I've been here for quite a while now, Since FK 6 or 7 I think maybe a bit earlier, and I've seen the changes and the evolution of the FK server.

And, while I'm not privy to your private discussions with your team on how you massage and change things to keep the players happy and the population high, I'm sure y'all have plenty of discussions along these lines.

But the one thing that I've not see you guys try, is to create an environment where these frustrated players are given some reason to stop making dumb decisions, and to want to play smart, or well, or

whatever.

Most of the guys I know don't give a shit about respect, don't give a shit about k/d ratio, but me personally, I just try to play for me, I try to play as well as I can. I'm an old fart and I know most of these young kids are much faster than I am, so I have to try and be smarter. Again, folks can play how they want, this is how I play but it's still always drives me nuts that someone can celebrate reaching 1000 kills.... but, they also have 900 plus deaths.

So, I was just thinking about how you could create an environment that made people WANT to play better according to some metric.

Now I know you used to run a leader board, so here's my first thought.

I heard that the leaderboard died because it was too much of a workload.

If you're interested, and I admit I don't know all the details in the logs and such, but I imagine it's all in there, I'd be willing to write some scripts, programs, whatever I come up with to parse the logs, tally kills, and dump all the data we want into excel.

There is enough information just in the chat log for a lot of this, but you may have other logs with data that we could use to rebuild but automate the leaderboard data.

And I'd be willing to do this, it's part of my wheelhouse.

Also, I was thinking about creating a score system. Unfortunately, Respect and K/D themselves are not enough, and Exile never, to the best of my knowledge resolved this information into a single metric.

But I was thinking, we could find the AVG of respect as of the LAST day of the previous wipe and then a simple metric for score might be,

$$(\text{Player Respect} / \text{Avg Respect}) * \text{KD ratio}$$

And then let's multiply by 100 to give the number a simpler and more visual granularity, and keep two trailing decimals after this last multiplication.

An average player with a KD of 1, at Avg respect would have a score of 1

Anyway, once a month like you used to we could publish these numbers and an FK Score.

I think if players had a reason to play well and not just fuck off, and look, they can fuck off too, but more players just might really start playing differently.

I'd be eager to help with any of this or to brainstorm other ideas or derivations if you're interested.

For example, it might be fun to have say, a half a dozen score thresholds and give players some bennes. Like decreased food and water usage, or, well, I don't know, small, simple, but something of value that's not gear or money.

My thinking is, isn't it time after all this time, to try something new?

This might be it.

All the best,

Burns

January 8, 2024

[6:42 PM]mubby: Hey Burns, sorry for the late response. I just want to let you know that I've received and fully read all of your messages. Thanks for taking the time to write as I'm sure that took a while to put together. There are a few things that I want to address:

the one thing that I've not see you guys try, is to create an environment where these frustrated players are given some reason to stop making dumb decisions, and to want to play smart, or well, or whatever

There honestly isn't really anything that can be done about this though...Simply put: frustrated players will always perform worse. That's just a fact of life and part of being human lol. Frustration is highly subjective and everyone has different thresholds. Unless you have specific things in mind, there isn't really anything I can think of that we can do about that. It boils down to personal responsibility.

When it comes to the subject of Rage Quitting, there are a dozen different reasons why people quit and most of that isn't really possible to manage or mitigate. The only potential feature that I can think of that might reduce rage quitting is possibly adding in Base Spawning. I really don't want to do that though because I feel like Base Spawning removes interaction with content and players.

I was just thinking about how you could create an environment that made people WANT to play better according to some metric.

I'm not sure if there is much that can be done about that either. Even if we made detailed tutorials etc. that teach people everything they need to know, they still need the massive amount of time and effort that it takes to adapt and master it. Most people who play Arma these days are casual players who play for a couple hours after they get home from school/work/spending time with family/paying bills/putting kids to bed/etc. -- no one invests time anymore except for people who can play for 10hrs+ a day and they already have every advantage because Exile is persistent.

Now I know you used to run a leader board, so here's my first thought. I heard that the leaderboard died because it was too much of a workload.

