

Horde vs. Alliance in PvP

Within the game of World of Warcraft, the Horde is generally more successful in Player versus Player combat situations. I have found this to be true, as a general rule, across the vast array of servers within the game. If one spends enough time reading forums regarding this subject, he/she will see that there are certainly exceptions to this rule. One will find occasional proud Alliance players who will claim that on "*their server*" the Alliance finds more success in PvP. Typically, these statements are founded upon little to no form of convincing proof. More often than not, these players will make statements such as, "Alliance wins like 60% of the time on my server". With very little frequency will one find any concrete evidence that this is indeed so. Most players agree that there is a significant imbalance in the overall success in battlegrounds, amount of honor earned, and arena victories, all in favor of the Horde faction. Deolynx, one of the most respected Alliance PvPers on the Mok 'Nathal realm in which I did the significant portion of my research, writes, "Horde wins almost all BGs unless you're in a premade, or it is AV, or I'm in the battleground" (Deolynx, Blizzard). Although arrogant, this post is fairly characteristic of those made by respected players. Most all agree that the Horde dominates PvP with the exception of Alterac Valley (which will be explained later) and the participation of extremely skilled Alliance players.

Those on this side of the argument seem to present many more logical and practical potential causes for this phenomenon. I have my own opinions on this matter and have experienced this imbalance first hand. I decided to keep track of my experience within the Arathi Basin battleground while using my level 39 Draenei Hunter (Alliance). Out of the 27

matches played, my team lost 27 times. In fact, in all of my experiences with PvP combat, I have never been on the winning side of a single battleground match. I am, however, almost always among the top five players who compete based on Blizzard's battleground ranking system. I say this only to verify that I am not the cause of these continual failures. One player on a forum at Worldofwar.net writes, "Does anyone happen to have an answer for this? This is completely just baffling me as to what kind of advantages the horde have over the Alliance. Why are they so better? What makes them so better? I've been trying to do Arathi Basin for the past couple of days, and I've never been on an Alliance team that has over 500 points compared to the Horde's 2000" (Kaltes). Statements like these can be found all over forums and blogs online. These questions are evident of the same sorts of concerns that pressed me to do research on this topic. As is the general consensus of the online forums, and as is my personal belief, the Horde finds greater success in organized PvP situations due to several different factors.

There are several theories that arise from Blizzard forums as to why this phenomenon exists. They vary significantly in variety of origin, player credibility, and degree of extremeness. Among players who display credibility and intelligence within the game, however, there seems to be a common thread of ideas. Because the results within individual can vary regarding PvP victories, it is difficult to find a universal list of ideas. Because of this, I decided to do the sizable portion of my research within server forums. The server in which I spent most of my time researching was Mok 'Nathal. It was in this realm that I lost 27 consecutive Arathi Basin battlegrounds as an Alliance player. I also conducted research in Silvermoon, where I have a level 25 Blood Elf Warlock and have played mostly the Warsong Gulch battleground. Within this server, the results have not

been nearly as convincing. Although as a Horde player I have won a vast majority of battlegrounds, it is not as convincing as my 27 out of 27 defeats in the Mok 'Nathal server.

I find it also important to clarify that there is a relatively universal exception to this the rule that Horde is typically more successful: Alterac Valley. Within this battleground, most players agree that Alliance is dominant. One article, written by Elizabeth Wachowski of *WoW Insider* on this battle grounds writes, "Basically, the Horde says that the Alterac Valley map favors Alliance, since Horde have to make it past the bridge chokepoint and the Stormpike graveyard is more secluded and defended than Frostwolf. The Alliance, on the other hand, blame the Horde's perennial losses on AFK people, a defeatist attitude, and a lack of defense, and note that Horde seemingly has no problems steamrolling Alliance in WSG and AB" (June, 2007). This quote tells the reader a few things. First, that there is a situation where the Alliance has found success, despite the fact that this seems to be due mainly due to geographical elements within the game and not necessarily faction superiority. Second, it is a generally accepted fact that Horde dominates in WSG and AB. The argument that the Horde has success in these other two battlegrounds seems to be less of an effective argument for the Alliance, and more of a testament to the fact that in battlegrounds where there doesn't seem to be an imbalance geographically, the Horde will dominate. In other words, when you even the playing field, the Horde usually takes the prize.

