

# SAGITTARIUS EYE

ISSUE **11**  
JULY 3304

**FEATURING:** BUCKYBALLERS ■ THE BIG THREE  
THE EMPIRE ■ CO-PAWLET ■ DISTANT WORLDS 2  
CREDITS AND WEALTH ■ AN INTROVERT IN OPEN

## TOP GUNS

GLADIATORS OF  
THE CQC ARENA

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# EDITORIAL

Souvarine

**S**agittarius Eye is a magazine aimed squarely at one demographic — those itinerant souls of independent means who, like ourselves, have been roving the stars since an anonymous benefactor first gifted them with a Sidewinder.

Celebrating all things interstellar, we exist to tell the stories and celebrate the lives of starship pilots. Those lives are sometimes gruelling; think back to those hours of mundane trade runs, checking your cargo manifests in the loading bay of some charmless industrial hub; or raking yet another asteroid with your mining lasers, hoping to chip off enough valuable material to keep the engines firing another day.

But our lives among the stars can also be *very exciting*. Few among the trillions living on the Bubble's scattered worlds and stations can hope to experience what we of the Pilots Federation do as a matter of routine — chases among asteroids, laser fire overhead as we outmanoeuvre a pirate, or drifting unseen into a starport as we smuggle narcotics under the noses of the station security.

We're rootless, yes, and few of us remember or have ever known what it's like to live in one place, under an unchanging sky. But our rattling homes are gateways to freedom and exhilaration out of reach for the overwhelming majority of our fellow humans.

It's this that we celebrate in Issue 11. The high-stakes pursuits of the Arena and the gladiators who make their names within it; the mad challenges the Buckyball Racers set themselves; and, continuing our history series, a biopic of the Empire, undeniably the sexiest superpower and manufacturers of the fastest starships in the Galaxy. Our newest writer asks: how much do credits matter, anyway?

So this is for the adrenaline-chasers and the thrill junkies; the brave and the few.

And for ourselves. Because we *love* making this magazine. Seeing each issue fly out into the Galaxy every month gives us a kick you wouldn't believe. We're pilots like you, carving out a life amongst the stars — and working together to create what you hold in your hands is damn good fun.

So, do something different this month. You have enough credits already, and your ship is plenty big enough. Join a race. Try your luck in the Arena. Get some friends and race moon buggies down a canyon.

Living in space has never been this much fun.



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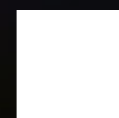
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# Credits and Wealth: Too Much is Never Enough

Pilots often associate their lifestyle with their credit balance. Some even say that having a few million credits is little better than having nothing. But is this true?

Credits are the digital currency used by every pilot in the Galaxy. No matter who they are or what they do for a living, all use the Bank of Zaonce to store and manage their funds while they traverse the dark reaches of space. Thanks to this digital expedient pilots can access their credits from anywhere at any time to perform purchases at their convenience.

Independent pilots often identify a person with their credit balance. They would say if an individual's balance is low, then they are simply 'fresh meat' on the Galactic spaceways – prey for pirates and inconsequential in interstellar economics.

“For most people it comes down to rebuy.”

Cmdr Bwana

### Cheap Fame

It has been proven you don't need credits to pull off incredible feats. Commander Nerth achieved a complete circumnavigation of the Galaxy with nothing but a Sidewinder; not only can you do something extraordinary with a small balance, but you can go beyond with next to nothing in your bank account.

Often the credits we earn from those things are used to become more efficient at those activities.

### Is Wealth Worth it?

On the other side of the spectrum, wealth in itself perhaps isn't a bad thing. There are many rich pilots out there who enjoy their lifestyle and love having all the starships they could ever dream of. However, some rich pilots report that having too much gets boring after time, as it gives them nothing to do. They have seen everything, bought everything, fought everything, and done everything the Galaxy can offer them. It is at this point pilots usually enter retirement.

One Pilots Federation member known to be incredibly rich is Commander Bwana. His last registered credit balance was 9,466,669,378 credits, with an asset count of 16,442,419,275 credits, and twenty registered ships.

*For most people it comes down to rebuy. At some point, the risk outweighs the reward while performing missions and even combat. Say for example, you fly a large ship and the rebuy cost is several million credits – you'll only perform high risk activities if you have a relatively comfortable 'cushion'.*

Commander SirSuperDeath, member of The Wolves of Jonai, demurs. "It's pointless getting rich, as there is nowhere to put your credits other than ships. I have 9 billion credits."

“ It’s pointless getting rich, as there is nowhere to put your credits other than ships.

Cmdr SirSuperDeath

■ The Imperial Cutter is one of the most expensive and luxurious vessels private pilots can buy

### When is enough enough?

When does one have enough credits? This answer varies. SirSuperDeath says that two billion credits is enough to sate you and get you all the ships you could need, yet for Commander Holiday Primus — with a balance of 5.8 billion credits — fifty to seventy million credits is a good balance, and those who don’t pursue a well-paying occupation can settle with eight to eighteen million credits. Commander Bwana says that enough is enough when one can comfortably recuperate rebuy costs.

No matter who you ask, the answer is usually within the millions.

### When does a person become rich?

What does ‘rich’ mean? There exists an unspoken line somewhere among the numbers of an individual’s balance, that — when exceeded — renders the individual rich. So where is that line?

It varies depending on who one asks. Commander Bwana says around 5 billion is where that line is crossed. Holiday Primus however places the line somewhere between 100 to 150 million. That’s an order of magnitude difference.

## It has been proven you don’t need credits to pull off incredible feats.

### Why be rich?

Most pilots agree that being rich can be worth it. Indeed, most of us spend the majority of our time beavering away at activities that reward us in credits. How important wealth is seems to depend on three different things: lifestyle, ships, and time.

Firstly, lifestyle. Whether it be exploration, hunting, pirating, or mining, there is a ship that excels. It’s the cost of those ships that makes wealth important. If a person enjoys exploration, they can get a good run out of a simple Cobra Mk III for a low price of just 300,000 credits. However, a Diamondback Explorer will allow them to travel further with greater ease, or they could go all out and purchase an Anaconda for an optimal travel experience. However, an Anaconda is several hundred times the cost of the Cobra — for a ship that few could argue gives an experience several hundred times more enjoyable.

As Bwana points out, rebuy cost is an important factor. If a person has an Anaconda but can’t afford the rebuy, they should not fly it and either should find a way to get more credits, or trade in the ship altogether for something they can fly without risk of losing.

Time is also a factor. It can take weeks to earn a few million credits as a starship-for-hire, and income is really a function of time invested. If an individual has enough time on their hands, they can get the balance they need for the ship they want, and the credits needed to keep it flying. However, if a pilot doesn’t have as much time to invest, it can take longer for them to progress. This can lead to people giving up flying altogether.

In short, the question of whether getting rich is worth it or not comes down to what is needed for one’s style of flying. There’s not much you can’t do in a Cobra Mk III. However, more expensive ships are better at specific tasks, and allow you to achieve your goals faster.

Overall, credits are a way to measure a pilot’s own accomplishment. Earning money releases dopamine to the brain, making you feel happier. This has an addictive effect: once you get some you want more of that feeling, so you chase the high. Competitive natures can turn this into a race.

Credits are the nominal reason to trade, explore, do missions, go mining or hunt pirates’ bounties. But often the credits we earn from those things are used to become more efficient at those activities, leading to ambiguity over which is the means and which is the end.

The more one gets, the more one wants. So why even go after credits at all? That question can only be answered by each pilot themself.

*Credits and Wealth: Too Much is Never Enough*

**Text:** Icarus Maru

**Images:** TolaakGrohiik, OrangePheonix

**Design:** McNicholl



## Co-Pawlets

Commanders, who keeps you warm, safe and slightly less-than-insane during those long nights in the cockpit? Your co-pawlots, of course! Those brave animals that traverse the depths of space just to keep you company. This is their section of *Sagittarius Eye*, celebrating them whether they have teeth, scales or fur.

**Co-pawlot name:** Io Harvey

**Commander's name:** Paige Stark Harvey

**Designation:** Ship's Cat

Io found herself aboard the Cobra MkIII, *Wasteland Whisper*, in early 3300, having been plucked from the air filtration system of Baker's Prospect.

Scrawny, with one squinting eye and a mew that could be heard all the way to Lave, she soon settled in as Cmdr Paige Stark Harvey's travel buddy, providing sage council, tongue-washes and incurring the occasional 'fire zone' fine, due to sitting on the pulse lasers' cut-out.

Does your co-pawlot deserve some time in the sun? Submit your image and a description to [editor@sagittarius-eye.com](mailto:editor@sagittarius-eye.com) for the chance to be featured in August's issue of *Sagittarius Eye*.



### Co-Pawlets

**Text:** Paige Harvey

**Images:** Paige Harvey

**Design:** McNicholl

# BUCKYBALLERS

## A NEW BREED OF RACER

The advent of consumer-grade hyperdrives has given rise to a peculiar new sport. Last month, *Sagittarius Eye* managed to pin down some of its wild-eyed disciples.

The Sedgebrook Hall Hotel, on the temperate northern hemisphere of Earth in the Sol system, isn't where one usually finds Commanders Drakhyr, Ozric, Alot, Alec Turner, Alex Brentnall and Furrycat. They are here for Lavecon, the annual convention organised by the Lave Radio Network for members of the Pilots Federation. It's now a tradition that the 'Buckyball Racers', as they're known, provide telepresence booths to allow attendees to take part in a special race marking the event.

The race is a time trial. *SAGi* watches, amused, as one by one the spacers lope in to try their luck. Flight suits unbuttoned, and clearly unused to the drag of gravity

on their limbs, they beam themselves into their waiting ships to see what they can add to the leaderboard for the day's challenge. The atmosphere is cheerful, as old friends compare scores and exchange tips. Despite knowing each other well, it is striking that this is a rare chance for these pilots to gather face to face.

It's an unusual occasion for *SAGi*, too. As with most interactions amongst the spacefaring community, telepresence is the norm for interviews. It is with obvious relish that your correspondent sits down near the group, datapad at the ready.





## A verb is born

The Buckyball Racing Club (BRC) is well-known. Their spherical logo is recognised at star ports throughout the Bubble, and 'to Buckyball' is even shorthand for traveling quickly through huge volumes of space via an uninterrupted succession of hyperspace jumps. Over the last few years they have entwined themselves into the fabric of interstellar life. Seemingly above politics and holding little regard for money, their quixotic races are firm fixtures in the Galactic calendar.

"Buckyball" is a take-off of the original Cannonball Run race from the 20th Century," explains Commander Drakhyr. The Cannonball Run was an illegal cross-country land race across a continent, taking participants many hours. Its 34th Century reincarnation was first organised by Commander ElectricZ in August 3300.

Conceived, like their namesake, as a time trial, the first Buckyball Runs were not organised by a 'club' at all. ElectricZ and some dedicated participants ensured that races took place regularly until July 3301, when ElectricZ

**"So as soon as I finished, I just went back and did it again."**

announced that he could no longer host them. It was then that Drakhyr took over and the Buckyball Racing Club was born.

