

Duel Masters

Problems and Solutions

By Eric Pietrocupo
February 14th, 2013

Introduction

This document is an overview of what bothers me in Duel Masters. I like Duel Masters, but it still have its flaws. At the same time, I am doing this to find a way to solve those problems for my own game design. So I'll list the problems with possible solutions and I'll list other ideas that I wanted to use in my game.

Problems of Duel masters

What you pay is not what you get: The concept behind a CCG is that each card has abilities and powers that each has a cost. The stronger the card, the higher the cost. Duel Masters seems to follow those rules ... most of the time. But there are many occasion where the rules are broken

- Rare cards get bonus points
- Water and Darkness are powered down by 1000
- Evolution creatures get bonus points
- 2 cards with very similar abilities and cost could have 1 of the have a bonus ability.
- Cards inflate in power with additional release of expansions.

This has the effect of unbalancing the game and I am totally against it. I promote the idea of what you pay is what you get. You do not get fancy bonus or minus for any other reason that is not related to the cost.

Some factions have no blockers: Nature and Fire have no blockers. I understand that each faction needs to have a flavor of its own, but blockers are an essential part of the core game. I don't care if there are different kinds of flavor for blockers, but all factions should have blockers.

Effects that target everybody are too powerful: For some reason, effects that are relative to the number of creature are way too powerful. For example, "Holy awe", a spell that target everybody, is over used in many cases. Its cost has even been increased by 1 in the "Kaijudo" remake of duel masters. They seem to have made the card cost the equivalent of 3 times the effect, since it could be true that there will be an average of 3 monsters in play. Else maybe having an inflatable cost could be the solution. Like pay 2 per creature. I think this is the solution they used in Magic the Gathering. Else removing them might be the solution. Survivor creatures also fit in that category. At least they have a meaningful additional cost.

Obvious cheap abilities: Some abilities are just cheap, for example, there is an ability where if you have all fire mana in your mana zone, you get a +2000 strength. In other words, if you make a 1 color deck you gain a bonus. Again, you do not pay for what you get, and 1 color deck are easier to play. It would have made more sense if you gain a bonus with the presence of a different color forcing players to use 2 colors which should be slightly to play because the player is no sure he will get the color he needs. So there is a possibility that the ability does not get triggered.

Spells eat up space in the deck: Many players prefer creature to spell, and in Duel Masters it is much more important since you cannot win the game by only casting spells like in Magic TG. Some times,

spells takes too much space in the deck especially if they have a low cost. You can sometimes achieve more with creatures. I do like spells, but I am thinking to implement as a third function where each cards has 2 abilities, it can be used as a creature or as a spell. CardFight Vanguard seems to have removed spells entirely from the game.

Lacking of Cards in hands: This was a serious problem in Magic the Gathering. It was partially solved in Duel Masters by making the game last shorter and making you draw your shields. But still, more than often players lack of cards. My solution is like in a deck building game, players draw up to 5 cards at the end of their turn. It makes sure they always have a good amount of tactical options, and it also allows players to read their cards while others are playing.

Shield Triggers: There are various issues regarding shield triggers. First, playing a shield trigger card from your hand makes you pay extra for something you do not get. Again, does not follow the: what you pay is what you get. Second, you can cast high spells easily as shield trigger, especially at the beginning of the game when you would normally not have the mana to cast it. An idea was that shield trigger required you to own the mana in your zone to use it. So if you shield triggered a card with a cost of 6, you needed at least 6 cards in your mana zone.

Finally, the worst abuse is having cards of different colors being used only for the shield trigger. For example, I have seen nature (Green) decks with 4 Holy Awe (yellow). It was almost impossible to cast the Holy Awe because they were the only 4 yellow cards in the deck, but they could shield trigger with no problems for free. So if shield trigger is used, maybe requiring having matching colors in the mana zone should be a good solution.

Evolution creatures are powerful: Evolution creature are way too powerful, not only they get serious increase of power even if you consider the original cost of the creature, but they also negate summoning sickness. So they get a free speed attacker ability. Personally, I suggest that playing evolution on summoned creatures, does not remove the sickness, but playing on creatures summoned last turn does not make it summon sick either. As for determining the cost, I think using the minimum cost for that race + the abilities of the evo + a small bonus for the trouble of evolving the creature should be OK.

