

How Sigma Approaches Tournaments

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Ethics

Don't cheat. If you cheat, it ruins the hard work of other players who play honestly and fairly. And the feeling that you get from winning a cup legitimately is always superior to the feeling that you get from cupping in some sleazy way (via cheating or having someone else win your cup for you)

1. Never arrange for free kills, whether it's for equipment or for a rank up. Never ask someone to die to you on purpose, PERIOD. Never intentionally let someone deactivate you.
2. Never ask someone to join a tournament for the specific purpose of PPH'ing with you (as in, he is not trying to cup himself; he is only playing so that you will score better PPH).
3. Never quit low. If you did your best to survive, and you are running out of shields and fuel, stay in until either you are deactivated, or the mob somehow gives up on you. Quitting low deprives other players who earned a kill their rightful prize.

Before the tournament

Speed matters a lot in this turn-based game, particularly since you might end up fighting near or against mobs of 5 or more players, and your ability to stick in an extra turn, when everyone else is lagging, is a critical advantage:

1. Use an Ethernet cord to connect online, instead of using a wireless router. I used to play on wireless and I always pinged more than 200 milliseconds, with frequent spikes of 2,000+ milliseconds (2+ seconds), making raids impossible to survive and it always took me more than 15 minutes to fill up. After I switched to wired connection, I shaved my ping down to 30-40 ms
2. Use a modern browser like Google Chrome or Mozilla Firefox. Avoid Internet Explorer.
3. Restart your computer before the tournament, and avoid opening any other programs that could cause you to lag

Obviously, you don't want to have to leave in the middle of a tournament, even if only for 1-2 minutes.

4. Half an hour before the tournament, avoid drinking too much liquid. Immediately before the tournament, use the restroom and set a glass of water on the table to sip for the next hour

Some miscellaneous recommendations

5. Select your time zone – by going to the TankPit account settings page at

http://tankpit.com/account_settings

This ensures that the tournament calendar displays in your local time, so you avoid having to convert GMT time to your local time and making a mistake on the start time

6. Study the properties of the tournament map ahead of time. Since the tournament calendar shows which map will be hosting the competition, you can play on it for a bit on the main map and get comfortable with the geography (mountains, rivers, etc). Decide where you want to spawn for your initial fill, to increase chances of finding a ferry, and know where all the equipment might accumulate during mid / late game.

Initial equipment fill

Note: during tournaments, all players can hold more equipment than on the main map. Recruits can hold 60 of each, and your capacity grows by 8 with each rank:

- Privates can hold 68 of each
- Corporals can hold 76 of each
- Sergeants can hold 84 of each
- Lieutenants can hold 92 of each
- Captains can hold 100 of each
- Majors can hold 108 of each
- Colonels can hold 116 of each
- Generals can hold 124 of each

However, the number of points needed to make the next rank, as well as the kill requirements, are the same as a main map's.

You always want to fill up on equipment as a recruit, as soon as you enter. There are two reasons for this:

1. The map is filled with a lot of equipment in the beginning, and the supply of equipment diminishes significantly after the first 15 minutes (you will never find equipment in such abundance during mid / late game)
2. If you rank to sergeant first and then try to fill, those who did fill beforehand and have dual / homing shots will make it very tough for you to focus on your equipment filling (you might even be killed)

Therefore, begin the tournament by searching for equipment as a recruit. A recruit's radar extends in a 5x5 box (with your tank in the middle, and the coverage extending two spaces above, below, left, and right). Leave auto-scroll on, radar all nine parts of the screen (center, four corners, and four edges), making sure that none of them overlap / that you don't radar any terrain twice, and drive to the edge of the screen on the ninth corner, so it takes you to a new screen, and you have some more new corners and edges to radar.

If it's a water map, you want to click by the coast when you enter, to increase your chances of finding a ferry. Drive along the coastline looking for a ferry, and radar for equipment boxes as you go along, with every step. Even if you don't find a ferry after 5 minutes, you will at least have picked up some equipment. (Credits to Jay for this). For appaloosa land, you can also choose a river that connects with the ocean, so if you find a ferry in the river, you can ride it into the Pacific or Atlantic. If you do find a ferry for your initial fill, make sure that you hide it somewhere after you are full. Yellow dots (fuel) appear on the map where you did your fill, so drive the ferry 1-2 screens away from the cluster of yellow dots, to a blank area on the map, and then ditch the ferry / teleport to land. (Credits to BlueGhost for this) Hopefully it is still there 10-20 min later when you need another refill.