Drakhyr is a garrulous interviewee. He naturally takes the lead and it's clear how his abilities helped take the BRC from whimsical venture to Galactic institution.

He doesn't describe himself as a leader, though — the BRC isn't structured in that way. Drakhyr's role is to collate and organise. "It's a very distributed model," he explains. "It's open for anyone to enter, and open to anyone to host."

The format is simple: intersystem races, open to anyone and everyone, which usually run over a period of a week. Multiple attempts are encouraged, to emphasize beating one's personal best. Races normally last between ten minutes and one hour, making the winning margins very thin — it's not uncommon for races to end in a tie.

"The week-long opportunity to take part allows as many people as possible the chance to get involved," Drakhyr says. "But the duration does vary, and can be extended if demand is high enough."



### The Last Gasp

Usually the lowest time wins — but not this time!

**When run:** January 3304

**Format:** Buy the best Life Support module you can — then switch it off. The winner is whoever can get the furthest on 25 minutes' worth of oxygen!

**Points for:** Docking at outposts. Each outpost you dock at gives you points, increasing with distance from the starting point. Bonus for finishing with one second of oxygen!

**Won by:** Commander Alot



### The Aquarian Job

So famous, there's even a tourist beacon for it

**When run:** May 3303

**Format:** A race around the constellation Aquarius.

**Points for:** Getting hot! Participants earned -1 second from their time for every 2% above safe heat limits they could get their ship. Commander Bruski achieved a negative time, by firing off shield cell banks within the corona of a star — getting his ship to 5,300% of its safe limit (remarkably, he went on to finish the race).

**Won by:** Commander Furrycat

### The Lion's Back

A simple tour of a local constellation

**When run:** September 3303

**Format:** A race around the constellation Leo. Racers had to visit each of the five main stars.

**Points for:** Hitting the unorthodox waypoints. One was a Resource Extraction Site, another was an asteroid belt.

**Won by:** Commander Bruski

### Supermassive challenge

Something that the BRC is particularly well known for is the Buckyball A\*. So much so, in fact, that to many people, the Club is synonymous with the famous race. First run in April 3301, the A\* run is a particularly harrowing time trial. The race from the Bubble to the supermassive black hole at the centre of the Milky Way demands several hours of concentration, with experienced pilots staging several attempts just to shave seconds off their times. Commander Alot, another of the stalwarts, has even undertaken the challenge twice in a row without pause.

"I knew, even before I got there, that I was going to come in a few minutes behind," he explains with a chuckle. "So as soon as I finished, I just went back and did it again."

Alot is the current title-holder of the race and has probably done it more than anyone. He first met Drakhyr on the race itself as they passed each other in deep space — one returning from Sagittarius A\*, the other on the way out.

"I suppose [the A\* race] is our flagship event," says Drakhyr, "but it's not the only format we use, and definitely not the only long-range one."

Real-time races, however, aren't their thing. The group readily concede that the Elite Racers hold the title as the premiere Galactic real-time race organisers.

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**'To Buckyball' is even shorthand for travelling quickly through huge volumes of space.**

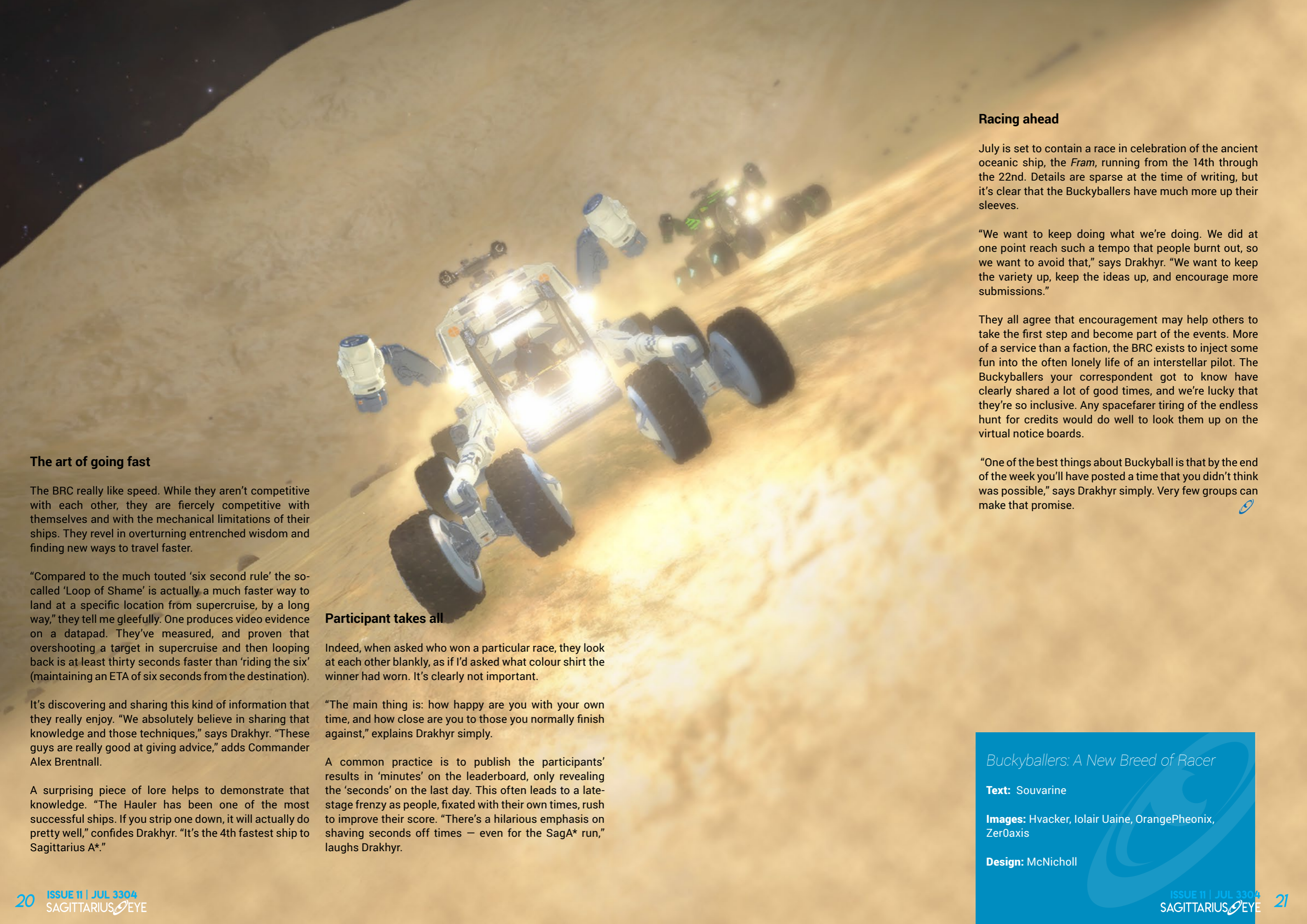
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Something that consistently pops up in discussion with the Buckyballers is the notion of inclusivity. There were even reservations about using outposts for one particular race, as it would have prohibited anyone flying a larger ship from taking part. "We are a registered pilot group," says Drakhyr, "but members are also members of other groups. There is no list of members, really. Membership is just race participants." There are around 220 of those to date.

A key priority for the group's events is variety, an aspect with which Drakhyr is entrusted. Other members are free to suggest and host races too, using their imagination to come up with cunning tests of wits. Now approaching their 60th event, only a single race has ever been repeated.

Most events have two classes: 'Open', in which pilots may fly any ship type and configuration they choose; and 'Regulation', where limitations are placed, usually to stock examples of specific ships, and often including the cheaper and less-popular models.

"I held one called Advanced Options in April 3303," says Alot. "it was a regular time trial with points awarded for specific extra challenges — like docking backwards. People who were new to racing could attempt it as a normal race, but experienced racers could have some 'opt-in' extra challenge." Commander Cookiehole — a "perennial winner", according to Drakhyr — took the prize.



### The art of going fast

The BRC really like speed. While they aren't competitive with each other, they are fiercely competitive with themselves and with the mechanical limitations of their ships. They revel in overturning entrenched wisdom and finding new ways to travel faster.

"Compared to the much touted 'six second rule' the so-called 'Loop of Shame' is actually a much faster way to land at a specific location from supercruise, by a long way," they tell me gleefully. One produces video evidence on a datapad. They've measured, and proven that overshooting a target in supercruise and then looping back is at least thirty seconds faster than 'riding the six' (maintaining an ETA of six seconds from the destination).

It's discovering and sharing this kind of information that they really enjoy. "We absolutely believe in sharing that knowledge and those techniques," says Drakhyr. "These guys are really good at giving advice," adds Commander Alex Brentnall.

A surprising piece of lore helps to demonstrate that knowledge. "The Hauler has been one of the most successful ships. If you strip one down, it will actually do pretty well," confides Drakhyr. "It's the 4th fastest ship to Sagittarius A\*."

### Participant takes all

Indeed, when asked who won a particular race, they look at each other blankly, as if I'd asked what colour shirt the winner had worn. It's clearly not important.

"The main thing is: how happy are you with your own time, and how close are you to those you normally finish against," explains Drakhyr simply.

A common practice is to publish the participants' results in 'minutes' on the leaderboard, only revealing the 'seconds' on the last day. This often leads to a late-stage frenzy as people, fixated with their own times, rush to improve their score. "There's a hilarious emphasis on shaving seconds off times — even for the SagA\* run," laughs Drakhyr.

### Racing ahead

July is set to contain a race in celebration of the ancient oceanic ship, the *Fram*, running from the 14th through the 22nd. Details are sparse at the time of writing, but it's clear that the Buckyballers have much more up their sleeves.

"We want to keep doing what we're doing. We did at one point reach such a tempo that people burnt out, so we want to avoid that," says Drakhyr. "We want to keep the variety up, keep the ideas up, and encourage more submissions."

They all agree that encouragement may help others to take the first step and become part of the events. More of a service than a faction, the BRC exists to inject some fun into the often lonely life of an interstellar pilot. The Buckyballers your correspondent got to know have clearly shared a lot of good times, and we're lucky that they're so inclusive. Any spacefarer tiring of the endless hunt for credits would do well to look them up on the virtual notice boards.

"One of the best things about Buckyball is that by the end of the week you'll have posted a time that you didn't think was possible," says Drakhyr simply. Very few groups can make that promise.



*Buckyballers: A New Breed of Racer*  
**Text:** Souvarine  
**Images:** Hvacker, lolair Uaine, OrangePheonix, Zer0axis  
**Design:** McNicholl

# Engineering an Expedition



From one of a number of archives detailing the 3302 Distant Worlds expedition, Cmdr Erimus Kamzel remarked on its origins:

Distant Worlds 3302 was never intended to be anything close to what it became.

The initial idea behind 'Distant Worlds' was for a small group of dedicated explorers to wing up and retrace [the 3301] Distant Suns route out to Beagle Point on the far Galactic rim. It was thought that no more than half a dozen [people] would be interested in joining Cmdr Dr. Kaii and myself on this crazy venture...

