

Darkfall – Siege-System Manual

Introduction

Much has been written about the new siege-system, most of which was, by necessity, relatively vague. Internally we've been running through numerous configurations of the system, continually refining and reworking it. A lot of this work was directly based on the wealth of feedback we received from the community. So you can understand that at the time it was impossible to describe the final configuration of the system until we settled on our final configuration choices. Now, with the release of the system, we can lay-out the specifics. It should be noted that while the current configuration of the system is made up of our release choices, the system can easily be tweaked and adjusted in the live game, so we will continue to monitor the feedback and where appropriate, alter the system accordingly.

As it has been said before, the new siege-system is a complete rewriting of the whole system. The key reason for this was to remove any hard limits imposed by the system, and make this whole aspect of the game much more open and free for all players to enjoy. While we agree that it would be nice if such a change involved, as some suggested, "changing a few numbers in the code", in reality it's nowhere near as simple, opening up the system exposes a myriad of new possibilities and situations, all of which must be carefully considered and managed. With that said, let's move on to the details of the system itself.

Attackers & Defenders

The new system makes a much clearer distinction between the roles of clans in a challenge, and each is handled separately. In the new system any individual clan in a challenge is either an attacker or a defender and, respectively, are either involved in an attack challenge or a defence challenge for a given holding. In the new system, a single challenge, for a particular holding, is made up of one defender clan (the clan that currently owns the holding) and any number of attacker clans (those clans that have joined the challenge). It's probably useful at this point to make some things clear:

- 1) There is no limit to the number of attackers that can join in the challenge for a given holding, if your clan is willing, and able, you're welcome to join in.
- 2) There is no limit on the number of concurrent attack challenges that a single clan can issue, if your clan is big enough to wage war on many holdings at the same time, then you're free to do so (or try to anyway).
- 3) There is no limit on the number of concurrent defence challenges that can be issued against a single clan, this doesn't just refer to the number of attackers that can be involved in the challenge for a single holding, defence challenges can be issued against any, or all, of a clan's holdings simultaneously, by any number of attacker clans. If your clan wants to own multiple holdings, then you had better be capable of defending them!

While this may seem unfairly harsh on the defenders, it should be remembered that in the previous siege-system there was nothing stopping vast numbers of unrelated players/clans from

attending a siege and fighting for, or against, the defender; in the new system it is still true that a defender with many allies willing to fight alongside them is a much stronger force than a clan standing alone.

In the new system, we have tried to create ways to encourage attackers to actively join-in on a challenge, rather than just turning up and fighting, while at the same time trying to discourage vast out-numbering of the defender. This is an extremely difficult balance, which we're certain you'll let us know if we've gotten wrong. To encourage clans to actively join-in on a challenge, the system is configured to offer no rewards to clans that have not joined the challenge, they cannot receive any part of wagers paid and have no chance of winning ownership of the holding; as before, clans are free to attend sieges, but grave-loot is the only thing they can hope to gain by doing so. To discourage massive out-numbering of attackers vs. defenders, we have implemented a system of wager penalties that we hope will prove effective in making potential attackers think carefully before joining in on an active challenge.

Initiating a Challenge

The one area of the siege-system that remains identical to the previous system is the initiation of challenges. To initiate a challenge, a high-ranking member of a clan must enter the holding that they wish to challenge and activate a clan-shard in the vicinity of the holding's clan-stone. The only addition to this process is the inclusion of a new confirmation dialogue, which will request authorisation to remove the total value of the clan's wager for the challenge from their clan-vault.

Progression of a Challenge

At this point, it's worth briefly laying-out the structure of a challenge, as it progresses from start to finish. In the new system, as with the previous one, a challenge will last for up-to 24 hours from the initial attacker initiating the challenge to the end of the fighting. This is split-up into 2 main sections, or "phases". An initial "count-down" phase of 22 hours, to allow clans time to prepare for the challenge and rally their members and allies. During this phase additional attackers can join the challenge if they choose to do so, and are at "war" with the clan that currently owns the holding. The 2nd phase is the 2 hour "fighting" phase, where the holding becomes vulnerable to attack.