Additional tips to streamline your recruit fill:

1. If a bot of your color is near you, ask him to "use the radar." If you are comfortable at using a bot to help you fill, you can ask him to move "out of the way", and ask him to "use the radar" again, and repeat. (Credit to sean/987 for this). Practice this with bots on the Practice Map, if you are serious about this method.
2. If you ever pick up a box of extra radar, turn auto-scroll OFF, teleport or scope to a new screen with no yellow dots on the map, use an extra radar, and pick up hopefully 3-5 boxes of equipment. When your box of 2-4 extra radars run out, go back to the regular filling method, with auto-scroll ON
3. Before you have extra radars, if you see equipment under an obstacle or one step in the water, pick up the obstacle / build a bridge to get that equipment. You are not guaranteed to find something if you regular-

radar a new 5x5 block, but you are guaranteed to get something from that box under a rock / in the water, if you exert 1-2 moves to reach it

4. Once you are full on everything else, and you are left with only extra radars to fill, turn auto-scroll OFF. Teleport to a new screen with no yellow dots, scan with extra radar, and pick up equipment that is easy to get. If boxes appear one step in the water or under a rock, don't bother to pick them up. In the time it takes to pick up a rock and bridge it to pick up 1 box, you could have been teleporting to a new screen that contains 3-4 boxes instead

The initial fill should take 8-10 minutes. Any fill under 8 minutes is very fast, and very good. Fills that take longer than 10 minutes are slow, and in those cases, during mid-game, you should focus on either fighting captains for more points-per-shot to make up for lost time, or go for kills / make major, if you believe you've lost the PPH contest.

Fill-fighting to Lieutenant

Once you stockpile 50+ radars and 60 of everything else, light up only your dual shots and extra radars (disable even homing shots), open up map, find the nearest bot, and teleport there to start smashing it. When you land, sweep the screen with an extra radar, so that you see where all the fuel and equipment on the screen is, and smash the bot until it teleports off the screen.

Players like 987 and Kirby will count the total number of shots required to make a bot teleport (7 for recruits, 8 for privates, and 9 for corporals), but I find that this requires too much brain power. Instead, I shoot until the bot turns last shade (darkest color), and then I only need to count for 1-2 shots. Once a recruit turns last shade, hitting it once more will make it teleport. For privates and corporals, once they turn last shade, hitting it twice more will make it teleport. This allows me to search through the active players list (press '?' to bring it up) for the first 6-7 shots without being distracted with all the counting to 7 or counting to 9. [Technical note #1]

Once the bot leaves, refuel yourself, grab all the equipment on the screen, and repeat this fill-fight process until either: 1 – you kill a corporal bot when you are sergeant and you rank to lieutenant or 2 – you run into a competent and willing human PPH partner of a decent rank (sergeant or higher). If a human player lands on the screen and he is obviously competent at PPH, session with him for a bit, until the screen runs out of fuel / he leaves.

When you are corporal or sergeant, look at the map to check if there are areas with no yellow dots / that have not been radared yet. Go to those and pick up equipment, and try to get your extra radar count above 70. You will need to burn over 70 radars over the course of the tournament anyway, and it's best to get those when they're plentiful. Kirby's rule of thumb for dry maps is – 2 extra radars for every minute left in the tournament. So if you are 20 min in / 40 min are left, and you have 82 extra radars, you are good for the rest of the tournament. For maps with better fuel / equipment conditions, like Desert, Rocks & Swamp, etc, you might only need around 75 or so.

If you can't make 70+ extra radars early on, either because most areas have already been cleared of equipment, or because there are a lot of newbies who didn't fill in the beginning (and it's worth making lieutenant quickly to try to kill them, and leave the extra radar business for later), then just do it later when your radar count drops to 30-40 and the second spawn of equipment appears. It's not a big deal / don't force it.

Whether or not you decide to top off your extra radars, either way, continue fill-fighting with bots or competent human players until you kill a corporal bot (red-1 or blue-2, etc) and make lieutenant. Once you make lieutenant, you will need to start thinking about kills and PPH.

Some Theory

Remember: the highest rank with the most points gets the gold cup. So if you think about it, you need to:

1. Score kills that are required for your promotion to captain or major
2. Grab points (PPH, or points per hour), either to get the 20,000 points to make captain / 30,000 points to make major, or to simply place better among all the captains / all the majors

Any player who aspires to win cups has to utilize some combination of these two (at times it's prudent to adapt a kill-heavy approach over the PPH-heavy approach, or vice versa). And if you run out of ammo, you should be spending your time

3. Refilling your equipment, and trying to do so as fast as possible, so that you have more ammo in a shorter time span, leaving you with more time to spend that ammo either 1 – scoring kills or 2 – grabbing points

So, I will address each of these three topics below:

1 – Landing Kills:

In 1-hour tournaments, if you get two kills and make major, you are almost guaranteed a cup, because there are almost always fewer than 3 people who make major (sometimes no one makes major). If 2-3 make major, and you want gold, you need to have decent PPH as well to outpace the other majors (which will be addressed in next section). For now, we'll talk about kills. You're going to need at least one kill (make captain) to cup.

