

Battlefield Central Battlefield 2 Interview

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BFC: Can you tell us what exactly DICE are doing with BF2, what EA is in charge of and what the co-operation with Trauma Studios has meant?

Also, please tell us for how long time you have been working at BF2 and how many people you have been using? Did you start right after the Road to Rome expansion?

DICE: The first planning of Battlefield 2 started while Road to Rome still was being worked on during the autumn of 2002 but the first actual production started at the beginning of 2003. While the Battlefield 1942 team ranged from 15 to 25 fulltime employees, Battlefield 2 occupies between 30 and 60 souls so the productions just get bigger and bigger.

The game is being developed by the original Battlefield 1942 team with Electronic Arts as the publisher. This means that DICE builds the game and EA helps out with things like localization (translations), voice-recordings and testing plus, of course, marketing and the whole sales machine.

Trauma Studios that brought you the MOD Desert Combat have been helping us with prototyping within the old Battlefield 1942 engine. This means that if we have a new feature that we want to try out, they implement it into an environment that we already know inside out which makes it much easier to evaluate at an early stage.

BFC: What exactly is the "Commander" in Battlefield 2 doing? And, is it a special game mode or will there be a commander in conquest mode too (or is it possible to turn it off during clan wars)?

DICE: The Commander is intended as a player that keeps track of the overall picture in the battles of BF2. Each member of the team can choose to play in the old BF1942 "Slone-wolf" style or choose to create/join a squad. If they choose to join a squad, the squad leader will lead his troops in the battle to e.g. go in behind enemy lines to blow a bridge.

But on larger servers with maybe 5 or more squads, it's not until you spread the control points wisely between the squads that you fully benefit from your teamplay and this is where the Commander comes in handy.

The Commander can gather more information about the enemy forces and then order the squads to different locations with specific orders to outsmart the other team. Then it's up to the squad leader to accept or reject the order. Additional to this, the Commander will have additional tools to help his/her team towards victory.

The Commander will be available in all gamemodes. Using Commander in the game or not might very well end up on the list for server settings so that it's up to the server administrator to define what's needed on his/her server.

BFC: If you compare the changes you can do as a mod maker between BF1942 and BF: V against the changes you can do in BF2, what are the differences?

We have also heard that there are plans at releasing SDK/MDT (which is it this time?) before BF2 is released. When would this be, after a Demo release or even before that?

DICE: We're looking at releasing tools to the mod community before we ship the game. The idea is to have modders up and running with mods at an 'alpha' state. We're incorporating a new scripting language into BF2 which will allow much more flexibility to the mod community. Modders can still work with the .con files but the scripting language will allow the hard-core modders more opportunities. We'll be releasing more information about this in the next few months.

BFC: Some physics questions. It has been said earlier that you're using the Havoc engine for the physics in Battlefield 2, why did you choose Havoc instead of for example the Swedish Meqon?

Will it be possible to drive over a tank or blow up trees and stuff like that or will the tank just stop when you drive into a tree as in the earlier versions of Battlefield? And how much of the buildings and the ground will be deformable?

DICE: These rumours about the fact that Battlefield 2 should be using Havoc are not true. We are using our own physics engine and nothing else.

We are still working with performance and trying to find a good level of destruction. Our focus is to have gameplay-changing objects that give us a much more dynamic battlefield and then additional destruction of more cosmetic objects to make the world more interactive.

BFC: Will the airplanes have some secondary weapons like machineguns or something like that when you're out of rockets so you can be able to get "quick kills" in dogfights?

And how strong will the tanks be in BF2? In BF: V they were really weak and we saw a movie from BF2 where an American soldier took out a tank with 1(!) AT shot and that was a tank that probably is 3x the size of a tank in BF1942.

DICE: The modern airplanes of BF2 will carry loads of weapons and among them, the auto cannon to engage with once you're out of all the high-tech gadgets. All weapons included should still require skill or cooperation in order to work at its best.

When it comes to tanks and balancing it's a delicate matter where the tanks need to be powerful with a modern feel but still possible to take out by foot soldiers in order to maintain the rock-paper-scissors balance. It's hard to describe here how powerful it will be or exactly how we will balance it but our focus is that once your inside one of those monsters, the enemy should shiver unless they have an even more powerful weapon.

BFC: What will be the smallest map size in the server settings? Will it for example be possible to set a map to be played 6vs6 with a good size at the map? And in what format do you recommend BF2 games to be played? 8vs8, 10vs10 or 12v12 or something else?

Also, can you tell us how exactly this function will work? Will the boundaries move while the game is in play or will it be set at the first round in the game and stay there until next round etc.?