To clarify: the leaderboards were shut down because of toxicity -- not workload. I got tired of rewarding people for playing like shitheads because they wanted to climb over their competition. People who wanted to maximize their kills were finding every scumbag edge they could and anyone who fell victim to it would only begin doing it so that they didn't fall behind in the leaderboards. It was a vicious cycle of bullshit, so I just stopped posting them and it all went away.

With that said, I have been strongly considering bringing leaderboards back. However, they would be based on Respect - not Kills. Before bringing it back, I'd want to overhaul the entire Respect system so that it can be properly measured, but I think this would be a good way for regulars to shine while also allowing us to use Respect configurations to moderate and control the leaderboard. For example: we can make it so that certain guns/ammo give more respect or less respect than each other. Perhaps killing someone with a Navid is worth X while killing someone with a pistol is worth Y, etc. It would even give us the freedom to potentially have a randomized "Weapon of the Week" that is worth more than everything else.

People could still kill as many people as they want with whatever they want, but if they want to compete within the leaderboards, they'd likely want to keep in line with whatever is incentivized at the time. I think it could possibly shake up the meta quite a bit and all of the leaderboard worshippers shouldn't turn into absolutely pieces of shit in the process this time around. If they do, we can just nerf

the respect value of what they're doing without having to remove weapons or something like we've done in the past.

Also, I was thinking about creating a score system. Unfortunately, Respect and K/D themselves are not enough, and Exile never, to the best of my knowledge resolved this information into a single metric.

I'm not sure I really understand your FK Score system. It sounds like it would just be some kind of Respect or KD system, which both already exists. I don't think that perk systems / benefits would be a good idea though. Those simply widen the gap between newbies and veterans. As you pointed out: we need things that bridge the gap instead.

I think that addresses pretty much everything? If I missed anything, let me know.

[7:18 PM]Burns: Thanks.

A couple of clarifications, I'll start with the last.

In the game neither Respect nor K/D is, in itself, an indicator of what you might call a consolidated Score. Sure, they each convey /some/ information regarding how a player is doing or playing, and they do rely on some of the same information, i.e. k/d is affected by a kill, and Respect is also affected by a kill, as scores they're completely different. What is needed is a way to take both these, call them, play metrics (i.e. a player who primarily kills other players might have a high k/d, not necessarily a high respect, a player who likes to build out his base, buy and sell items, etc, might have a high respect, and a low k/d), as well as any other meta data that might be available and relevant, and combine them into a single score better generalizes but describes the player's progress versus everyone else's and against that philosophy of play you're trying to achieve.

I know that might sound a little heady, but consider a game like Monopoly. Obviously the full game is literally a last man standing. But these games often can run for many hours. So say a group of players decides to break early, and yet they still want to call a winner. Who wins? The player who had more money in hand? Or the player who owned more board properties? Or is it the owner who owned more property value? Etc. Usually, the last man standing, as a concept, represents the player who actually did ALL these things, was the winner on cash flow, the winner on property count, the winner on property value, etc. (edited)

[7:22 PM]Burns: But there is no equivalent in Exile. What I was trying to do was proffer a suggestion that might represent one such consolidation of differing play metrics, and that of all the changes and massaging you've done over the years, that you consider something new like this, for an upcoming wipe.

Thus, my example.

I'll clarify that I just "termed" it the "FK Score" because it's not formally a concept that is surfaced in Exile itself.

So, I needed some baseline for Respect, I mentioned last time that maybe we use the Average respect as of all the players on the last day of the last server wipe session, so we'd use FK 11.0's average, at the start of FK 12.

One reason you might want to make a consolidated score using THIS particular baseline, is because you want that score to more generally represent your player base's performance. But it requires gathering THAT game metric to feed into this one. But I'm just brainstorming ideas and options inside this idea of an "FK Score."

Another idea, you could use the amount of respect needed to finally buy all the items offered by vendors at the traders, it's something like 34,000 poptabs.

With a baseline Respect the new FK Score could be expressed as:

$(\text{playerR}/\text{baselineR}) * \text{kdRatio} * 100$

this results in a nice number, and give multiple ways to achieve an increasing score allowing a player to play in a style they like, and if players can be incentivized to want to get a good or outstanding score, if they play poorly in their preferred style, they will still see this score drop significantly.