There are multiple opportunities to grab kills throughout the tournament. But you want to do it whenever possible – the earlier, the better. A player who snagged a kill early at the 30-35 min mark has significant advantage because now he has the option to choose whether he wants to try for a second kill and make major, or just stick with captain and PPH for the next 25-30 min. This gives the early-kill player more than one way to cup – a significant advantage to being lieutenant at the 50 min mark, and getting anxious about landing that crucial kill during the shield-fighting or wondering if there will be 3 majors at the end. So get kills whenever possible. For sake of discussion, I will differentiate targets into three types:

1. Type 1 targets: the most inexperienced players (usually carry minimum to zero equipment), whom you can kill in a 1v1
2. Type 2 targets: inexperienced players, who carry enough equipment (shields) to survive and run from 1v1s, but mis-manage their equipment eventually and ultimately die before the tournament ends
3. Type 3 targets: experienced players, who have won cups in the past, take raids frequently on the main map, and rarely die in tournaments (if they do, it is always the result of lag or other external circumstances)

Type 1 Targets: During the initial equipment fill, every minute or so, press "T" to look at who are the top players. If there are corporals in the first 4 minutes or so, these are guys who went straight for ranking up and they did not fill up their equipment. Remember their names and color, because after they make sergeant, at around the 15-20 min mark, they will get killed. If you don't kill them when you're lieutenant to make captain, someone else will, so be sure to fight in their vicinity by the 15-20 min mark and try to kill them before anyone else gets there. Since they have no equipment (shields), if they get raided and get low, definitely take shots at them, and try to block the other raiders into firing homing shots instead of duals, if you can. If there a lot of these no-fill newbies (like 4 or more), there will likely be majors at the end of the game, so it's a good idea to make lieutenant quickly

(and leave the 2-ER-per-min business for later) and kill one of the no-fill newbies to make captain early and try to do it again later on to make major yourself.

Also, during mid game, keep pressing B/O/R/P, to see if there are any late comers to the tournament, who are corporal, and about to make sergeant. If they are true newbies, teleport to them at half-fuel, turn on your shields, fire single shots at them, make them think that they're about to kill you, let them hit you a few times until they make sergeant, and then plant mines / turn on your duals, and snag the kill. Spending two minutes working on a kill this way is superior to spending far more time (10 min or more) in the end game when you're a high-PPH lieutenant hungering for a kill (Credits to Jay for this).

Type 2 Targets: During the mid game, the slightly more, but still less experienced players (who filled on equipment, but aren't experienced yet) will begin to stick out. Their PPH will lag (maybe they're #20 or worse). They don't know that they're supposed to leave when a 2v1 becomes a 3v1. They have newbie awards (silver tank, death medal, only a single star, or no stars at all). So forth. But they have shields, though, so they won't go down as easily as the no-fill newbies. If there are a group of players randomly shooting each other, keep close to the filled-newbies, shoot the players who won't move as much, and if the filled-newbies get low and mobbed by more experienced players, turn your homing shots on and join in.

Alternatively, if no mob forms naturally, but you have strong teammates on your color, you can try to have a 1v1 with the newbies, get them low on fuel, then call a raid on one of them with "Base is here" or "Meet me" messages, and hope that a raid forms. In either case, when this happens, try to block the other raiders' shots and force them to use homing shots. If the newbie goes insufficient, and tries to drive away, burning his shields quickly as he drives (happens a lot in water maps like Deep Six, Iceland, or Aquarium), you need to figure out which direction he is going, and teleport half to one screen ahead of him, so that when you land, he will be next to you and you can fire duals while the other raiders are forcing homing shots / toggling their scope / etc. If the mob isn't your color, turn on shields, in case they turn against you after you make the kill.

