

Understanding Duel

By Myrmidon ©

Introduction

The first guide I wrote for Quake 2 duel was a series of uncensored thoughts compiled into what was essentially an unedited and unstructured draft. I currently have a month to spare with little to do, so I have decided to edit down and rewrite sections of my original guide into something resembling a lean and articulate manual. I understand that Quake 2 is a dead game and this is most certainly a fruitless endeavour; however, the thought processes provided in this manual are generic in nature and can be applied to all kinds of games and even aspects of life, so some might find it beneficial regardless. What I will be demonstrating is a strategic and tactical predisposition towards duel.

The first thing I must do is provide you with the tools to extract the full potential of this manual, so you can understand exactly what my explanations are referring to.

Strategy and Tactics

A strategy is a fundamental goal or a vision (usually long term) that a group or individual aims to achieve. Strategy is applied in all walks of life, but some of the most common environments where a strategic approach is paramount would be in a military or business setting. For example, during a war, one faction might find it strategically prudent to destroy bridges to hinder the mobility of the opposing force.

Tactics on the other hand are the methods we use to attain our strategic goal. By nature, tactical decisions tend to be intricate, riskier and subject to failure. Let us take our bridge destroying example from above. In what way would you go about destroying those bridges? Would you use long range artillery? Would you bomb them from the air? Would you use a small group of soldiers to plant explosives? All these tactical decisions would need to be weighed up in terms of difficulty, efficiency, and probability of success.

So, when you see the word strategy or tactic in this manual you should now understand its significance. These concepts will be applied to duel further on.

The Map Misconception

Many players in Quake 2 put a great deal of emphasis on being able to play several maps, and due to this notion, they tend to associate knowing a broad range of maps with heightened duelling ability. This is not exactly true, and the reason is simple: learning or knowing a map takes time and dedication, not skill. On the flip side, the better dueller you are the more value you will be able to extract out of a map. The process of learning a map has three basic steps:

- 1. You learn the geography.** This means you learn what items can be collected, where they are located, and how to navigate between them. There is no great mystery to this process. All one needs to do is spend an hour running around a map until it becomes familiar. This is also where one begins to develop map related muscle memory.

- 2. You learn how the map is played.** Understanding how people play a map is an important process, and it's essentially how human beings learn new things in general. It is the age-old concept of passing down wisdom, from teacher to student, and when learning a new map, *you* are the student. You will need to pay attention to what areas your opponent roams, the specific items they control, places of positional advantage, and which weapons suit the map environment. Also, learning the sound cues is very important on a new map. A good dueller plays with their ears, not only their eyes.
- 3. You manipulate the map.** This is fundamentally the opposite of two. Now that you know how others play the map, you can create and apply your own style. Developing strategies and tactics that are superior to the pre-existing metagame will define you. Being a dueller goes beyond playing a map countless amounts of time. This is what is referred to as refinement, and it is the foundation of mechanical skill. When one repeats a process over and over, they become proficient and refined – which is basically muscle memory – but they are only refining what is already established. A true dueller will innovate the pre-existing strategy, building upon its effectiveness and sophistication.

Theory and Mechanics

Many players will have a hard time understanding or accepting this fundamental fallacy, but it is important to explain so that one is aware of exactly what duelling entails, and here it is: aim is not a duelling skill. Before your brain melts from confusion let me explain. Aim is most definitely a skill; it is comprised of many variables, but it is a skill nonetheless; however, it is separate from that of duel. There are many players who have exceptional aim, but their ability to essentially bully and out-muscle their opponent does not define great duelling capabilities. These kinds of players can win duels, but they are not duellers by nature.

Another ability which should be put to one side when referring to duelling technique is movement. To be precise, movement is comprised of two attributes: dexterity and agility. Many people might argue that they are fundamentally the same thing, but the difference between the two is quite significant. Agility is an individual's mechanical ability; for example, how well they can use their hands and fingers to control their keyboard and mouse. Dexterity on the other hand is their ability to manipulate their environment in game – the map. Dexterity is an important aspect of duel, but agility, like aim, is physical in nature. You are probably now starting to realise that duel is a kind of doctrine which is derived from mental ability, not so much physical.

I am not saying that mechanical ability is unimportant for duel; on the contrary, it is paramount for success, but what needs to be established is that mechanical and duelling abilities are two separate disciplines. When discussing a player's duelling ability, people tend to base their judgement largely on mechanical skill, were as I do not.