The event grew into something no one envisioned. It captured the imagination of the exploration community.

As the project continued to gain momentum, it became obvious that there would be more to do than a half dozen people could possibly manage by themselves. In the end, Erimus enlisted the aid of over fifty individuals and groups. With their help, it evolved further and was later hailed as one of the most successful events in history.

The people, it seems, were the key.



## Distant Worlds 2 on the horizon

Knowing full well the monumental task another such expedition could turn out to be, early on he enlisted the aid of many of those who had such a positive impact on the previous venture. On 2nd January 3304, with this cadre already in place, the announcement was made to the general public of the preliminary planning phase for Distant Worlds 2 — and the response was overwhelming.

In a little under three months, the number of interested explorers signing up has far exceeded even the original total of 1,078 commanders from the first event.

*Sagittarius Eye* grew curious about what it takes to gauge the public interest, determine the routes and goals, evaluate waypoints, and develop events to keep things interesting for such a large expedition like Distant Worlds 2. We headed to FleetComm HQ and met Cmdr Qohen Leth to talk about what it takes to track, survey and manage the Distant Worlds 2 roster.

## Assessing Interest

Walking through FleetComm Headquarters on a Sunday morning, one might expect a ghost town of empty cubicles and equally deserted hallways. It turns out that exploring a galaxy is a twenty-four hour, seven-day-a-week business. We find Qohen hard at work, surrounded by datapads.

Hey, Qohen. How did you get to work here in FleetComm?

During Distant Worlds 3302, I had gathered a small team of photographers. We set up a community photo gallery and organized the weekly photo contest with prizes. It was pretty popular.

Later on, I had the pleasure of working closely with Erimus and others on the Colonia Citizens Network. I suppose it was only natural that Erimus came to me in late December 3303 to recruit my art and nerd skills to help set up Distant Worlds 2.

What is it you do for the Distant Worlds 2 team?

Mainly, for now at least, I've set up the Roster. It's a complex system of forms, formulas, master/slave spreadsheets, statistical maths and formatting stuff... It took some time to put together, with the help of Commanders Olivia Vespera and EfilOne, and after a few hiccups it works pretty much flawlessly.

It helps everyone who kept their personal form edit link to update their own application — and in turn, automatically updates everything else.

I've also been drawing the visual assets for Distant Worlds 2 (DW2), mainly the DW2 mission patch. It was an attempt at doing something both respectful of the legacy of Hi-Ban's original DW 3302 patch and a little more modern, more dynamic. I had sent it to Erimus even before he asked me to come onboard. I think it works very well.

The forms also have a pilot survey to answer. Why ask for ship types and the other information? What is it for?

That's for the Ship Showcase — a single place where everyone will have a profile picture of their ship, name, roster number, etc. All automatically generated.

Will everyone be able to see this or is it something that might be developed in the future?

At the moment, along with the former Distant Worlds 3302 photo team administrators (Galaxyutii and Atomic), we're working on putting together a website for the entire DW2 expedition. The forums are starting to be too small and inconvenient. That's what we're working on right now, and we hope to have the it up and running sometime this summer.

The Roster sign-up process seems very easy to use when going through it. What happens to all the information gathered?

Right now the Showcase sheet gives me a file that I feed into a photo database which creates the Showcase images automatically. Once the website is up, though, we will probably do it differently with a bank of ship pictures on one side, and then let the website compose the pics on the fly. Closer to the launch, I will accept custom ship photos for the Showcase and invite Commanders who have lost their personal form edit links to send me their amendment requests. Then both Roster and Showcase updates will be closed shortly before launch.

Very nice! All the technicalities aside, how does a photographer and artist get drawn into managing multiple spreadsheets and the sign-up process for something so huge? Seems like it would be a bit too bureaucratic for a 'free spirit' type.

You can't fight the nerd side! I suppose Erimus got wind of my mild spreadsheet-OCD. I've done a few over the past two years.

With the route and waypoint selection still in progress and the final schedule still a fair ways off, why start a sign-up process this far ahead of any actual solid plan for the event?

The main reason was to give any sponsors enough time to consider the proposal, and hopefully to steer some of the changes to exploration technology scheduled for the end of this year. We also hope to avoid the exponential growth of the roster that happened before with DW 3302. Last time, as the departure was closing in, Erimus was swamped with amendment requests and late sign-ups.

By opening the sign-ups early, we give people enough time to prepare and ourselves a lot of time to brainstorm the content of the expedition. But we know it'll be chaos, as usual, two days before the launch.


I guess the next question is: how many people have indicated an interest in DW2, so far?

Let me pull up the long sheet. Right now, we are looking at ... 2,742 signups.

That is over twice the original DW official roster already, isn't it?

The official DW 3302 roster was closed at 1,153 Commanders, and there was an overflow roster of a couple hundred. So — pretty much double. In perspective though, only about 22% are DW veterans, so a lot of new participants, and among those, nearly 2,000 commanders that have never taken part in an expedition!

How many people out of that 2,742 would you expect to finish the entire expedition?

Well, there is one ship registered with a 10ly jump range, so considering one needs at the very least a range of 16.8 even to reach Beagle Point... I would say 2,741? 

*Engineering an Expedition: Distant Worlds 2*

**Text:** Michael Darkmoor

**Images:** Zer0axis, lolair Uaine

**Design:** McNicholl

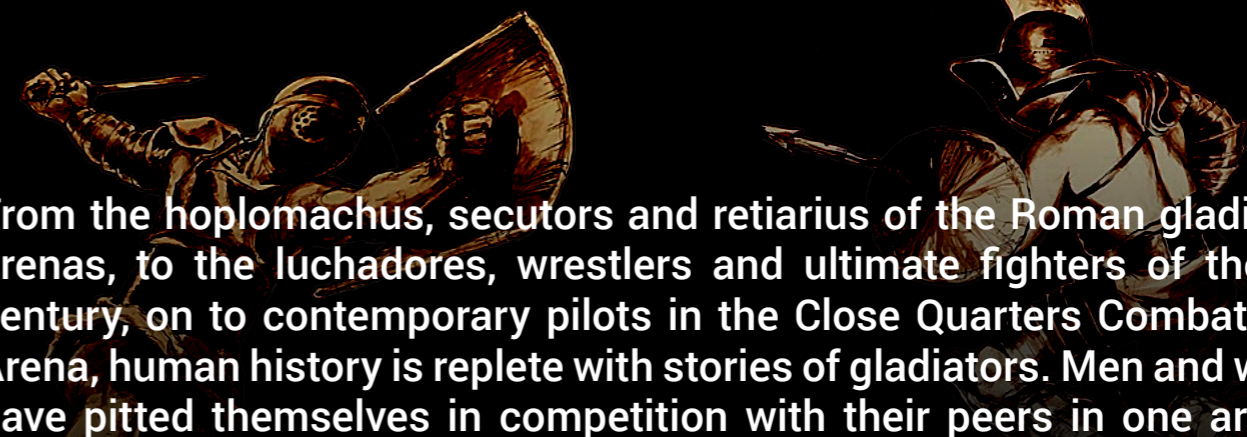


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From the hoplomachus, secutors and retiarius of the Roman gladiatorial arenas, to the luchadores, wrestlers and ultimate fighters of the 20th century, on to contemporary pilots in the Close Quarters Combat (CQC) Arena, human history is replete with stories of gladiators. Men and women have pitted themselves in competition with their peers in one arena or another, and through strength and guile, have risen to prominence as champions. ▶

# TOP GUNS



## THE GLADIATORS OF THE CQC ARENA







CQC Arena, often referred to as simply 'Arena' or 'CQC', is a modern day gladiatorial contest where spacecraft take the place of chariots, and stadia are replaced by asteroid belts and planetary rings. In the past, contests of champions like these were reserved for only the most important of occasions. Modern industry means that the violent spectacle can commence at any time, and continue uninterrupted for many days, or even weeks, at a time. When one ship is destroyed, a replacement can be fabricated and readied to pilot within seconds.

The most significant difference between ancient gladiatorial contests and the Arena is also the reason that the modern events can continue for so long. Unlike earlier, historical, contests, the life or health of the competitor is no longer on the line as pilots now use telepresence systems to control their vessels remotely.

CQC Holdings, the company responsible for operating and promoting CQC events, currently offers three different types of events in which would-be champions may compete — 'Deathmatch', 'Team Deathmatch' and 'Capture the Flag'. The most popular of these is Deathmatch. This event pits groups of up to eight players against each other in a frenetic free-for-all, the goal of which is to score points for kills and assists against other competitors, and to be the first to reach a score of 750.

Participation in CQC events is unrestricted, allowing anyone who has successfully completed their basic flight training with the Pilots Federation to enter. In fact, for some older pilots, such as Cmdr BUBENCOV, it was actually competing in CQC that helped begin their careers as pilots:

*I used to be a musician; I'd passed my basic flight training but never did anything with it. One day I was invited to take part in some Arena matches at a gig, seemed like fun so I kept going back. After a couple of months I realised that being behind the stick was where I belonged, so I picked up a job as a short range courier and went from there.*

When asked to describe the kind of person that goes on to compete in CQC, terms referencing a pilot's skill are common. However, less favorable traits are also mentioned. Terms like 'lone wolf' or 'cold', 'antisocial' and sometimes even 'ruthless' are often heard, and the undertone of such responses is that CQC competitors are violent and solitary.

The stereotype is easy to see; in a world where piracy is a way of life for many, and mercenary groups such as those operated by Archon Delaine can even demonstrate significant political power, it's not hard to believe that those predisposed to violence can be disliked by the communities in which they operate.

