

# Vanguard Bandits FAQ/Walkthrough for Epica Stella

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FAQ/Walkthrough for Epica Stella  
(or Vanguard Bandits, the English version)  
on the Playstation by  
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Version 1.3

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Disclaimer - Anyone using this guide must notify me. Period. No questions asked. ^\_^

Well, seeing as this thing's been released in the States now, I thought I'll dust off this old piece of work and get back to work on it. Since I really liked the game when I played it, expect at least a modicum of effort to be put in now. However, first I have to get my faulty Playstation fixed. So any real work on this thing will take some time, but I do plan to do a good job on it eventually, so hang in there. ^\_^

First though, some notes. I played the JAPANESE version of the game, so obviously, I will not know anything unique to the NA release and might have some attacks and/or character names listed differently. Secondly, I have a request. I DESPERATELY need information on how to access different story paths in the game. I'm pretty certain you can at least join the Empire...help me out here, people! After all, you'll be benefitting from the info as well.  
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## Frequently Asked Questions

Q : Near Scenario 20, there's a battle with Faulkner that I can't win - Randi\Bastion gets brainwashed and I either end up killing all my teammates or letting him die. What do I do?

A : This is the single most often-asked question I've gotten (at least 20 or so mails on this topic alone) so I guess it deserves a special mention. Here's what you have to do :

1. Have Randi\Bastion's final technique, the one that takes 90 TP to use.
2. Have good relationships (and I mean GOOD relationships, stars and the like) with all your party members.

As long as you fulfill these two conditions, Randi\Bastion will tap into the power of the Oukai\Ultragunner and resist Faulkner's intrusion into his mind, letting you control him manually.

Q : How come I only get 20 missions out of the 56?

A : Because there's the Empire path to plan too. In order to get on it, have Randi\Bastion be Level 8 at the end of Scenario 3. This is a tall order, and usually requires a hefty amount of luck - in order to make things easier,

have Randi\Bastion fight a lot and keep your other playable characters back. Also, a lot rides on whether or not you're able to kill the two bandit leaders in Scenario 2.

In order to get the other missions, once you've completed both the Kingdom and Emprrie routes, play through again and Sharon\Sadira will ask you what you plan to do with the Oukai\Ultragunner once it's awakened. There should be another choice in which Randi\Bastion decides to conquer the world. That's the third and final path.

Finally, there are 4 optional scenarios which you get if you manage to escape Radcot's ambush of Bastion.

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Thoughts on the English version :

I managed to catch a glimpse of it while playing on a friend's borrowed disc, and my first thoughts were...what is Working Designs doing? ^\_^ Anyway, it's not as if it's bad, but it's just that I like the Japanese version more.

First off, the translation is...strange. I don't know what the translator had in mind, but everyone sounds far too medieval. The character dialogue in the Japanese version was more or less standard, so I was a bit taken aback by the high-English sounding lines.

Secondly, the openings have been changed for the worse...the Japanese version had a kick-ass advertisement-style second opening which really showed off key scenes in the game. Not a terribly bad omission, but one nonetheless.

And that's about it. I'll add more if I actually get to play the English version of the game, and I will also be completing the Quotes section of each character so that you can see what they actually sounded like.

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General Battle Hints :

1. Get your characters Strong Slash ASAP. Without it they waste all their excess AP and TP and besides; it's a damn good move even later on. So upgrade STR, BAS and DEX as fast as you can.

2. Always upgrade weapons first and elemental stones later. Also, by this same token, WEP stats go up quite fast (as your weapon power increases) so you should spend little to no points increasing it.

3. Know what different elemental stones do. Fire ones have heavier damage attacks, Earth allows for healing, Wind for long range etc...actually, I think I'll just give you the whole list below. The stuff in brackets is the Special Skills you can use when the equipped stone.

Wind : (Accel Powered - Increases Accuracy. Excellent to use on characters that need to level up.)

1. Spiral Wind. Evade Down effect. 2 space range.
2. Air Blast. Knock-Down effect. 4 space range. (This one has special mention in a later section.)
3. Wind Strike. Knock-Down effect, Damage and Accuracy Up. 1 space range.
4. Sonic Blade. Knock-Down effect (do you sense a trend here?), high Damage Up, 3 space range. Excellent move overall.

