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The Finals Season 11 balance breakdown: the melee rework, five balance patches, and the meta after 11.7.0

Season 11 (Galaxy Masters) has shipped 11 patches, five of them changing balance: the melee rework at launch (Stamina, Precision, Quick Melee 40→25), a correction in 11.3.0, the biggest pass in 11.6.0 (12 buffs, 2 nerfs — M11 hit hardest), and a Shockwave glitch buff in 11.7.0. Melee tuning is ongoing, with another pass expected before the season ends around mid-October.

12 min read · 13 sources

2026 | galaxy masters | melee rework | meta | patch notes | season 11 | weapon balance

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Season 11 of THE FINALS — Galaxy Masters, the space-themed season that launched 9 July 2026 — has shipped eleven patches as of 27 August 2026, and five of them changed how the game plays [1] [13]. The season opened with the biggest structural change in the game's history, a ground-up rework of the melee system, then settled into a pattern of store updates and hotfixes punctuated by two real balance passes (11.3.0 and 11.6.0) and a late-August specialization buff (11.7.0). This breakdown covers every balance change in those five patches, what it did to the meta as of patch 11.7.0, and what Embark has said is still coming.

11	5	40→25	100→110→104	+75%
Patches shipped in S11	Patches with balance changes	Quick Melee damage	KS-23 damage arc	M11 hip recoil (11.6.0)

Where Season 11 stands

Galaxy Masters launched 9 July 2026 with the new Galaxy Estates arena, a bot-mode onboarding system, personal-performance Ranked Score bonuses, and the melee rework[1]. The season is roughly two-thirds through: it started 9 July and is estimated to end in early-to-mid October — the countdown site ggseason.com projects 10 October 2026 based on the ~93-day historical average, while the community wiki lists 22 October as TBC[11][12]. Embark has not confirmed an end date.

- 6 Jul 2026 — **Melee rework deep dive**
  Design Director Matt Lowe details Stamina, Precision and the Quick Melee kick
- 9 Jul 2026 — **11.0.0 — Season 11 launch**
  Melee rework plus gadget, spec and weapon balance
- 14 Jul 2026 — **11.0.2 — Cashout Bots hotfix**
  Progression nerfs only: Item XP disabled, World Tour points cut
- 30 Jul 2026 — **11.3.0 — balance pass**
  C4, Grappling Hook, BFR, FAMAS, KS-23, four melee weapons
- 20 Aug 2026 — **11.6.0 — balance pass**
  12 buffs, 2 nerfs — the season's biggest
- 27 Aug 2026 — **11.7.0 — Shockwave buff**
  Two-second glitch effect; the only gameplay change

The balance cadence is visible from the official patch index[13]: after the launch patch, balance changes arrived roughly every three weeks — 11.3.0 on 30 July, 11.6.0 on 20 August, 11.7.0 on 27 August — with store updates and hotfixes in between. The 11.6.0 patch also carried the engine upgrade from Unreal Engine 5.3 to 5.7, which caused its own crash wave that 11.7.0 had to clean up[4][5].

The melee rework: Stamina, Precision and the kick

The season's defining change, announced in a deep-dive blog post by Design Director Matt Lowe on 6 July[2], replaced the melee system outright. Embark stated the twin goals plainly:

> *"We want to make melee a more viable style of play with a fairer chance to win matches and we want to ensure melee is not frustrating for those who die to it." — Matt Lowe, melee rework deep dive*[2]

Two new mechanics gate the reworked weapons' power behind skill[1][2]:

- **Stamina** controls lunges. Attacks lunge only while the bar is full; running dry removes the lunge but nothing else — damage, movement and attack speed are untouched. Stamina

regenerates in about two seconds (weapon-specific: 2s on Dagger, Sledgehammer and Sword, 3s on Dual Blades, Riot Shield and Spear, 2.5s for the kick), and landing a **Precise hit instantly refills it**, creating a combo loop.