**“ The real gladiators of the world are so humble in their origins and unremarkable in appearance that when we stand next to them in a grocery-store line, we never guess how brightly their souls can burn in the dark.**

— James Lee Burke

Such broad generalisations seem unfair to competitors in CQC, who come from many different walks of life. They tend to foster a much more nurturing and protective atmosphere within their community. As one Arena veteran, Cmdr Curtis R. Prophet, puts it:

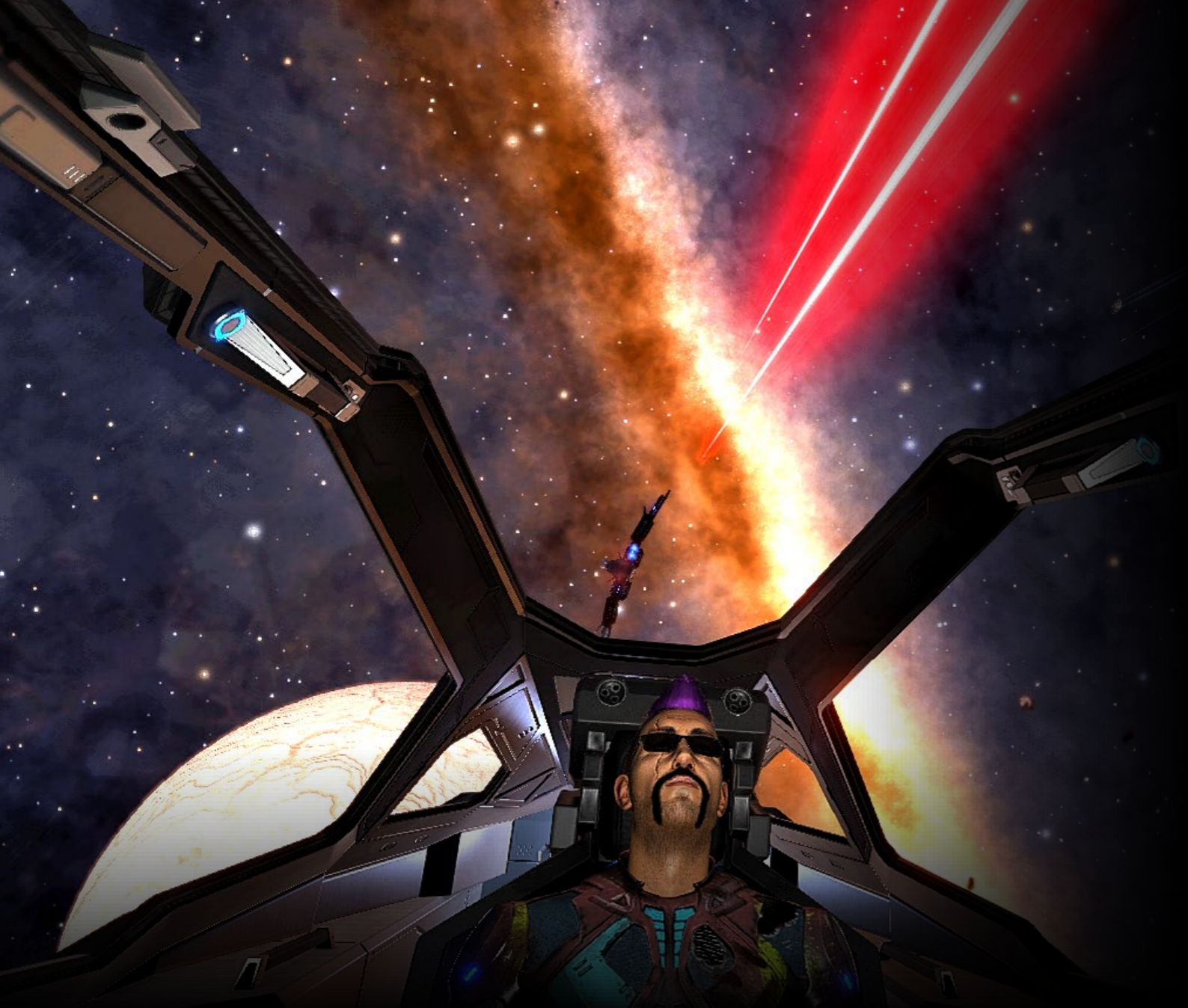
*CQC is quite beloved for some of us, so I don't think that I could be part of something intended to attack it.*

When first approached by *Sagittarius Eye*, it was apparent that a number of the pilots we spoke to, like Commander Curtis, were concerned about how this article might reflect on their community. This sentiment grows each day, as some new and typically inaccurate statement or stereotype about the Arena community is spread by those who have never even made an attempt to join it.

The physical heart of the Arena — and headquarters of CQC Holdings — is Attilius Orbital in CD-43 11917: a system permit-locked to all but Arena champions. The recognised home of the Arena participants, though, is the unofficial virtual communications net that connects them to each other across several locations around the Galaxy.

Here, between the frequent klaxon calls for upcoming events, competitors can communicate with each other directly — something that the mechanisms of the Arena prevent. It is common to find pilots complementing each other on competing, or for exceptional demonstrations of skill:

*You were making some really nice, controlled maneuvers to navigate into structures and tunnels. On more than one occasion I didn't think that you would be able to make it cleanly into a structure with your angle of approach, but you pulled it off smoothly. Nice.*



**“Fame itself... doesn't really afford you anything more than a good seat in a restaurant.”**

— D. Bowie

### Gladiators, Ready!

Something like the CQC Arena cannot continue for long without a regular influx of new pilots to keep things moving along. As pilots grow older and retire from the contest, some move on as champions into management or coaching roles, whilst others leave when changes to their circumstances demand it. There is a constant vacuum for new pilots to move into and begin their own journey in the Arena.

This 'evolution of skill' is another point that many pilots touch upon when talking about what drew them in and keeps them coming back. We discussed this in greater depth with Cmdr MUSKETEER.

CQC's the only place in the Galaxy where it's only about skill. Outside the Arena there's always more to think about in a fight. The ships make a difference, the weapons, the modules and all the engineering that's gone on under the hood. There is always room for a fight to be unfair, and when the dust has settled, you have to deal with legal fees, ship insurance, repairs, rearmament...

In CQC those expenses are covered by CQC Holdings. The ships are as fairly balanced as its been possible to make them, and the only advantage you have in a fight is your skill behind the flight stick.

When we touched upon this issue, many CQC pilots emphasised that they are keen to encourage new competitors into the community. They go out of their way to level the playing field so that new starters don't feel immediately overwhelmed. To encourage new contestants to learn and continue in the sport, some pilots choose to deliberately handicap themselves. Others also choose to reduce their aggression whilst engaging new contestants for a time.

"I usually do fixed targeting against new contestants. It improves my aim, so I get better as well," says regular combatant Cmdr Aaskar Aaskarsson. Curtis Prophett agrees:

"Sometimes, when I'm in a game with very new players, I look for and experiment with escape routes. I do love flying through and around structures!"

Paradoxically — given the levels of adrenaline and testosterone you'd expect to be in play — the conversation is almost exclusively positive. Any grudges and animosity are left at the door when competitors leave the Arena. It's far more common to see someone ask for advice on what they need to do to improve than it is to hear complaints about being beaten. This attitude seems to underpin the CQC community.

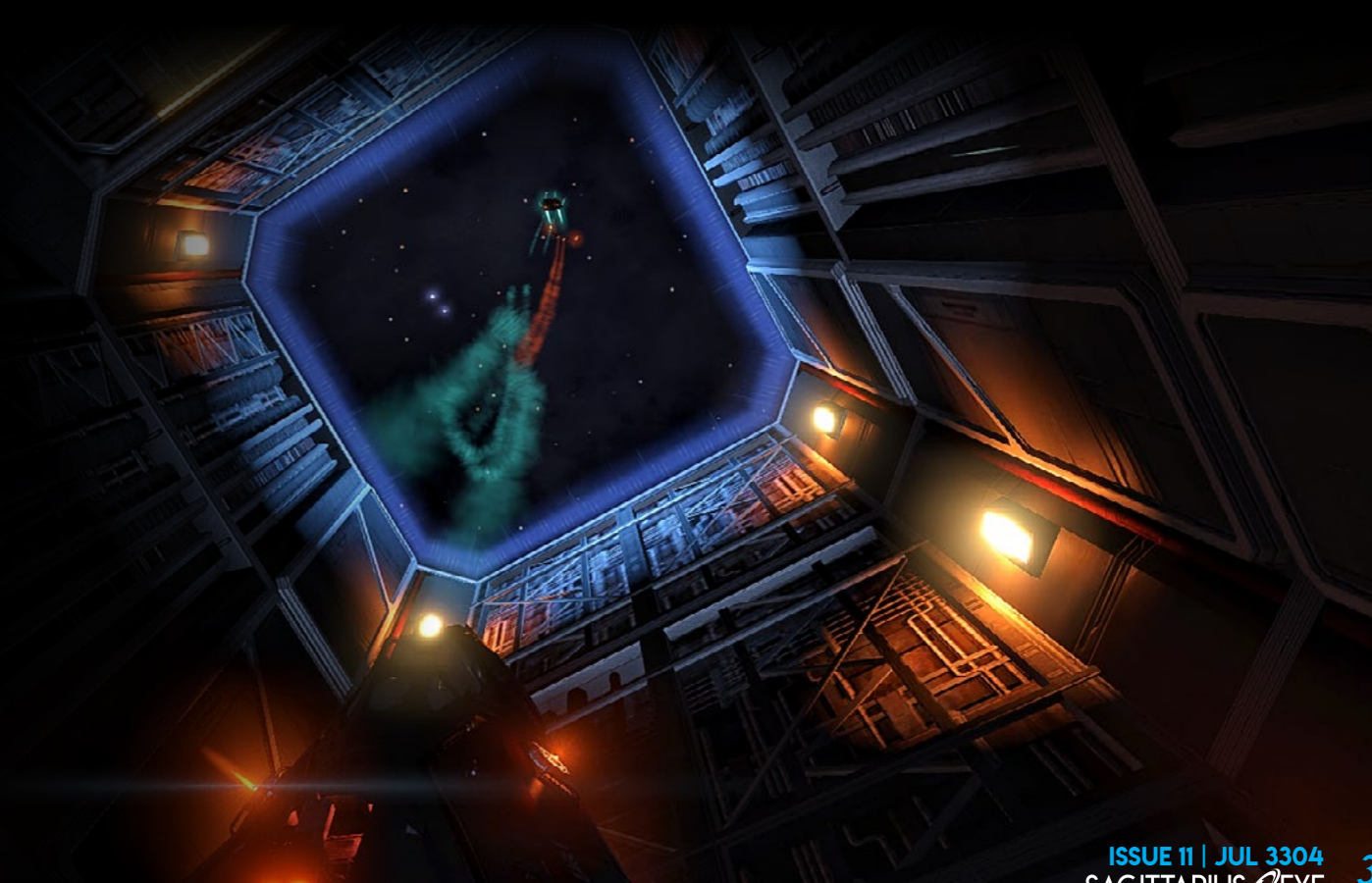
Of the pilots we spoke to — many of whom are CQC champions, or Hall of Fame record holders themselves — the vast majority reported that what first drew them in wasn't anything as crass as celebrity or credits, but instead, was either simple curiosity or just the desire to have fun with their friends.

Cmdr Commie Lingus, for example, told us that "I don't want to waste my time grinding away at a job just to have fun, so I spend all my time in CQC... it's probably the hardest skill-based challenge ever created."

Cmdr Curtis R. Prophett, in his seminal work *An Ode to CQC*, expands on what drew him in and keeps him coming back:

Out of curiosity I jumped into a deathmatch one day, and learned, with an emphatic note of certainty, that being an 'ace' mass-murdering bounty hunter did not count for much in the Arena...

...Somewhere along the line the chaos of the arena began to resolve itself into patterns that made sense, and I started to slowly feel like, maybe, I was beginning to know what I was doing. There was something really compelling about this evolution of skill, and once I turned the corner and actually started winning a few matches, and then started being competitive with some of the best, regular competitors, well... by then I was well and truly hooked.





“ Here we belong, fighting for survival. We’ve come to be the rulers of your world. — F. Mercury

Their concern for new participants extends beyond a few concessions made within CQC itself, however. Incoming pilots who engage with the community will find a number of different guides on loadout and combat style available, as well as coaching sessions in the form of the community’s ‘Tutorial Tuesdays’.

