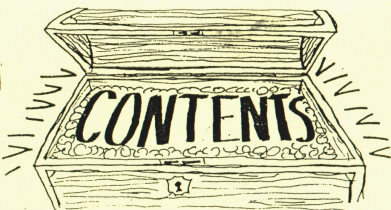
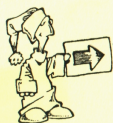


Generals, Dragons and Dice



Generals Dragons and Dice

Issue #20, Dec '91



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EDITORIAL

Well, here we all are at the end of another year and, boy, am I happy. Now is the time to be jolly, have lots of festive cheer, and generally all that stuff. Now, I hope all you dyed-in-the-wool gamers out there don't spend all your holiday time closeted in your gaming rooms or around tables playing modules or new games given to you for Christmas, especially while it's sunny out there!

Time for us to ask you for a contribution to the Mag'. How about, when you get a new game, expansion or add-on to play, you write us a review, send us some comment to tell us how good, bad or indifferent it is, even if it comes in letter form. A few words by someone who plays these games is useful and insightful for others considering buying these products. Don't underrate yourselves: some of the best opinion and comment we get comes from people who thought they "weren't good enough".

Another thing that would be useful would be for you folk to write to us and tell us what you would like to see in the Mag'. If it's game stuff that doesn't appear, you should try and persuade some of your friends to help write up something on it.

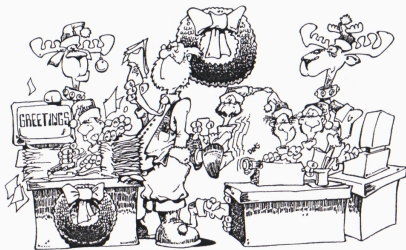
On the news front, I have one small piece of trade news that has come to light. A group of English gamers, who used to help on the production of White Dwarf before it became an unashamedly in house brochure, have got together and produced a lookalike of the old WD called *Red Giant*. The first issue has lots of interesting offerings, including an article for Traveller, which - according to sources - appeared in *Challenge*, and some stuff for the much-neglected *Runequest* Game. This mag could be one to watch in future!

Another piece of information: a young chap in Blenheim is working on a New Zealand sourcebook for *Shadowrun*. If anyone would like to add some stuff, or even make comments, let us know here. Special thanks go this issue to James Shaw, who - after much cajoling - finally produced a scenario for me. Thanks James!

That's all folks! Have a great Christmas and a better New Year - all the best.



Steve



Shamlar

Kristoffel stared at the dagger lying on the table near the hearth. Flickers of light from the fire could be seen reflected in the blade. Behind him, Amleth waited impatiently. Kristoffel was nearly fifty, and the thick maroon gown and slippers he wore bore witness to the fact that Amleth had interrupted him on the way to bed. Amleth, taller and perhaps thirty, had discarded his amour and cloak on a nearby couch and wore thick cloth shirt and leather breeches. Eventually his impatience got the better of him and he spoke.

"Well Kris, you have what you wanted? This must have been my easiest quest ever: all I did was follow your directions. Though I didn't enjoy hunting through the piles of bones and filth in the ruins of Gorbach's Keep. I found this caked in mud in what might have been one of Gorbach's dungeons. I cleaned it, but it didn't come up any cleaner or less pitted than you see now.

"If you look very carefully, you can see that the pit marks are actually small holes leading into the centre of the blade. That's when I first thought it might really be what you're after. It's magic and evil, and it sort of preys on your mind. I found myself thinking about it often and at night, I'd find it in my hand when I was sitting by the fire. It's kind of unnerving, so I came here as quickly as possible. As far as I'm concerned you're welcome to it. You promised me an explanation if I found it, so come on: spill the beans."

The older man smiled. "It seems I was wise to choose you Amleth, even if you met no enemies on the journey. The dagger itself is an enemy, and I trusted you to be careful with it and not use it. This is 'Shamlar' and to say that *it* is a dagger is to misunderstand completely. In fact one should say '*she*' is Shamlar, and *she* is a living creature, just like you or I. She is considerably older and more dangerous than either of us. Fortunately, few of her race still survive.