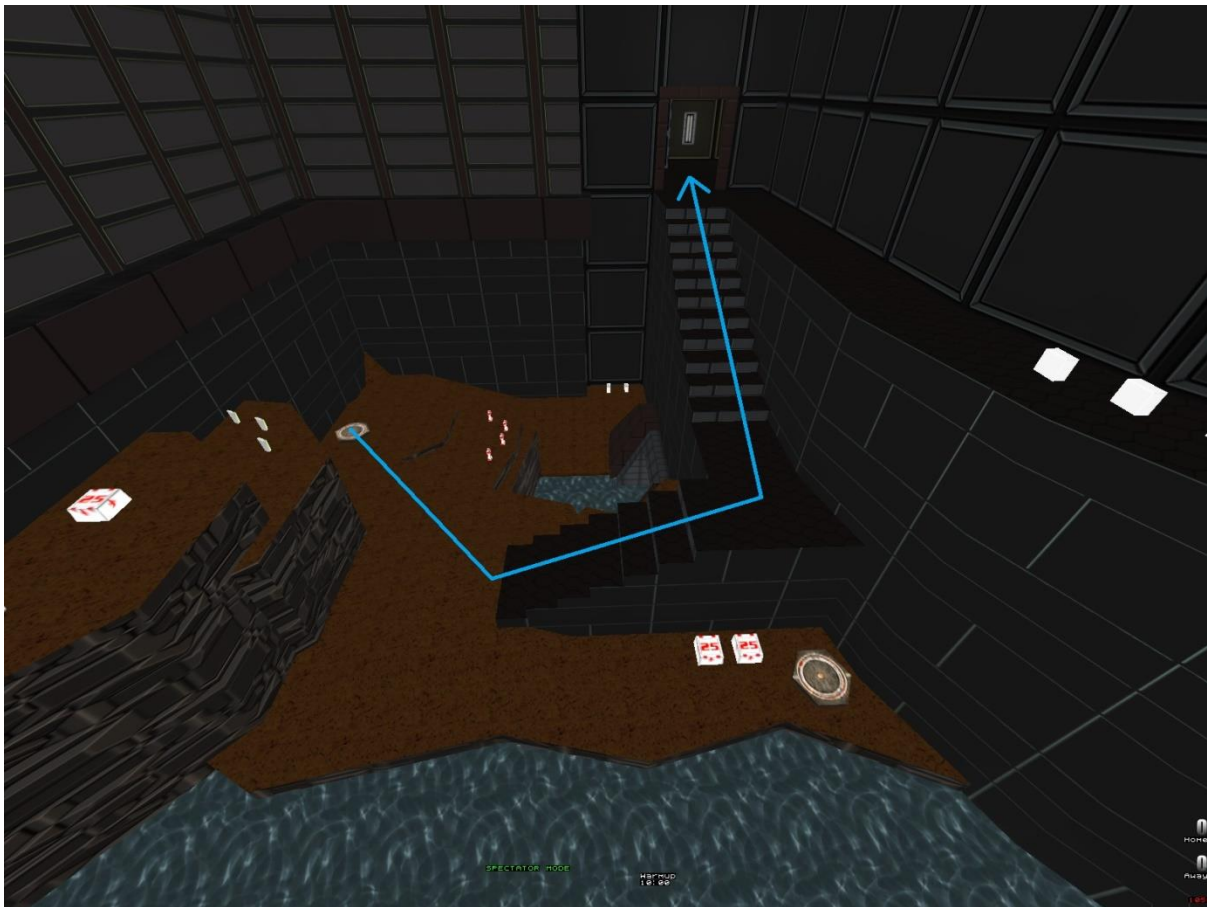
Opening Gambits

I commonly hear from players that some spawns are better than others, particularly on certain maps. There is some truth to this, but what is more important are the choices you make from your starting location. I refer to these series of choices as opening gambits. To those who are familiar with chess, you will already have some idea of what an opening gambit is designed to achieve, but for those who have never heard the term before here is a basic explanation:

An opening gambit is a series of actions or manoeuvres taken in order to achieve a strategic or tactical advantage.

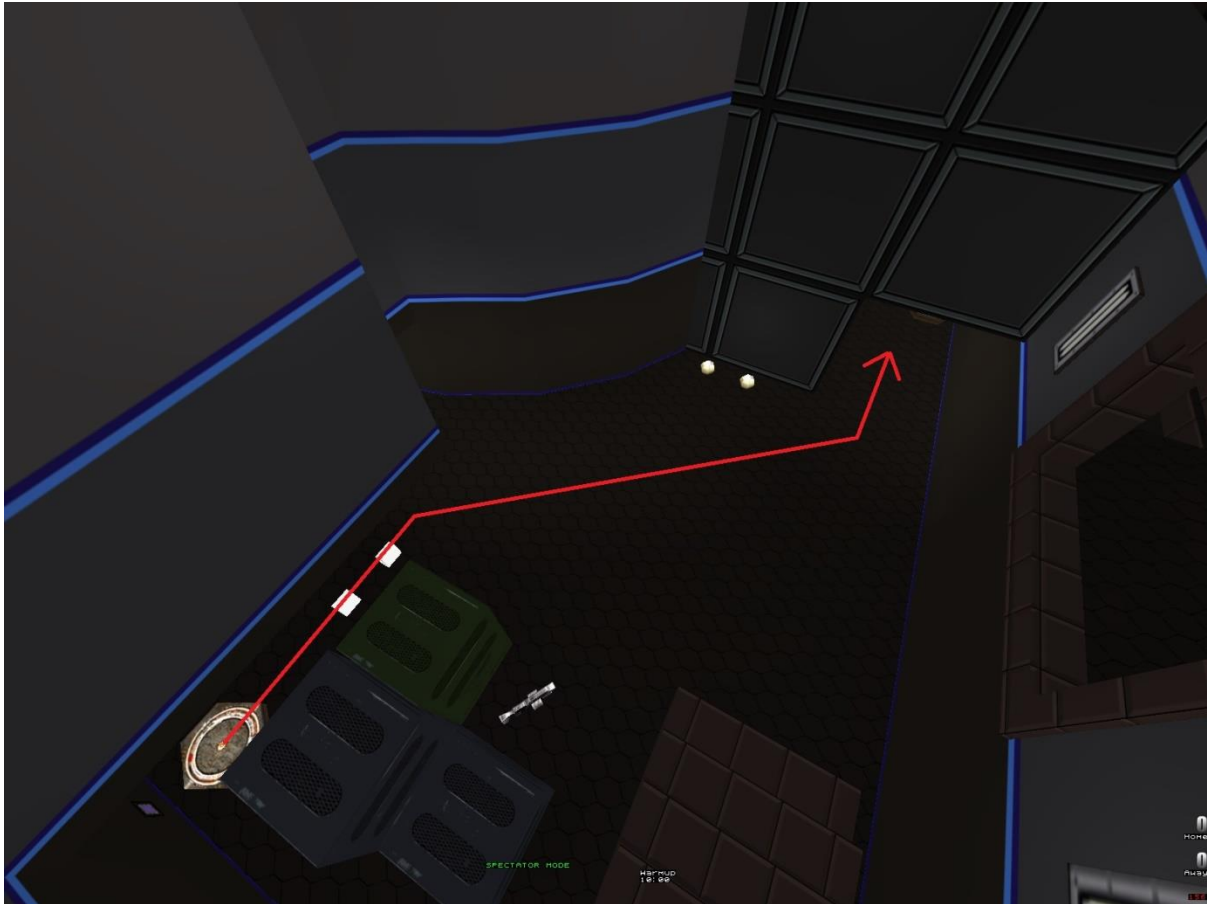
Opening gambits are one of the most important aspects of duel. They set the tone of the game and establish your position in terms of control. Your opening gambit should not only be determined by where you spawn but also where your opponent spawns. As a dueller you should develop opening gambits from every possible spawn on any given map. It can take months or even years to truly develop comprehensive and efficient opening gambits, and usually involves a lot of analysis and trial and error.

Here is an example of an opening gambit for the Edge:



Contender (Blue) spawns at water in front of the stims. The first thing any player should do when spawning in this location is head up the stairs towards the megahealth room. Sound cues become very important at this point because it determines whether one enters the room or retreats towards the super shotgun. This decision is made by listening out to where the opponent spawned. If they have spawned at super shotgun or in the megahealth room then you should retreat towards the super shotgun area – yes, despite it being taken. If your opponent spawns above chaingun or in front of the grenades in the room then some players might be tempted to steal the megahealth or yellow armour and escape without receiving too much damage. This is a risky move and will usually fail against most seasoned players. It also burns valuable time which is important in the first twenty seconds of the match. In this scenario the contender *does not* hear the opponent racing from the super shotgun, picking up the chaingun or charging from the top rocket launcher, so they enter the room.

There is also the possibility that they both spawn by the water. In this case it becomes a race to the room where a trade-off between the chaingun or the armour and megahealth takes place. If executed cleanly then taking the armour and megahealth is more beneficial and gives an advantage. If not performed cleanly then the contender should always prioritise the megahealth over the armour. The armour respawns every twenty seconds, but the megahealth will not respawn until their health hits one-hundred, and this is something the contender has control over.