Specific to attackers, there is also a "siege-stone placement" phase, which is that attacker's 1st hour after joining, or initiating, the challenge, during this time the attacker clan must place their siege-stones; failure to place any siege-stones will result in that attacker being removed from the challenge. All siege-stones placed by all attackers will become vulnerable to attack 1 hour before the start of the "fighting" phase; if this hour coincides with an attacker's "siege-stone placement" phase, then siege-stone that they place will be immediately vulnerable to attack when they are placed. No siege-stones can be placed after the end of the "count-down" phase, so if a clan joins a challenge with minutes left before the start of the "fighting" phase, then they only have those minutes to place all their siege-stones.

Clan Size Limits

While a defender clan can be of any size, a potential attacker clan must have a given number of members before they will be allowed to issue, or join, a challenge for a holding. This size limit is

based on the type of holding being challenged and is currently 10 members for challenging a hamlet, and 20 members for challenging a city; when determining the size of the clan, members using trial accounts are not included. If an attacker clan drops below this size limit at any point during the “count-down” phase of the challenge, they will be given 30 minutes to recruit additional members before being ejected from the challenge.

Wagers

In the new system, all attackers that want to initiate a challenge, or join an active challenge, must pay a wager of gold; holdings an attacker may own are no longer used as wagers for challenges. The amount of gold that must be wagered is based on several factors, primarily the value of the holding being challenged is used to calculate the “base-wager”, this is based on the current state of the holding (the number of standing buildings, the value of those buildings etc.); for holdings that are not built, there is a minimum wager value that is imposed (currently this is 15,000 gold for hamlets, and 30,000 gold for cities). This base-wager is the wager that the 1st attacker that issues a challenge for the holding will be required to pay, each additional attacker will have to pay the base-wager plus some additional penalty-costs; penalties are applied for:

- 1) The number of attackers that are already active in the challenge. Attacker-2 will pay more than attacker-1, attacker-3 even more and so on.
- 2) The number of attack challenges that the clan already has active on other holdings. If your clan is already attacking other holdings then the cost for your clan to issue additional challenges will increase.
- 3) The amount of time that has passed in the challenge. In the new system, additional attackers are free to join a challenge at any time during the “count-down”, but the cost of joining in the 2nd hour after the challenge began is more than joining during the 1st hour, and joining in the 19th hour will cost considerably more.

The total amount of gold that a clan must pay to initiate, or join, a challenge is then the base-wager plus any penalties that the clan has incurred; the penalties themselves are not added to the “wager-pot” for the challenge, but are taken by the system, and will not be paid out to the challenge winners, only a large percentage of each attacker’s base-wager is added to the wager-pot for the challenge. While we’re sure that you would like to know the exact percentages that are used in the wager calculations, we wouldn’t want to deny you the “fun” of attempting to work it all out for yourselves; sufficed to say that in a challenge for a large built-up city with several active attackers, the rewards available to the winners of the challenge will include a considerable amount of gold, along with the holding itself.

Siege-Stones

In the new system, siege-stones represent not only an attacker’s “local bind-spots” but they are also the attacker’s only “link” to the challenge, if they are destroyed then the attacker clan is ejected from the challenge. All attackers must place at least one siege-stone to continue in the challenge, and given the importance of the stone should defend them from attack throughout the challenge.

Several new restrictions are applied to siege-stones in the new system, firstly, the type of siege-stone that can be placed is now tied to the type of holding being challenged, “large siege-stones” can only be used in challenges for cities, and “small siege-stones” can only be used when challenging for a hamlet. The “medium siege-stone” can no longer be used in any challenge, or bought from the NPC vendors in capital cities, any existing “medium siege-stones” that have been purchased already can be sold back to an NPC vendor for a full refund. Secondly, the number of siege-stones that a single attacker clan can place has been altered, for city challenges each attacker can place up-to 2 large siege-stones, but for hamlet challenges, each attacker can place only 1 small siege-stone (to compensate for this reduction in numbers, the number of available bind-spots for small siege-stones has been increased to 15).