Again, the goal is to find a single metric that best represents a consolidation of play styles, goals, and player performance.

WRT giving gear:

I get what you're saying. I don't have an opinion either way. I expressly commented that, blah, giving away gear wasn't my preferred option, but as is often the case with the human mind, once an idea starts banging around up there, new ones tend to shake loose. I don't have any particular ideas because I'm not well versed on how far Arma scripting will let you push exile. But, surely there are creative ideas that could be done, that that would incentivize players in a way that there is no significant "overpowering" threat. Like I mentioned more efficient food and water use.

The problem for me with this is I don't know much about what you can or cannot do, so my ideas may be simply undoable. Take more as brain food than concrete suggestions,

but what about,

increased movement rate for higher score thresholds
or how about bigger discounts at trader?

The nice thing about this is you're never having to penalize (beyond exiles built in loss of respect).

This means that players are still free to play as fast and free or as slow and reserved as they want, shoot more or sell more, whatever, and they still get those actions represented in relative equality in their final score. BUT, what IS very bad is dying. Because no matter what path you take to play on FK, if you die, your score will always take a hit.

Now, I'm in for strapping shock collars to our necks and getting the shit shocked out of you if you die, but that me, and obviously not practical, but personally, I'd vote for making it hurt more when a player dies. But then I haven't run a server for years and years, so I understand if you find that less than an appealing option.

What I WOULD ask of you, is that you take that idea, and let it simmer, because there very well MAY be a good idea that works in a penalizing way but isn't too threatening or scary to the average modern dope trying to play, AND that can at least be said to be balanced effectively against what the consolidated score brings new to the table, by supporting many different play styles but fully and unequivocally expressing that dying is the BAD result of playing, if not the worst!

I'm not sure if there is much that can be done about that either. Even if we made detailed tutorials etc. that teach people everything they need to know

Whether or not it's working or achieving the level of results you want is one thing, but you ARE doing something about this.

In all the different rules, and ways you actively modify the game, you are manipulating or massaging in a way you think or hope will achieve an environment in the game that pleases you and your player base.

We can have opinions but we won't know anything empirically until we try, I'm just tossing you some ideas I think are worth trying, that I might do, and that I've not seen you do yet. Moreover, it was my hope that if I could elicit your interest in a general idea, it might lead to more specialized ideas and discussion on that topic. But, like I said at the top, it's your server, I have no skin in the game.

Lastly, another idea we generated was:

Now, keep in mind, this comes from the idea of the score and maybe the leader board, etc, because the PREMISE for this idea is that we scrub all the logs and what resources are available and dump everything we think is a data point of value in a database from which we can make queries and assumptions. So given a database of, let's call it, "whatever relevant data needed,"

how about then creating a single headless client that can watch the game, watch chat even, and with access to the database, make fun call outs and even some innocuous taunts, for example,

FK Score Bot: And with that kill, Bob's score just sunk to his all time low!

FK Score Bot: Wow, Mufasa, if you die anymore your k/d ratio going to need to be expressed in scientific notation!

FK Score Bot: Killz just surpasses Tango for the number 4 spot on the top 10 leaderboard!

etc...

I like some of you ideas on the weapons respect, especially how it lends itself to your "Weapon of the Week" idea.

One further thought I had on that, is, not all players /are/ equally adept, smart or capable at playing. I've seen some amazing plays and some shots I didn't understand or maybe even believe, and I wouldn't want to push it too far that people with average or even less skills, who just like to play, but still want to play their best, are pushed into playing in ways that don't want to or outright don't like.

So, I was thinking, when I first read that idea, was yea, like one week maybe the Varmin is the gun of the week, that might be a hoot. But if it was say a 9mm pistol, well, that's a BIG game change and I think it manipulates players a little too hard. The sandbox isn't supposed to be a cage with a sandy bottom. But I think this could really be done if carefully.

Maybe a week is a bit too long, maybe it's a "Day" thing, or a "Weekend" thing.