"I think her kind must have been magically created, though I can't imagine how. She is very intelligent and lies there listening to us. Hoping to feed, to drink blood or steal another soul. She will make an excellent addition to my collection." Kris took the dagger, and turned towards the door. "Come, I will show her to you at her worst." Without waiting to see if Amleth followed, he left the room, went down the passage and through the back door of his house.

At the back of the house, a piglet was tied to a post by a short rope. Kris strode up to it, oblivious of the fact that his slippers and the bottom of his robe now had a liberal coating of mud. As Amleth watched, his friend raised the dagger and plunged into the unfortunate animal. There was no squeal, but a loud sucking, slurping sound which lasted only a second. Amleth felt the heat rise from his neck, and the sweat break on his forehead. The poor pig toppled lifeless to the ground, not one drop of blood seeping from the wound.

Rising from the body, Kris turned to his friend. Conversationally, he explained. "You see not a drop of blood is left in the body. But worse, the poor animal's soul is also stolen, and Shamlar feeds on it now as we speak. It is the same with all creatures, though a piglet isn't very satisfying for her. A pretty wishy-washy sort of soul, I'd imagine. I should think she will completely devour it in an hour or two. A man's would take a bit longer, maybe a day.

"But now, it's time to show you the most amazing thing of all. Here! Hold this." He handed Amleth a scroll and walked back to the body of the pig. He untied the corpse and, taking the dagger he thrust it back into the wound, he stood up and took the scroll from Amleth's hands. Walking round the body, he read from the scroll. Amleth couldn't recognise the language. Then he stood up. "I can't be sure this will work. That's the trouble - one can never be sure what's myth and what's not. Still... here goes." He bent down and withdrew the dagger with a flourish. The piglet rose to its feet with a squeal of pain and bolted.

"Oh good, I hoped it would work. It all depends on how much of the soul she's eaten." As Kris turned round he was just in time to see his friend topple into the mud. "What a stupid time to pass out" he mumbled. "These fighters really have such weak stomachs..."

KNIVES:

<i>No Appearing</i>	:	1
<i>Frequency</i>	:	Very Rare
<i>Alignment</i>	:	Chaotic Evil
<i>Intelligence</i>	:	High
<i>Movement</i>	:	Minimal (See below)
<i>Psionics</i>	:	Limited (see below)
<i>Value</i>	:	20,000 Gp
<i>XP Value</i>	:	3,000 xp

Shamlar and her relatives are so rare as to be unique in gaming terms. They are normally daggers about a foot long, tarnished and of poor quality. *Detect Magic* or *Evil* will indicate more of their true natures.

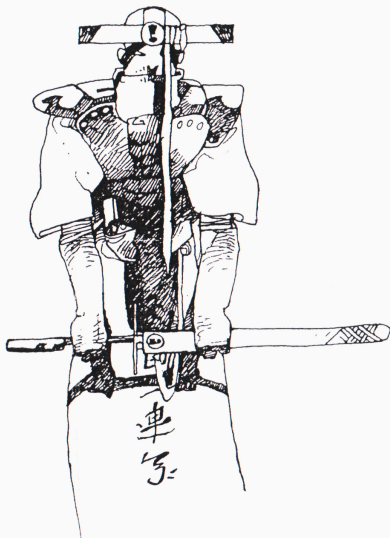
Knives are totally evil, existing only to feed, and happy to feed on any *living* creature regardless of alignment. They convey no bonuses to hit or damage, unless a to hit roll of 17 to 20 is rolled against a *living* creature (i.e. undead and elemental creatures are excluded), in which case they always hit, and the slurping and soul-stealing described above will take place, and death will be more or less instant.

The process can be reversed only if the Knife is reinserted in the wound and the correct words chanted over it before the knife devours the victim's soul. How long this takes depends on the victim's constitution. A dead victim's soul will lose 1 point of constitution per hour until it is completely gone. Even if reversal occurs lost constitution points are not restored to victim.

Knives are not immortal but their lifespan is hundreds of years. They can be destroyed if completely immersed in holy water which contains three drops of blood from a victim who has been bought back to life by the reversal process.

