

Variance Sucks ...

Introduction Randomizerless systems in tabletop RPGs, especially those focused on tactical combat, offer a distinct and compelling experience that stands in contrast to traditional systems reliant on dice rolls. The primary appeal of randomizerless systems lies in their emphasis on player skill, strategy, and tactical decision-making. Here are some thoughts on the benefits and potential downsides of these systems, along with their impact on combat tactics:

Benefits of Randomizerless Systems

Skill and Strategy Focus: Without random elements, the outcome of actions depends entirely on the players' decisions. This can create a deeper sense of satisfaction as success is directly tied to the player's tactical acumen.

Predictability and Planning: Players can make long-term plans and strategies with greater confidence, knowing that their actions will have predictable results. This can lead to more complex and engaging tactical scenarios.

Reduction of Frustration: Eliminating the possibility of extreme dice rolls (both positive and negative) prevents the kind of disheartening situations you described, where careful planning is upended by an unlikely string of bad luck or a single lucky shot.

Clearer Feedback: Players receive immediate and clear feedback on their decisions. When an action fails or succeeds, they

can directly trace the outcome to their choices, leading to more meaningful learning and improvement.

Downsides of Randomizerless Systems

Lack of Excitement from Uncertainty: One of the appeals of dice-based systems is the thrill of uncertainty. The possibility of a critical hit or a catastrophic failure adds a level of excitement and drama that can be missing in deterministic systems.

Potential for Stagnation: In a purely deterministic system, once optimal strategies are discovered, the game might become repetitive. Without the variability introduced by randomness, players might find themselves using the same tactics repeatedly.

Accessibility: Tactical depth can be a double-edged sword. While it rewards skilled players, it can be intimidating or less accessible to newcomers who might prefer the simplicity and occasional forgiveness provided by randomness.

Impact on Combat Tactics

In randomizerless systems, every movement, attack, and defense can be calculated with precision. This places a greater emphasis on:

Positioning: Since outcomes are predictable, controlling the battlefield and positioning becomes crucial. Players must think several steps ahead, anticipating the opponent's moves and counter-moves.

Resource Management: Decisions on when and how to use limited resources (e.g., special abilities, power-ups) become even more critical, as

there's no random chance to bail out poor planning.

Mind Games: Deception and prediction play larger roles. Knowing that the opponent also has perfect information, players must often engage in psychological tactics to outthink their foes.

Personal Reflection

As a GM and player, the choice between randomizerless and traditional systems often comes down to the kind of experience you seek. For those who enjoy a focus on tactical depth, strategy, and skill, randomizerless systems can be highly rewarding. They offer a structured and predictable environment where players feel their decisions have weight and consequence. Conversely, those who enjoy the thrill of chance and the narrative twists that randomness can bring might prefer dice-based systems.

Ultimately, both approaches have their merits, and the best system is the one that aligns with the players' and GM's preferences and the type of stories and experiences they want to create. Exploring different systems can provide valuable insights and help refine what aspects of gameplay are most enjoyable and meaningful for your group.