So aside from the exception of Alterac Valley, the potentially imbalanced battleground, what makes the Horde so successful in PvP? The most convincingly universal point that is expressed in forums is the advanced level of organization that Horde teams

display. Many players seem to share a common sentiment with a player named Notsochubbyleprecon who writes, "Horde almost always ends up as a more organized group, Alliance seem just to be out for kills on their own behalf not adding much to the team" (Worldofwar.net 2007). This theory aligns itself perfectly with my own experiences in battleground situations. Having played both Horde and Alliance avatars somewhat extensively in Warsong Gulch and Arathi Basin, I have noticed that there is significantly less communication within Alliance battleground chats. The communication that usually does go on is typically negative and unhelpful. There is usually a significant amount of order-giving early on in the battle, which then turns to mass-complaining and blaming as the team starts to fall behind. This however, is not usually the case with the Horde, in my experiences. Immediately there is huge volumes and strategizing before the match even starts. In Arathi Basin, for instance, the team will usually pick two bases to take and hold. Unlike the players within Alliance, Horde players usually obey these commands. They seem to have a greater understanding of the fact that it is more important to hold bases that have been captured, rather than abandoning these bases and trying to claim new ones. Throughout the battle, Horde players do a much better job of keeping the whole team informed of the situation at all bases, which allows everyone to better work as a whole. From what I have found, Alliance players typically resort to complaining and blaming. I do not mean to generalize; I am simply emphasizing how my own experiences align with what is written by other players online.

Why is the Horde more organized? Is it age? From what I have found, there are no convincing statistics that show that either faction attracts any age group with greater frequency. It would seem logical that younger players would typically choose Horde

characters because they would more likely be attracted to the more “evil” faction. The enormous success of video game such as Grand Theft Auto and Halo, and movies such as Texas Chainsaw Massacre and the Saw series, shows that the younger generation is attracted to brutality. Because younger players are typically less mature, it would seem that organization would be significantly less on the Horde. However, it doesn’t seem to be true that younger players are always choosing Horde characters. Each forum poster has his own opinion, but most seem to agree with Powalord when he writes, “Both factions are the same damn age... There is no "mature" faction” (Allakhazam’s Magical Realm). Some older players who have written on forums note how they play Horde characters only, and their children play Alliance characters because they want to look similar to traditional super-heroes. On the other hand, researchers such as Nicky Yee have found that research shows a greater number of younger players on the Horde faction. Originally, I think it was typical for older players to choose the Horde. I think that it is tough to really measure without doing statistical analysis of Blizzard data. Yee may be right, but I believe it is typically a realm specific quality. Billthecat writes, “(I) think a good portion of the older players started horde characters first, based on previous warcraft experiences. In my opinion, the previous warcrafts have portrayed the humans (alliance) as greedy and traitorous, while oftentimes showing the horde to be honor-bound, but struggling with "inner demons" so to speak”. In my opinion, the original tie between older players and the Horde may still have roots and a chain effect by drawing higher quality, more mature, and older players, thus explaining why they would be more organized in battleground situations.

Because there is no concrete evidence that any age group plays either faction with greater frequency, it is important to consider other possibilities as to why the Horde finds

greater success in these PvP situations. The answer, of course, is their greater degree of organization. The real question then, is “why?” What other possibilities could there be besides age? One other factor to consider is that of “twinks”. Generally, the Alliance has a significantly larger population, and consequently is much more social. There are more players within the Alliance faction who play the game to make friends, chat, and role-play. Because the Horde has a smaller population, there are less human distractions for players. Players are more focused on game generated interests, such as gear (i.e. “twinking” in PvP). Therefore, there are fewer players in the Horde faction who are simply in the battleground to “try something new”. In other words, a smaller social sphere leads to fewer distractions from in-game goals and progression, thus producing higher quality and more “twinked-out” players. The players who spend less time socializing will likely spend more time in battlegrounds and consequently gain more experience.

Lastly, it is important to consider population imbalance. Because the Alliance has so many more players than the Horde, they usually experience longer queue times. This is because there are several players in line to fill every one spot that a Horde member fills. Because the Horde has such shorter queue lines, they spend significantly more time in actual battles, thus gaining more battleground experience and honor. Not only does this make them more intelligent players, but it allows them to gain PvP gear faster. As this cycle continues, it begins to compound on itself. The shorter queues lead to more experience, which leads to more organization and maturity within the battlegrounds, which leads to more victories, which leads to more honor, which leads to better gear, which then leads to more victories. The cycle seems never-ending and extremely difficult to break.

There are several factors that could possibly explain why the Horde seems to be so much more successful in PvP situations. Organization, age, twinks, and queue lines are only possibilities that help to explain this phenomenon. It may be all of these combined, or it may be only a few in combination. Whatever the case, it is clear that the Horde currently holds several advantages over the Alliance in PvP situations, and it plays out through their victories. Whether right or wrong, the Horde seems to almost always come out on top. The problem is that Blizzard has done a fine job of making sure that the environments (aside from Alterac Valley) are fairly equal. It is currently out Blizzards control as to which faction any given player chooses to align himself. Therefore, there will more than likely not be an easy solution to this imbalance in the future.

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