



First of all, if you're still playing BroodWar in 2012 and beyond, awesome! Unfortunately, (or fortunately, depending on how you look at it) BroodWar remains a very challenging game that requires a *lot* of practice to improve. Because of the game's inherent difficulty, it can be enticing to want to find a "magic button" type of play or strategy that will help them win more games. Usually, this type of person will go people who are better than them and ask for advice on how to play, and receive a *vast* array of varying answers. This write-up isn't really a "How To Win" guide, but more of a "Why You Won/Lost" general analysis. Understanding why certain strategies work in situation A but fail in situation B is very helpful to comprehend what's happening in replays when you review your own play and others' play.

A big pet peeve of mine is when there is a new player looking for advice. Like, for example, say there is a Zerg player who just does not understand ZvP. Someone might tell him or her: "Well, you need to learn 3-hatch spire into 5-hatch hydra". Or if they're a Terran player who is struggling with TvZ, someone might say to the new player, "You need to learn early +1 into 5rax build." Now, I have absolutely nothing against those strategies, but the advice is not very practical in reality. The new player will learn the early +1 into 5rax build, and start using it, and will still lose. He or she will show the replay to a friend and ask "What did I do wrong? Why did I die to mutalisks if this build is supposed to stop mutalisks from killing me?" and the friend might nit-pick a little bit and go "Well, I saw you got your range upgrade a little bit late, and you lost one medic to zerglings earlier, and you lost a few marines behind your mineral line because you didn't scan over the cliff." but *completely* ignore that the Zerg went 2-hatch mutalisk instead of 3-hatch mutalisk.

Before I get into specific details about why X seems to work against Y, I want to clarify a few things:

- First, no matter how good you think your strategy is, it will fall apart quickly if you do not have the mechanics to carry it out. If your primary problem with your gameplay is mechanics, then no amount of theorycrafting can solve that.
- Second, when you're being self-analytical, it really hurts to have a bad mindset and think, "Well, I just lost because my opponent was good and I suck." because that's an enormous oversimplification of what should be a thorough self-analysis. You can't objectively analyze your play or someone else's play if you have an extremely negative attitude towards yourself, or an extremely negative attitude towards someone else's play.
- Just because someone is "good" at playing BroodWar does *not* automatically make them a good teacher. It's really easy to get stuck doing something stupid in your games because you're just blindly doing what someone told you to do. It's a trap!

Okay, if you haven't listened to the Day[9] Podcasts, I highly recommend you do, because they will make you think about StarCraft in a way that you wouldn't normally do just by reading liquipedia or getting advice from your expert StarCraft friend.

Note: Your expert StarCraft friend might be a really good teacher, and if he or she is, then I totally apologize to them.

Advantages

Day[9]'s podcasts provide a lot of insight into his game theory, in which he talks a lot about using your play to secure advantages in games. An advantage (and this is just me talking here now, not Day[9]) can be *anything*. Any time you have any single element of game play that is greater than your opponent, you can use that to give yourself an edge in a game. It can be as simple as simply having more self-confidence than your opponent (which is can be difficult to gauge) or something more tangible, such as having more gateways than your opponent. Just to list some potential advantages, here are a few:

You can have more (for example)

- Map vision
- Bases (most obvious one to everyone)
- Battlecruisers
- Resources
- Scouting information
- Knowledge of the map
- Air units
- Harvesters

There are some exceptions, such as

- I have more critters on my side of the map, so I can use this somehow
- I have more burning buildings than my opponent
- I have more distractions in real life than my opponent, like my cat knocking grape soda all over my keyboard

The point is, **all plays and strategies are or should be tailored to give a player an advantage**, and that he or she has the option to compound that into *more* advantages, which will snowball into a win later on.

Playstyles

Different players have different "styles" of play. Some Terran players, like **T Fantasy**, like to build a lot of vultures and be very aggressive. **T Flash** tended to play less aggressive and would play very safe. This, of course, is just a generalization, because Flash *can* play an aggressive game and Fantasy can turtle all day if he wanted to. Here's where I'm going to make a very bold statement: in terms of very general playstyles, certain styles will automatically give you an almost-immediate advantage over other styles. In terms of what-kills-what:

Aggressive > Greedy
Greedy > Safe
Safe > Aggressive

This doesn't mean "If you pick scissors, you will always beat paper 100% of the time", because that would be stupid. What I'm saying is that by reading your opponent, you can make slight adjustments to your play to give yourself small advantages to help yourself win. Sometimes, you can't read your opponent, and you can just gamble, and then do your best from there. The most cited example of this is in ZvZ:

12 Hatch is considered the 'greedy' build

9 Pool is considered the 'aggressive' build

Overpool is considered the 'safe' build

Therefore, if '**Aggressive** > Greedy', a Zerg player going 12 Hatch will be at a disadvantage to the other Zerg player who went 9 Pool. This advantage that the 9 Pool Zerg just attained can be compounded upon by the fact that his gas extractor was built earlier than his opponent's, which will give him mutalisks or zergling speed much sooner than his opponent.