Upon destruction of an attacker’s siege-stone a percentage of their wager for the challenge is subtracted from the wager-pot for the challenge and paid out, immediately, to the clan that destroyed the siege-stone; please note, that this gold is not paid out to clans that have not joined the challenge, or to the clan that owns the siege-stone that was destroyed, however, if the siege-stone is destroyed by other clans/players then the percentage is still removed from the wager-pot. You may be pleased to know that the answer to “who destroyed the siege-stone?” is based on the amount of damage done to the siege-stone by members of different clans throughout the life-span of the siege-stone, not on the final hit, making the system much fairer to all clans involved.

Attacker’s Holdings and Counter-Challenges

As mentioned above, holdings owned by attackers can no longer be used as the attacker’s wager for a challenge; additionally, holdings owned by attackers will not become automatically vulnerable to attack, as they did in the previous system; in the new system all holdings must be explicitly challenged by a clan before they will become vulnerable.

This should not be seen as “favouring” attackers, since their holdings are no longer being “risky” when they issue a challenge; all holdings operate under the same rules and can be challenged by any number of clans even if the owner is currently involved in attacking another clan’s holding. Furthermore, if a defender wishes to “counter-challenge” one of their attackers’ holdings, they are free to do so, and if they choose to do so, they will receive a “counter-challenge reduction” in their wager cost for initiating, or joining, the challenge. This reduction only applies to one of the attacker’s holdings, if the defenders wish to counter-challenge additional holdings that the attacker may own they will pay the same wager as any other clan would.

Clan-Stone Vulnerability and Wall Destruction

Once a challenge enters the “fighting” phase, the clan-stone of the holding can become vulnerable to attack, however, as with the previous system, before this can happen a given number of walls around the holding may need to be destroyed. The rules surrounding the destruction of walls have changed slightly since the previous system, so it’s worth going over them again.

If more than 50% of the walls that can be built around the holding have been built, then the number that exceeds 50% must be destroyed. For example, if a holding can have 20 walls, and only 10 have been built, then no walls need to be destroyed before the clan-stone will become

vulnerable, however, if 15 walls have been built then 5 must be destroyed to make the clan-stone vulnerable to attack during the “fighting” phase. Given the vast differences between cities the new system imposes an upper-limit on the number of walls that must be destroyed, that limit is currently 15; so if a city can have 100 walls and all 100 have been built, only 15 must be destroyed.

On a side-note, we have never been fond of the requirement of wall destruction internally, and we’re working hard on being able to remove this mechanic from sieges; while we cannot say more at this time, just know that we’re very excited to show you what we’re working on as soon as we can.

Losing a Challenge

For the defending clan, aside from disbanding their clan, the only way to lose the challenge is if the clan-stone in the challenged holding is destroyed.

For the attacker clans, there are more ways to lose the challenge. As with the defender, an attacker will lose if their clan is disbanded, but an attacker can also lose by falling below the clan-size limits (see above), having all their siege-stones destroyed (also above), or failing to place at least one siege-stone during their “siege-stone placement” phase. When an attacker loses, they are removed from the challenge, and cannot re-join it, and their wager remains in the wager-pot to be paid out to the winners. A challenge will continue, as long as there is at least one attacker remaining.

Winning a Challenge

For defender clans, there are only two ways to win a challenge. They can successfully defend their holding’s clan-stone until the end of the “fighting” phase, at which point the challenge will “time-out” and the defender declared the winner. Or they can work to actively remove all attackers from the challenge, once no more attackers remain the challenge ends and the defender is declared the winner. If the defender clan wins the challenge they (obviously) retain ownership of their holding, and additionally they are awarded the entire value of the wager-pot.