(Both Wind Strike and Sonic Blade require very high POW and DEX scores to be learnt. I also suspect that Sonic Blade is actually Zenia's Super and not the fourth Wind attack.)

Evaluation - A stone to equip on your support characters. More versatility than Earth and Wind Strike later on is VERY nice. Doesn't have the raw power of Fire, though.

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Fire : (Flame Powered = Increases Attack, Phoenix = sacrifice unit to revive another fallen one.)

1. Flare Bomb. Attack and Accuracy Up, 1 space range. Easily the best of the Level 1 elemental attacks.
2. Merton Flare. Attack Down effect, Accuracy Down. Hard to hit - don't use this often. Does good damage if it does connect, though.
3. Flame Blast. Heavy Damage, low Accuracy. Extremely powerful if used in the right situations - however, it has a HORRIBLE hit rate, so it's a guessing game with this one.
4. Unknown.

Evaluation - For attack only. Keep one or two (I use Russell) characters with this stone for your heavy artillery, but more than that is overkill due to the limited usage of most of the attacks.

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Earth : (A note here - Earth is THE stone of choice for your support\weaker characters since it has the all-important Earth Heal, the only thing in the game which can restore HP.

Earth Heal = Restores HP. High AP cost, so be careful to position your healing units near the front line.

Turn Quake = Not too useful, but can present the enemy's back to you. I'd rather not waste my turn.

Gaia Protect - Increases Defense.)

1. Earth Strip. Restricts movement, which makes it quite powerful, but it does pitiful damage and is difficult as hell to connect with. Give it a miss. Useful when isolating enemies for levelling-up, or in missions where slowing down the enemy is a priority.
2. Gaia Buster. Much better. Decent hit rate, good damage and Knock Down effect. This move is excellent as an irritant\TP reducer.
3. Mega Quake. Like Sonic Blade but worse. I'm not kidding - Sonic Blade actually is better in every respect.

Evaluation - Use only for Earth Heal. Water and Wind outperform this stone in all respects except for it's healing capability.

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Water :

4. Again, with respect to levelling-up, remember that all characters have a Super attack that is enabled once certain stats have reached a requisite level, and that the more powerful elemental attacks are only gained by having stats which are strong in that stone's particular areas - i.e, you gain Mega Quake only by maxing out BAS, whereas Wind Strike is more POW and DEX based.

The only Supers I have now are :

1. Randi. Make sure all his stats are above 20 and balanced. The Ring of Kings (purchasable in the last shop) helps here. You MUST get this skill to complete the game.
2. Russell - Calling Upon the Soul of Fire. High POW is a prerequisite, but I'm not too sure about the rest...I think BAS and DEX are safe bets though.
3. Zenia. Never actually got it, but POW, DEX and AGI are the stats to go for.
4. Regina. Again, not sure, but I suspect DEX as one of them.

I REALLY NEED more help on this section. ^\_^

5. Always, ALWAYS \*always\* attack from the back if you can. Why? Not only will the attack do more damage (much more in some cases), the enemy can do nothing but evade - that means no blocking, counterattacking or even Deflecting or Parrying your weapon. Note that attacks from a diagonal direction (that is, when using a more than 1 square range attack) count as side hits - the attack must be totally from the back.

The only exception to this rule is when you're trying to increase the amount of used TP the opponent has (which means, of course, you want your opponent to block if possible) which is explained in more detail below.

5. One of the MOST useful tactics in the game is to force the opponent's TP bar to overflow - thereby rendering him helpless for a turn or so; during which ANY attack will hit with a 100% success rate. Definitely not something to scoff at.

So how does one accomplish this feat?

The primary method is to keep on attacking with attacks that the opponent will block. Why block? Because blocking costs 30 TP, as opposed to evading's 20, and the enemy doesn't get a chance to counterattack. Now, the next and obvious question is which attacks to use.

