

Jailbreak 2007 – Thoughts

Abstract

Jailbreak is a new team game type for UT2007. It supports two or more teams, with the maximum number of teams allowed depending on each map.

Basic Gameplay

A Jailbreak match starts like Team Deathmatch, but fragged players respawn in a separate area of the map, called “jail”. Each jail can be opened by operating a “release switch”, which can be found in the opposing team's base.

The goal of Jailbreak is to capture the enemy teams. To accomplish this, quite some team work will be required, because you need to frag opponents and release your team mates by operating the opposing team's switch while at the same time protecting your own switch from being operated by opponents.

Scoring

There are several possible scoring modes:

(a) Last Team Standing:

The last free team scores one point. If no team “survived” the round, no score is awarded. The match ends when one team hits the score limit or has more points than any other team after time limit is hit. If several teams are tied to the lead at the end of the regular game time, the game goes into overtime until one team has more points than any other team.

(b) Score Distribution:

Teams score points depending on how many of the captured team's players they “busted”. If more than one team is captured at the same time, the captured teams may also receive points, except in the case when all teams are captured, which means no score is awarded. The match ends if one team has more points than any other team when at least one team hits the score limit or time limit is hit. If several teams are tied for the lead at the end of the regular game time or when the score limit is hit, the game goes into overtime until one team has more points than any other team.

(c) Capture Penalty:

Each captured team receives a penalty point. The team with the least penalty points wins. The game ends if one team has less penalty points than any other team when a team hits the score limit or when time limit is hit. If several teams are tied for the lead at the end of the regular game time, the game goes into sudden death mode. In sudden death, teams are eliminated if they are captured and are in (shared) last place, unless all teams have been captured and have identical scores. Sudden death ends when only one team is left, this team is declared the winner.

(d) Designation:

For each team one of the other teams is designated as the enemy team, which has to be captured. The team whose designated enemy team is captured scores a point, except when it has been captured as well. When one or more teams have been captured, their players are executed, all players respawn in freedom and a new round starts.

The match ends when one team hits the score limit or has more points than any other team after time limit is hit. If several teams are tied to the lead at the end of the regular game time, the game goes into overtime until one team has more points than any other team.

These scoring modes could be combined with the following gameplay modes:

- (a) Round-based:
After scoring, jailed players are executed. Then all players respawned in freedom and a new round starts.
- (b) Continuous:
After a team is captured, only that team's players respawn in freedom, while the action continues. I guess execution sequences need to be skipped here because the players may be jailed together with free teams' players.
For obvious reasons "Last Team Standing" automatically falls back to round-based scoring. Also "Designation" probably won't work well in continuous mode, enemy designation would stay the same for the entire match.

Jails and Release Switches

Jails can, but don't have to, belong to a team. Team associations are also created through the player spawn points placed in them and by linking them to release switches. Release switches belong to a defending team and trigger events depending on the team of the player who operates the switch.

A single switch can open multiple jails and on the other hand can a single jail be opened through multiple switches.

This allows for a wide variety of switch/jail setups, such as:

- each team is captured in a jail in their own base, to release your team you can use any of the other team's switches
- opponents are captured in the killing team's jail, to release your opponent's prisoners you can use that team's switch
- opponents are captured in individual jails belonging to the killing team, to release only your teammates, use the switch in the killing team's base (another team's player would release only his/her teammates from the same switch)
- you name it...

Some maps, especially in UT Jailbreak III, also used the release switch to harass prisoners, for example by dropping grenades into the jail when a player of the defending team touched the switch.

Arenas

Another way to gain freedom is by winning an arena fight.

Each map can have one or more arena areas. These could be part of the main area or a jail, but usually they are separated from the rest of the map. There are different ways to start arena matches, but the most common way is to randomly select one prisoner per team once in a while and let them fight it out. The number of players that can participate in an arena fight is limited by the number of player spawn points in that arena.

Arena fights are basically a Last Prisoner Standing match with only one life. Players that die during the arena fight are sent back to their jail. If only one player is alive in the arena, that player is respawned in freedom.

Another possibility for arena fights may be Team Deathmatch with two players per team and only one life. In that case, the last team's surviving players are respawned in freedom. TDM arena fights might be started if the number of player spawn points in the arena is twice or more the number of teams available in jails.

Alternate Escape Routes

Some jails may offer an additional way for escaping, which is usually very difficult to use or requires team work. This could basically be anything that allows prisoners to escape from a jail without opening that jail through the corresponding release switch.

The alternate escape route could, for example, include a random chance teleporter that randomly puts the player over a lava pool or into a room full of monsters instead of bringing him back to the main area of the map. Another popular feature used in alternate escapes is the use of a human ladder to reach a small opening that can only be entered when crouching. Almost-impossible impact jumps and gauntlet runs with some kind of time limit were quite popular in UT Jailbreak III.

Release Protection and Llamas

Getting released from jail is a bit like respawning, except that it's announced and there are a lot of targets for free players camping at the jail exits. To prevent this, Jailbreak puts release protection on players who escaped from jail during a regular release. If an opponent tries to inflict damage on a release-protected player, no damage is actually done, but the blocked damage is added up for the opponent and when it exceeds a certain amount, that player is made a "llama".

As a llama the player will be surrounded by eye-catching visuals and sound effects and everyone, including team mates, are allowed to hunt down that player for a few bonus points. The llama will not be able to pick up items, send players to jail or operate release switches. To make things worse, the llama's view is distorted with motion blur, FOV changes and other effects to give the llama a drunk feeling.

In UT Jailbreak III players were "llamaized" for disconnecting from jail and rejoining in freedom, but this feature is dropped in favor of putting the reconnecting player right back in jail.

Execution Sequence

In round-based mode when teams are captured and team score is awarded, the captured teams' players are executed. Before the execution sequence starts, players of teams that were not entirely captured are teleported out. The execution sequence itself is entirely in the hands of the mapper, but players may get killed through a fall-back execution method if they survive the mapper's more or less custom execution sequence.

An execution sequence can be anything that results in jailed players dying in a relatively short time. This may sound a bit morbid, but good execution sequences should be entertaining for the free players watching. Often executions provide a certain level of interactivity for the prisoners, for example when monsters or turrets whose attacks can be dodged are involved. Non-interactive executions shouldn't take too long, or they become boring over time.

Maps and Teams

Since maps can be designed for a different number of teams, the players' team preferences may not always match the number of teams possible on the map.

After switching to a new map that changed the number of teams required, players may need to be moved to different teams. Teams are first filled according to each player's desired team. Then the remaining players fill up the teams with the least number of members. Finally, if automatic team balancing is enabled, teams are balanced by selecting random players from the larger teams and moving them to the smaller teams, until the size difference between the largest and the smallest teams is 1 or 0.