- **Precision** splits every swing into a center "precision zone" (critical damage) and the rest (glancing blows at reduced damage). The old flat-damage sweeps are gone; the new melee crosshair shows both the stamina bar and the zone width.

The third system-level change is the **Quick Melee kick**: damage dropped **40 → 25**, and a full-stamina Quick Melee now performs a Kick that knocks targets back ~5m — reduced to ~1m against players stealing an objective, a deliberate guard against steal-denial[1][2]. Embark's stated reason for the damage cut was to free up weapon breakpoints: a 40-damage burst was "almost a third of a Light's health," which constrained balancing of "spiky" weapons[2].

Melee weapons at 11.0.0 (base → precise damage, lunge)

WEAPON	BASE (GLANCING)	PRECISE	OLD FLAT	LUNGE AT 11.0.0
Dagger primary	42	60	60	3 → 4.5m
Dagger backstab	—	×4.5 mult. (was ×4.26)	~60×4.26	3 → 4.5m
Dual Blades (×2)	39	57	50/60/100 seq.	4.5m
Dual Blades Cross Slash	84	140	new	5m
Riot Shield primary	57	82	90	3 → 4m
Riot Shield bash	40	—	new	~3m
Sledgehammer primary	90	120	100	4.5 → 5m
Sledgehammer secondary	150	200	175	4.5 → 5m
Spear primary	55	74	65/80/90 seq.	7.5 → 5m
Sword primary	71	110	88	3 → 4.25m

Secondary functions were rebuilt alongside: the Riot Shield gained full-frontal blocking plus a Shield Bash (~5m knockback), Dual Blades lost its third combo hit but gained the Cross Slash lunge out of the Deflect stance, the Spear's spin became a stamina-gated chain that refunds stamina on hit, and the Sword's lunge now needs stamina for maximum range (~10m with, ~5m without)[1][2]. The design intent: higher damage *ceiling* than Season 10, but only for players who land precise hits and manage stamina — and a kick in the face for anyone who rushes in.

11.0.0 launch balance: everything else that changed

The launch patch also rebalanced four gadgets, three specializations and seven ranged weapons[1]:

Gadgets — APS Turret blocks 5 → 6 projectiles with 160 → 175 HP, but its cooldown no longer regenerates while deployed (5s manual retrieve / 15s remote / 30s destroyed); Breach Charge

arm time 1.5 → 1s (stays 1.5s on carriables, to protect against "nukes"); Data Reshaper can now reshape Gateways, disabling them instantly; Hover Pad health 350 → 425.

Specializations — Cloaking Device minimum duration ~13 → ~11s, with energy now draining at max rate at/above run speed (previously only while sprinting), pushing it toward the "hide and seek" playstyle; Evasive Dash charges 3 → 2 with cooldown 7.5 → 6.5s; Winch Claw's mini-stun window on victims cut from 0.25 → 0.1s, plus shorter post-pull lock and user recovery, targeting its close-range "kill-tool" use.

Ranged weapons:

WEAPON	CHANGE AT 11.0.0
.50 Akimbo	Damage 44 → 46
93R	Damage 25 → 24, ammo 21 → 27
FCAR	Fire rate 540 → 530 RPM
KS-23	Damage 100 → 110, falloff 0.7 → 0.64
M134 Minigun	Dispersion −10%, environmental damage 30 → 35
Model 1887	Pellet damage 12 → 13
Pike-556	Headshot multiplier 1.5 → 1.75

The dev notes are unusually candid about targets: the 93R was "a very strong outlier compared to all other Light weapons, by a considerable margin," the FCAR buff had pushed it "well above most other Medium weapons in performance metrics," and the Pike got its granular headshot multiplier "without stepping into over-powered territory again"[1]. The community read at launch (r/thefinals' Season 11 balance overview thread) was that the FCAR's 10-RPM cut was too small to matter — "less than a 2% difference" — and that the 93R was "back to the dumpster"[9]. By the numbers those calls aged differently: the FCAR has gone untouched since, and the 93R's ammo bump to 27 rounds kept it in B-tier with a 16% pick rate as of late August[8].