A Key Issue: is differentiating between type 1 and type 2 targets (i.e. – whether you really can take a target down 1v1 or not, and when to give up on a target and come back later when more raiders are joining you trying to take him down together). Failure to differentiate can often mean that you spend 10 minutes and half of your stack of homing shots chasing a target that doesn't die, and in this process, utterly destroying your PPH and you find that you have dropped from top 5 to top 20, which is a total disaster! I speak from experience because this has happened to me! Therefore, here are some common signs that you cannot take down a target by yourself:

- Your target is persistent about marathoning (teleporting continuously, determined to leave you in the dust). When you find him on the map and teleport to where he is, as soon as you actually land, you realize that he is no longer there and has already teleported to a new screen. You find that you can't get more than 1-2 dual shots on him and you're expending almost only homing shots on him. In this case, give up on him for now, and let the late-tournament mobs help you take him down.
- Your target is fighting back, but you cannot get him down to third shade for long because he has enough extra radars to find fuel when he is close to becoming insufficient. You realize that you will run out of duals before he runs out of shields.
- Your target is inherently weak, but he will call for back-up (you know this because every time you attack him, other newbies of his color mysterious appear on your screen and start cock-blocking you) or he will find a screen with 2-3 bots of his color and leverage their firepower to slow you down.

What happens when one or more of these signs appear? Stop trying to take him by yourself! Call for backup with "base is here" if competent players are the same color as you. If no one joins you in the early stages, give up on him and accept that you need to track him down later when mobs start forming at the 45+ minute mark. In the meantime: go PPH some more, refill your equipment, find another target, etc.

Hopefully it doesn't come to this, but if you did not score a kill earlier on, during late game, you have one more chance to land a kill, in the armor fighting in the last 3 min or so. Mobs start forming, and it's critically important to keep your fuel above half-health, or else they will start mobbing you. If a mob is on the other side of the map, do a two step teleport: teleport 2 screens away from the mob, find fuel, heal your health above 75%, and then teleport again, to half a screen away, scope in, and start sniping at the mob. Join in anytime someone in the group gets low and gets mobbed by the rest of the group. If you have a lot of shields and good health, jump in next to the target, block 1/3 of the other guys shooting, and you try to snag the kill yourself.

Type 3 Targets: If the player is experienced and gets mobbed, usually you should not chase him if he manages to survive the mob screen and teleport away. The very rare exception is if you have counted that he took a beating of 40+ duals on that screen (lost 80+ shields), in which case, he has probably at most 10 shields left and you have a decent chance of killing him if he doesn't find fuel on the next screen.

If you get a kill at any time and need some points to make the next rank, get away from the mobs, and try to find someone to 1v1 PPH with.

2 – How to maximize points per hour (PPH):

In 1-hour tournaments, for maps that are wet, and the participation rate is low (i.e. – only 12 people playing a R&S or Desert tournament), kills will be rare, so there might not be any majors, but there will likely be at least 3 or so captains, so you want to cup by making captain with very high PPH.

You can practice PPH on the main map when there are only a few (3 or less) players (so you don't get raided), turning off your homing shots, shoot with only your duals against an experienced player (preferably in top 25), anticipate when he will drive to fuel / teleport away, and subtract a point mentally for every time you hit the ground / miss him. Make it a game to have the least negative score in 30 min or an hour, and practice this, until you miss 1 out of 10 shots or better.

If you are PPH'ing in a tournament, try your best to fight 1v1 against someone else who is interested in grabbing points like you are. At most, you settle for 2v1, and never try to fight against 3 or more at a time. Some other tips:

1. If you hit a guy who has full fuel and you hit him 2-3 times and he doesn't hit back, he is not in the mood for PPH'ing (he is probably searching for equipment), so give up on him, and find someone else.
2. If you get into a fantastic 1v1, turn off homing shots and try to anticipate when he will drive to fuel / teleport off the screen. Don't let him pick up the last fuel on the screen, because then, during your 1v1, your health is run out earlier than his does, and he will get an extra 1-3 shots (more points) on you as you map towards a new screen with fuel. If your PPH-buddy is experienced (has a cup, in the top 10, etc), and he gets lows and stops fighting, he is likely mapping / searching for where to teleport to next. You have 1-2 shots to hit him with before he disappears – so fire twice (he will teleport away next turn), and then do something useful like shooting at another guy, pick up fuel / equipment, etc.
3. If you get into a 2v1, position yourself so that the first guy is between you and the second guy, thus blocking the second guy. Then, shoot through people (if there are two guys in a row in your angle of shooting, fire at the further guy), so if one of them teleports, you will still hit the other one. If you're doing 2v1, and a third person appears on the screen, don't waste time sharing turns with 3 other guys / wasting shields if they end up turning on you. Just leave and find a better angle / area to fight from
4. Don't fight with bots if you're lieutenant and there are captains and plenty of other lieutenants around. It takes three shots on a private bot to farm the same amount of points as two shots on a lieutenant. So if you find a competent human PPH partner who sits still, there is no reason resort to bots. That difference

in points per shot, over 100+ dual shots over the course of the hour, can add up to 10,000+ points and mean the difference between making #2 captain vs. #6 captain.

