

COMBAT REVAMPED

The face of war has forever been changed...for the better.

Sure, it's pretty, but the game's graphics weren't the only aspect of *Lords of Shadow* to get a complete overhaul. *LoS2* raises the bar for combat in the series, incorporating the necessity of evasive rolls and counter-blocking from the first game, and a better all-around diversity of enemies that force you to change tactics on the fly.

Take the two basic types of soldiers: a heavy, shield-bearing warrior and the more offensive-based two-handed sword variety. While the latter just needs a mix of effective dodging and timing to take out, the former actually requires switching over to Chaos Claws (see "The Armory" sidebar) to rend free that big hunk of metal that they hold.

Like in the original, quick, decisive strikes open these soldiers up for a finishing blow, delivered via quick-time event. Every enemy you take

down in this way adds to Drac's focus bar (also introduced in the first *Lords of Shadow* game) eventually producing magic-generating orbs that fuel the two upgradeable schools of spells Dracula has at his disposal, void and chaos. Cox said by playing well and filling your focus bar, you'll be able to start unlocking more sections of a proposed skill-tree system that the team hadn't quite finished when I saw the game. If you just spam the direct attack button, Cox said, you'll never get a chance to see everything Drac can do.

Magic, it seems, will play a vital role in combat—directly fueling which weapons you'll be able to use, and in turn affecting how quickly you'll be able to take out baddies. "We're very serious about making this a combat game," Cox said. "We really want players to think about what they're doing and not just mash buttons."

TITAN

Remember the titans? Those monstrous, hulking pieces of arcana that Gabriel climbed *Shadow of the Colossus* style to bring down in *Lords of Shadow*? Yep, they're back and bigger than ever. The Titan I saw, appropriately called the Siege Titan, was about 10 times the size they were before. Besides being a big, bad stage boss, the Titan served as a battle arena and intricate platforming exposition before Drac got to the top and pulled its plug. After watching the epic first encounter, I can't wait to bring one down for myself. You know what they say...the bigger they are, the harder they fall.



◀ **BLOOD CROSS**
Stealing the blood of your enemies will be a major component of *Lords of Shadow 2*.