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## What's the best class for capturing the flag?

### **Introduction**

Warsong Gulch, a 10 vs. 10 PvP “capture the flag” battleground, is one the most popular in the World of Warcraft community. As a new player to the game and hearing friends rave about the PvP aspect of WoW, I decided to give Warsong Gulch a try. As a level 20 Blood Elf frost mage and the only one without a mount, I ran slowly behind my teammates to the Alliance base. After I finally caught up, I felt ambitious enough to go right towards the flag. My screen lit up with a rainbow of colors and within seconds I found myself back at the graveyard regretting the trip back to the Alliance base I was going to have to make on foot. Repeating this same strategy unsuccessfully for the remainder of the match, I finally admitted to myself that this simply was not going to work. Ambition alone was not going to capture the flag. So the question I now had on my mind, what's the best class for capturing the flag?

My curiosity provoked me to traverse WoW forums in hopes of finding an answer. After a simple Google search of, “wow forums”, I came across four different websites: Gameaxis.com, illidrama.com, ZAM.com, and Tentonhammer.com. Searching “Warsong gulch” on these forums yielded five articles that claimed to be Warsong Gulch victory guides. From here, I found a couple of answers.

My answer was not in the form of exactly what class was best for capturing the flag, but rather two characteristics of classes that made the best flag capturers. These two characteristics were overwhelmingly mentioned across all channels: resilience<sup>1</sup> and movement speed. One player, who wrote one of the articles, suggested that the “ability to kill (in case your supporting team dies)” (Gray) is just as important as those two abilities.

Many supported the idea of a Druid being the ideal class because of their ability to “absorb large damage output, and escape snares, and travel at an enhanced speed” (Combatwombat). Druids are unique because they can “pop in to different forms as required for speed or toughness, and still pop out and heal themselves if needed” (Mudry). However, not every player fully suggests being a Druid to capture the flag.

Most players heavily suggest being as “resilient as possible” (Gray). A suggestion from one player specifically mentions that “tank gear doesn’t count” (Gray) and “being a Druid doesn’t automatically qualify you” (Gray). Rather, he suggests, “sporting at least 25% damage reduction” (Gray) and that “you’ll never, ever, have enough resilience as a flag carrier” (Gray). Resilience can only be gained through equipment, elixirs, enchantments, and gems (WoW Wiki).

As for speed, some players criticize that speed alone will not successfully capture the flag, saying it is “helpful, but useless if you get away from protection” (Gray). One player recommends Rogues due specifically to their “sprint ability” (Combatwombat). No player denounces speed as being an important characteristic

in being a flag carrier, however, many suggest that it shouldn't be the only characteristic.

One player recommends Frost Mages (although not very strongly) due to their "novas, various shields/wards, frostbite, and blink" (Combatwombat).

The articles, in addition to the character abilities suggested, also covered overall strategies for success in Warsong Gulch. While six main strategies were observed from my research, only two of the six strategies and two variations of one strategy call for specific classes to carry out the strategy. All other strategies suggest the flag carrier be resilient and quick in movement, as I have previously discussed.

### **Turtle Breaker (Variation 1 and 2)**

The strategy behind the Turtle Breaker is for one player to go in to the enemy's base and try and steal the flag. While this player fails and all the enemy players theoretically follow him out of the base, another player goes in and steals the flag when it spawns again.

The variation of this strategy requires a mage. The mage runs in to the enemy base and freezes everyone and then Blinks to the ramp and keeps running back to his own base.

The second variation of this strategy requires a Priest and a Warrior. The two players drop in, release the Fear Bomb, grab flag and leave through the same exit.

### **Soloing**

The main strategy of Soloing is to sneak in to the enemy base, without fighting anyone, grab the flag, and sneak out. Rogues and Druids are ideal for this

strategy because they can “steal in and then sprint/dash to outrun enemies” (WoW Wiki).

## **Duoing**

This strategy is very similar to the Soloing strategy with the exception that support is brought along. The flag carrier is a tank carrier (Rogues, Warriors, Druids) and the support is a healer character.

Amidst all the opinions about which strategies and qualities of character class are required and what skills and abilities are most useful for capturing the flag there was still no empirical evidence. Which class is truly the best for capturing the flag in Warsong Gulch?