The quiet patches: 11.0.1 through 11.5.0

Not every patch touched combat. The one gameplay-relevant hotfix in this stretch was **11.0.2 (14 July)**, which nerfed progression, not fights: Item Progression XP was disabled in the new Cashout Bots mode, a tournament win dropped 16 → 12 World Tour points, and reaching the final dropped 10 → 6 — a response to the mode becoming a progression farm[6]. 11.0.1 (10 July) fixed launch-week issues including a Sledgehammer multi-hit bug, and 11.1.0, 11.2.0, 11.4.0, 11.4.1 and 11.5.0 were store updates, crash fixes and an esports recap with zero combat balance[6][13].

11.3.0 — the first correction pass

Three weeks in, Embark made its first follow-up: mostly nudges for under-performers, one gadget nerf, and the first re-tuning of the new melee weapons[3].

- **C4 (Heavy):** cooldown 30 → 45s — "an outlier in terms of win rate and usage for Heavy for quite some time," with 2–3 drops per Cashout fight part of that power
- **Grappling Hook (Light):** cooldown 7 → 6s — deliberately small, since bigger buffs "risk breaking map pacing"
- **BFR (Heavy):** damage 88 → 90
- **FAMAS (Medium):** damage 23 → 24
- **KS-23 (Heavy):** damage 110 → 104, falloff 0.64 → 0.675 to keep max-range damage — Embark admitted the 11.0 buff was too much but kept it above the pre-season 100
- **Dagger:** lunge 4.5 → 5m (primary and backstab), faster max lunge speed, longer backstab sweep
- **Dual Blades:** precision zone 8° → 9°, lunge 4.5 → 5m, Cross Slash always lunges at full stamina, Deflect-stance move speed +25% (reversing half of the 11.0 −50%)
- **Riot Shield:** precision zone 9° → 10°, lunge 4.25 → 5m (this lunge "didn't work correctly" and had to be re-listed in 11.6.0), damage 82 → 83, Shield Bash always lunges at full stamina
- **Spear:** precise primary 74 → 82, base 55 → 57, spin sequence 75/100/125 → 75/125/150 — "the damage adjustments made to the Spear with 11.0 have proven to be more severe than we intended"

The Riot Shield note is the clearest statement of the season's melee philosophy — that 11.0 deliberately made it a defensive "anchor," with Dual Blades as the aggressive Medium brawler instead[3]. The KS-23 note is the most honest:

> *"Sometimes, making a change is the only way to find 'the truth' of why it performs as it does across all the different modes, skill tiers and so on." — 11.3.0 KS-23 dev note*[3]

11.6.0 — the season's biggest balance patch

The 20 August patch is the one that finally addressed ranged weapons: **12 buffs and 2 nerfs** across 14 items, plus another round of melee follow-ups[4].

Guns and gadgets buffed: AKM damage 20 → 21 (to sit alongside FAMAS and FCAR); ARN-220 fire rate 725 → 750 RPM with faster reloads (it "lagged behind the XP-54 and M11 for quite some time"); BFR Titan falloff 0.65 → 0.7 so it owns the long-range niche; Cerberus 12GA pellet damage 8 → 9 (full shot 104 → 117), compensating for the Quick Melee damage cut; Recurve Bow max-draw 124 → 126 for the same reason; Lockbolt reload 2.2 → 1.75s; Dematerializer cooldown 20 → 15s per charge; Evasive Dash cooldown 6.5 → 6s ("our previous changes… restricted it too much"); Guardian Turret activation 3.5 → 3s, health 280 → 300, remote-retrieve cooldown 17.5 → 10s. XP-54 got quality-of-life only — a recoil-curve fix and −8% airborne ADS dispersion.

The two nerfs:

- **M11 (Light):** the season's biggest gun nerf — hip recoil +75%, ADS recoil +25%, ADS dispersion +25% in most stances, and airborne ADS dispersion +120%. The dev note: the M11 "outperforms its intended range by quite a bit, cannibalizing combat distances that the ARN

and XP-54 should really be a best fit for"[4]. Embark added that the large percentages apply to "current very low levels of M11 recoil and dispersion," so it wouldn't feel as drastic as the numbers suggest.