Known Victory or defeat: In some games you get in a situation where you know you cannot lose or win because you can calculate all the attacks and defenses possible. I found that a bit annoying because it eat up the hope of a player. This is why I wanted to use a more random victory condition. What I want is to make player destroy cards of their opponent's deck when they pass through the enemy line. The goal is to destroy 5 seal cards hidden in the deck. This way, the players does not know if he is going to win or lose next turn and the defender can still hope for a reversal.

Units Impossible to kill: There are also those situations where a unit is so strong that it cannot be possibly killed. The impossibility to band creatures together and the low amount of spells to get rid of a creature sometimes make it hard to defeat a strong creature especially if you have no other creature in your deck matching that creature. An idea could be to have some enchantment spells that can be attached to creatures to power them up.

Cost 1 cards: Spells and creatures that cost 1 is are a complete waste of space and they can lead to abusive combos and card plays due to its very low cost. So I personally suggest that all cards should cost at least 2. I had the idea that enchantment or abilities you do not want to price could all cost 1.

New Ideas

No ability gives power boost: Even if you pay for what you get, it seems that creatures with no abilities are much weaker than creatures that have abilities. It is probably related to the reduction of strategic options. So an idea is to power up all creatures with no abilities by 500 point to allow them to at least win ties.

Groove: An idea I had from Fighting games and CardFight Vanguard that could replace the shield trigger. This is a catch up mechanic that allows players to use damage inflicted on them to unleash attacks on their enemy. The way it could work is that each destroyed card is placed face down in the groove. Some cards or situations could allow a player to use cards from his groove to activate abilities. The spent cards are discarded. Maybe groove effects are only used as interrupt. This promote the idea of catch up mechanic and makes it similar to shield trigger that takes effect in opponent's turn.

Seals: Each player will be forced to place 5 seal cards in their deck. Seal could have various abilities and effects. Besides being the goal to destroy them, I had some ideas on how to use them:

- A seal can be played as a spell, it use groove instead of mana.
- A destroyed seal is placed in front of the player and it gives him a permanent power up.

Lower Creature Strength: Does the creature strength has to range between 1000 and 10000. That makes it hard to read. Why not 10 to 100, or 1 to 10. The problem with 1 to 10 will be that creatures with no abilities would get a .5 bonus, giving strength like 4.5. The advantage is if each point of strength destroys a card, then you know that 4.5 will destroy 4 cards.

Soaking Damage: Each card will have an armor value. When the attacker pass, the player must flip cards from the top of the deck until the armor value of all drawn cards exceed the attacker's strength. So if for example, the creature strength is 8 and the defender only has armor 3 cards, he will destroy 3 cards that will go in his groove. I am not sure how I would determine the armor level, it will probably be directly related to the cost of the creature since players need to balance their creature cost because a deck with pricy creature will not run pretty well. This way, it should keep the balance between players with various armor levels. A deck with only high cost creature will be well armored but very hard to play.

Tag Team and Multiplayer: I want the game to support multiplayer and possibly tag team (an idea I had for duel masters). Duel Masters in multi player is awesome and I want to keep it this way in my game. Probably like in DM, a player could recover a destroyed seal when he defeats an opponent.

Theme: Chinese Elements: For the theme of the game, I like the 5 element structure, and personally I am thinking to use the Chinese elements: Earth (rock), Fire, Water (Ice), Metal (Robots), Tree (Plants). I think that will complement each other pretty well and will offer a good variety of creatures.

Dual monster categories: In order to make effect targeting easier, it could be more interesting to either have 2 race per creature or 2 properties that can be assigned to a creature to make it targetable by effects or a spells. CardFight Vanguard seems to do that.

Deck size: Personally, I like the 50 cards deck. In theory, if you can draw up to 5 cards each round, you can pass through your deck in 10 turns. But it will probably arrive faster if you take damage.

Designable Card Game: The most important idea is that all the abilities will be available in a list and player will have necessary templates to design their own cards. If some abilities are too strong, the ability list could simply be adjusted and it should fix all the cards.