Knives' psionic ability is limited. They can psionically suggest to their owners that they should be used, and owners who do not concentrate hard on selecting a weapon will always find the knife comes to hand. They can also move a few feet once per day by telekinesis. There is no real strength in the movement, but it can be enough to make a stroke miss or the knife fall out of a bag. NB: Knives cannot make a stroke *hit*.

Knives are highly intelligent and will soon learn any language they don't already know. They will tend to stay with an owner who uses them often, but one who provides little food is liable to find the knife has been lost, or worse, suddenly flies into the hand of his opponent.



Following up on the Desert Special Presentation of the campaign setting, ILRAEMER...

ILRAEMER: THE POLITICAL SITUATION AT PRESENT

by Steve Martin

For your Information:

Athians are the original people who have lived since 11AD in the area shown on the map in Issue #18 between Gallilarn and the mountains on the left-hand side of the page, and all lands in between from the Shrine of Athis in the north to Tyran in the south.

Erimoreans are the people from Erimore who arrived to help the Athian Kingdom in force around 513 AD, large numbers of which have settled in Ilraemer.

Ilraemerians are the people of either culture who live in the above area, who see the best way for all is a bonding of both cultures into one, hence a new name for the old kingdom of Athis: ie, Ilraemer.

Erimorean and Athian relations:

Despite the marriage of the Athian Queen and the highest-ranking Erimorean Lord, and the declaration of a new Kingdom of Ilraemer, there are large amounts of resistance to the idea. Some of this opposition is passive, yet there is some which ferments at a dangerous and exploitable level.

Land Division:

One of the major dividing factors is the land division that took place after the Crusade. By necessity, there are Erimorean Knights occupying lands that were held by local long-standing lords or their direct descendants. No lands were passed on if there was a strong noble, who could enforce their claim to the land. However many petty nobles had lost everything to the Gulan as much as three or four generations ago, and had no chance to start again. Their descendants thronged to court but many could not pull sufficient strings to gain a new grant of land, or, if they got it, could not rebuild castles and towns destroyed and looted in the war.

Much of the strife involved in the Kingdom between Erimorean and Athian is catalysed in the port of Tyran. With the development of the coastal city-states in Erimore and the regrowth of the Kingdom's economy, especially trade with the Dream Marshes, Tyran is once more becoming a major port. Count Rolphen of Flanden has organised trading and pro-"Erimorean" deals which cut out Athian traders, and which allows a power base that relies not on co-operation but exploitation (actually pro-Corrun, an anti-imperialist port at the mouth of one of Erimore's many rivers).

Cultural factors:

The second major dividing factor is Cultural:

Erimore: *	Ilraemer
Patriarchy	Matriarchy
God is ERIMORE	God is ATHIS
Feudal Kingdom	Imperial Kingdom
Nobility against trading	Nobility accepted traders
Population Growth	Reduced population
Intolerance of Magic	Acceptance of Magic

* Note: Where "Erimorean" is used to refer to the Erimorean Empire, rather than "Erimoreans in Ilraemer", it actually refers to a specific part of the Empire - the Duchy of Torthan - and should not be construed as the Empire's official attitudes.

Population Drift:

A major factor affecting Ilraemerian politics is the huge numbers of people that fled to the cities to escape the war long ago and who will not move back to the open land. Erimorean lords tend to see this as a further sign of weakness within the old Athian society, and compare it to the feudal obedience owed to them by the serfs they have transported across the miles between Erimore and Ilraemer.

A complication of this drift has been the growth of both a large, powerful middle class and a vocal and sometimes-difficult lower class.

Athian-descended nobles are quick to point out that Erimorean nobles are forced to pay out huge sums to bring serfs to Ilraemer, and then must offer huge incentives to get them to stay on the land. Such incentives have included, almost as a standard, the grant of land to at least each family *freehold*. These three factors polarised opposition into two factions or alliances by AD527.

Political factionalism:

Within the Kingdom there are several political factions or groups vying for power.

The Nobles:

Athian: the Athian party revolves around Cominae Raharis of Rabaar. Their attitude is one of "Athis for the Athians" and "Erimoreans go home!" They see the Erimoreans as having usurped their land's rights and privileges.

