

5 July 2006

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[Navy Field](#)

Resurrection Of The Steel Fleet

I do not intend to glorify the benefits of War as it is (there aren't any), but historically speaking and at a conceptual level, one must admit that it has been a major source of inspiration not only for the technological and social advance but also for arts and - recently - many forms of entertainment. In this sense, war-related game genres are arguably by far the most praised by gamers everywhere. There's just something in the human nature that uncontrollably draws it towards anything that has to do with bravery and pride through "formal violence" (dueling). If for the men (meaning in the twenties or thirties) of the Middle Ages jousting was the ultimate form of entertainment (either as spectators or champions), today's lance, sword and round-shield have been replaced by mouse, keyboard and the implicit PC. In this sense, war-related games (especially those with WW II content) have had, in most of cases, a warm welcome throughout gamer communities. While single player games with such content usually followed the simple pattern of "pumped up release - wave stirring - back into digital oblivion as something new arrived on the scene" those focused on multiplayer have managed to keep a hold of the communities that gathered around them. Navy Field makes no exception. Its straight forward approach and WWII content have quickly rallied an impressive number of players (mainly from South Korea and United States).

Concept At a superficial analysis, Navy Field does satisfy its given definition of MMOTSG (Massively Multiplayer Tactics Simulation Game). The truth however, is that NF does not jump too far from the bulk of your average MMO games. The basics of NF more resemble those of a third person hack & slash team deathmatch, and nowhere close to something as flamboyant as its entitlement of "tactics simulation". Such names are reserved exclusively to those games where the elements they gather manage to satisfy multiple/strict conditions in order to be effective in a given situation. In terms of stellar warfare (if not naval, as there aren't any other than NF) flawed as they were, games like Star Fleet Command or Nexus: The Jupiter Incident bring to shame almost all other tactics simulation wannabies. Not that I am thwarted in my expectations, there never was the case to speak about Navy Field in such terms. It is the right of every company to come up with one outlandish scheme after another just to make sure their wares sell. And marketing strategies are of no concern here, however clearing things up a little won't hurt anybody. As aforementioned, Navy Field was designed to encourage large scale team versus team battles and long playing times. Therefore, even if it does have some single player missions available, the game thrives exactly on these two aspects. The consequence is a thorough ship/crew management system to support each player's effort to "survive" some fierce clashes inside the game's battle rooms (ranging from 48 to 128 players at a time).

Gameplay Whereas the battles themselves tend to resemble a flock of sheep ridden by wolves and stricken by gadflies, the overall game experience is counterbalanced by the continuous development of your fleet and implicit crew. And this may translate in both a high level of addictiveness and resentment towards the game. It ultimately depends on how the player perceives the situation, and what is he prepared to sacrifice in terms of spare time and social life to get the best experience from the game. Interesting things happen only later, after some serious time investment (I'm talking months here), and only after many of the game's subtleties have been mastered. Each new player begins with a several thousand credits (the in-game currency required for purchasing equipment) and just a few thousand training points (without which one won't be able to train the crew needed to man a war ship). As he takes part of more and more battles, his crew will begin to improve. Having a battle hardened crew means access to a wide range of crew specializations and better ships and

equipment. While the first twelve crew XP levels do not provoke the player to any dramatic decisions, hereafter he will have no choice but to set a precise course in the game's micromanagement by entering the service of one (if not all, gradually though) of the four available national fleets: the Kriegsmarine, the Imperial Japanese Navy, the U.S. Navy or the Royal Navy. ([Details here](#) and [here](#)) Talking about ships and ship equipment, although many of the popular World War II ships (no Regia Marina Littorio class battleships, though) are present in the game, backed up by some that never existed such as the mighty German H39 and H44 battle cruisers (that remained projects on the drawing board throughout the WWII as The Third Reich decided to further develop their U-boat technologies), the ships' characteristics are greatly altered even for a game's proportions. Although it little matters as long as game balance and gameplay come on the first spot. The innovation in Navy Field is that nothing is available without a well trained crew. Almost everything you wish to undertake in terms of shipyard management has a requirement that translates in the level of training and specialization (note: nationality and class) of your crew. To buy a ship, a naval gun, a plane or even to enter a national port, you're crew will be requested to satisfy a set of strict conditions concerning the aforementioned XP level, nationality, class of bridge commanders (trained from the ranks of your initial crewmen). The bridge operator, as it is the case with any other type of crew, needs to be refitted with great care, as with every option you make all the others will be rendered unavailable. And here comes another interesting part. The same as with the bridge operator, a crew's specialty once chosen cannot be undone. Furthermore, it does not add nor retain from its skill points instantly but modifies their "learning abilities". In this sense, a German sailor learns abilities such as accuracy, reload, engine and fighter at a higher rate than any other, while Japanese sailors are more open minded towards flying bombers and manning torpedo launchers. Mutatis mutandis, a gunner will improve only in his accuracy and reload attributes whereas all the others are neglected, thus suffering severe penalties in time (note: with each level gained). Crews improve not just as a whole but also at an individual level. Better trained crews mean they are larger, have more specialists and veterans and they are more effective overall. The drawback is their weight. Every ship has a fixed displacement which may be used, besides holding a crew, to mount guns, carry planes, ammunition, torpedo bays, armor, targeting systems, engines and so on. A player must learn which ship is better fitted for his game style, and how to manage the space, the gun mounts and crew quarters it provides. Those new to the game will find it very hard to adapt to this kind of informational bombardment, granted the battles themselves conclude rather swiftly. Without the help of others, the whole ship micromanagement will quickly transform in a painstaking trail-and-error "figure it out fool". In-game tutorials are conspicuously missing and one will find that obtaining some basic information about a torpedo tube's characteristics (range, speed) will require him to install it (thus pay a fee, only partially reimbursed if the player reconsiders his intentions to use it). Paradoxically, the battles themselves - thanks to the poor development - represent only a tenth of what is requested from the player. The most relevant aspects of the game take place inside the shipyard figuring out what is needed for the upcoming naval clash. How much bulge (torpedo defense) do I need? Should I increase the structural resistance of the ship (bulk head)? Am I going to rely on speed thus reduce crew size, add a thick skirt to hold against direct shots as any other type won't bother me too much as, otherwise I am an impossible target to any other kind of attacks? Or should I put some heavy deck armor, to withstand high angle shots, move slowly and try to "snipe" my opponents outside their line of sight? Is my bridge commander trained enough to spot everyone else before they do, do I have space for a scout plane? Is my naval guns' range good enough? And then there is the battle... five to ten minutes of either pure adrenaline, utter confusion and cheerful competition for sinkable tonnage, or sour depression as two diving bombers sunk your tin can in the first thirteen seconds of the game without firing a single shell. And while you jump from one foot to the other, and two weeks of constant playing have past, you realize that moving from the destroyer class to your first light cruiser makes things even worse. Now, for