For attacker clans, the only way to win is to destroy the clan-stone in the challenged holding. However, since there may be multiple attackers active in the challenge when the clan-stone is destroyed, declaring a winner is a little more complex. In the new system, all damage done to a holding’s clan-stone is recorded, and points awarded to the clan whose members dealt the damage, there is also a “point bonus” awarded to the clan whose member deals the “critical hit” to the clan-stone, that is, the last hit, which destroys the clan-stone. At the end of the challenge, the remaining attacker clans are ranked according to the points they have scored, and the clan with the most points is awarded ownership of the holding. In the rare event of a tie between two or more clans, one of the highest-scoring attacker clans is randomly selected as the overall winner, and ownership of the holding passes to them. In the case of multiple attackers winning a challenge, the wager-pot is not handed out to the overall winner (that was awarded ownership of the holding); the gold is handed out to all remaining attackers as follows:

- A percentage is paid directly to the attacker clan that was awarded ownership of the holding

- A further percentage is divided equally amongst all remaining attackers (excluding the clan that won the holding)
- The remaining amount is divided proportionally amongst all remaining attackers, based on the damage they did to the holding's clan-stone (including the clan that won the holding)

As with the actual percentages involved in the generation of wager penalties, we're sure you'll have a lot of fun trying to determine the values that we're using, and we would hate to take that away from you by listing the values here; but be assured, we'll be monitoring all of these values very closely, and will adjust them accordingly if we feel that the wager-pot is being divided unfairly.

Grace Periods

One aspect of the new system, which was the subject of heated debate both internally and in the community, is the inclusion of "grace periods" for holdings that have been part of a challenge. While we certainly understand the concern that grace periods could be seen as "blocking" or restricting clan actions in the game, we felt that their inclusion was necessary to allow clans time to rebuild their holding, gather resources and generally enjoy their holding before having to defend it again. We believe that the careful use of grace periods can achieve this without putting unnecessary restrictions on the system. As such, we identified 3 possible endings to a challenge, and apply grace periods to the holding accordingly; these are:

- "Quick Defence" when the defender of the holding is declared the winner in a challenge that did not progress beyond the "count-down" phase. In this case no grace period is applied to the holding at the end of the challenge.
- "Successful Defence" when the defender of the holding is declared the winner in a challenge that did progress to the "fighting" phase. In this case the retained holding will be immune to further challenges for 30 hours after the end of the challenge.
- "Successful Attack" when an attacker wins the holding and ownership is transferred. In this case, to allow the new owners to "settle in" to their new holding, the newly won holding will be immune to challenges for 60 hours after the challenge ends.

As with all other aspects of the new system, we will be monitoring the use of the system, and listening to all community feedback on the issue, and can easily adjust the values if appropriate.

Protection Shards

The only other part of the new system that generated as much, if not more, heated debate than grace periods has been the inclusion of the new protection shard items; these items can be used to effectively apply a grace period to a holding, though the times involved are considerably less than those applied at the end of a challenge. To be clear, we felt that the inclusion of these items was essential, as it offers a possible solution to the problems of "off-peak sieges"; a problem that, given the wide-range of geographical areas and time-zones each server caters for, would be impossible to solve with a "one-size fits all" type of solution. Protection shards allow the owner of the holding to decide, if they choose to use them, what is "off-peak" for their clan, in a highly flexible manner that is ultimately "player controlled". We hope that the restrictions we

have placed on their usage will ensure that they cannot become the “self-siege shards” that no one wants them to be.

Protection shards are available in two forms, “small” and “large”; both shards are available for purchase, as with the clan shards used to initiate challenges, from the councillor NPC in each race’s capital city. The small shard will cost 30,000 gold and will protect a holding for 3 hours, the large shard will cost 75,000 gold in return for a 6 hour protection window. To use the shard, a high-ranking player from the clan that owns the holding that is to be protected must enter the holding and activate the shard in the vicinity of the clan-stone. The rules for protection shards are as follows:

- The holding being protected cannot be involved in a challenge at the time the shard is activated, nor can the initiation of a challenge be in-progress.
- The holding being protected cannot already be in a grace period.
- The clan activating the shard must be the clan that owns the holding being protected.
- The clan activating the shard cannot have activated another protection shard within the previous 24 hours.
- The activated shard will only protect the single holding in which it was activated for the indicated time, additional holdings will remain unprotected.