The advice most often given to new contestants is to have fun first and worry about ‘kills’ second. In Deathmatches, team or otherwise, it’s the points that matter, and whilst ‘backstabbing’ (the act of shooting another vessel without intending to destroy it in order to gain assist points) is frowned upon in older pilots, it’s a recommended technique by which new players can effectively build up their scores as they develop their skills.

The CQC community are always happy to share their experience with other participants, and it’s not hard to draw a few of them out to discuss particular aspects of CQC events. However, those pilots seeking an answer to ambiguous questions like “How do I get to be as good as you?” should be warned: as a contest of skill, there’s no one-size-fits-all solution, and no magic combination of buttons to become an Arena champion.

“It all comes down to experience,” explains Cmdr MUSKETEER. “We all have different styles of flying and judge situations differently, then make decisions to suit that style. So decisions about which targets to eliminate first or when to fight and when to run, and the way we do, are different. But for us it just clicks. It all comes with experience.”

Sadly, the spectacular façade of bright lights and high octane combat presented by CQC Arena masks the cracks in the veneer of an empire in decline.



■ Lakon’s Taipan fighter is more heavily armoured than its peers

The number of new competitors currently entering the Arena has slowed over the past few years, and fewer of those who do start competing tend to stick around for longer than a few matches.

When we discussed these issues with members of the CQC community, the majority of respondents were keen to lay the blame at the feet of CQC Holdings. The general belief is that this governing body has been slow to find new funding sources and less effective in securing sponsorship agreements with other corporations. This has led to a significant reduction in prize pools for competition. It is felt that over the past few years, particularly since the onset of war with the Thargoids in the Pleiades, corporations that used to sponsor CQC events have shifted focus to supporting the war and other development efforts.

With fewer new participants being attracted to CQC, those people who do try to compete are finding it increasingly difficult to find matches, leading many to leave without ever having competed.

The most effective solution to the problem, it is thought, is for CQC Holdings to modify its approach in securing new sponsorship arrangements so that more attractive prize pools are available. At present even the most prestigious CQC champion’s lifetime earnings are barely equivalent to the hourly income of a basic passenger liner pilot. It is believed that a significant increase in earnings, either in raw credits, or other useful or saleable materials, would go a long way to incentivising new competitors.

Another approach favoured by some is simply to ask Faulcon DeLacy to offer Taipan fighters for use in the Arena. The belief is that fans of the platform who have felt the exclusion of these fighters from CQC events is detrimental, might be enticed into participating.

In spite of CQC Holdings’ failings, it is clear that the community has worked hard to continue the gladiatorial tradition for another generation, by training, supporting and promoting its members.

Under the surface, we found the CQC community to be tight-knit, considerate and passionate about a sport they feel is unfairly overlooked. For enthusiasts of any type of combat sport, investigating this pursuit is clearly worth the time.

*Top Guns:  
The Gladiators of the CQC Arena*

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**Thanks to:** CQC:Discord, Curtis R. Prophet, Bubenkov, MUSKETEER, Commie Lingus, Aaskar Aaskarsson, Gsyhiap



FARRAGUT BATTLE CRUISER  
**FNS AGAMEMNON**

JOIN THE WINNING SIDE.  
JOIN THE FEDERATION.



# OPEN SPACE

## A SOLO PILOT'S FIRST TIME

Some pilots revel in the experience of meeting other people out on the space lanes, citing the sense of camaraderie engendered, and reminding us that space can be a very lonely place. Others, like Commander DanIRW from the *SAGi* art team, avoid the risk of bumping into potentially hostile strangers, preferring to fly solo or stick to private areas of space.

So this month, we sent our intrepid artist out to experience life in the hustle and bustle of open space for the first time.

*How did you feel about going out into the open?*

When I first went out I was certainly nervous. You hear dangerous things about open space, outside the relative safety of stations and surface settlements. But with Thargoids attacking stations, it makes you realise that nowhere is truly safe. So I decided to take a ship out into the open and face that risk. After all, it has to come some time.

*How was your first time out there?*

My encounters with other pilots were varied and few, unless I went to particularly busy areas such as mining spots, areas hosting events such as races, friendly combat competitions, and stations, especially on busy trade routes.

But even then, your interactions with other people are very limited. The occasional blip on the radar, the odd stray local communication, and perhaps chance encounters at points of interest, were all that broke up a lot of my travels. The Galaxy definitely felt a little less dangerous with the revelation that there aren't many of us on this frontier, considering the size of the area we are trying to cover.

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**I realized that getting on the wrong side of pilots can be deadly unless you're capable of taking care of yourself.**

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*Where did you find the most amount of interaction? A hazardous resource extraction site? Perhaps a designated conflict zone?*

Going to a Community Goal ('CG') was probably what brought the most interaction actually! I was uncertain what to expect as I approached the station in order to sign up for participation. I submitted my docking request and approached, taking care to keep clear and give way to larger ships – which dare I say was every ship from the perspective of my tiny Adder.

After signing up for the rescue effort, I made my way to the salvage region, to find a scattering of occupied escape pods in a sea of debris. I collected the souls I could find, dropped them off and headed back to another salvage point.

This time, however, I noticed a Commander already picking up escape pods.

As I approached him to offer my help, another pilot in a Python dropped in, quickly announcing that the act is illegal salvaging and that he will stop anyone doing it. I quickly tried to slip away and stay out of sight, but the other salvaging Commander decided to tempt fate and carry on rescuing those in escape pods. He quickly learned that the Python was more than he would be able to take on, and unfortunately paid the price for this. It was brutal – and I realized that getting on the wrong side of pilots can be deadly unless you're capable of taking care of yourself.



*That's a pity. However, one can only guess at the motivations behind a pilot's visor. Were there too many other pilots like this, or did you have more amicable encounters?*

Not at all! Few of the pilots that I encountered were the 'shoot first, ask questions never' type. After a while of searching rescue sites, I kept running into the same few Commanders scouring the place, all using collector limpets to take on any pods they found. I quickly realized my success in a small Adder would be limited with so many other Commanders around. I was considering making my way back to the station, when I saw another Commander approaching.

There was no communication sent, nor any form of provocation, but we continued to approach each other slowly. My scanner showed me his details, and I could see he was in a Chieftain. Assuming the worst, I knew that he could make short work of me if he wanted to.

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## Shots started flying straight away, and I wasn't about to stick around to find out how much my Adder could take.

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My fears were unfounded, though. When we were in close enough range to see each other's cockpit, I could tell that we weren't destined for a fight but for a more understanding encounter. We continued to get closer until our shields flared and stayed watching each other.

In lieu of my communicator, I opted to roll whilst continuing to face the Chieftain, and I was surprised to see him reciprocate, both of us spinning as a way of showing friendly intentions. We flew around amiably for some time, though we found no salvage.

However, when we finally located a group of occupied escape pods, things took a turn for the worse.

A Commander dropped in in a flash of coloured light; communications suddenly opened to proclaim that all salvage in the area was his.

Shots started flying straight away, and I wasn't about to stick around to find out how much my Adder could take. The Chieftain seemed more confident though, turning to face the attacker and engaging them whilst I boosted out. I would have liked to see how he fared and make sure he got out okay, but for my own survival, I decided against facing such a formidable foe.

I never saw the Chieftain again, but I want to thank him. If he wasn't there to draw fire, I would never have survived the onslaught long enough to get out of there with my ship.

DanIRW was visibly rattled as he recounted his tale of the companionable Chieftain pilot.

*Sounds like there was adventure, tension and excitement to your engagements out there. So overall, do you think you'd fly out in the open again?*

When returning to my home station, I had some time on my journey to consider how I feel about travelling out in the open. There's not a lot that's different — it feels just as dangerous. But there's something that doesn't feel real about flying alone without interactions with other Commanders, now that I have experience out there to compare it to.

The lack of human interaction, especially, gives the experience of flying solo incredible emptiness. Sure, either way the Galaxy is a lonely place, but being able to interact with another pilot makes the dangerous world a little less empty. ▶

Michael Darkmoor, staff writer at SAGi and seasoned pilot, shared his thoughts too.

When I first started, I flew in private as well. To me, the learning curve to pilot the ship was the most important thing to understand. It took several weeks to finally feel comfortable enough with the controls and how the mechanisms worked. Once I felt I could handle things, I started flying out in the open. I rarely met anyone other than local system pilots, and most of those I did meet seemed more afraid of others than I was.

I was still in my 'Sidey' going on my fourth week when I got 'ganked' by four guys in Sidewinders and Eagles. They were not very good, but still took me out very quickly. Since I'd saved up enough for a new ship and had already A-graded the Sidey, I had more than enough to buy and upgrade to an Eagle Mk II. I went hunting them individually and eventually got all four of them into an insurance claim!

From that point on, I never feared confrontation with other players. I took jobs as Escort or running interference in the CG areas for traders of one kind or another.

Even once survived an encounter with Majinvash and his crew while running an interference contract.

Tanky Asp against two Pythons and a 'Conda...

Almost didn't make it, and there were many times I had to file an insurance claim. There was always concern for how much was in the bank account, but after a while, that becomes less and less. Confidence, having a good buffer of credits, and learning to enjoy those rare encounters is what has kept me out there.

My opinion: there is no *right* way to fly. I fly privately when I just don't want to deal with other people's crap, and I fly out in the open when I want those encounters with other Commanders.

**I rarely met anyone other than local system pilots, and most of those I did meet seemed more afraid of others than I was.**

The debate of whether encounters with other Commanders of the Pilots Federation enhance one's experience of space travel isn't one that can be won or lost, based — as it is — on personal preference. The experiences of both our team members show that there are indeed 'bad agents' out there, who will try to spoil your day if you come across them.

It's worth noting, however, that both decide ultimately that the risk is worth it. Despite the aggression, piracy and foul play that can be found throughout lawless space, it seems as though the positive connections one can make out in the black, on balance, make life in space that much more meaningful.



Open Space:  
A Solo Pilot's First Time

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**Title 3D art:** Ian Baristan

**Design:** LexMoloch



# GUTAMAYA

## IMPERIAL-COURIER



*all the speed, all the shields and all the style*

# BIG THREE

## CLASH OF THE TITANS

For many years, one undefeated champion reigned supreme over the Galaxy's large ship market – Falcon DeLacy's Anaconda. Its excellent performance and flexibility gave it the edge it needed to beat its competitors. But at the end of 3301, two new vessels emerged to challenge the Anaconda's title. Now, we take a look at the large ship scene today, and how these challengers have shaken things up.

The combination of firepower, versatility, and customisability has allowed the Anaconda to fill every role imaginable for those rich enough to afford it.

### The Champion

Sat on the throne it has ruled since 2856, DeLacy's Anaconda is an ancient and tested design. The combination of firepower, versatility, and customisability has allowed the Anaconda to fill every role imaginable for those rich enough to afford it. Interstellar battleship, heavy trader, or long-range explorer, very few career paths are incompatible with this behemoth. With all of this going for it, what could possibly challenge such a stalwart ship?