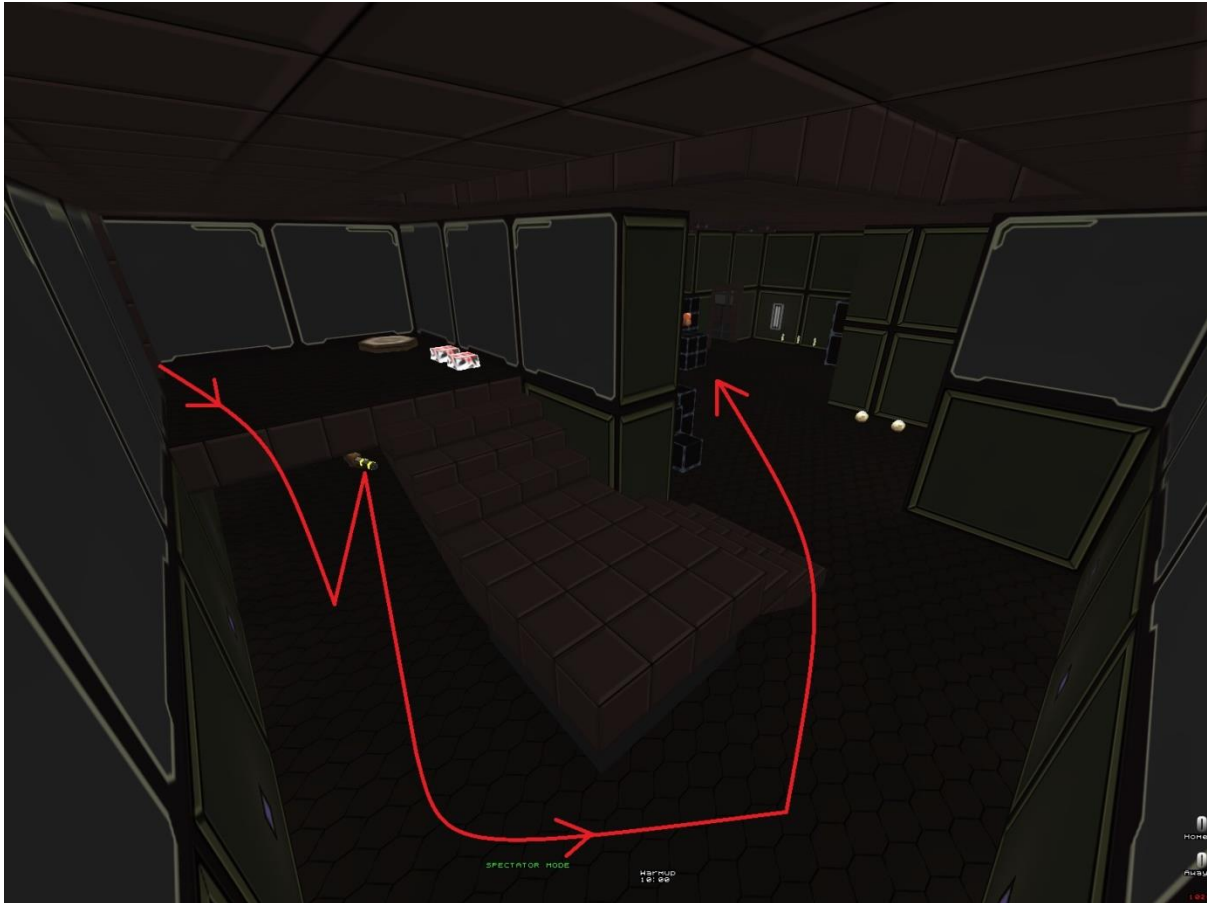
Opponent (Red) has spawned by the shotgun. The first thing the opponent does is head towards the lift. This is general common sense because from this position they have access to the choice of two main weapons: rocket launcher and super shotgun. The top of the lift is also a fortified position which gives access to a grey (or green) armour and the arena yellow, which is a short drop. In this scenario the opponent grabs the machinegun (which is inefficient because it burns time) and heads up the lift to take the chaingun before the contender. This strategy is possible, but it is much less likely when spawning by the shotgun. It would have a much higher success rate if the opponent spawned next to the lift.

Remember, time is vital in the early game – every second counts! So, the opponent is taking a gamble right from the get-go. However, this depends largely on where the contender spawns. It should become clear that many variables are involved in calculating and weighing up your decisions during an opening gambit. There are many options available, and if not executed efficiently your strategy can change simply from stumbling on a step, missing a jump or hitting a wall. This is where mechanical skill and refinement applies to duel; however, we are focusing on “what to do” rather than the actual “doing”.



Contender (Blue) has entered the megahealth room. The priority would be to collect the chaingun. The reason behind this logic boils down to tactical safety. Since the contender did not hear the opponent approaching from the super shotgun or the top rocket launcher then they must assume that their opponent spawned near the bottom rocket launcher. Taking the chaingun first prevents the contender from being trapped under the stairs by the opponent. A rocket launcher is a strong close-range weapon, and if used properly can easily overpower the contender in that area. The opponent would also have a height and armour advantage in that situation, so collecting the chaingun must be executed cleanly and quickly; but what is more important is the decision whether you collect it or not. This is where sound cues become vital to decision making. As you approach the steps, if you hear your opponent at the top of the lift then you **do not** go for the chaingun. It should now become clear why the opponent's success rate to claim the chaingun diminishes depending on whether they spawn by the shotgun or next to the lift. In this situation you abandon the chaingun and collect the armour and the megahealth then retreat from the room using the water exit, as seen in the picture above.

You perform a similar action if your opponent spawns at the top rocket launcher. In this scenario you would take the yellow armour and then retreat towards the lift or the arena depending on whether you are able to make the jump from the backpack to the armour. This manoeuvre is faster and safer because it results in a clean escape. It is possible for your opponent to hit you with a rocket as you retreat to the arena if you travel all the way over to the steps to jump up the armour crate. Again, it boils down to clean execution.



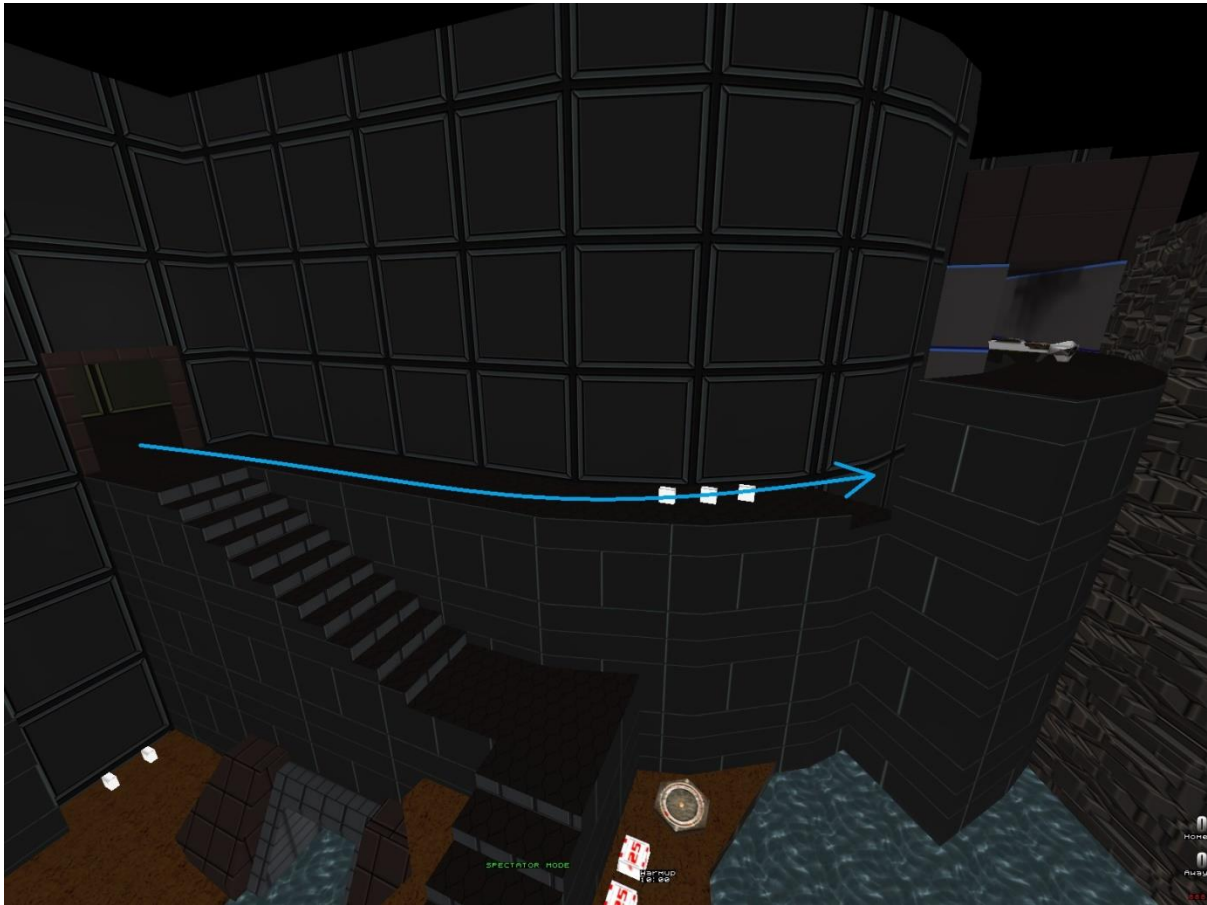
Opponent (Red) takes the chaingun and charges into the megahealth room. There is no armour or megahealth to collect which removes their ability to pursue the contender or be aggressive at close range. The opponent has three strategically viable options.