DICE: The way the system will work is that given your servers hardware specification and the type of gameplay you are looking for, you can choose different presets for 16, 32, 64 players and the game takes different usage of the map depending on your choice.

The 16-player layout might be a city-fight while the 64-player setup covers an amphibious assault on a city by the beach. We are

currently looking at making the 64-player setup the recommended one.

BFC: How will the net code in BF2 be if you compare it to the net code in BF1942/BF:V? The net code in BF1942 for example could be pretty strange sometimes; if you threw oneself down behind sandbags or ran behind a corner you could still get hit for example.

DICE: Our network programmers are doing everything they possibly can to deliver a smoother and more reliable experience compared to our previous releases.

BFC: The single player part in BF1942 and BFV isn't really good. Will the BF2 AI be better and how will the single player mode work?

DICE: We have listened to the feedback from the community and beefed up the AI-team in order to deliver a much more impressive singleplayer experience. We are currently working hard with this part of the game and will get back to you all during the autumn when more of the components has come into place.

BFC: In the released screenshots we have noticed that you have a very long view distance, is this just for the screenshots (like the early BF42 screenshots were) or will it be like this in the game too?

Will the grass for example be visible from far range so that it doesn't disappear just because you're far away from it (so you can't see people "hiding" in the grass)?

DICE: The view distance will come to differ from map to map and since we still are working on performance, the exact distances haven't been set yet. The longer view distance the better so we'll do our best to give you a good experience.

We are aware of the distance issue with the grass but feel that we have found a good solution for BF2 that won't make you stick out when you crawl around thinking that you are totally hidden.

BFC: About how many maps will be included in BF2 and will there be any small infantry maps like Stalingrad in BF1942 for example?

And, will you have any function to support custom maps? For example if you try joining a server with a map that you don't have, it starts downloading it (like in Counter-Strike for example)?

DICE: All maps will have a 16 and a 32-player setup and in some cases they will resemble the experience you had in Stalingrad. With this new system all maps should be able to have at least one setting that match your type of gaming.

As for downloading maps, we're investigating how to handle that without putting a big strain on the game server. No promises, but we're looking at solutions to this.

BFC: Why haven't we seen anything from the Chinese army and the Asian maps yet? Will it be a surprise or will it be released later?

DICE: It wouldn't be fun to see everything from the first day, would it? I promise you that more will come and we think that the new look that we have created for the Asian theatre will please you all.

BFC: In the earlier Battlefield games it hasn't been possible to have more than one water level since the heightmap only supports this. Will it be possible to have rivers and things like that in BF2? And, will there be any weather effects like rain, snow, sandstorms etc.?

DICE: We are totally reworking both our water system and our effects system so what you remember in these areas from BF1942 belongs to the past. I won't reveal anything here but we promise to show you more as the development continues.

BFC: We know that you can climb in ranks if you play good, but will you also be able to fall down in the ranks if you team kill a lot etc.?

Also, will it be possible to inactivate the ranking function at the servers (or to set everyone's rating to full)? Would be good during clan

wars since clans want to have the same conditions.

We also read about a new Sexperience system ala Enemy Territory. Have you been thinking through this so the medics that are shooting their team mates can't just go and heal them again to gain experience points? And will the experience follow you during a map change?

DICE: Our view of teamkilling is something like: Where ever you are, what ever you do, teamkilling should always make you suffer. So you might not loose rank but your chances of continuing up in rank just went out the window. We have thought about clan games and will provide support for equal conditions.

This time we are building our score system to not only encourage killing and flag-capturing but also all different support duties like healing, reviving, repairing etc but we will never let you gain points by abusing the system. Both the team here and EA's testers will work hard to get this well balanced out.

BFC: The community has been shouting after BFTV, Spectator- and Demo-functions since the release of Battlefield 1942. A while ago there was a so called "petition" for this (link) that got about 8500 signs. In a interview that the Swedish site FragZone did with Lars after the release of Battlefield 1942 in September 2002, he said that the next step would be to add a spectator function. You can find that interview here. We have also seen an interview with DICE Canada by Boomtown where they said the same thing about Battlefield: Vietnam. You can find that interview here.

As you probably know, these functions are a must to get the game to become really big in the clan perspective to be able to compete in really big tournaments as CPL for example. Now, we have seen the clips from the showing of "BFTV" for BF2, but we noticed that it's more like a "Demo"-function than a Spectator-function (as the name BFTV sounds like). We would like to ask if you will make this more like "HLTV" for Counter-Strike/HL so thousands of people can connect to the server and watch the games with a couple of minutes delay (this is what the community actually wants), or if it will only be a Demo-recorder and viewer.