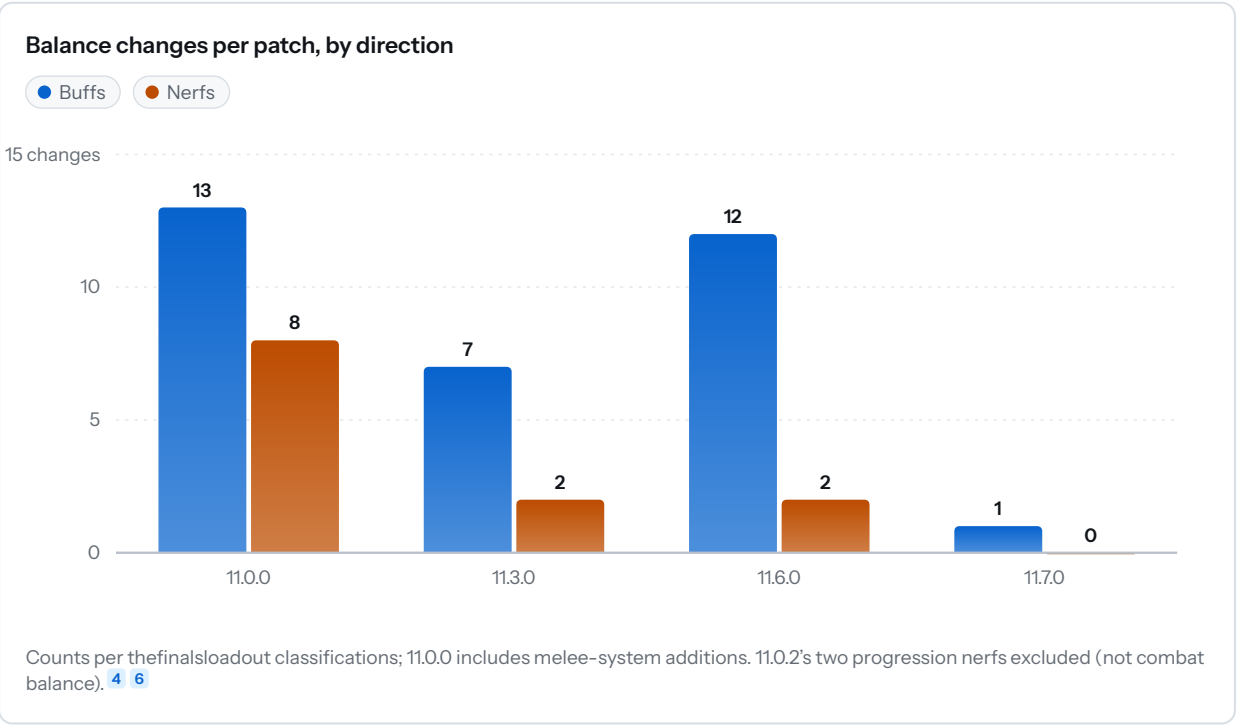
- **KS-23 (Heavy):** nerfed at range — falloff multiplier 0.675 → 0.58, falloff start 18 → 12m, end 23 → 22m — because it was outperforming the BFR at mid-to-long range.

Melee follow-ups in 11.6.0: Dagger primary base 42 → 49 and precise 60 → 70 with longer lunge duration (0.15 → 0.22s); backstab base 75 → 85 and total 337 → 340 with lunge duration 0.22 → 0.32s. Dual Blades precision zone 9° → 12° (the second strike "frequently causes… misses"). Riot Shield primary base 58 → 60, precise 83 → 86, the fixed 5m lunge, Shield Bash damage 40 → 50 and environmental damage 50 → 100. Spear damage sweep box +60%, lunge 5 → 6.5m, lunge duration 0.3 → 0.45s, lunge speed +50%, and a longer spin-sequence reset window.