Maybe that weekly gun isn't the top respect earner, maybe it just earns a bonus percentage added to the base respect of the kill. That sound's like the same, but if you get the MAX bonus you're getting something, it SOUNDS big, but players who don't want to go for that challenge aren't going to be unreasonably left behind still playing with their preferred gun.

Best, (edited)

January 9, 2024

[1:25 AM]mubby:

This means that players are still free to play as fast and free or as slow and reserved as they want, shoot more or sell more, whatever, and they still get those actions represented in relative equality in their final score. BUT, what IS very bad is dying. Because no matter what path you take to play on FK, if you die, your score will always take a hit.

You may not realize this, but you are literally describing Exile's Respect system lol...That is exactly what it is for! It is meant to be a status symbol for progression in an open and persistent world.

On FK, players earn Respect all kinds of ways, but they only lose Respect from dying (3% from players, 1% from AI) or cheesing (5% from bambi slaying/heli sniping, 1k from running over AI). No matter what path you take to earn Respect (selling, killing zombies, killing AI, killing players, etc.), you lose a chunk of it every time you die to players or AI.

Whether or not it's working or achieving the level of results you want is one thing, but you ARE doing something about this.

I could be wrong, but I believe this is mostly a problem similar to "you can lead a horse to water, but you can't make it drink". Combat in Arma is far too situational to really make any sort of tutorial useful. Other than the most basic common sense information like "don't stand out in an open field" and "rocks > buildings > trees > bushes", there isn't much else to tell people outside of maybe setting up proper configs etc.

Just doing a quick YouTube search for "Arma Exile Tutorial" comes back with nothing but tips for Arma installation/configuration, money earning, and base building. The only exception I could find is one that had "KOTH Combat Tactic" tips, but that was just some video of a guy talking over the match he was in which didn't have any actual tips and had zero application to Exile lol...

We can have opinions but we won't know anything empirically until we try, I'm just tossing you some ideas I think are worth trying, that I might do, and that I've not seen you do yet. Moreover, it was my hope that if I could elicit your interest in a general idea, it might lead to more specialized ideas and discussion on that topic.

I'm always open to discussing ideas and topics with anyone and everyone, but a lot of these have been talked over in the Suggestions channel in some form or another. The only idea I've seen you mention that I don't think has been brought up before is adding customized killfeed messages - which I am open to exploring and should easily be doable after building the stat-tracking system for it to pull from. I've wanted to expand on our killfeed messages to make things a bit more fun, but wasn't quite sure what to include, but using it for some sort of achievement announcement could be nice.

Since there have been a lot of messages back and forth, I just want to provide a TLDR summary here to make sure I'm not missing any of your suggestions:

Give frustrated players a reason to stop making dumb decisions --> Impossible lol. That is up to the player, not us.

Leaderboards --> I'm open to it, but only after making them governed by Respect. Otherwise, it will mainstream toxic gameplay again.

"FK Score" --> Exile's Respect system makes this irrelevant. This just seems to overcomplicate things

when the Respect system already accomplishes this.

Perk System (efficient food/drink, faster movement, giving gear, trader discounts, etc.) --> These increase skill gaps instead of bridging them; "the rich get richer, while the poor get poorer"

Custom Killfeed Messages -> I'm open to it, but I'd probably focus more on positive highlights than negative ones. There's already a fuckload of toxicity without people knowing how many times you've died lol.

The sandbox isn't supposed to be a cage with a sandy bottom.

I agree that it should probably be Weapon of the Day just to prevent things from getting too locked in -- especially since some weapons are DLC only. However, I still believe all weapons should be kept in the pool just for variety sake to make things more fun and exciting. If you don't like the weapon, just don't use it.

To clarify: I was already thinking of it as a bonus added to a base value, not changing the base. No matter what gun you die from, you'll always lose 3% and your killer will always earn 3%. But they get additional respect for distance, killstreaks, vehicle type, etc. -- the weapon would just be another calculator added on top. Lowering/increasing the percentages based on the weapons is likely overkill -- but could still be a thing for general categories of weapons or possibly magazine types or something. That isn't what I had in mind, but I'd be open to it if we think it would be needed. (edited)

[6:54 PM]Burns:

*To clarify: I was already thinking of it as a bonus added to a base value, not changing the base.
-- the weapon would just be another calculator added on top.*

Exactly. I think you're on the right track with the added bonuses, analogous to distance, killstreaks, etc.