5. Exception is if it is a water map like Iceland, Aquarium, or Deep Six, where most of the land are in the form of islands that are too small (contain one or no barrels of fuel) to support two human players smashing each other with duals. If you decide to fight a human lieutenant, yes, you do get more points per shot, but inevitably, you also take more damage from him, and if there is no fuel on the island, you need to teleport away sooner to avoid going insufficient and getting killed by him, and if you teleport to a screen with no fuel, he might come after you and burn down some of your shields. All said and done, it's not a great bargain on water maps. Instead, if you fight a bot, you know exactly how many shots you need to make the bot stop shooting you and leave, you also take less damage because bots fight singles back at you, and the bot will not steal your equipment or fuel if you find any on the island. The result is that I have manage to keep up in top PPH by hopping from island to island, fighting bots until they teleport, picking up any equipment on that same island, and repeating, until hopefully I run into a ferry eventually that gives me access to an equipment-rich sea and another human player on ferry whom I can really PPH hard with. If you find another competent human player on ferry, especially if you just got a kill, try to stick with him and PPH for 5-10 minutes in the water to pass a ton of other players who are struggling on land.

3 – Equipment management:

Don't be misled: equipment management is just as important as scoring kills or good PPH. Slow equipment refills will cannibalize time that should be spent fighting instead, so it is very critical to manage your equipment efficiently. There are two very important aspects to managing equipment (and it can make or break your tournament game):

1. Turn off homing shots when you are PPH'ing, use only duals, shoot higher ranks like lieutenants or captains, and try to hit the ground as little as possible. Turn on homing shots only when you are going for a kill. You want to ensure that you only pick up dual shots (and occasional extra radars) when you are refilling. This makes your refills very fast

"Don't purposely fire homings over rocks or obstacles unless you're going for a kill. It's a waste, just find a new angle or map." –The Relevation, 28-Jul-2014. Rev is referring to cases where we fight in mountainous terrain, like Crazy Maze.

2. Counter-cyclicity: fill immediately when new equipment spawns, and never fill immediately after a crowd has cleared an area of equipment. Always have a sense of where the mobs have been, and where large groups of players have been fighting. When you refill, avoid those areas, and go fill in areas that have not seen any action in the past 20 minutes. You want to find 4-5 boxes in a single extra radar sweep, and refill all of your duals within 2-3 screens (1-2 minutes). Practice this "map awareness" on the main map by keeping track of the mobs in the back of your head, and try to fill where no mobs have been. Subtract points every time you hit an empty screen, and try to have the least negative score in 30 min or an hour period of practice time.
3. Try to view filling and fighting as one concept: fill as you fight. During a fight, if someone (you or someone else) radars and discovers equipment, pick it up. You need to refill eventually anyway, so if someone has saved you the extra time of finding the equipment, just pick it up, and then continue fighting. If you don't pick it up, someone else will get it, have an extra 10-20 duals to hit you with, and then you need to spend your radars after the fight anyway to find equipment.

4. If the player you're fighting 1v1 is experienced, he will usually recognize quickly that you picking up equipment and he might think you are not interested in PPH'ing and leave (teleport away) after he hits the ground 2-3 times. If you pick up no boxes, he will probably get them instead of you. If you pick up too many (5 or more) boxes, your PPH partner will give up and find someone else. So you want to pick up as many boxes as you can without pissing him off. So pick up two boxes of equipment, let him hit the ground twice, and just as he is about to give up and leave, shoot him, and convince him to exchange some duals with you, and then go back to picking up 2-3 boxes again (if any remain on the screen) after 7-8 shots.
5. If you notice that a fresh spawn of equipment has just appeared on the map, and you're having issues finding a good PPH partner, you can stop fill-fighting and just go straight to filling entirely. The fill will be fast given the fresh spawn, and you might finally run into a high rank PPH partner (captain or above) while you're shopping around for some equipment. If you do, seize the chance to session hard with him and make your duals count for more points per shot than shooting lieutenants or sergeants.
6. When you scan a screen and discover 5+ boxes of equipment, make sure you take the shortest path that covers all of the boxes. Avoid long driving from top right of the screen to bottom left of the screen, back and forth, etc. Sometimes the equipment appears on the edges of my screen. Then I will keep auto-scroll OFF, and drive in a clockwise or counter-clockwise path to pick them up efficiently. If you end up in one of those spirals of Crazy Maze, and the drive to pick up an equipment box is ridiculous, then sometimes it's faster to pick up an obstacle and build a shortcut bridge instead.
7. How many duals you should accumulate for the last fill, after which you will not fill again for the rest of the tournament (usually happening with 8-10 minutes to go) depends on whether or not you are depending on a kill or points to win a cup. For example, if you are top 3 PPH already, but you are stuck at lieutenant and you need to kill a sergeant or higher to make captain, then you can fill on less duals, knowing that you will need to jump towards mobs sniping for a kill and fire homing shots at a moving target. Conversely, if you made captain late (with no chance to make major) and you are fighting for a cup via points, then you will need more duals (probably 100 duals with 8 minutes to go) and find another captain to shield-fight, during which both of you will be sitting mostly still, expending dozens of duals in a short time, and use very few homing shots.