Things That Knock Down is the first, heavy-damage ones the second, the reason being that the first prevents counterattacks (because it knocks down, duh) and the computer won't chance being hit by the second. You'll have to use pretty accurate attacks, though, because the CPU will choose avoiding if it's got more than a 50% chance to dodge.

This is where Air Blast comes in. It has a +20% Hit Rate, long range for better aiming, AND knocks down. Your perfect Tp-drainer. Make sure at least 3-4 members of your party have it (especially at later stages) because it makes fighting any bosses\powerful enemies much easier. Plus, it has a VERY low AP cost, so it can be used quite often. Gaia Buster and other similar elemental attacks work, but this is the all-time best.

Two things to remember after this, though :

a) The enemy will recover FULLY (that is, with zero TP used) after the one turn is up, so make sure you kill him\her before that happens. It's not so bad when fighting normal enemies, but this is dangerous with bosses.

b) If the enemy has a very high amount of TP, he\she will sit there and recover instead of attacking. This is sometimes preferable to running the risk of the above, so keep it in mind.

Once you've got your opponent on the ropes, move in and let him\her have it with everything you've got. This is why you keep Fire stone users around - for the damage! Tackles (which normally whiff due to lousy hit rates) also work well here.

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Character Evaluation :

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Randi (Bastion) -

Well, he's the main character of the game - you've got to use him. (Actually, you've got to use the lot of them...) A friendly, likable sort of chap, he's also adventurous and determined; despite a few rough edges, attributable to youth and inexperience, definitely material for royalty. It is probably these qualities, combined with a sense of integrity, that keep his friends' all-important faith in him.

Battlewise, Randi is as well-rounded as they come. He's got good starting stats and I recommend you keep them that way - i.e, don't specialize. While in the Aruba, he's good enough, but once he gets the Oukai, Randi easily becomes one of the (if not THE) strongest fighters in your team.

Quotes :

\*attacking\*

"Ikuzo!" ("Let's go!")

"Kiai!" (No translation - an angry battle shout.)

\*against Faulkner\*

"Chichiue no kataki da!" ("This is for my father!")

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Regina (Reyna) -

A soldier serving Duke Zeria, Regina has a refreshingly bright and cheery personality as well as bad cooking and a rather sarcastic tongue. She is on occasion sweet on Randi but prefers to fulfill the role of a sort of older sister to the group...after all, Randi has Mairl.

Regina's main asset is a high DEX, so I suggest you focus on that. She also is one of the few characters to use spears, giving her a range advantage - POW helps in that area as well. You can basically use her any way you want (she ended up with above-average AGI scores in my game) but keep in mind her starting stats and weapon of choice.

Quotes :

\*miss\*

"Donmai, donmai!" ("Don't mind, don't mind.")

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Julie (Ione) -

Another of Zeria's soldiers, Julie typifies the noble knight - unfailingly polite, even to enemies, resolute and utterly dependable. She's not with you for very long (at least not in my story path) but Julie's useful even in that short space of time. She also seems to have some relationship with Regina.

Use Julie as you would any other unit; she's not going to be with you long enough to level up more than two levels.

Quotes :

\*being hit\*

"Yarimashita ne." ("Well done, I see.")

\*attacking\*

"Soko desu!" ("Over there!")

\*counterattacking\*

"Okorimashita yo!" ("You've made me angry!")

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Russell -

A wandering mercenary, Russell hangs out with his buddy Puruta and is as easy and happy-go-lucky as they come. He is, however, fiercely loyal and can demonstrate quite a fiery personality. He more or less fulfills the "good buddy" stereotype of the team and enjoys a healthy friendship with Randi.

Russell's strength lies in his attack - it's good. This guy is definitely a frontliner. Actually, like Regina, you can theoretically train him any way you wish, but I tend to stick with my character's inherent talents, and for Russell it's POW all the way.