The first would be to attack into the super shotgun via the arena. This is risky and favours the contender tactically. There are two reasons it will fail: one, because the contender has more health and armour; and two, because the super shotgun area is enclosed with lots of corners which forces the opponent to fight at close range.

The second choice would be to collect the yellow armour in the arena. This is a viable strategy depending on whether you feel comfortable attacking into the megahealth room. The reason for this boils down to a simple manoeuvre on the contender's behalf: as soon as the opponent goes to the arena armour the contender will backtrack past the water into the megahealth room. This allows them to collect the room armour again once it spawns uncontested, and setup a defensive position on top of the crate – a positional advantage.

The third option would be to simply wait in the megahealth room for the armour to respawn. This decision might seem like the least viable out of the three, but it is the most efficient and effective. The reason for this is that you have a chaingun and the megahealth room which allows you to pressure the arena armour while having the option to collect the room armour uncontested. The contender will not attempt to attack into the megahealth from super shotgun if the opponent remains in the room because the walkways are a bottleneck, which means they are death traps against a chaingun. A rocket launcher would be required to force the opponent away from the doors to perform such a task. So now that the opponent can pressure

the arena armour and wait for the room armour the contender has little choice but to go for the rocket launcher.



Contender (Blue) exits the megahealth room and heads towards the super shotgun. It is important to pick up the three bullet packs en route because it reduces the opponent's combat capabilities. The chaingun runs out of ammo extremely quickly and ammo management is strategically vital in the early game, especially when you are limited to one weapon. If the opponent was to charge out from under the stairs, guns blazing, then they would waste a good forty to fifty percent of their bullets with no viable way to obtain more. The closest bullet packs besides the three by the water would be down by the lift or in the sewer, and that would mean giving up your position.

Do not worry if you miss one of the bullet packs. If you go back to collect it then you waste time, and if your opponent does take the option of attacking into the super shotgun then it increases the likelihood of him coming out victorious. Remember that the contender does not have any weapons for defence, so if the opponent decides to attack then the outcome depends on how quickly you are able to collect the super shotgun.

That concludes this analysis. There are many opening gambits for every map, some more sophisticated than others. As a dueller it is your responsibility to analyse and refine opening gambits in order to gain strategic and tactical advantages. There are many maps in Quake 2 which are still highly undeveloped in terms of strategy, so there is plenty of opportunity to practice forging your own gambits and dominate.

The Two Principles

One

The point is to make frags without giving them away to your opponent. If you are unable to make frags then your sole purpose is to *keep the score as even as possible*. The logic behind this principle is simple: it is much easier to come back from being down one or two frags than seven or eight. So, try to avoid attacking out of anger, especially after you have been fragged. Also try not to take risky decisions. It is always better to live to fight another day.

Two

If you are down in frags then whether you have control or not, you are the hunter. The opposite is also true: when you are up in frags you become the hunted. The player who is winning has no obligation to attack – they are prey. It is always a priority to extend a lead, but they can pick and choose their engagements. The player who is losing *must* attack some time or another. Remember, a duel is not over until the clock hits zero.

Situation and Observation Analysis

Being able to determine the state of your situation is very important when judging what decision needs to be made. This section involves elements that could be conducted prior to a match depending on your understanding of the opponent, but in most situations, unless you're aware of who your opponent is, then their characteristics will be shrouded until you take a moment to assess their play-style. We will bypass pre-game strategy and look directly at observing and analysing any situation, hence the title of this section. Situational analysis is done quickly and in real time, and it becomes more intuitive with practice.

Your analysis of a situation will be determined by scale, logic and experience. Once your analysis is sufficient you can formulate a strategy or tactical initiative. The first stage would be to observe your opponent and examine your situation, and then determine what you need to do and how you should go about doing it. Here is a list of questions that highlight situations which players commonly have difficulty addressing, and some possible solutions you might use to overcome them:

- **Does my opponent have a strong aim and how do I overcome it?**

If you determine that your opponent has a strong aim, then you need to think of ways to limit their ability to use it effectively. One such way would be to avoid open spaces and instead stay in areas that provide shelter and protection. In such places, your opponent is unable to get a clear and consistent line of sight on you. This thought process leads into the concept of positional advantages. Try to take battles where you feel aiming and hitting shots is easier for you than your opponent. Having the high ground is a simple and common positional advantage used in duel.

- **What if my opponent relies a lot on a particular weapon, such as the chaingun?**

This is a common occurrence amongst a lot of players. I have seen players struggle immensely in duels until they are able to obtain a certain weapon, then they make almost all their kills using it. In duel there are four main weapons; two of them are defensive and two are offensive. You could also describe two as siege weapons and the other two as combat weapons.

	Defensive	Offensive
Siege	Rocket Launcher	Railgun
Combat	Super Shotgun	Chaingun

Dealing with a particular weapon is a combination of choosing the correct counter weapon and trying to dictate the environment where battles take place. For example, if your opponent is very chaingun dependent then you should draw them into enclosed areas and use the rocket launcher. An area with many corners is good for this, for example the super shotgun location on the Edge.

If the opponent is railgun dependent, then constantly seek cover to break their line of sight. When engaging into a railgun, try to make them miss the first rail by feigning movement, and then attack using a chaingun or super shotgun. Though the railgun is a very strong weapon, its defensive capabilities are weak, and if your opponent misses the shot while in a vulnerable position then it is your own fault if you fail to make the frag.

The rocket launcher is arguably the most difficult of the four main weapons to use effectively, but if your opponent is strong with it then maintain distance and engage in areas where you can move fluently to dodge.