The dev notes frame these as interim:

> *"We're working towards some networking improvements for lunge attacks that should really help, but they're a little while away yet." — 11.6.0 Dagger dev note* [4]

The same patch fixed a Dual Blades deflect bug by swapping the damage modifiers: imprecise deflects now take 20% damage, precise deflects 0%[4].



Counts per thefinalsloadout classifications; 11.0.0 includes melee-system additions. 11.0.2's two progression nerfs excluded (not combat balance).[4][6]

11.7.0 — Shockwave gets a glitch

The 27 August patch was mostly store and stability — it fixed crashes from the UE 5.7 upgrade and removed the inpoutx64.sys uninstall workaround — but it carried one real balance change[5]:

Shockwave (Medium) now applies a two-second glitch effect to enemies it hits — not to friendlies, the user, or deployables. The dev note says Shockwave has been the least-used Medium specialization, and the glitch "micro stun" is intended as a skill-based counter to Mesh Shield, Cloaking Device and Evasive Dash [5]. The community immediately clocked it: "two second glitch by shockwave? kinda big change," and "Holy shit they gave mediums a glitch nade" [10]. It effectively hands Mediums a built-in anti-specialization tool that previously required the Glitch Grenade gadget.

What the tier lists say now

As of patch 11.7.0 (tier lists refreshed 31 August), the meta looks like this [7] [8]:

	thefinalsloadout	vs	thefinals.gg
S-tier Light	M11	·	XP-54
S-tier Medium	CB-01 Repeater	·	FCAR / AKM
S-tier Heavy	ShAK-50, KS-23	·	Shak-50
M11 after 11.6.0 nerf	S (close-range dominance)	·	A (recoil tax)
Melee weapons	C/D, Spear in D	·	B/C, Sledgehammer B

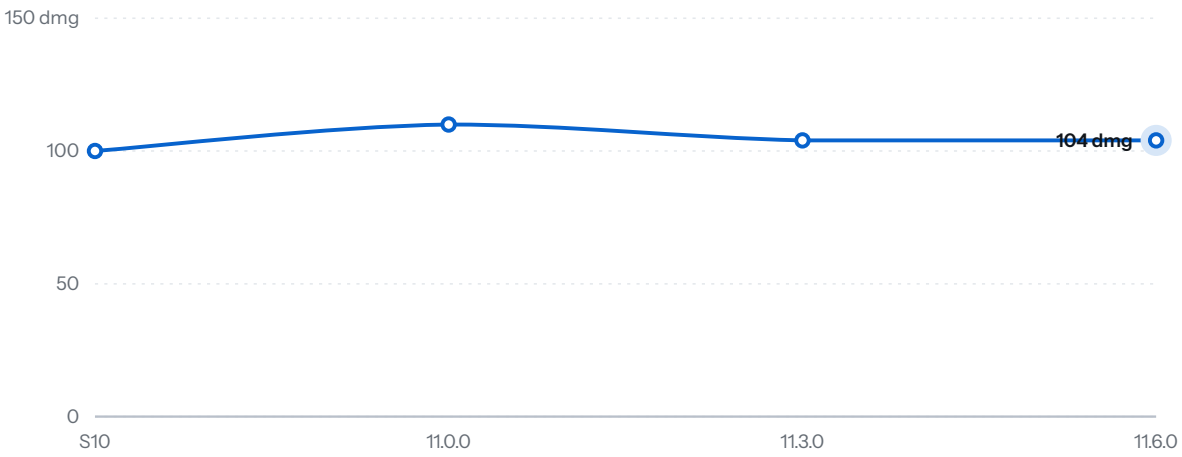
Both lists refreshed late August; thefinalsloadout tracks community sentiment + estimated pick rate, thefinals.gg leans on loadout/stat data. [7] [8]