## **Method**

I decided to tackle this question in three ways. The first, play my level 20 Blood Elf mage in twenty 20-24 level bracket Warsong Gulch battles on the Stonemaul server in random “pick-up groups” (PUGS). Second, record the top fifty Rated Battlegrounds players’ classes and whether or not they earned the following achievements: Quick Cap, Capture the Flag, and/or Ironman. Third, make a forum post that asks what the best class for capturing the flag is.

## **Warsong Gulch Battles**

I captured my data by doing screen shots of the post battleground summary data. Once all the data was collected I graphed the values among all the types of classes and the number of times they captured the flag.

In addition, at multiple points throughout each match, I would take screenshots of the map to see where my teammates were to later analyze if there was any strategy implemented.

As an extra measure I chat-logged every in-game conversation to extract any sort of strategy implementation or any discussion as to who should capture the flag.

### **Warsong Gulch Achievements**

I viewed the top fifty players in the Rated Battleground on wow-achievements.com, a site that gathers data from WoW Armory: the official WoW data collection site. I viewed each character's achievements in Warsong Gulch individually. I recorded whether the character has achieved any of these three Warsong Gulch achievements: Quick Cap, Capture the Flag, Ironman.

#### ***Quick Cap***

Grab the flag and capture it in under 75 seconds.

#### ***Capture the Flag***

Personally carry and capture the flag in Warsong Gulch.

#### ***Ironman***

In a single Warsong Gulch battle, carry and capture the flag 3 times without dying.

### **Forum Post**

I posted a question to Gameaxis.com, illidrama.com, ZAM.com, and Tentonhammer.com. This is what my post looked like:

**Subject: best class for capping the flag in warsong gulch?**

**Body:**

i've been getting into battlegrounds lately and have been playing a lot of warsong gulch. i'm a frost mage right now and i'm not having much fun with it cause i keep dying and i want to actually have a chance at capping the flag. i've done some reading up on a couple of strategies... 10-0 zerg, 7-3, 3-6-1 (<http://www.worldofstrats.com/Warsong...9/Default.aspx>)

do some classes work better at capping the flag under certain strats? or do you think theres an overall best class for doing this?

thanks mates

I received 10 replies.

## Results

### Experiment

The results from my experiment in twenty level 20-24 Warsong Gulch battles revealed that Hunters, Warriors, and Paladins were the classes that captured the flag the most (see figure 1).

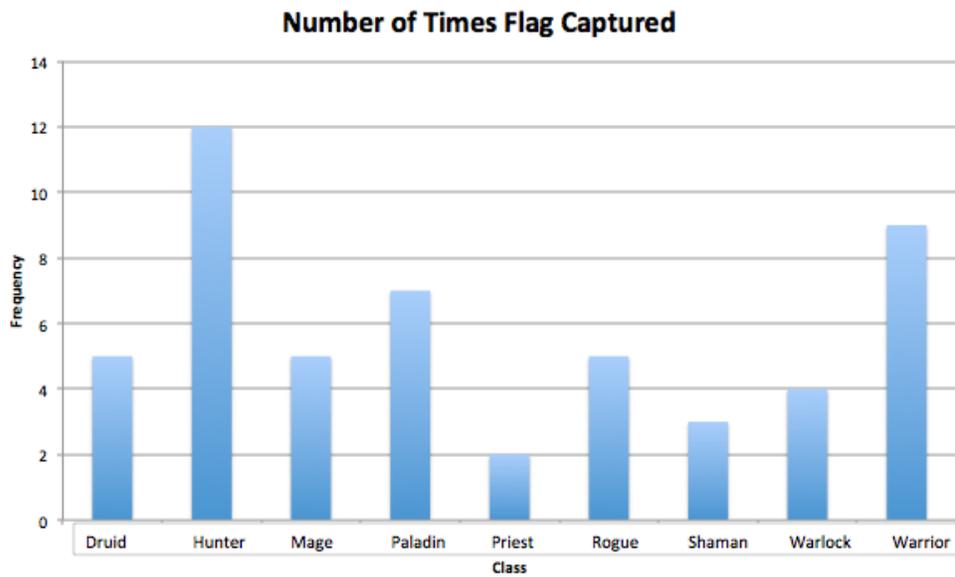


Figure 1

Hunters captured the flag 23% of the time, Warriors captured the flag 17% of the time, and Paladins captured the flag 13% of the time (see figure 2).