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Walkthrough :

(I can't remember most of the scenarios due to how long ago I played the game, so I'll just write down the guides and you can match them to the stages. If I specify a scenario number, don't take it as the truth - it's probably wrong. ^\_^)

Scenario 1 - Moving Destiny

Scenario 2 -

Scenario 3-4 (I forgot) :

This is the one where Kamoshu must hold the bridge while you fight off the enemies at the other side. Simple enough; there are only two things to remember - Julie doesn't need to gain any experience (she will leave shortly) so you can use her as a blocker. The other is that Prince Deris retreats if you deal him enough damage. Use this battle to try to get Randi Strong Slash - he'll need it shortly.

Right at the end here, you'll witness a spectacular fight scene between Faulkner and Kamoshu, one that unfortunately ends in the latter's death. Before he breathes his last, the old man reveals to Randi that he is actually the King...

Scenario 6 (I think) :

Here is where most people get stuck. ^\_^ Your objective is to move one unit (any unit) to the castle to rescue the Duke. In the meantime, Zeria's forces will be fighting a pitched battle to provide you with some much-needed cover.

This adds a considerable random element to the stage. Depending on how the fight goes, Faulkner himself might come after you, or Zeria could even attack Zargos. The rule of thumb is that as long as your forces are doing fairly well (i.e, Faulkner is occupied and the unit ratio is 1 to 1.5) you don't need to restart. It's usually not worth it to restart for your own forces to do better...and no, you don't get anything from killing Faulkner, if you're wondering.

Anyway, your second main problem is Zargos. You NEED Strong Slash to fight him - if you don't have it, ignore him and make an all-out rush for the castle. Again, depending on how the main battle is faring and the condition of your party members, you might want to battle Zargos and his men instead. (Note that unless your forces are doing well, this WILL result in Faulkner catching up to you.) My strategy is usually to leave a few people behind to take out Zargos (if not, he hampers your movement) and use one unit to break through and rescue the Duke. Remember, the moustached idiot is worth a lot of EXP...

Scenario 8 :

You can't win this fight. Randi's naviete has placed him in a situation in which there is no escape...the most you can do is get some EXP from the attacking enemies. Resign yourself to your fate and Randi is carted off to the palace to be imprisoned.

(Apparently, if by some miracle you manage to avoid the trap and survive, 4 additional scenarios will be opened up in which Randi doesn't meet up with Nana and instead confronts and defeats Radcot himself...I personally haven't gotten this though.)

Scenario 9 :

Randi breaks out of the palace with Nana's help and meets a mysterious (not to mention kooky) stranger that assists his escape.

Scenario ? :

Here is where Randi gets tested for the right to wield the Grantia. The first fight is not so bad, but the second is...if you play your cards right,

you might be able to win that AND the fight against Andrew later, but I wasn't able to. Anyway, if you decide on that course, an Earth stone to cut down movement rates should be your weapon of choice.

If you do manage to beat Andrew, you get to challenge the Marquis himself; besides that, no special prizes.

Scenario 13 :

This will be your first fight against Nifleheimians. In this and all other subsequent battles, remember that they are slow but POWERFUL. So slow, in fact, that you might be able to Counter their attacks on occasion. Anyway, this particular fight isn't so bad - you have Zenia, after all. Take down the enemy front line, they lie in wait and make Eris come to you. When she does, surround her and attack fast.

Scenario ? :

This is a deceptively easy battle in the beginning...the two guards initially pose no threat (hell, they probably won't give you 10 Experience between them) and neither do the later foes. It's only when the Sharkin shows up that you realize this was a setup...your best bet against that monster is to TP overload it FAST and then move in your heavy-hitters and take it out before it recovers.

Scenario ? :

Finally, the godly Oukai (I wonder what that will be in English...) is in your hands! And godly it is...you'll soon realize that nothing on the map can withstand it's power - Faulkner running off should be an indication of how strong it is. ^\_^ The trouble is, of course, lasting until Randi can come out of the temple. It actually shouldn't be too hard - select a good defensive position (front of the temple works, so does the bridge) and then enhance your troops with stones and fight off the waves. Once the Oukai is yours, you can pick off the enemies at your leisure and the stage ends.

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Credits :

1. Everyone who e-mailed me about how to get the Empire route. Thanks!
2. Ericking for lots of miscellaneous help and info.
3. Shapirosrw for information on the third path.