- **thefinalsloadout** ranks **ShAK-50** (Heavy, 1.14s TTK, ~36% pick rate, 92% sentiment), **M11** (Light, 0.90s TTK, 30%), **CB-01 Repeater** (Medium, 1.54s, 30%) and **KS-23** (Heavy, 1.64s, 12%) as S-tier — and notes the M11 "remains oppressive up close" despite the recoil work.
- **thefinals.gg** disagrees at the top: its S-tier is **Shak-50, FCAR, AKM and XP-54**, with M11 dropped to A. The two lists converge on ShAK-50 and on the strength of the Medium rifle pack (FCAR/AKM), but they split on the M11's post-nerf standing — thefinalsloadout keeps it S on close-range dominance, thefinals.gg knocks it down a tier.
- **Melee weapons remain off-meta despite the rework:** Sledgehammer, Sword and Recurve Bow sit in B, Dagger, Dual Blades and Riot Shield in C, Spear in D, with pick rates of 2–10% [8]. The buffs have made them better at connecting — the Dagger's non-precise punishment rose from 42 to 49, the Spear can actually close distance now — but none has broken into the ranked mainstream.
- **C4** is still a B-tier Heavy gadget at 16% pick rate despite the cooldown nerf; the gadget tier lists still lead with RPG-7, Defibrillator and H+ Infuser [8].

> CAUTION
>
> One tier-list entry needs a caveat: thefinalsloadout's CB-01 Repeater card attributes "11.6.0: Full-shot player damage increased to 117" to the Repeater — that figure is the **Cerberus 12GA's**

change. The Repeater was unchanged in 11.6.0; the Repeater's S-tier rating stands on its own merits [4] [8].

KS-23 damage per shot across Season 11



Base damage per shot; 11.6.0 also cut falloff start 18→12m. Sources: official notes [1] [3] [4].

The KS-23 is the season's clearest case study in iterative balancing: buffed at launch to 110, walked back to 104 in 11.3, then stripped of its range in 11.6 to protect the BFR's long-range niche. Each step was explained in the dev notes, which is about as transparent as live-service balance gets.

Where balancing is heading

Three signals point forward:

1. **Melee tuning is explicitly not finished.** The 11.6.0 notes promise networking improvements for lunge attacks that will "really help" melee reliability — "a little while away yet" [4]. Every melee weapon has been buffed in at least one follow-up patch, and Dagger, Dual Blades, Riot Shield, Spear and Sledgehammer have all had two passes. Expect at least one more melee-tuned patch before the season ends.
2. **Shockwave is now a watch item.** Embark called it the least-used Medium spec and gave it a unique tool; whether the 2s glitch pushes it into the meta — and whether it needs a follow-up nerf — is the live question of the back half of the season.
3. **Season 12 is already changing the game outside combat.** The 11.0.0 notes announced that the Sponsor system and its reward tracks are being "replaced with something new, more involved and more engaging" in Season 12, with fan requirements cut ~50% in S11 to compensate [1]. That is a progression/economy change, but it will land in the same patch as whatever balance work Embark has planned for next season.

With the season projected to end in mid-October and roughly six weeks of patches left, the pattern of the last two months — a balance patch roughly every three weeks — suggests at least one, possibly two more balance patches before Galaxy Masters closes.

Bottom line

Five of Season 11's eleven patches changed balance. The short version: the melee system was rebuilt at launch (Stamina gates lunges, Precision zones gate damage, Quick Melee became a 25-damage kick), the launch patch also nerfed Evasive Dash, Cloaking Device, FCAR, 93R and Winch Claw while buffing KS-23, Pike-556, Model 1887 and others; 11.3.0 was a light correction pass (C4 cooldown up, KS-23 back down, melee lunges and precision zones up); 11.6.0 was the season's biggest balance patch — 12 buffs, 2 nerfs — with the M11 hit hardest and the KS-23 stripped of range; and 11.7.0 gave Shockwave a two-second glitch. The current S-tier conversation is ShAK-50 on Heavy, M11 on Light, and the CB-01 Repeater/FCAR/AKM pack on Medium, with melee still off-meta despite two buff passes. If you play one thing this month, keep an eye on Shockwave and the next melee patch — Embark has said both are still moving.

SOURCES

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