### The Rivals

When competitors finally faced Falcon's king, they emerged in the form of military vessels. From Core Dynamics, produced for the Federal Navy and adapted for civilian use, came the Federal Corvette. A purebred warship designed to enforce the Federation's will, the Corvette's role is that of a gun platform, boasting a significant number of powerful armament placements. The ship's brutal aesthetic strikes fear into the hearts of those who stand up to the Galaxy's oldest superpower wherever it's seen, supported by its two class 4 hardpoints – the only ship to date with such capability.

From Gutamaya, the Imperial Cutter is available to members of the Imperial Navy Auxiliary, also adapted from a military design. The Cutter represents all that is Imperial – elegance, aesthetics, and speed. Behind the vessel's beautifully curved exterior lies a force to be reckoned with. A truly colossal internal module capacity coupled with more than capable firepower, Cutters may be found anywhere the Empire desires to demonstrate its extensive power.

Naturally, each of these ships is only available to the most affluent amongst the Pilots Federation. As such, budget will not be considered when comparing the beasts' capabilities. In this showcase of titans, performance is all that counts.



■ The Imperial Cutter

## Trading

Coming in with a cargo capacity of 388 tonnes while shielded, the Anaconda remains a respectable trading vessel to this day. Protecting your merchandise is a shield strength of 752 megajoules (MJ), assuming no shield boosters are used. This is a notably smaller cargo hold than boasted by its competitors, however the Anaconda retains one edge: jump range. For very long-range purposes, the Anaconda's jump range exceeds 20 light-years (ly) when laden, not even accounting for engineering. If long distance capabilities are on your checklist, this is not a record that will be beaten any time soon. Without modification or use of prismatics, this is also the largest shield capacity for a standard trading build.

In comparison, the Corvette can haul a shipment of 552 tonnes while shielded. This increased cargo capacity comes at a cost, however. Not only are the Corvette's shields slightly weaker than an Anaconda's, at 683 MJ, but the Federal warship can only haul those tonnes around 13ly at a time. This is a lower distance than many popular trading routes, and any extra jumps will increase turnaround time. Even when engineered, the Corvette remains unable to jump as far as an unmodified Anaconda.

**The Cutter represents all that is Imperial — elegance, aesthetics, and speed.**

Lastly, though most definitely not least, is the Imperial Cutter. Despite offering the weakest stock protection at 656 MJ without boosters or modification, the Cutter offers a jaw-dropping 728 tonnes of space for your chosen goods. While hauling almost double the volume of the Anaconda, the Cutter can maintain a laden jump range of over 16ly before engineering. For these reasons, and the fact that its shield is still nothing to be sniffed at, the Cutter is the trader of choice for many an Imperial pilot.

While some may prefer the high range of the Anaconda for their trading purposes, it is difficult to dispute the Cutter's supremacy for space trucking. The Corvette struggles with its poor jump capabilities for its mediocre cargo capacity and gets left in the dust by its Imperial counterpart. The Cutter even rivals the capabilities of the Type-9, a dedicated heavy trader. Engineering also allows for greatly increased shield strengths and jump ranges, further enhancing the Cutter's hauling abilities.



## Exploration

Turning their gaze to the Milky Way's most distant heavens, the Anaconda is a common choice for the wealthy explorer. Unengineered, the ship can exceed 40ly when configured as efficiently as possible; and throwing engineering into the mix, ranges of over 60ly are easily achievable. Since modern frame shift drives (FSDs) came to the common market, the Anaconda has, very understandably, dominated the Galactic mapping scene.

In this area, the Anaconda's more militaristic counterparts lag far behind. The Corvette posts a miserable entry of barely 20ly, with the Cutter faring little better, struggling to break 25ly. Engineering helps little, boosting the Corvette up to a dismal 32ly and the Cutter to around 40. Even though the Cutter has the ability to fit a class 8 fuel scoop, it isn't sufficient to break the Anaconda's distance advantage. It is obvious that both ships are not designed with exploratory purposes in mind. This makes the choice of exploration vessel clear; the Anaconda is still on top.



■ The Falcon DeLacy Anaconda

## Combat

An area not quite so cut and dried as trading or exploration, it is well known that all three ships boast excellent combat capabilities. But the debate rages, particularly along the Federal-Imperial divide: which is the best?

To truly test these behemoths, a classic field test was in order. Being large ships, designed for long-term combat endurance, each one was taken to a resource extraction site until they either ran out of ammunition or were routed. For a fair comparison, all three ships were unengineered for the test.

Up first was the Anaconda. While lacking the defensive capabilities that come with the larger internal slots possessed by the other ships, the old king retains one advantage: firepower. On paper, the Anaconda wields the largest potential damage per second (DPS) available on the market. This is thanks to its wide and versatile set of eight hardpoints and its class 8 power distributor. For the test, it was equipped with a standard bounty hunting build consisting of lasers and multi-cannons.

Throughout the test, the Anaconda's overwhelming firepower consistently shone through. Small and medium targets lost shields very quickly, and their hulls were swiftly torn apart

by the combination of the huge and large multi-cannons. As with most large ships, the Anaconda is not the most agile choice out there, but this is easily made up for by using gimbaled weaponry.

The Anaconda's clearest weak point was its defensive abilities. With fewer internal compartments for shield cell banks, the shield did eventually collapse before the ship ran out of ammunition. However, the bulkheads withstood enough incoming fire to allow the target to be destroyed, before retreating from the extraction site. Despite being routed, the performance was impressive, demonstrating the massive offensive power of the ship.

Up next was the Corvette. Core Dynamics' entry has one fewer hardpoint than the Anaconda, but is the only ship on the market capable of mounting two class 4 weapons. Despite having a lower maximum theoretical DPS, this hardpoint configuration can allow large bursts of damage to be delivered at once. The ship was equipped with two huge cannons for attacking armour, and five pulse lasers for stripping shields.

The most immediately noticeable thing about the Corvette is the unique kinematics it possesses. While not a fast ship, clocking in at the similar mid-to-high 200s range as the Anaconda, it is able to roll faster than any of its competitors. This allows the ship to lay down fire more consistently, reducing the time in combat significantly. So strong are its rotational capabilities that gimbaled weapons aren't required for the more precise pilots out there, easily being able to accommodate the added requirement of aiming fixed-mount guns.

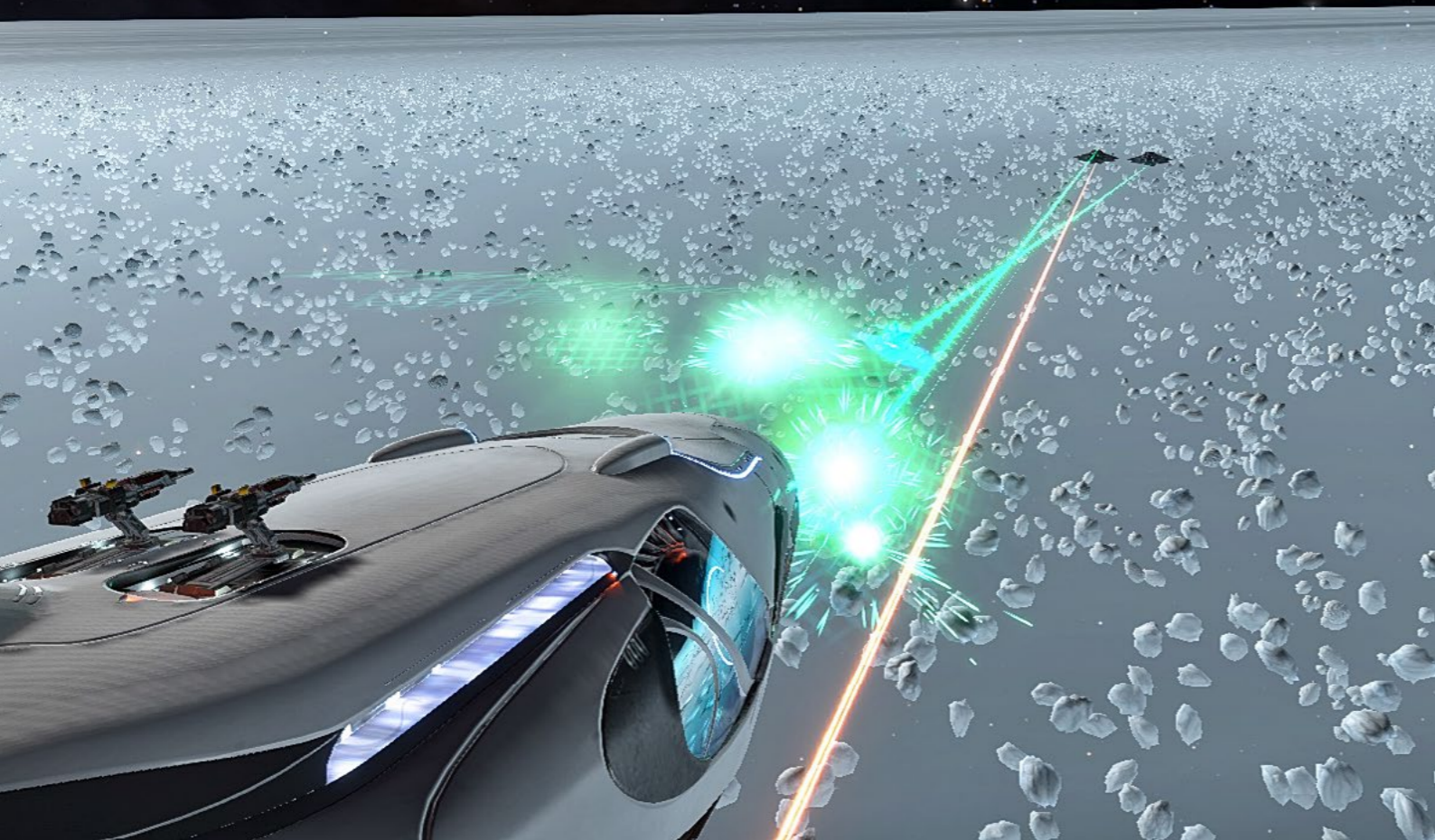
Coupling excellently with the ship's flexible offensive abilities, the Corvette can also take one hell of a beating. Due to its larger internals, the Corvette can run with a higher total shield capacity than the Anaconda even with one fewer shield cell bank. Not only that, but it does not impinge on the size of the equipped fighter hangar when doing so, allowing the use of two extra fighter rebuilds in extended combat. By the end of the test, the Corvette still

**A pure-bred warship designed to enforce the Federation's will.**

■ The Core Dynamics Corvette is the only ship on the market boasting two class 4 hardpoints



■ The Cutter's shields can withstand an impressive amount of firepower



had unused shield cells remaining when the ship ran out of ammo for its twin cannons. An excellent performance, as to be expected from the supplier of the Federal Navy's armaments.

Finishing up the day's tests was the Imperial Cutter. In combat, the Cutter faces immediate difficulties stemming from its class 7 power distributor. While its set of seven hardpoints allow a wide array of weapon combinations, they frequently find themselves choked of power. To accommodate this, the majority of the weapons mounted were multi-cannons, as they have a much higher damage per unit energy (DPE) than lasers do. Only two pulse lasers were mounted, on the ship's large hardpoints.