Another bonus our team has tossed about is difference in respect/score between players.

Now this one is a bit more complicated, but not impossible. BUT, first, I need to try one more time, to get you to understand that the FK respect system is NOT the same as what I've proffered as a consolidated score.

FK Score" --> Exile's Respect system makes this irrelevant. This just seems to overcomplicate things when the Respect system already accomplishes this.

Incorrect. As I've stated and tried to explain, this is not a consolidated score, it's but one internal metric of player activity.

Maybe a direct example will help,

I recently was killed by Dexter, and then I subsequently killed him back, so I know, at least within about a week ago, no more, he was close to the same respect level as I was. At 3%, 400k throws 12,000 respect before any modifiers, and we killed each other for approx 11,000 respect, so we were both close to 366k respect.

Ok, I don't know his K/D ratio or either of the relevant parts of that, his kills OR his deaths.

But for the sake of discussion let's just say he has 1100 kills and 950 deaths (I'm using these numbers because Armed Civilian has about these same kills and deaths).

That results in a K/D ratio of about 1.58

So, a player like Dexter, has virtually the exact same respect as I do, but (USING my example numbers) he's killed 1100 players, just over TWICE as many kills as I have, but he's died, 950 doing so, which means he's killing players at 1.58 times more than he's dying.

However, I only have around 500 kills. I'm not just sitting in a bush, never moving, never participating, never moving around the map, because I also have 366k respect, and you can't get that high doing nothing, but I have a K/D of 8.2

So, irrespective of play style, irrespective of the subjectivity of player activity, etc, who seems to have a better score?

Well, 366k means we must be doing the SAME, huh?

But Respect can be modified by SELLING things, used to you got about 100 respect from reviving another player, etc.

Respect doesn't JUST come from kills. Surely, I've had to sell at times, but I can't remember the last time I turned in a mission crate, I do so only rarely.

But there is no sub-component in K/D for Selling!

The Respect system is not the full picture. I've said this repeatedly, I don't see how to make it any clearer,

Burns: In the game neither Respect nor K/D is, in itself, an indicator of what you might call a consolidated Score.

Burns: Also, I was thinking about creating a score system. Unfortunately, Respect and K/D themselves are not enough, and Exile never, to the best of my knowledge resolved this information into a single metric.

But by combining both the Respect system WITH the K/D value in some creative way,

What is NOW expressed, is a clearer total picture of how the player is doing, a consolidated score that can now be used to more accurately and more reasonably, COMPARE players.

So, let's use the 34,000 base line respect value I mentioned previously, since most people I've heard tell me "they don't give a shit about respect" always AT LEAST want to get to 34k so they can purchase everything.

So, my "FK score" becomes,

$$(366000/34000) * 8.2 * 100$$

8,827.06

And our example dexter, with the same respect,

1700.82

Now that looks like a wide spread, but, there is that hidden penalty for so much dying as compared to killing. In life, we don't get a "do over" right, and what this does is place a heavier emphasis on not just making a score based on syphoning respect by killing others or by selling, etc. But by having to do ANY and ALL of that while AT THE SAME TIME, NOT dying.

And now, you're subtly massaging an environment and play style by creating an environment where players just don't think of killing!

IF not for this, how do you compare my "score" to our example player? He's twice as good as me I guess because he has 1100 kills. But he's playing an arcade game, doesn't give a shit about his deaths or how they affect his respect.

And players CAN play that way, but it will now affect how they are compared to other players who do not in a more accurate and reasonable way for "the best FPS simulation of the year."

AND NOW, with a consolidated score that moves UP when player does game positive things and moves down when they don't, It might be fun to consider how a player killing someone with an Pistol might earn a bonus over killing them with a Spar. But we'll table those ideas for later, since this would require and understanding of the need for a unified, consolidated score.

All the best,
Burns