- **I need armour, but how do I collect it without being killed?**

Armour is a cornerstone of duel and without it you will have a hard time winning battle. The true key to safely collecting armour is in perception, and by that, I mean your ability to use sound effectively. You need to know when the “coast is clearly”, so to speak. There are several ways to distract or deter your opponent from engaging when you attempt to take armour, and both comes down to using sound and being able to read the game. If your opponent holds the room on the Edge and you wish to collect the armour in the arena, then you need to make sure they don’t rail or chain you to death as you drop down from the lift and escape.

Feigning Actions

Making your opponent think you are doing one thing in order to do another is quite an arcane skill. It is highly steeped in psychology, sound mastery and decades of experience. You might think that is an overstatement, but our intuitive brain is able to pick up on the tiniest anomaly, so conducting a manipulative manoeuvre requires a degree of authenticity and finesse. Basically, it must seem genuine or players will instinctively know something is wrong. Highly experienced players are hypersensitive to certain maps and will know if something is amiss

very quickly; however, a certain degree of intelligence is required to put two and two together, and if a player isn't very bright or experienced then it may not occur to them even if all the signs are there.

An example of feigning which I commonly use is for collecting the arena armour on the Edge. The opponent who controls the megahealth room *must* respond if you move down the ramp and stand above the chaingun. The reason for this is because you have easy access to the chaingun and the potential to attack into the room successfully. Both the stairs and the armour box give a height advantage and can be used as cover, so your opponent will want to avoid you gaining that position at all costs; therefore they have to move away from the arena door to defend the stairs. This is your cue to take the arena armour. You must use *walk* back to the top of the lift and perform a *clean drop* to the armour. If you make a noise or hit a ledge on the way down, then you give away your position and your opponent will dive at the opportunity to damage or frag you.

Now you are probably wondering *what if they do not move away from the door?* In this situation you demonstrate your intention to push into the room using the armour box as cover. Doing so will force the opponent to realise that there are *consequences* to not reacting to possible threats. It will keep your play-style unpredictable and flexible, and your opponent will have to always respond to your actions.

Sound Cues

Using sound cues to determine whether the coast is clear is straight forward. It takes some experience but all that is required is waiting until you hear your opponent in a part of the map that is far enough away to provide enough time to collect the armour. For example, if you're on top of the lift waiting to drop and you hear your opponent collecting the three bullet packs by the water then it's safe to collect the armour and get to safety before they're able to attack. Getting the feel for time frames simply takes practice. After gaining more experience you should instinctively know whether you have enough time to perform an action or not.

Damage Output

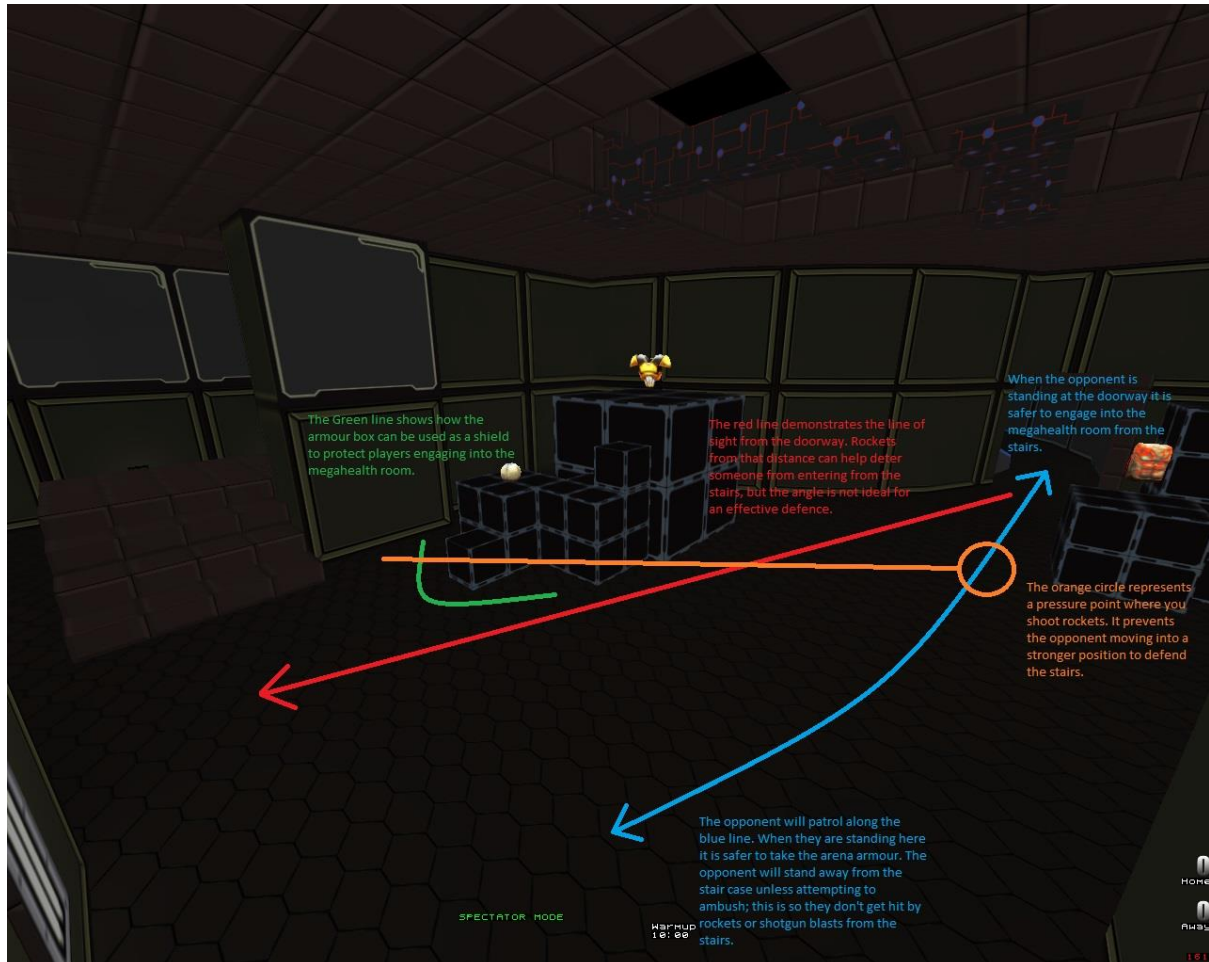
The final determining factor is based upon maintaining balance. If you can dish out enough damage during an engagement, then your opponent will not be able to maintain an aggressive stance without putting themselves at a high risk of being fragged or losing control. Simply shooting rockets at the arena door as you drop to the armour will deter an opponent with low armour and health from attacking. Calculating risk is a tricky factor in duel, and it boils down to experience and intelligence. It is quite common for players with strong aims to be risk takers because they tend to believe there is a higher probability that they will hit their shot and their opponent will miss.

- **How do I attack into the megahealth room effectively?**

A lot of players believe that as soon as their opponent has control over the megahealth room then the game is over. I will not lie to you; taking back the megahealth room from a strong dueller is a very difficult task and usually requires a combination of you executing your attack cleanly and your opponent making one or more mistakes. A game between two highly skilled

and experienced duellers is usually determined not so much by the better player but who makes the most mistakes. Below is a picture which demonstrates a positional analysis of engaging or feigning into the megahealth room.