The first thing one recognises in the Cutter is its very poor manoeuvrability. It handles like a starport, and this can be very difficult to manage — particularly against more agile opponents. While the ship can achieve incredible straight-line speeds, in the mid 300s when boosting, the slow pitch rate means engagements will be very drawn out. Throwing into this slow mix the class 7 distributor, don't expect fights to be over quickly.

The Cutter's redeeming quality comes in the form of protection. A standard shield configuration will have almost 70% more shield integrity than an Anaconda, allowing the shield to absorb an unreal amount of ordnance without breaking a sweat. The test rather unsurprisingly took longer than the previous two, due to the high time-to-kill that comes with the Cutter's offensive stats, but by the time ammo was depleted the shield was sat comfortably full, with shield cells to spare.

Deciding on a true victor of this test is difficult. Each ship excels in different areas. The Anaconda is more of a 'glass cannon', with weaker defences but achieving the fastest kills. The Corvette represents a balance: good firepower backed up by adequately strong shielding. At the defensive end of the spectrum, the Cutter can tank for extended periods, but will take a while to secure kills, drawing the fight out for a significant amount of time. The 'best' ship depends entirely on the flight style of the pilot. Aggressive flying benefits the Anaconda more, while endurance fits the Cutter. Despite this, the most balanced option usually represents the 'best' choice for the average bounty-hunter, so in this case, the Corvette comes out as a very debatable winner.

## Final Verdict

Unsurprisingly, we have arrived at somewhat of an impasse. Of each of the three tests, a different ship has come out on top. The Anaconda remains the top explorer, the Cutter is the best at trucking, and the Corvette proves itself on the battlefield. Naturally, a million other tests could be performed to try and decide on a ship that technically wins out on paper, but for an individual, this is a pointless exercise. The Pilots Federation is made up of pilots of uncountable skillsets, interests, career paths, and personal preferences. As expected, there is no 'best' large ship out there.

**This makes the choice of exploration vessel clear; the Anaconda is still on top.**

The best advice for someone who is in the market for a ship of this price range is to do your research. What is the ship going to be used for? Will its role change a lot during use? None of the ships are bad choices; they're all excellent vessels for what they do, and it's easy to see why they dominate the large ship scene. If you're rich and insane enough, get all three!

The Anaconda most certainly no longer reigns supreme, but it is far from ousted from its position at the top. As the ships continue through development and new models are released over the next decades and centuries, it is almost certain that the big three will continue jostling for the throne. New competitors may join the fray, but it is certain that we are now in a golden age of advanced large ship technology.



## The Big Three: Clash of the Titans

**Text:** Mini\_Watto

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**Design:** McNicholl



# DRAGONFLY



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We are proud to announce\* the **Dragonfly**, an aerial recon vehicle for terrestrial worlds with atmosphere density of  $0.015 \text{ kg/m}^3+$ .

Based on the legendary Scarab® frame, equipped with low-noise high performance SX Turbo SR90 hypersonic rotors, perfect for populated areas\*\*. Unprecedented hover stability, minimized wake turbulence and downwash: this is the best rotorcraft we have ever designed.

**Are you ready?**

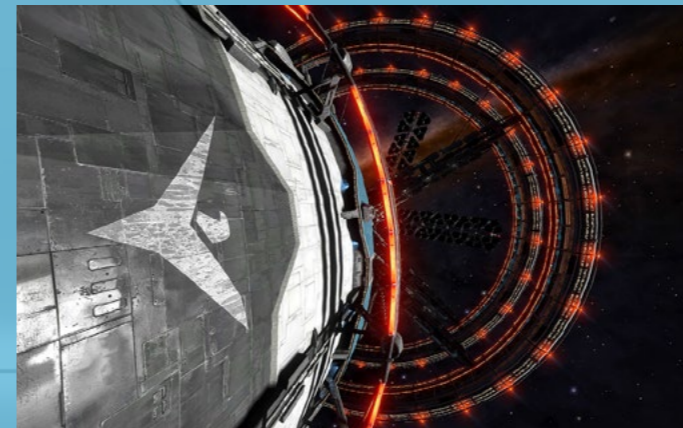
\* Available soon at Vodel representatives in surface ports on atmospheric worlds.

\*\* Subject to local legislation.

Possibly the most surprising story of the three superpowers belongs to the Empire. Now a bastion of human civilisation and power, it is second only to the Federation in age and size.

The origins of this behemoth lie in one visionary family's defiant stand against the overwhelming force of the rest of their species, but also in authoritarianism and genocide.

# History of the Empire



## The Duval Ideology

The Duval family has been the driving force behind the second largest superpower in the Galaxy. It has survived assassinations, wars and the attrition of centuries, and has been embraced by more than 1.8 trillion men and women from Federation, Alliance, and former GalCop star systems.

Imperial society seems to suit wealthy families who seek less intrusion and bureaucracy. They pride themselves on living by a system of values that centre on ethics and honour, and believe that all citizens should be respected, even those of the lowest status. These new Imperialists live within complex social codes, and uphold ideals that have been common to several of the most successful ancient societies on Earth. Led by a hereditary monarchy and strictly stratified, the Empire continues to grow as its culture is extended into new star systems.

**The origins of this behemoth lie in one visionary family's defiant stand.**



## Origins of a dynasty

The Empire's story begins its long journey in the middle of the 23rd century, with the savvy and wealthy Marlin Duval. Duval was a Federation citizen, who – angry and disenchanted with the Federation – voyaged with her family and supporters to Achenar 6d to start a colony based on her own ideals and philosophy. This was very different to the Empire we know today.

She installed a democratic governing body with an administrative council at the helm, and the Republic of Achenar was founded. This system was a huge success, and the colony expanded, with a strict doctrine based on peace and dialogue.

This idyllic commune garnered success until the year 2296, when a tragic shuttle accident killed Marlin Duval, her partner and her children. Her brother Henson Duval immediately took control of the Senate, as Marlin's closest living relative. He disbanded the ruling council, installing himself as leader of the Republic of Achenar, and began the transformation of the Republic into an empire. During the following two decades Henson converted the colonists to his own ideology, and in 2320 he was crowned as the first Emperor of the Galactic Empire.

## Battle of Achenar

News of the successful colony on Achenar reached the Sol system and sparked interest among young men and women. However, as the colony grew, it increasingly came into conflict with indigenous life. Details – certainly within the Empire itself – are hazy, but it's thought that a sentient but primitive species called Achenar 6d home, and that Duval's followers were routinely butchering them to clear land.

How much this animated the White House at the time, and how much they simply resented a thriving colony nakedly rejecting their way of life, are matters still disputed today. But the executive began to plan to forcibly annex the colony. Late in the year 2323 an armada was assembled at Beta Hydri and began the journey to Achenar with a small logistical support team.

Once in the Achenar system, Admiral Richard Morgan began to establish forward operating bases, but was met with intense resistance from local starships. First the fleet was attacked, followed by the fragile supply lines.

During the following year the Federation continued to struggle against the local forces, but early in 2325 the Achenar resistance counterattacked in what they coined the 'Great Battle of Liberation'. Every ship owned by an Achenar colonist was placed into service for a massive and overwhelming attack against the Federation fleet.

The operation succeeded in forcing the armada to retreat from Achenar to their base in Beta Hydri. This was a major turning point for the Federation, in that it represented the first time they had had to accept another sovereign power, rather than being able to subdue and subsume them. It too was a watershed moment for the nascent colony, and a source of immense pride. The episode served to bolster and define Imperial identity for generations.

During the following fifty years, skirmishes continued between the two navies as the Federation was determined to disband the colony. Henson Duval and his inner circle understood early on that a perimeter zone would have to be established around Achenar to help defend the capital against attack. The decision was made to expand into adjacent systems.

Over time, the Federation realised that the Empire was here to stay, and their policy quietly changed from aggression to containment.





## Expansion and terraforming

In the centuries that followed, Imperial systems experienced significant population increase as people from independent, GalCop and Federation planets migrated to them. This necessitated a series of terraforming projects that began on Cemiss 2 in 3080. Emperor Gaylen Trasken Duval approved the new Imperial settlement shortly before passing at the age of 109.

**On August 5, 3301, Emperor Hengist Duval was assassinated by Brendan Paul Darius.**

■ The Imperial Eagle is Gutamaya's interpretation of a classic ship frame



## Enter Emperor's Dawn

Over the next two centuries, while the Sirius Corporation terraformed several planets in Imperial systems, both the Empire itself and the Duval family increased dramatically in size. Meanwhile, an ultra-traditionalist movement within the Empire had grown large and dangerous.

A group of these Imperialists formed a rebel group called Emperor's Dawn. They feared the dissolution of Imperial values and traditions, and resented modernising influences on the monarchy. Hengist Duval became a target.

The covert group operated their own navy out of the Kausalya system and had outposts on Namarii, Tabaldak, and LTT 874. Until the assassination, they were mostly considered a nuisance, and operated mostly in secret across both the Empire and Federation.

On August 5, 3301, Emperor Hengist Duval was assassinated by Brendan Paul Darius, a high-ranking Imperial official and member of Emperor's Dawn. The Imperial succession was thrown into question, and both

Arissa Lavigny-Duval and Aisling Duval were considered to hold legitimate claims. On October 6, a new Emperor was finally chosen by a vote of the Imperial Senate. Arissa Lavigny-Duval was formally crowned on October 18, 3301, during an elaborate ceremony on Achenar.

A week later, Senator Denton Patreus joined forces with the Federal Navy and began a military campaign to destroy Emperor's Dawn's navy and facilities. A large number of outposts and forward operating bases were attacked and heavily damaged in both Imperial and Federation space. There was very little resistance, and on October 28, 3301, victory was declared after the Federal Navy levelled the agitators' headquarters in the Kausalya system.

However, the group and its cause continue to exist within the Empire, and their navy and outposts are quietly being rebuilt by a small group controlling the Tabaldak system. At the time of writing, Tabaldak is exploited by Admiral Denton Patreus and both the system and Emperor's Dawn are experiencing a boom in their respective economies.



■ The Imperial Courier is the emblematic Imperial ship – elegant, well-shielded and blisteringly fast



### The race to the Pleiades

If there were two events that pushed the superpowers into the great unknown and truly reshaped populated space, this reporter believes they were the discoveries of the Meta-Alloys and the Thargoid structures in the Pleiades Nebula. The discovery of a type of intelligent life that mirrored our own will and determination was not only awe-inspiring but a landmark event for our species. During Zachary Hudson's thirty-minute speech regarding the Thargoid attack on Federal ships, there was no criminal activity reported at all in the Nanomam system. Emperor Arissa Lavigny-Duval pleaded with her citizens to remain calm and assured them that humanity would come together and survive whatever was thrown our way.

For the early years of the thirty-fourth century, that led up to those incredible events, both the Federation and Empire had been locked in an arms race which many had taken to calling a new 'cold war'. It took an attack from an extraterrestrial lifeform to change the way the powers viewed populated space and humanity's direction.