When to shield fight:

1. Do use your shields if it's during the early stages where equipment is plentiful, and you end up on a screen with lots of boxes of equipment, but no fuel, and someone of a higher rank than you is willing to sit still and fight you. Get points fast with this high-rank guy, pick up the equipment to refill your armors, and continue fill-fighting
2. Don't over use your shields after the first 15 minutes / after you make sergeant, because equipment won't be as plentiful as it was in the first 15 minutes. Spending time on refilling shields is time that you are NOT collecting / firing dual shots, and that is time that you are not spend spending PPH'ing. If you minimize your shield usage, you will pick up only duals and radars when you go equipment hunting, and (assuming 5-9 dual shots per box) your refills will take only 10 boxes or so (about 2-3 screens)
3. During the final 10 minutes of the game, if you already have a kill and you just need to maximize your points, make sure that you fill up your shields and duals quickly, before the last spawn of equipment is used up, and leave the last 5 minutes for shield-fighting. Keep the second hand of the clock visible (on your computer screen or on your watch) and count down in the last 60 seconds, pressing 'I' repeatedly while you're shield-fighting to check your armor shield count. You need your shields to last until the last second; it's a catastrophe if they run out with 10 seconds to go and you die / lose your rank. When shield-fighting is done properly, you can accumulate 10,000 points in a very short time span and perhaps even make stunning passes over other players.

Scenario Analysis and Balancing Kills vs. Points

Whether you fail to cup because you end up as #5 captain (insufficient PPH), or you end up as #8 lieutenant with all 7 people ahead of you being captain (lacking a kill), the end result is the same – you failed to cup, period. In that sense, kills and PPH are equally important. Even if you decide to go for major, or especially if you fail to make major / end up stuck at captain and having to compete in points with other captains, you need both kills and points to cup. Balancing kill potential vs. getting points is one of the most persistent dilemmas for any tournament player, so here I will dedicate an entire section just on balancing the two aspects, with some commentary from experienced players and example tournaments, to help you develop that sixth sense.

“Tournaments are not to played with one strategy. the top pph 1 kill strategy works when a tournament has 10-15 players. Most tournaments these days are 20+ players and you should aim for kills because nobody is cupping by just getting top pph.”
–PRIDE, 03-Aug-2014

“If you see several noobs ranking up in the beginning without filling equip, you KNOW there are going to be several very easy sergeant kills early on. I would try to get to lieutenant ASAP and hunt them down. If on the other hand those players are the same color as you, then you better adapt a PPH-heavy strategy early on. I think strategy should depend on a) the field of players in the map b) the map itself (for example, there tends to be a lot of kills on maps like desert and castles and relatively few in deep six/iceland/apps etc) and c) the situation you find yourself in. If a known veteran snags a kill for captain early, more likely than not that player will take 1 of the 3 cups. If another gets a captain kill, you should really try to shift strategy and go for major. It only takes about 50 minutes with VERY average PPH and good luck to make major. The lesson is to be adaptable. If you go into every tournament fixed on trying for top 3 PPH and then snagging a lucky kill in the last few minutes, is that really a satisfying win to you?” –Beaver, 31-Jul-2014

“I don’t ascribe to the traditional tried and true teaching of PPH at lieutenant until the last 5-10 minutes and try to find a kill. I find that there is a dearth of truly nooby players who are easy kills (maybe 2-3 per game) and they make sergeant around the 20-25 minute mark, so that represents a great time to try to nab a kill. The last 5-10 minutes are no longer a “guarantee” for die down kills because players are very good at surviving nowadays. I almost always try for a kill early, and if I am not successful, then I have to make a decision of trying to catch up in PPH or going for major.”
–Beaver, 14-Jul-2014

“I’m sure everyone on this site knows how to win a cup, but when there’s 18 minutes left and 4 captains I’m sure majority of the players play incorrectly. Gotta be willing to stick to the plan from start to finish with no deviations even when it feels like you need to do something different (like waste time filling or spend a minute on map looking for someone who maybe could die to someone in a raid)” –Jordann, 03-Aug-2014

Scenario 1: You make #1 captain with 5 min left to go, and there are only 3-4 other captains. The map appears to be wet enough, and there are no more newbies that might die in the last 5 min.