Arena Door



This picture highlights a simple perspective based on two positions: the contender attacking or feigning into the room from the stairs, and the opponent attempting to prevent the contender from collecting the arena armour or attaining a foothold behind the armour box.

The **blue** line represents the path that players regularly patrol to either pressure arena armour or prevent their opponent from taking up position behind the armour box. In this situation many players switch between the railgun and chaingun. Rockets and buckshot are not very effective at pressuring the arena armour. When the opponent moves towards the stairs they will most likely stay away from walls and corners. This allows some space to dodge incoming rockets in case of rush attacks. It is possible that the opponent might jump up the armour box for a height advantage to shoot rockets on the stairs, but that can give away their position and burn valuable time.

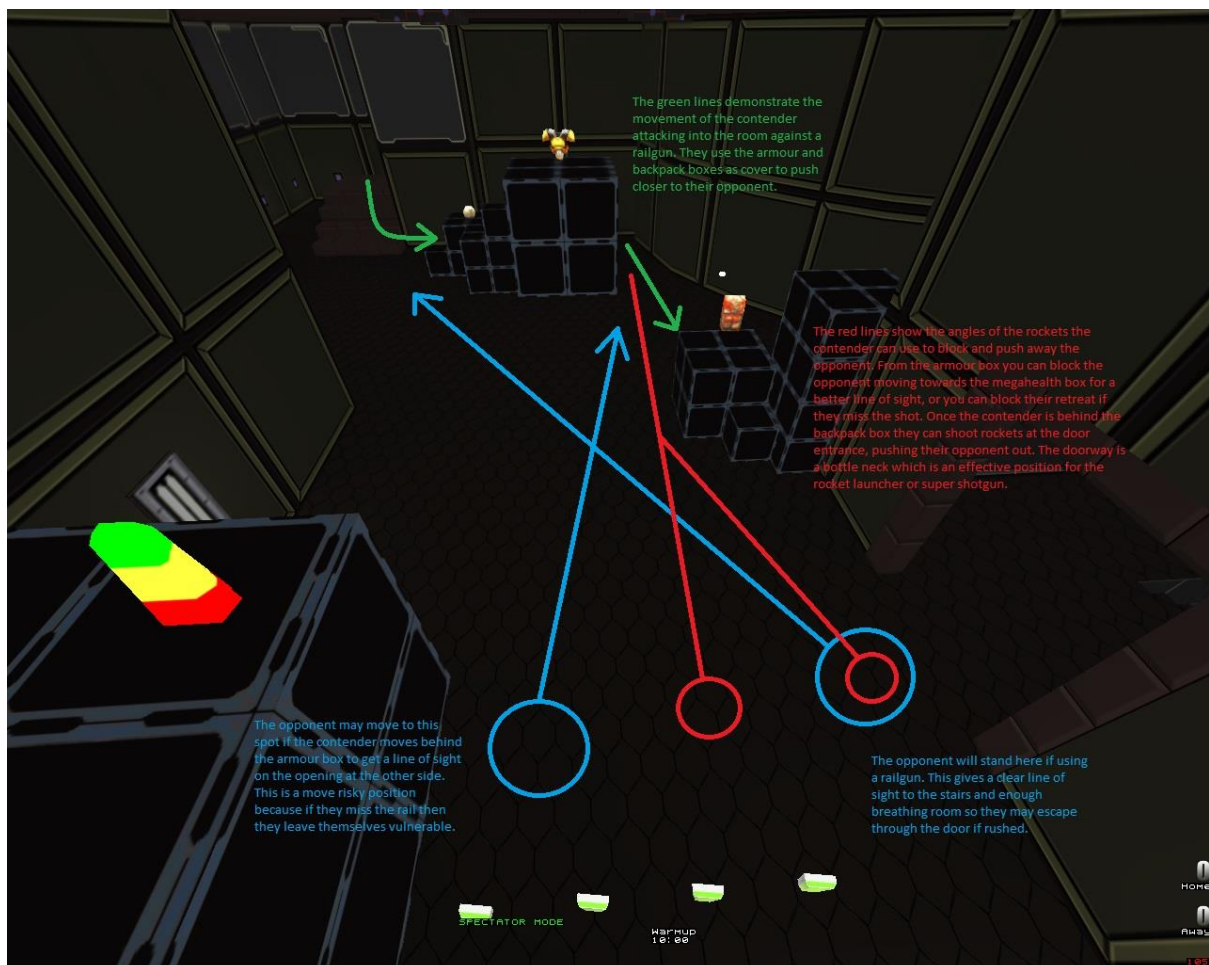
The **green** line demonstrates the use of the box as a shield or cover while engaging into the room. Behind the box can also be act as a bottle neck giving the rocket launcher or super shotgun a tactical advantage. The **red** line shows how the line of sight is broken from the arena doorway to the stairs. That armour box is a crucial element to engaging into the megahealth

room with only the use of the super shotgun and rocket launcher. If you have a chaingun or railgun then it can be played differently, but when you do not have control it is unlikely you will possess one of those weapons.

The **orange** circle is what I refer to as a pressure point. It is a place where you can shoot rockets that either prevents a player from taking up a position or where they unconsciously move towards out of habit. There are many pressure points in the room and throughout the whole map, but in this scenario that pressure point is important for preventing your opponent from taking up a stronger position. The box with the backpack acts like a bottleneck stopping the opponent getting to the shards or centre of the room without having to move closer to the armour box. Remember, when you possess a rocket launcher or a super shotgun, close range engagements are your friend, so you either want to force your opponent to move closer to your or retreat from the room.

Water Door

The picture below shows another common situation that players tend to have trouble with. It can be difficult engaging into the room against a player with a strong railgun aim, especially if their ping is lower than yours. There is an effective way to do it though, and it takes precision, confidence and decisiveness.



As explained on the text in the picture, the **blue** circles represent common positions the opponent will stand at and the arrows point to where they will aim. The position closest to the

door allows for a clean shot at the contender approaching from the stairs. This spot is ideal because it has fail-safe measures, meaning if the opponent misses the rail they can simply retreat. The water area is also an open space, so it's not ideal for the contender to pursue the opponent if they retreat unless they are very weak, in which case they will probably head towards the super shotgun area for protection and health. The second position is by the megahealth box, which allows for the opponent to cover the opening at the back of the armour box. This position is riskier because if the opponent misses the shot it will allow the contender to pounce onto their position quickly and block their escape with rockets.

The **green** line shows the route that the contender can take to get closer to their opponent safely. It is ideal to try and make the opponent shoot and miss before moving from the stairs to behind the armour box. Sound usage becomes paramount at this point because once you are behind the box you need to listen out to what the opponent is doing and where they are standing. If you can hear their exact location, then you know where to shoot defensive rockets. If the opponent remains at the water door looking for the rail shot then simply use the backpack box as cover to push closer; however, if they switch to another weapon then either stay behind the box and wait for them to move close enough for rockets, or retreat when you have the chance. The rocket launcher is the most effective weapon for flushing players out from behind boxes, so if you know that your opponent does not have one, then that makes your engagement much easier.