every level needed to unlock a better vessel you must sink twice as many tons of scrapheap to the bottom of the sea. And your new CL (light cruiser) is more of a sitting duck than an impetuous warship, while your DD (destroyer) has just been scrapped to fill your bank). Your "team mates" have their own personal agenda and you are left with your anxiety, loneliness and disgust for the ill overall "advancement economy" of the game. It takes you half a year just to collect a decent ship, only to realize that you've seen enough even though you feel there is still so much to see and try out - mastering the manual aiming system mounted on a heavy cruiser or commanding a tier four Carrier class ship.

The NF Community and Its Moderators (Team NF) Although players may join or establish fleets, each with their unique symbol and status, and engage in something more rewarding than your average battle room, in fleet versus fleet the easiness with which some change their fleet commanders as if they were panties prevents casual players from fully enjoying such features. Fleet members are not as helpful as one would expect and as soon as a fleet battle is announced, it is swiftly buried by the rise of countless "mercenaries" racing for an easily won credit. A simple tweak (fleet shifting restrictions, or simple rewards to encourage loyalty) would have probably guaranteed a whole lot more importance to this feature. Anyway, where some play entirely for camp, there are still many players out there who always go for grit. It depends on what a player chooses to do: make friends and have a good time or greedily gather as much as possible (capped at six ships of the same nationality, and fifteen in total). From what I have seen the community does not break any of the instances set by other MMOGs: dirty language, quarrels, whining, lack of professionalism from the moderators (with just one exception, a true fan of the game and its community), ... "the usual stuff" and some cherry on the top: forum activity is rewarded through a points system that enables free purchase of crew boosters and veterans or premium ships (either fictive or inspired from the WW I era such as the German heavy cruiser Moltke). To rephrase my last statement, the NF community isn't half bad, and at 51%, well I'm not sorry I was part of it, even for such a short notice. There are many helpful NF fanatics and without their help (Baubau, CJGod, Hera, and not only, many thanks), chances were that I would have needed twice as much time to understand the game's ins and outs.

General Game Support and Video and System Issues Playing Navy Field, I felt for the first time in my life that a 2D game should have been 3D and gifted with the latest pixel shader technology. For a 2D timer it looks impressive, and the shipyards' detail deserves a "thumbs up". The music themes and sound effects are quite impressive, although some of the big cannons seemed to have skipped breakfast. The game GUI is somewhat limited, as some in-game commands require the player to keep a key pressed instead of just typing a figure (shoot angles, speed cruise speed, for instance). Moreover, one needs to learn ship names, their types and classes by heart as once a battle commences, a player won't have access to such information anymore. On the other end we find the customer support and the system issues of the game. Although constantly addressed, game bugs gave me the feeling I was beta-testing the game and not playing it for cash (not to mention that every update always keeps the servers offline, sometimes for more than one would find reasonable). The payment service works just in weekends, probably fearing that if it did on a daily basis, too many would swarm it and abuse it with their credit cards and Pay Pal accounts. Old timers of Navy Field complain without receiving any firm response or any at all, that they cannot continue playing the game if the developers do not add more features and content to the game. Passing the 100 level checkpoint (until recently, there weren't any ships for extreme bridge commanders) there isn't anything else to do than play the game for the sake of playing, as there is no reason to continue gaining experience for the bridge commander. Newly implemented, the ultimate battle cruisers (H44, Montana, Super Yamato, Lion II) are both bugged and underpowered compared to similar ships of lower tiers. Being one of the most praised NF features, those ships were of utmost importance for the ship management system. Without them (as they proved with such poor code and design), veteran players (to be read: loyal customers) threatened the

company to leave and never come back again as they felt lied to and abused in their confidence by the developers. **Conclusion** It is no secret that some of us have a passion for the history of World War II. Navy Field however, has little to do with it. But this is the whole point; it stands steady on its feet. It could as well be Tank Field or Star Field, it matters less. The most valuable trait of Navy Field is that it brings people together and allows them to have a great time (although, I believe it is unfair to wait for almost a year to be able to grab the rudder of your first battle cruiser). And with something of a more decent game, tech and customer support, Navy Field would have gone 3D by now...