Analysis: You would think this is a joke, but: your first priority is survival, beyond anything else. There is no point in taking unnecessary risks. If the mobs are particularly vicious, and you cannot find any other captains to 1v1 PPH with until the end, it’s okay to fight with bots, even if that might cause you to drop to #2. True story – I was careless on how low I was getting / how many people were pursuing me, and I actually died as #1 captain with 5 min left, in the June 28, 2014 Levels tournament

Scenario 2: You enter a tournament with huge mobs, a large participation rate, a lot of deaths. You score an early kill and make captain by 35 minutes into the game.

Analysis: Given the number of deaths, large participation rate, there is a very high chance that the best players will make major, and there will likely be 2 or more of them. Given that you still have 25 minutes left as a captain, definitely try to make major, because high PPH captain is likely just not enough.

Scenario 3: You are decent in PPH (#5 or so in points), and you are stuck at lieutenant (no kill) with 10 minutes left in the tournament

Analysis: Even if you snag a kill now and make captain, in a 10 min span of time, you likely don't have enough time to get the 30,000 points to make major or the luck to snag a 2nd kill. Your only option is to push harder for your PPH, and go for a last-minute kill in the armor fighting, and try to place higher than other captains / hope there are 2 majors or less in the end.

Sniping at mobs from the edges of the screen is definitely one way to balance between kill potential versus max points. But ultimately, a successful tournament player (in my opinion) needs observe factors such as: which veterans are playing, how many newbies might die, the wetness / dryness of the map, the number of total players, the player's own conditions (how he is placing in points, does he have kills), and using all of those factors, assess which method (making major or high PPH captain) is more likely to be successful, and then stick with it.

How to train for tournaments

Do practice drills on the main map: *"Do I go for a kill now? Do I PPH? Do I fill up on equipment? Will my radar count make it to the end? Will my shields make it to the end?"* There are just too many factors to keep juggling in your mind at once, too many variables to keep track of, and it can be overwhelming. So train as you would train for any sport or playing any musical instrument – do drills that emphasize specific sub-skills.

- Work your PPH skills on the main map: log onto the main map when there are only a few players (so you don't get raided), find an experienced player in the top 25, turn off homing shots, and exchange as many dual shots with him as feasible, without hitting the ground, anticipating when he will drive / teleport vs. sit still, in a 30 min or one hour period of time. Every time you miss him / hit the ground, subtract a point in your mind, and aim to make your score as close to zero as possible.
- Work on equipment management on the main map. Get a feel for where the mobs have been (avoid those areas), and which areas haven't seen action in the past half an hour, particularly those in mountains or swamp areas that people don't like filling near (go to those). Make a game out of finding as many boxes of equipment in as few extra radar scans as possible.

All of these skills that you can practice on the main map will help you immensely in the tournament. And then, once these sub-skills have been absorbed into your subconscious level, as a natural sixth sense, then you will naturally find that you know when to do what, without conscious effort.

Watch videos by experienced tournament players. Watch tournament videos of other players (Kirby and BlueGhost have dozens of real footage where they cup. Jay / Krusty the Clown and Headhunters / Megatron also have a few videos). Watch actively, instead of passively; ask yourself what you would do as the next step, as you're watching. Then when you see what they actually do, compare differences in their styles versus yours. You do not need to adopt everything that they have, since you should find a style of play you are most comfortable with, but you can always borrow elements from their styles or get inspiration on aspects you previously never considered.

Repeatedly critique your own tournament: Get filming software like Bandicam, record your own tournament play, and after each tournament, play back the footage, and critique yourself. Ask questions such as

- "Why did it take me 5 minutes to refill my duals? Was I looking in the wrong place, at wrong time? How can I change that?"

- “Five kills happened this tournament, and I was not on the screen for any of these deaths. Why?”
- “I ran out of shields and died with 15 seconds left in the end game. How can I better time that next time?”
- “I made captain at 25 minute mark, decided to continue PPH’ing, but ended up getting pushed out by 3 majors in the end. Were there warning signs that there were going to be so many majors?”