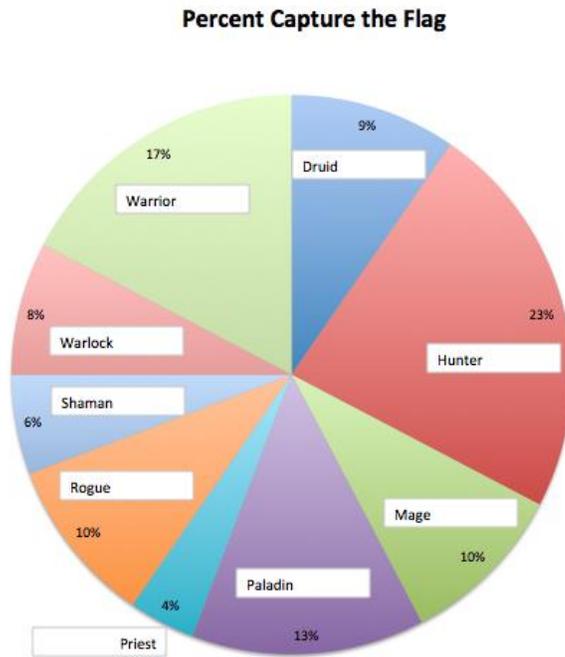


Figure 2

### **Experiment: Strategy Implementation**

From all the data gathered by screen capturing the map periodically throughout the match, only one clear strategy was continuously implemented: 10-0 Zerging or more formally known as “everybody run to the enemy base, attack, and somebody grab the flag.”

Chatlogging yielded no clear signs for strategy implementation or suggestions as to who should capture the flag. Most of the chat captured was just nonsense talk in the beginning of the match, like, “how do you have 400 hp as a lvl 20?” or intermittent “I have the flag” remarks throughout the match.

## **Forum Post**

My forum posts yielded 10 replies. Many players suggested playing as a Gnome Rogue due to their ability to “stay out of the way and avoid damage, and gnomes have one more [ability] Escape Artist (racial)” (jiggeryqua, illiDrama). Many also suggested being a “tanking class” as they “should be best by logic as they are able to withstand damage better” (sealfire, ZAM). One player said that they play as a mage but don’t normally capture flags unless there “are a healer or two backing me up” (sealfire, ZAM). One player even suggested that the class is “largely irrelevant” (jiggeryqua, illiDrama) because he’s seen “all classes score under the right circumstances” (jiggeryqua, illiDrama) and it “depends more on choosing the right moment and the best route...and getting a good team” (jiggeryqua, illiDrama).

## **Achievements**

The results from the top 50 players on the WoW Achievements website revealed that Warlocks and Warriors had the Capture the Flag achievement the most, followed closely by Druid, Mage, and Deathknights. No Hunters earned this achievement (see figure 3).

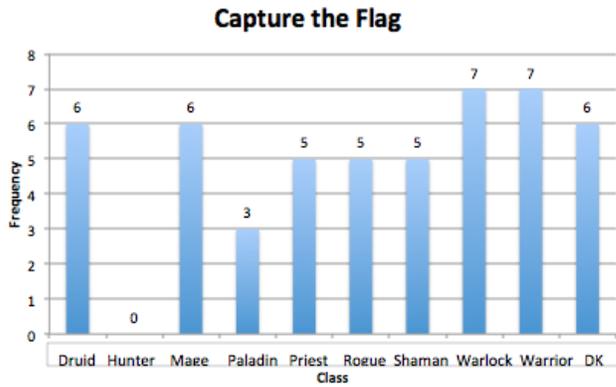


Figure 3

Warriors had the Ironman achievement the most, followed closely by Deathknights. No Hunters earned this achievement (see figure 4).

