Valve announces Underlords, a standalone Auto Chess clone for Steam, Android, and iOS



Valve has just announced *Underlords*: its own version of the popular *Auto Chess* mod for Dota 2. *Underlords* will be a standalone game for Windows, Mac, Linux, iOS, and Android. Valve says it has been running a "friends and family" beta of the game for the past few weeks, and will be expanding the test today to all Dota 2 Battle Pass owners. A free open beta of the game will then launch after a week of preview stress testing.

Underlords is the second breakout title from the company's *Dota 2* portfolio after 2018's release of *Artifact*, which was met with mediocre reviews. (Artifact dropped off sharply on Twitch, only to be resurrected as a meme for facilitating streaming piracy.) Unlike Artifact, Auto Chess already has a strong following. That includes the people who work at Valve, who said in May that they've "spent much of the last six months" playing the game. Like *Auto Chess*, *Underlords* will

allow seven players to battle against each other with turn-based tactical strategy. In the announcement for the game, Valve says that unlike Dota 2, “victory is determined not by twitch reflexes, but by superior tactics.”

Valve announced a few weeks ago that it was working on its own Auto Chess clone after it unsuccessfully tried to woo the game’s developer, Drodo. “We had great conversations, but we both came to the conclusion that Valve and Drodo could not work directly with each other for a variety of reasons.” Of course, the big unspoken reason is likely that the standalone version of Auto Chess is now an Epic Games exclusive, and is a pawn in Epic’s war against Valve. It’s not clear why Drodo agreed to let Valve rip off its hit, but the company spoke highly of Valve, saying that it has “been a great company” and that Valve was supporting its efforts to develop Auto Chess.

For those keeping track of the intellectual property chain, Underlords is a standalone version of *Auto Chess*, which is a mod for *Dota 2*, which is a standalone sequel to *Dota*, which was a mod for Blizzard’s *Warcraft 3*.

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