3303 was truly a year of great change for the superpowers, and the human race. The leadership of the superpowers formed the cross-power Aegis organization to study the Thargoids. But after a Federal fleet was destroyed by the aliens in Pleiades Sector IR-W d1-55, the two superpowers allowed Aegis to begin research that focused on defence.

The engineer Liz Ryder and the engineer-turned-astrobiologist Professor Palin were recruited to produce weapons that could destroy Thargoids. By the end of that same year, both the Federation and Empire had withdrawn from the Pleiades Nebula, passing all responsibility for the region's security to Aegis.

### Till The Stars Fade

Imperial society is unquestionably a success story. However, its reliance on slaves and clones instead of robotics and artificial intelligence could become the metaphorical anchor that slows progress and stagnates growth – not to mention the moral outrage Imperial slavery causes in other societies.

### Imperial society is unquestionably a success story.

The technology revealed to us in the Guardians' ruins, unleashed by scientists like Ram Tah, is pushing humanity ahead with unprecedented speed. Continued reliance on slaves, while other societies begin to experiment with more and more autonomous defence technology, could render the Empire outmatched in the future.

However, Arissa Lavigny-Duval is one of the most respected of Galactic powers, and under her leadership the Empire is larger and more successful than it has ever been. It seems clear that the greatest threat to this venerable civilisation comes from without humanity.

### History of the Empire

**Text:** J C Warren

**Images:** Sebastian Wehmeyer, OrangePheonix, Zer0axis

**Design:** McNicholl

## HAVE YOU SEEN MOVIES IN

## WITCHSPACE?

Studies being conducted at Stephen Young's Academy in Lalande 6320 suggest that pilots who spend a lot of time jumping through long, consecutive routes report having had strange, otherworldly experiences in which they claim to have seen old holo-vids or even read stories.

TEXT: Dr Noesis PHOTOGRAPHY: Starfox DESIGN: Liam Keating

This phenomenon, believed to be a combination of the light, sounds and electromagnetic radiation pilots are exposed to during long or repeated sequential jumps, can cause a measurable spike in activity in several areas of the brain. These include Wernicke's area, the visual cortex and the temporal lobe, resulting in affected pilots experiencing these strange, hypnotic effects.

An unfortunate side effect of these experiences is that they can be so distracting that pilots often lose focus, impairing control of their vessel when exiting hyperspace. It is hy-

pothesized that a significant number of incidents where ships have performed emergency drops upon encountering the outer corona of a star after exiting a jump may be a result of this problem, and the Pilots Federation has suggested that it may commission an investigation into these findings later in the year.

Research into the effect is ongoing, and possible means of protecting against the effect are still under investigation. In the meantime, the project lead, Professor Lucas, made the following statement for susceptible pilots:

*"Witchspace Hypnosis is a difficult issue and we are working to learn more about it and how to stop it. In the meantime, we would urge pilots who believe they might be susceptible to these effects to ensure they zero their throttle before exiting a jump to allow them plenty of time to reorient themselves after experiencing an episode."*



Professor Lucas  
Stephen Young's  
Academy

セチラビット  
CETI RABBITSおいしい肉 あなたの顔のために  
DELICIOUS MEAT FOR YOUR FACE

カロリー	CALORIES/ 100 G	135	CAL
タンパク質	PROTEIN	20	G
炭水化物	CARBOHYDRATES	0	%
脂肪	FAT	1	G

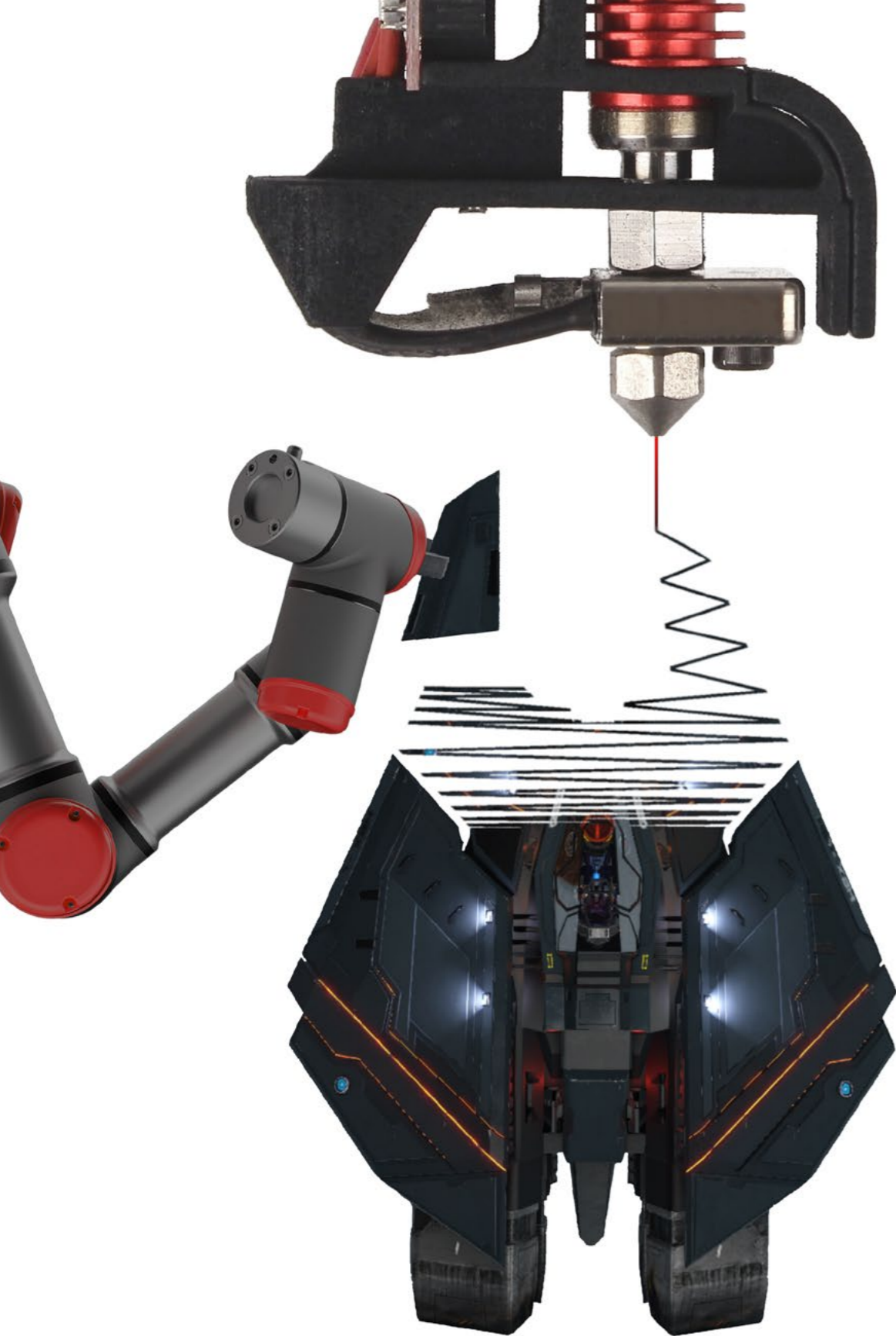
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顔を吸うための超素晴らしい肉  
セチラビット 唯一の肉です

あなたは深い喉にしようとする必要があります

1,675 CR

KAUFMANIS HUB, 47 CETI  
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**REBUILD**

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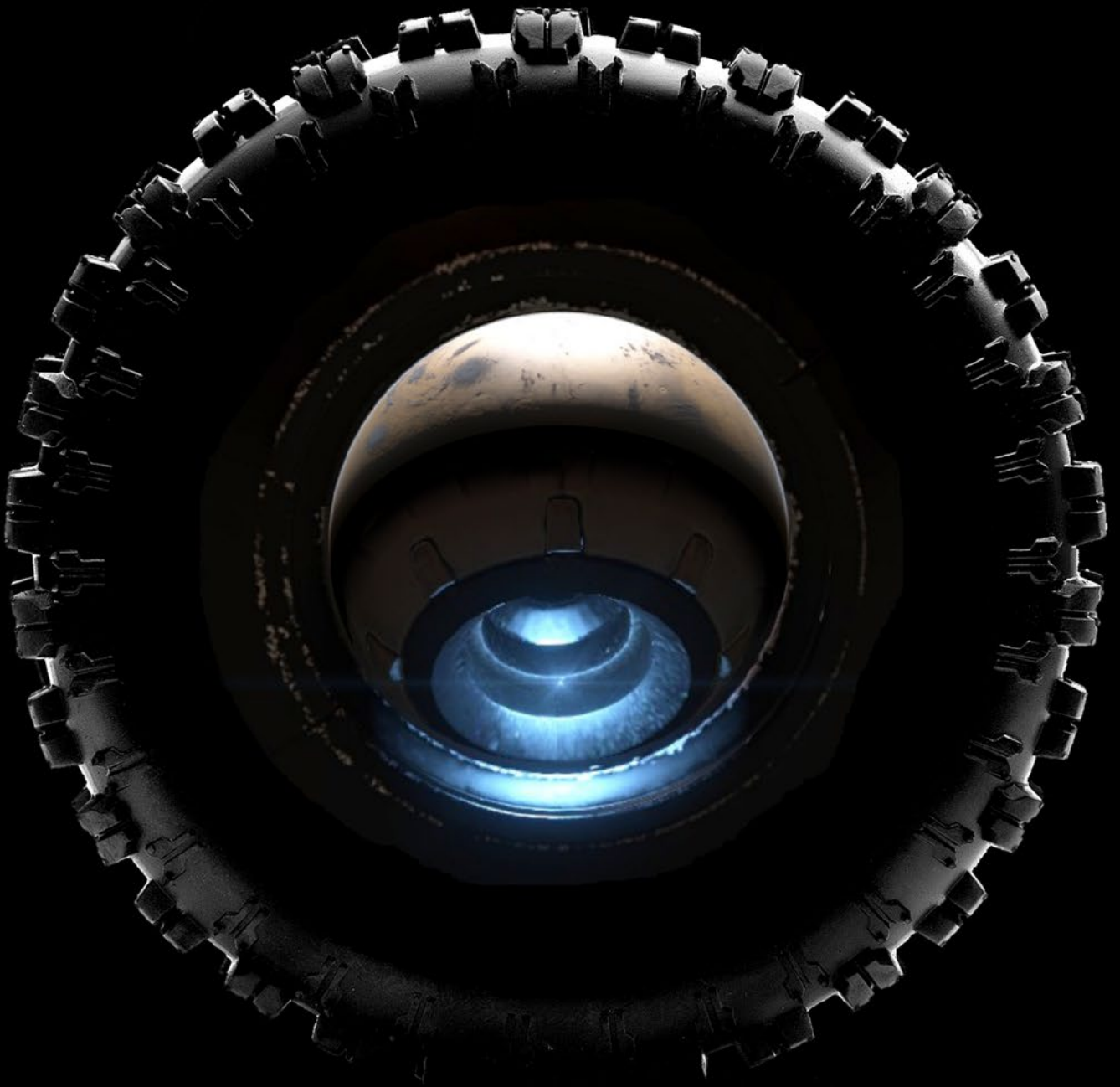
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