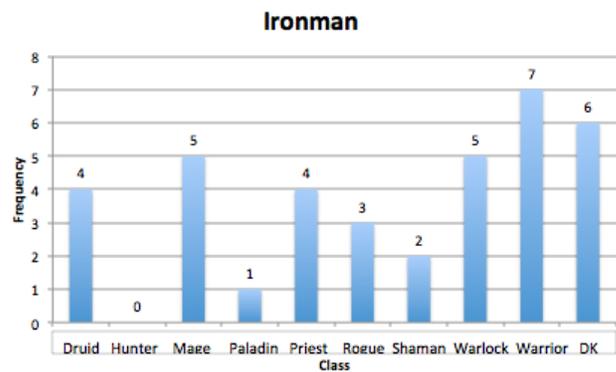


Figure 4

Warriors had the Quick Cap achievement the most. Followed by Druid, Mage, Rogue, Warlock, and Deathknight. No Hunters earned this achievement (see figure 5).

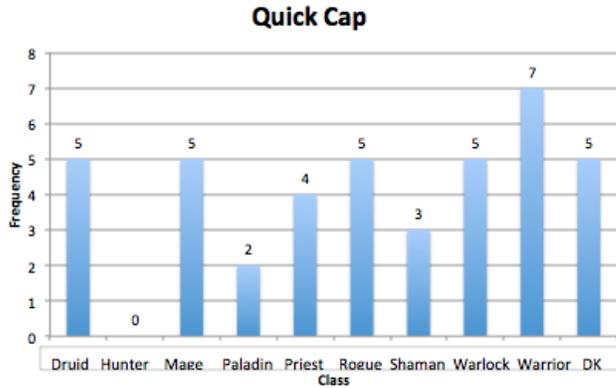


Figure 5

I then measured how many achievements each class earned, whether they earned just one of the three, two of the three, or all three. Every Warrior and Deathknight in the top 50 players for Rated Battlegrounds earned all three achievements (see figure 6).