This sort of rock-scissors-paper rule has a lot of exceptions, but generally works like this:

Greedy > Safe

The Safe Player is investing in defense that he or she may not need, while the Greedy Player is taking an extra expansion, or making more harvesters. Later, let's say in the middle-game, both players' armies confront each other. The Greedy Player will simply have a larger army because he or she chose to start building an economy for a huge army while the Safe Player wasn't.

Aggressive > Greedy

The Aggressive Player uses a timing window to deal a serious blow to the Greedy Player *before* that later stage in the game. This type of play almost always immediately kills off the Greedy player, or can cripple them seriously. A good example of this is in TvP, when the Terran player sees the Protoss is double-expanding with very few gateways or tech. The Protoss is playing "greedy", and the Terran player goes 6-fact to attack the Protoss player before the benefits of that 3-base economy kicks in.

Safe > Aggressive

A "safe" play is to prepare yourself for possibilities that may arise by building defense of some sort. For example, let's say you're a Zerg player who has double-expanded, and you're against a Protoss player who has forge-expanded. You fly an overlord into his or her base and see 8 gateways, so you know the Protoss is going to produce a huge army to attack you. You would start playing "Safe" and building the appropriate defense to deal with a huge incoming attack, whether it be a thick sunken/spore/lurker field, or a huge flank of hydralisks and lurkers. You wouldn't play "Greedy", and just mass drones willy-nilly, or take two more bases.

During the early, middle, and late stages of any match, you can change the pace of your play. For example, many Zerg players see a Protoss fast-expanding, and therefore, play "Greedy" in the early game by double-expanding and massing up drones, then play "Aggressive" by building a bunch of hydralisks in the mid-game after they're done making drones.

This kind of understanding of a person's play has huge implications when analyzing replays. Sometimes, you'll see a progamer replay or a semi-pro do something awesome and think "I want to do that!" but miss the context in which they did it. What was their opponent doing? How were they playing at different stages in the game?

To go back to the TvZ +1 early attack upgrade vs 3-hatch mutalisk scenario that I mentioned earlier, there is a difference when facing 2-hatch mutalisk. Of course, mutalisk micro and marine/medic control is incredibly important in both cases, but with 2-hatch mutalisks, the mutalisks can arrive a full game minute sooner than a 3-hatch mutalisk build. By staying on a single barracks for so long, you will naturally have less marines, because getting the early command center and then the +1 attack upgrade is a greedy play in the early game, so early aggression by the Zerg player can give the Zerg an advantage, *especially* if your timing is off. Against a 3-Hatch Mutalisk play vs your +1 attack upgrade into 5rax build, you take advantage of the fact that Zerg players want to play greedy and take their third base as quickly as possible and an aggressive mid-game play from a Terran player will shatter a greedy Zerg opponent.

Finally, let me close this with a story about what inspired this whole piece into being. I was watching a friend of mine practicing playing TvP. He would scout the Protoss player going double gateways with a robotics facility to build observers, but he chose to push with a fast fake-double push (5 marines, 1 tank with no siege, 1 vulture with mines) and would get crushed instantly. The Protoss' play was relatively safe from early Terran aggression, and the fast FD push is an idea that revolves around the Protoss player playing Greedy and staying on one gateway for a long time. About a week later, against the same practice partner, my Terran friend had abandoned going fast FD, and was doing a very super-safe siege-expand. Meanwhile, his practice partner, being aware of this, simply double-expanded while having only one gateway and no robotics facility yet. The Protoss player was just abusing strategies to gain an advantage - which is exactly what you should try to do when you play. This write-up exists to help give you a very general idea of how you look at your replays, someone else's replays, or VODs, and be able to unravel the mindset of the player that you are watching. Of course, there are a lot of strange situations that don't fall into a rock/scissors/paper mold, which is one of the many aspects of StarCraft that make it an awesome game.

Ciao!

[originally posted by ninazerg on teamliquid.net broodwar strategy forum]