Be persistent, be patient, and never give up:

- Kills do happen last minute. I don’t encourage procrastinating getting your kills to the last minute, but if you tried and failed to get your kills earlier on, then by all means, roll your dice in the last 2 minutes of shield-fighting. You have nothing to lose at that point; it is your best bet. Every other tournament I play, I see someone snag a kill in the last 60 seconds. So don’t give up. That person could be you
- Don’t panic if your initial equipment fill was slow (10 minutes or more). You can make up for this easily if you are a lieutenant and you find a captain to 1v1 with for a few screens. During a Castles tournament, I was #18 when I made lieutenant and I jumped to #10 within 5 minutes, simply because I ran into and stuck with a very experienced player who made captain early.
- You can do everything right and still fail to cup because often, getting kills is still based on luck. Keep trying; you can’t get unlucky EVERY single time. Expose yourself to mob screens where targets run out of shields and die. The most you can do is to be one of those 5-6 guys taking turns tearing the target down. Even though the chances of landing the kill are 20%, if you expose yourself to 5 of those mob screens in a tournament, the chances of you getting at least one kill is 2/3 of the time. And that’s for a single tournament – if you play multiple tournaments well consistently, it’s only a matter of time before you cup.

Took me 23 tries to win my first cup, so for all the players out there who haven’t cupped, know that with persistence you’ll eventually get it

-Beaver, 14-Jul-2014

- *“Just look to maximize every decision in tournaments, don’t spend time on map, don’t use unnecessary equipment, don’t chase targets that most likely won’t die and never turn down a 1v1 opportunity. Also don’t ever give up, the end stages of tournaments can change quite drastically and you’re never truly drawing dead until the river hits.” – Jordann, 09-Jul-2014*
- *“I think that as long as you are still trying your absolute best to advance your #, everyone should be going all out towards the end. The final minute can be when we get the most points off of shield fighting, but it can also be the time where shield fighting goes all wrong and we end up with 0 shields with 15 seconds left - whoops, I’ve been there.*

Plus everything is 20/20 in retrospect. How many times have you thought you were out of the run at #7, then all of a sudden you pass 2-3 people at once and find yourself at #4 with a massive shot at cupping. No one can give up until the bell rings!!!!” –The Revelation, 27-Jul-2014

If you get mobbed a lot while learning, play an anonymous tank.

- When you start out playing tournaments, you will die occasionally, and the most experienced players will learn to target you as an easy target in future tournaments. You can overcome this by playing a different tank name every tournament to hide your identity, until you get good enough to reveal yourself.
- I was adamant about playing my main tank, so when I started playing tournaments, I died a few times, and then afterwards in future tournaments, mobs chased me even if I had full health / full shields. But after 10 or so tournaments, I placed better and better, stopped dying, and the mobs stopped chasing me. They would target me if I were low, but the moment I found a 500+ fuel and healed myself to a bright color, they would scatter and chase someone else. And then after another 15 or so tournaments, I was the one forming or leading those mobs, picking the targets to raid.

Don't be discouraged; it takes time and practice to compete against guys who have won 50+ cups / played hundreds of tournaments!

A Final Word

A shout out to: 987, Beaver, BlueGhost, eldawg51 / HONOR, Jordann / Battlefield-1, Kirby, Krusty the Clown, Lancehead, lol / AsTrO KiD, Matt / OLYMPUS, Megatron / Headhunter, PRIDE, Revelation, Rome sDs / ASCENDENCY, Thundercracker / silentsnake1124, wardizzle, weekend nachos / RECONNAISSANCE, WEENIE BOY

I have tried to combine my own experiences with those of very experienced tournament players, and organize those ideas into a digestible way into this guide. I hope that this has helped you, whether it is getting your first cup, or turning you into a consistent cupping machine. Remember to play fair, play hard, and have fun cupping.

Feedback is deeply appreciated. My AIM is: "SigmaTankPit" and my bfunity username is: "LastSingularity"



Technical note #1:

You can count the number of total shots to force a bot off-screen: 7 for a recruit, 8 for a private, 9 for a corporal. However, I favor judging based on shade of the bot, i.e. – I know that once a corporal bot hits last (darkest) shade, I can smash it twice more before it leaves. This method of counting the last 2 shots requires less brain power. And the less brainpower I put into a task as mindless, algorithmic, and pre-determined as fill-fighting bots, the more brainpower I have left over to strategize on more complex, open-ended questions like where to find a ferry, whom I should hunt once I make lieutenant, etc.

When you are ranking from recruit to sergeant, don't be picky about whether you fill-fight with recruits or corporals. It is true that you harvest more points-per-shot smashing corporals than recruits, or equivalently, you need to expend less shots on corporal bots to rank up. However, the extra time you spend specifically seeking out only corporal bots, as you work your way up to sergeant, will almost surely leave you worse off. Even if you specifically seek out only corporal bots (instead of recruit bots) ranking your way up to sergeant, you will save at most 8 duals, which is one box of equipment. With 25+ human players and 36 bots on the map (60+ total dots on map), repeatedly spending time to search for one of those 6 corporal bots that you can shoot will definitely take more time than picking up one extra box of equipment.