

HomeLAN Fed Battlefield Mod Coordinator Interview

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HomeLAN: Prior to this new job, what were you doing to pay the bills?

Lawrence Brown: The last paying job I had was working on Crimson Skies for X-box. For the last two years I was basically living off my savings so that I could put all my time into working on Battlefield: Pirates.

HomeLAN: How did the Mod Support Coordinator gig come about?

Lawrence Brown: That's a long story, but basically I had been getting some notice at EA for my work on pirates. At the same time I had been working with Eric Smith, the creator of Battlecraft. He was providing some of the maps and a few other things for Pirates. Through those contacts I started getting questions referred to me from the mod community, which I was always glad to help with. After a while of doing this, I mentioned that it might be a good idea to have one person whose responsibility it was to handle all this kind of support stuff. It turns out that they had simultaneously been thinking the same thing, and we just developed the idea from there.

HomeLAN: Why does EA believe supporting mods for the Battlefield series to be this important?

Lawrence Brown: It's not a secret that mods help extend the life of a game. After a while even the best games get a little old. You've done it all, seen it all, and shot it all. But when people start releasing their own custom variations of the game, suddenly you have a whole new experience waiting for you. The fans are what make the game, and mods are an easy way for everyone to get involved.

HomeLAN: Can you briefly describe what your responsibilities will be as Mod Support Coordinator?

Lawrence Brown: Basically, I'll be operating as a go-between connecting the modders to the programmers. Because of my background as a game artist and my experience working with programmers I'll be doing such things as reviewing the tools to make sure they are artist-friendly, writing tutorials on how to use those tools, answering questions and listening to feedback from modders, and providing solutions to mod teams when they need particular issues solved.

HomeLAN: In terms of the two current Battlefield games, how will you and EA try to help mod teams with their projects?

Lawrence Brown: Support for the current games will not stop, even after BF2 comes out. There are a lot of great mods out now with even more still in production. We'll still continue to tweak the tools, answer questions, and try to solve problems for the teams that continue on the BF42 and BFV platforms. There has been such great work done on these that we want to see it continue. For example: I'm currently in the process of rewriting some of the existing tutorials on the MDT website and adding some new ones, making small updates and changes here and there to make them clearer and more accurate.

HomeLAN: With Battlefield 2 coming up, what plans does EA have in supporting mods for that game?

Lawrence Brown: That's a big question. We have some amazing things planned, things you've never seen any game publisher do before. Unfortunately, I'm not at liberty to say anything more specific at the moment other than I'll give you the following example: For BF2, among other things, DICE is creating the mod tools at the same time as they are making the game. This means modders won't have to reverse-engineer the game like we had to with bf42. Everything will be there and working from the beginning. Let's just say that as a modder myself, I'm very excited about what's going to happen with BF2.

HomeLAN: Is it possible that mod tools for Battlefield 2 will be released before the game itself is released to stores?

Lawrence Brown: That's a scheduling thing more than anything else. Like I said, the tools are being worked on even as we speak, but of course we don't want to release something until its just right.

HomeLAN: How do you feel that this move by EA will affect the mod community as a whole? Do you think that this is the first step in more official mod support from publishers?

Lawrence Brown: I think this is going to raise the bar as far as game publishers supporting modders is concerned. Like I said, I can't go into details yet, but once some of these things that are planned are in place, other publishers are going to say "How come we're not doing that?" In my opinion, if we do our job right, BF2 is going to be as much fun to mod as it is to play.

HomeLAN: How will this move affect the development of Battlefield: Pirates?

Lawrence Brown: Development on Pirates isn't going to stop. You haven't seen much lately, but those of you that have followed it from the beginning know that I don't generally show things off until after they're complete.

It's too soon for any official announcements, but let's just say that part of what I bring to my position as Mod Support Coordinator is my hands-on experience creating mods and the unique perspective I have because of it. This is something EA values and wants me to continue with, so you are going to see future versions of Pirates, made with the same tools that everyone else will be using just to show everyone what's possible.

HomeLAN: Finally is there anything else you wish to say about your new job?

Lawrence Brown: Arrrgh! I be promised a new eyepatch and a shiny new hook fer a signing bonus! I still be waitin for me booty! (just kidding..)

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