

The Imperial Games

The Imperial Games of Thyatis were originally used as a means of sacrifice over the graves of recently buried relatives. Two slaves would be pitted against each other in a fight to the death. This process became more and more formalised, to a point where the fights became a means of entertainment unto themselves. While there is no formal "league" as it might be compared to modern times, tradition has developed a number of annual games into something that comes close in its resemblance. Moreover, as Thyatis has conquered other lands it has imported and exported aspects of these games.

The reasons and types of games are as varied as the people who sponsor them. Some areas have regular occurring holiday games that often take the form of tournaments. In most places, festival games are sponsored by individual citizens in order to buy popularity. There are also underground games that revolve around gambling. Some of the games are to the death, some involve more than just fighting. A gladiator school that decides to follow a circuit around the Empire must be prepared for all sorts of possibilities. In the Hinterlands they may be executing criminals - in Retebius they are playing a ball game.

Gladiatorial schools are rated by their recognized accomplishments by Thyatian officials. Theoretically a school that does well in a region will be given a letter of accomplishment by the local governor. The number of these letters acquired determines the schools official rank. However politics can often come into play here, and favored schools may get letters much easier than foreign schools. Sometimes schools are required to handle some out-of-game tasks to get a letter. The school rankings are Sacrificium (sacrifices), Varietas (entertainment, 1 letter), Professio (professionals, 3 letters), Veneratio (honored, 6 letters), Veneratio cum Laude (honored with honors, often just "Laude", 9 letters), Optimus (the best, 12 letters), Vinco (masters, 16 letters).

The regions are: Hinterlands, Ochalea, Pearl Islands, Redstone, Wesrourke, Caerdwicca, Buhrohur, Carytion, Hattias, Kerendas, Machetos, Sclaras, Retebius, Tel Akbir, Vyalia, Thyatis City.

Hinterlands are effectively split into two types of games. The local military runs underground execution and gambling games that can bring in good money and curry a quick reputation for someone who wants out quickly. The locals also have their own, non-lethal games that include king of the hill, dominance, etc. While these bring less cash and immediate fame, they will build reputation and good will amongst the tribes. This could be used to an advantage to the local governor...

Pearl Islands. The games here are non-lethal and not frequented much by actual schools. There is a local school that will happily accept foreign challenges for a festival and the local governor needs some help with pirates.

Ochalea. These peace loving folk have surprisingly brutal, but non-lethal games that are held on holidays. The gladiators from here are unique and effective, but they refuse to fight to the death in the games.

Redstone, Westrourke and Caerdwicca. These are more traditional style games that are sponsored by local politicians and organizations. However sometimes Alphasians will become involved in the games, either as captured slaves/criminals or even as a visiting school. There is also an underground circuit.

Buhrohur. The dwarves love to fight but don't see much point in losing their lives over it. The games here tend to be more tactical such as king of the hill (which they excel at). They also have some stunning underground arenas and interesting monster battles.

Carytion. The wealthy come here to be amused and these games can be some of the cruelest in the Empire, but also the most financially rewarding. Games are individually sponsored for personal entertainment and some of the most dangerous beasts can be encountered here.

Hattias. The most traditional region to fight in. Fights tend to be unequal and to the death for ritualistic reasons, especially when foreigners are involved. Traditional roles are required to be filled. Foreign schools have extremely difficult times getting letters from here.

Kerendas. Naturally the games here have a strong equestrian nature to them. They also tend to be of a more traditional bent, though not as much as in Hattias. There are state-sponsored tournaments along with personally funded festivals.

Machetos is actually something of a proving grounds for many adventurers looking for a challenge. They resemble less gladiatorial games and more like medieval knight tournaments with jousting and melees.

Sclaras is where the magic is. Bizarre arenas and amazing opponents. Only the bravest schools come here. Many of the games tend to be more like challenges posed by bored wizards in search of entertainment. However, any school wanting to add some arcane muscle needs to visit.

Retebius. Another region not for the faint of heart, these arenas often go up into the sky. Most schools that come to these games don't know how to fight in the air - the very few that emerge victorious do when they leave. While combat is rarely to the death it often borders on it by the nature of the fights, but the rewards are well worth it.

Tel Akbir. A taste of Ylaruam in Thyatis. The games here are mixed but the opportunity to pick up some desert warriors make it a must-visit.

Vyalia. The elves are not fond of the Imperial games, but love the chance to test their skills. The games are non-lethal and the elves love seeing foreign schools flounder at their unique and often unserious tests. The rare school that treats them with respect and performs well wins their hearts.

Thyatis City. The heart of the Empire, the championships are held here before the Emperor himself. Besides the Imperial tournament, many side games are held by individual aristocrats all over the city and region.

Rewards

Rewards for individual matches come in treasure and Reputation.

Gold rewards for matches tend to follow this pattern:

Small Prize: 10gp/level

Medium Prize: 50gp/level

Large Prize: 100gp/level

In addition, many matches may have special equipment available as a prize.

Reputation is kept in two scores - Local and Imperial. When a new region is entered, the Local Reputation will be set to a portion of the Imperial Reputation (based on the locality). Generally the Local Reputation goal is around 100 for getting a letter. The Imperial Reputation is increased by 10% of the local reputation.

Recruiting Gladiators

There are several ways to recruit a gladiator into a school. The basic way is to visit the local slave trade office and check out if they have anyone for sale. Gladiators usually cost about 100gp/lvl to recruit, but some may cost more or less depending on the circumstances of their slavery. Another way is to purchase them from a rival school. This needs to be negotiated. Finally a citizen may join a gladiator school by selling himself to the school - some do this for profit, some do it for excitement.

Each arena will have a list of the sources and types of gladiators available for recruitment.

Bookers

Gambling often takes place to some degree at gladiator competitions, but for underground games is often the only way a school can make money. These arenas will have a "booker" who will negotiate a fight between two schools and then handle the betting. Odds are generally determined by the difference between the two schools' local reputation. In addition, the booker will usually have requests for type of fights that will increase the popularity of the fight - this can be rated from 1 to 10. Some bloodthirsty underground arenas require death matches in order to make any significant money at all. Use the following formula to abstract the "take" for each match for the winners. The losers get 1/10th of that.

$$((1/10\text{th Opponent's Rep} - 1/10\text{th Your Rep}) \times 5) + (\text{Popularity of Match} \times 5) \times \text{level}$$