We would also like to know if it's possible to view these demos in first person mode or if it's only third person (as it was in the movie that we saw). And we also noticed that everything at the map was recorded in the demo. Will you be able to change between the players in both teams while watching the demo or can you only watch yourself? Last question about this subject, will there be "Bullet cams" at larger shells like tank shells and bombs?

DICE: He, he ! you have done your research well!! We have wanted to include it for a long time but there are loads of things that we want to get in there and we need to prioritize. What you have seen is the first iteration of our Demo tool that will allow players to record what's happening in a game or to show off their latest stunt. All features in it hasn't been nailed yet but it has already proven very valuable.

This system shouldn't be mistaken for the BFTV-system that we also are working on and that system is exactly what you are looking for. The game broadcasted with a certain delay for people to connect to and follow big tournaments etc.

BFC: Will you do something about the current problems in clan wars? You probably know about "pixel shooting" (you aim with a tank/artillery/defgun etc. at a certain pixel in the skybox where you have learnt that you will hit a target, for example an airplane and you can also watch the clock so you know which second it spawns and when you should shoot there etc.) and "baserape". Pixel shooting is very frequently used in today's clan wars and can win a match if you use it the right way.

Will you for example make so that the skybox is moving or will you add spreading to tanks and artillery at far distance? This is probably the thing that people have been asking about the most after BFTV and Demo-functions.

Also, if you're going to fix any of the latest questions above (BFTV, Demo, spread at artillery/tanks), will you then add these changes to BF1942/BFV too or would that be for BF2 only?

DICE: Ever since we started Battlefield 2 we have been continuously monitoring the community for your wishes and suggestions. It's not always in our hands to deliver what the community want at that time and exactly the way people want it but we do try to do our best. What you all can do to help us is to continue to point out exploits and let us know of what you think would add to the gaming experience. This exploit has been noted and we have a solution that will take care of it.

As for adding these new features into BFV or BF1942, those games haven't been designed from the ground up to support features like BFTV and Demo-recording so it would be much more difficult to incorporate into them.

BFC: We newly got to know that you're developing an official BF1942 mod to BF:V. Will you do something like this to BF2 also?

DICE: Heh heh... maybe the mod community will beat us to it? If there's a big enough response from the community, then it's a possibility....

BFC: We have seen that the number of players in BF1942 are still more than the BF:V players. You earlier said in an interview that you would support the most popular game. I can also add that there is a new poll running at BFCentral.se at the moment about what people think about the BFV 1.1 Patch and the results are right now:

Very good (18%)

It's ok (18%)

Bad (6%)

Patch BF1942 instead (58%)

(Totally 832 votes)

How do you look at this now (supporting the most popular game)?

DICE: The BF community is always growing and they are extremely vocal, a great sign. We're constantly assessing what our plans are for support.

BFC: There are rumours telling that the guys at the DICE Canada office are the ones who are in charge of the patches nowadays both for BF:V and BF1942 since DICE Sweden are busy with BF2. Is this correct, and if it is, can we stop expecting another patch for BF1942 since DICE Canada obviously wants to patch BFV instead and maybe make some BF:V expansions?

DICE: It's true that DICE Stockholm is focusing entirely on BF2. It's a huge game and requires a focused, dedicated team. DICE Canada took over patching for BF1942 at the 1.6 patch and also all BFV patches.

BFC: We read your new interim report and noticed one line saying:

Contracts

A contract for the development of further material for Battlefield Vietnam was signed at the end of the second quarter. The material is being developed in Canada and the total value of the contract is about SEK 4m.

Is this an expansion pack for Battlefield: Vietnam and if it is, can you tell us more about it?

DICE: We're not ready to comment on that.

BFC: We have read that you're going to release a demo. Can you tell us when we can expect this demo to land and can you give us some more information about it (like if it is Multiplayer, Single player, number of maps etc.)?

DICE: We'll be releasing a demo before the game ships. Stay tuned for more details towards the end of the year.

BFC: Thanks a lot for the interview Sean and Lars. Could you maybe just give us a hint about system requirements so we now what hardware we should save our money for?

DICE: The system requirements will be equal or slightly greater than BFV.

As you see, we got some really nice answers. Now we know that BFTV will be there and not only the Demo-function that we have seen earlier and that they have taken care of pixel shooting. And that they have fixed so you can inactivate the Commander feature and the Experience system just for clan wars is a vera good sign.

I would like to thank DICE again for the interview and of course also our visitors that sent in their questions to us.

Courtesy of [Battlefield Central](#)