

THE STORY SO FAR

2005, a young engineering graduate named Erik Walle decides to make a game. Erik's an aficionado of gaming strategy and mechanics, of all games both video and board. He has been making games since he was 11.

He envisions a board game-esque computer game that you could play with your friends, and/or with thousands of others, all the time. A game where you have fresh situations and choices to make every day. A game balanced to ensure an entertaining ride for all, a fair shake for the newcomer squaring off against veterans, while still rewarding avid play. A game where different play styles could interact productively, but efforts to “grief” interactive gameplay were easily discouraged or filtered.

The result was the original Battle Mines. A mere toy, it was limited to 50 players at its largest, but served as a testing ground for mechanics and plot.

Fast-forward to 2010. While at Firaxis Games working on Sid Meier's Civ World, Erik begins development on a second incarnation, with a proper back end and actual GUI. In 2013, after quitting Firaxis to create his vision full time, Battle Mines is reborn and made available to the public.

TENETS OF GAME DESIGN

1. *Equal player footing*

Players should never be grossly mismatched, as this limits opportunities for interaction while typically tipping reward in one side's favour. The appeal of continued play should be in the range of options, not necessarily their strength.

2. *Substance over form*

If you don't have a good game underneath, flashy graphics will only take it so far. Also, I can't draw.

3. *Icons over numbers*

It's better to have a multitude of game elements, that interact over time to create progress, than to simply scale numbers up and up and up. Such numbers are typically things like money, experience, or score. Any number larger than about 20 is very hard for humans to actually envision. In Battle Mines, take buildings, objects, players on the map: Everything is on the order of tens, rarely more.

4. *Emergent gameplay* = *Mission Critical*

If I want to make a game to entertain lots of people for a long time, single-handed, it needs to spew forth incredible coincidences and amusing anecdotes on a daily basis.

WHAT TO EXPECT



Ah, another sunny day! Should I dispatch some spies, or just open fire?



Let's tidy up and rebuild the customs house. I need to get trading.



Powersinks! Now I can try that borehole layout I dreamed about!

Hey, wanna play some Call of Duty?

Too mindless.

Chess?

Not mindless enough.

Candy Crush?

Too vapid and trite.

Well, did you notice that I blew the crap out of you in Battle Mines?

Battle what?

Battle Mines! You signed up last night in a drunken stupor, remember?

Oh yeah! Hm, I wonder if my refinery is ready to harvest...

Master B sez:

Stay in school!

Brush your teeth!

Don't forget to take your medicine!

<http://battlemines.com>

Share this with a friend!



BATTLE MINES

“Dystopian Nuclear Farmville Warfare”

~ OR ~

The little strategy-MMO that could.