The **red** lines represent places to shoot rockets when pushing closer to the door. When emerging from the back of the armour box it is important to lay down some fire to prevent the opponent from getting a better position with a clear line of sight. This keeps him at the water doorway. Once you get behind the backpack box you will have a better angle to shoot rockets at the door and push them out of the room. When pushing into the room from the stairs it is a good idea to fire some rockets towards your opponent if they are at the doorway with a railgun. This forces them to move helping to break line of sight, throw off their aim, and even rockets can block their view sometimes.

These demonstrations on how to take back the megahealth room are only a couple of many methods, but they are usually the ones people have the most difficulty addressing. Try to figure out how to attack into the megahealth room via the doorways instead of the stairs. Use the techniques I have provided to design tactics of your own.

The Right Mentality

There are far too many players out there who submit themselves to defeat before a match has even begun. The right mentality when approaching duel or practice is paramount to success.

When you are watching duels, your thoughts should be:

How do I beat this player?

What are his strengths and weaknesses?

How can I use them to my advantage?

Your thoughts should not be:

His aim is too good!

I will never be able to do that.

He is too fast!

It's true that some people are born with talents that give them an advantage in duel; however, it's a multidimensional discipline, and where they might be strong in one area (aim) they are probably weak in another (tactics). There have been very few players in the history of Quake 2 duel that have been highly skilled in every attribute.

It is important to understand that *no player is unbeatable!* Every player makes mistakes. Every player has weaknesses. It is up to you to figure out what they are and exploit them. By this principle you should view opponents or maps as puzzles. It is not impossible to solve a puzzle, it only takes time and effort; however, some are more difficult than others. Viewing duel in this context serves two specific purposes:

1. It entices the player, making them *want* to figure out the problem. It is very gratifying when you solve a problem. You get that surge of dopamine which signals to your brain that you are climbing the dominance hierarchy, boosting confidence.
2. You will not see your opponent as a personality, which helps to remove anxiety and intimidation. They will simply be an object to solve. Always respect a player's ability, but never fool yourself into believing that you cannot beat them.

A lot of players will perceive this attitude as ego or arrogance, and that is because they either do not understand its purpose or they are insecure about their own ability. This mentality has come back to bite me on several occasions over the years, so I advise prudence when sharing your views on how you feel about your opponents.

Awareness of Habits

Habits are a common problem in duel, and they are mostly seen in less experienced players. For those of you who are familiar with Poker you know that you play the person across the table, not your hand. There is good reason for this: people unconsciously give away signs and gestures that give away their intention. They are essentially habits, and the better the player the easier you will be able to identify them. The same principle applies to duel: pay attention to your opponent and look out for any repetition. This can be anything from a player attacking from the same location consistently, unconsciously gravitating to a certain position during battles, and even making zigzag movements. They are all habits that can be exploited.

Many players will act out the same habits because our brains fundamentally work in similar ways as humans. By that principle, they can also be contagious because one of the ways people learn is by mimicking others; therefore, if we are able to identify the habit of one player, the chances are we can use it to our advantage against multiple opponents.

Removing Habits

The irony of habits is that you need to develop good ones to remove bad ones. The first thing you should do is observe your own games to see if you have any habits that need ironing out. Once you have identified them you should ask yourself: *what should I do instead?* There is almost always something more efficient you could be doing. When you have figured that out, breaking the habit is a process that takes time and patience.

To break a habit, you need to *focus on what you are doing* while playing. It is easy to get swept up in the moment causing your focus to shift from yourself to the opponent. You could argue that this is a habit itself. The key is to play at a slower pace and get into the habit of questioning everything you do. Do not worry about winning; that comes later. Focus on improving yourself first.

A good example of a habit I broke in my early days as an aspiring dueller was the “panic jumping” during battles. This is still commonly seen by many players today, and that is because it is a natural stage of development. During battles I noticed that players had a tendency to jump around erratically, so instead of doing the tango with them I decided to simply stand still and focus on aiming my crosshair on every place they were about to land. It worked incredibly well for two reasons:

1. They expected me to jump around too, so it confused them. Their mind was not able to apply a cognitive process to the situation. It takes more focus to aim at a player standing still during the heat of battle than it does a moving target. It is because our brain can predict where a moving target is going – a trajectory.
2. I learnt to be much calmer during battles. Panic is never useful in duel; it makes you predictable and cause mistakes. This was my first experience into a calm and articulate performance, and it radically changed my results.

Exploiting Habits

Discovering a habit is one thing but it is another figuring out how to use it to your advantage. You essentially can read your opponent’s mind at this point, or that is what it will feel like to them. They might even make wall hack accusations, but there are no mysterious or immoral deeds at work. It is simply the ability to observe attentively.

There are a few different types of habits that can be exploited, and one of the most common is the persistent use of specific routes. If your opponent attacks from the same location consistently then it is time to setup ambushes where they do not expect to be attacked. A good example of this on the Edge is when players constantly attack into the room from the stairs. It’s difficult enough to engage into the room when your opponent stands on the armour box for a height advantage, but when a player attacks from this location over and over, sooner or later the opponent will silently walk up to the lift and simply prevent you from using this route altogether. There are four locations between the room and the top of the lift that can be used for ambushes.

All these ambushes work due to the principle that people naturally follow the same patterns. When they come up the lift, they are expecting their opponent to be waiting in the megahealth room for them; therefore, they tend to believe that the route they are taking is safe up to a certain point. The more a player’s mind is set on autopilot the easier it will be to ambush them. Players who are impatient, aggressive, or feel like they have so much control they are unstoppable will also be susceptible to ambushes.

1. At the bottom of the stairs, it is possible to deal a point-blank shot with the super shotgun on a player who is not cautious when coming down the steps. This has become quite a common ambush in recent times, and any experienced or intelligent

player might shoot at rocket towards the bottom of the stairs to ensure their opponent is not setting up an ambush.

2. Catching a player on the ramp with a super shotgun is also useful. In order to pull off this ambush effectively it must be unexpected and undetected. This goes back to the explanation of how players become hypersensitive, so they can pick up on small intricate anomalies or sounds. If your opponent suspects you are waiting for them by the ramp it can be disastrous. It is an easy place to get hit by rockets, so it must be executed naturally and used seldomly, otherwise it becomes useless.
3. The top of the lift is a simple ambush location, and it is straightforward. If your opponent has poor perception and is not paying attention, then they will walk into the lift unaware that they are about to be fragged.
4. Another method of ambushing at the top of the lift is to stand near the shell packs. When the opponent reaches the top of the lift, they will collect the grey armour and head into the room oblivious of their surroundings. This technique is useful if you do not have a rocket launcher; however, if the opponent escapes down the ramp without sustaining enough damage then they can use it as a bottle neck to block your access back into the room.