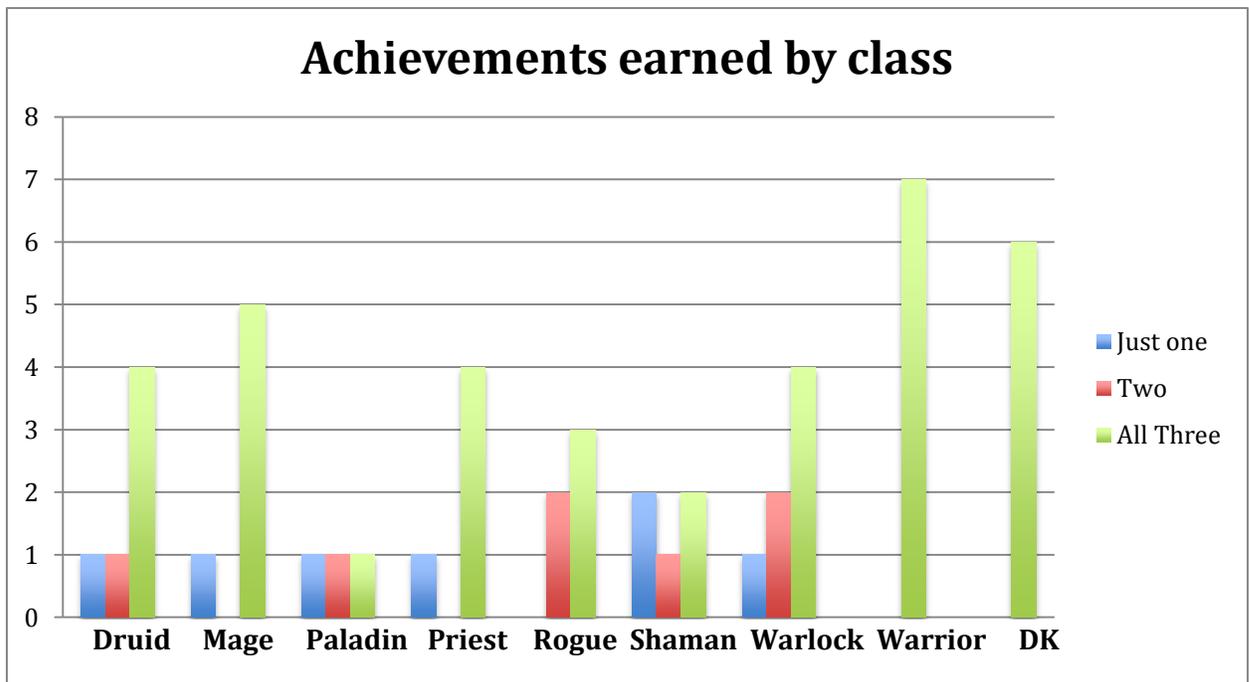


Figure 6

## Analysis and Discussion

Across all mediums of research, it is apparent that resilient and quick classes are the best for capturing the flag: with the exception of mages, whose vast range of abilities allows them to be cunning flag capturers if used correctly. From the experiment, the achievement data, and the forum posts the Warrior exceedingly came out on top as being the best flag carrier. Warriors are resilient and can absorb massive amounts of damage. Although they are definitely not the quickest class, they are self reliant and if their support dies they can hold their own. That's about the only class that all the research mediums agreed on.

One of the most interesting discrepancies in the data was from my experiment. The Hunter exceedingly came out on top as the best flag carrier, however, no Hunters were in the top fifty players to earn achievements and Hunters were never recommended as being a good class for capturing the flag. I believe this occurred because of the level of characters I was playing with. Being only level 20-24 every class is underdeveloped. There is a strong possibility that Hunters are at an advantage in this level bracket for capturing the flag. There is also the possibility that Hunters all had really good heirlooms that automatically made them stronger than everybody else playing the game. Or the possibility that Hunters all had really good heirlooms that automatically made them stronger than everybody else playing the game. That's just a small possibility, but it is one.

Another discrepancy in the data is the fact that Deathknights and Warlocks earned so many achievements while, besides the obvious fact that Deathknights can't play on a level 20-24 level bracket, Warlocks only captured the flag 8% of the time in my experiment. In addition, Warlocks and Deathknights were never

recommended as being a good class for capturing the flag. Although many sources say that “any class can capture the flag, under the right circumstances” (Gray) it still doesn’t explain why so many Warlocks and Deathknights earned these achievements. One reason this may be is that I only looked at the first 50 of 1,338 top players on the WoW Achievements database. These players not only have achievements in Warsong Gulch, but many achievements across all different battlegrounds as well as quest achievements. For whatever reason, there are many dedicated and skilled Warlocks and Deathknights playing WoW battlegrounds and not nearly as many skilled Hunters. This could be due to so many factors, ranging from enjoyment of playing these classes, to ease of using these classes, etc. This is also odd because Hunters are one of the most popular classes in the game (US Realm Pop). This question is left up for further research.

Druid, consistent with what the strategy guides and forum posts suggested, was one of the top classes for earning Warsong Gulch achievements. However, Paladins and Rogues who were revered as a tank class, recommended for capturing the flag, did not score very high in my experiment and the achievements. The results from the Paladins doesn’t surprise me simply because Paladins are such a versatile class that can be healers, tankers, or damage per second (dps). Therefore, there are many Paladins playing Warsong Gulch who assume different roles in the game. Rogues scored higher than Paladins in every achievement. I feel that this makes sense due to the fact that there are strategies (specifically referring to the Soloing strategy) that Rogues are ideal for. However, Paladins scored higher than Rogues in

my experiment but I believe this is due to the same reasons that Hunters did so well in my experiment.

Finally, Mages who were recommended for a variation of the Turtle Breaker strategy and also Frost Mages specifically recommended as a overall good class for capturing the flag had this reflected in their Warsong Gulch achievements, scoring second in Quick Cap and Capture the Flag and third in Ironman. However, in the experiment Mages only captured the flag 10% of the time (fourth highest, tied with Paladin). Again, I believe this can be explained by the same reasons that Hunters scored so high. I believe that my experiment could have been a lot better and I think that the same experiment across all level brackets would yield some very interesting results. I also believe that this truly stunted my experiment. There is so much change that takes place within classes and the game itself (equipment does not earn a resilience rating until level 60 armor) between levels 20-24 and level 85 that it renders my data nearly invalid to apply generally to the game. Also, My experiment was really stunted due to the fact that Deathknights were not included in my experiment.

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