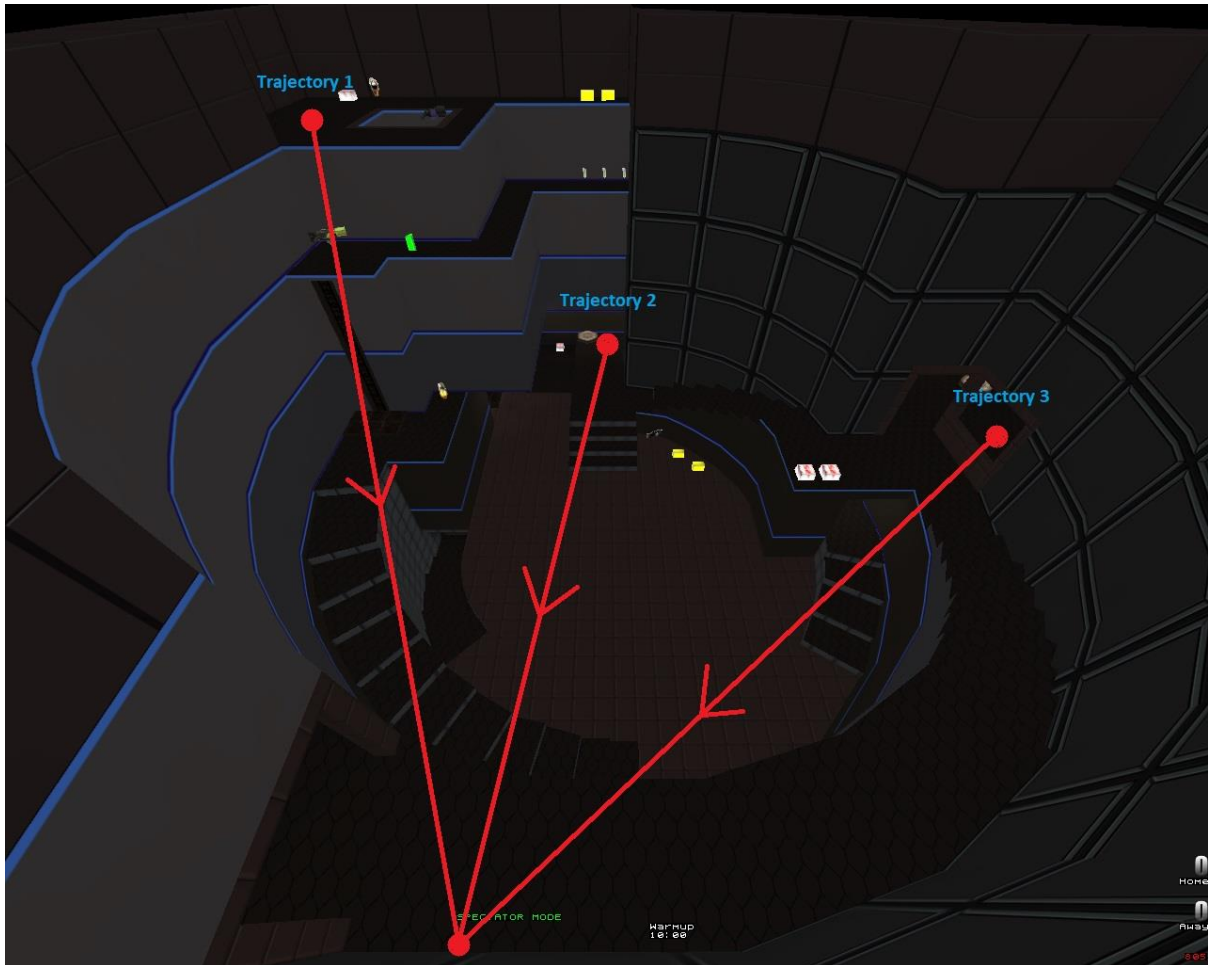
An obvious habit that you can use to your advantage are intricate movements that players make during engagements. It is a natural response for a human to avoid things by moving side-to-side or backwards and forwards, and it is this zigzag movement that you need to pick up on. When a player moves right to avoid a rocket, they will almost always instinctively move left to dodge the next.

The same principle can be applied during railgun a railgun stand-off. Most players will rapidly move side-to-side to make themselves harder to hit. As stated in a previous part of this guide, it is harder to hit a player who stands still during the heat of the moment because it confuses our cognition and demands focus. For both the rocket and railgun situations, it can be easier to allow your opponent to *move into your crosshair* when taking aim rather than trying to manually target them. The logic behind this boils down to two factors:

1. It is mechanically easier to point your crosshair at one location rather than trying to point and click at a rapidly moving target.
2. There is a longer exposure time to hit a target moving into and out the view of a crosshair. This means that the shot has a much higher chance of hitting.

Rocket Trajectory

A cute trick which I figured out early and still use to this day is observing rocket trajectories to anticipate what your opponent is planning. The direction or angle of a rocket can give away an abundance of information. Below is a picture which highlights three common rocket trajectories which can be used to determine what your opponent is planning or where they intend to attack from. Imagine viewing the angle of these rockets while standing in the megahealth room facing the arena doorway.



Trajectory 1

If you see a rocket hitting the wall from the angle shown in the picture, then you know they are on top of the lift and are probably attempting one of three actions:

1. They are about to attack into the megahealth room from the stairs.
2. They want to drop down to the arena armour.
3. They will head towards the top rocket launcher.

Be prepared to either defend the megahealth room or pressure the arena armour. If they head to the top rocket launcher, this provides time to restock ammo or collect armour for yourself.

Trajectory 2

This is the most ambiguous rocket trajectory because it can suggest several possible actions. The likelihood is that the opponent is planning to enter the lift; however, it is centralised and has access to many areas. Here is a list of possibilities:

1. Attempting to enter the lift.
2. Checking to see if the opponent is not watching so they can retrieve the lower rocket launcher undetected.
3. Backtracking towards the super shotgun. Possibly via the stairs or the hallways.

4. Boldly moving out into the arena to move towards the armour stairs. This is not uncommon and is either done under the protection of rocket fire or silently using walk.
5. Simply attempting to hit rocket spam to gain time and open opportunities.

Trajectory 3

This is a common spot to fire off a few rockets. It has direct access to important items and two of the routes into the megahealth room.

1. The player might simply want to collect the super shotgun. It is common for them to fire some rockets at the doorway to push their opponent back into the room if they have a railgun.
2. They may be attempting to sneak up to the room via the water area. Always be vigilant and cautious when your opponent goes quiet. It usually means they are up to something.
3. If they have took damage they will be after the health packs. You should always be keeping track of your opponent's health and armour. If you know they are low on health, use the health packs as bait for an ambush.
4. They may want to push into the room via the arena doorway. This should be easy to detect if you are vigilant.
5. They might backtrack and try attacking via the lift.

One thing is for certain, most players usually make very illogical and inefficient decisions in duel, especially if they are inexperienced, so remain open to any possibility regardless of rocket trajectories. The examples given above are based on probability and likelihood.

A Final Word

This guide, for lack of a better word, is a compilation of my knowledge and experience from over twenty years as a player. My aim was to demonstrate how a player should *think* when approaching Quake 2 duel, and if you now feel like you are aware of the depth involved and appreciated its complexity, then my work is done. The truth is most players perform these actions unconsciously, and all I have done is articulate into words the thought process of a player.

A lot is missing in this guide because it's difficult to recall over twenty years of knowledge, and it would also take forever to write it all down; however, the most fundamental techniques for laying a strong strategic and tactical foundation have been provided. The rest is up to you.

Enjoy,

Myrmidon^