Erimorean: the Erimorean party sees Athian society as degenerate and ineffective. Athian Nobles have lost their power and aren't real nobles. Their attitude is "We fought for it, we own it."

Ilraemerian/Royalist: a group that believes that the other two groups are dangerous, and more direct action should be taken to remove these malcontents. Moderate members encourage loyalty to the crown.

Wizards Guild: the College of Wizards and the Circle of the Magi wish to promote the expansion of wizardry and, to this end, are anti' the Erimorean party. However, they wish to see the growth of trade, especially in rare and hard-to-come-by spell components from Erimore and beyond, especially by the fast sea route out of Tyran.

Merchants: The Merchants are fundamentally opposed to anybody making money they don't get a cut of. As such, they are opposed to Erimorean monopoly out of Tyran, especially if trade goes east to the Dream Marshes. The Merchants quite like the stability and order that the new Kingdom seems to offer, and are, in the majority, pro-Illaemerian, however some warn of the effects of a too-powerful, centralised government.

Criminal guilds: The criminal guilds fundamentally share the merchants' attitudes, but wish to encourage more chaos in order to profit further.

Storm Knights: Nominally, at least, the Storm Knights are apolitical. Within the organisation, however, there are some who reflect the divided loyalties of the Kingdom.

The Free Lancers: The Free Lancers are in an awkward position. Being Erimorean, they are disliked by the die-hard Athian supporters. Being long-standing members of Athian society, and having assimilated many Athian customs, they are seen as just as foreign as the Athians to the True blue Erimoreans. They are pro-Royalist.

Desert Tribesmen: One of the most advanced approaches that the King and Queen have taken is the conciliatory approach to the Desert Tribes, especially the Sambayani, who in the last four years have become a noticeably developing power, and the Jaloni of the north. Relations with Tigerkin have continued to improve, especially when they aided the Erimorean defenders of Tarsin Keep against the raiding Thune. The Ssessiphrani too negotiate with Illaemerian ambassadors, and only the Thune still oppose all attempts at reconciliation.

Political Personalities:

Queen Edrienne of Mira Ges Tor (Athian): the head of the old Athian Kingdom, Edrienne used her power to make a new Kingdom and a new covenant to rule it. Many who were dispossessed see her as a traitor to her lineage, and to the Athian people. The majority of powerful landed nobles see her as a strong competent ruler, and therefore something to be cautious of. Edrienne's insistence in adhering to her mother's approach to law, especially the new appointment of royal arbiters, has drawn her into opposition with some of her more powerful barons, but most see her involvement as relatively minor, and more than offset by her generous support and encouragement of works within each of the Lords' demenses.

Edrienne has large amounts of support from the common people of Athian descent, especially of the cities of Mira, Tyran, and Rabaar. Her personal lands are the city of Mira and the Tower Plains.

Edrienne is a seventh-level mage. She is always accompanied by at least five of the Royal Guard.

King Taled of Gallilarn (Erimorean Nobleman): Taled is the senior-ranking Erimorean noble, and comes from a powerful House in Torthan in the Empire of Erimore. While the men of Erimore not within his personal lands do not owe him any particular allegiance, he was a faithful and doughty crusader, whose abilities were widely recognised by all the crusading Erimoreans. His leadership has helped smooth relationships with the Athian nobles, and this, combined with the support he has garnered from among the young unlanded knights, has aided his acquisition of personal power.

Taled is overlord of Gallilarn and Sornion, and the all the demenses between. Taled is always accompanied by Forthis, the Ariman Cominae of the new Kingdom, and 2-4 guards and 2-4 young knights. Taled is happy to sponsor individuals to settle and farm areas in his lands.

(The Royal Marriage:

For a marriage made for political stability, this has been a surprisingly steady and durable relationship. Taled was impressed with Edrienne's olive beauty, and fiery and independent spirit. Edrienne was impressed with the suprising manners this noble from Torthan had, and his enlightened attitude to magic and mages. A further factor to the success of the marriage was the fact that they shared many of the same ambitions: the creation of a Kingdom strong enough to stand upon its own. To this end, both try hard not to contradict each other in public, nor favour either the Athian or Erimorean people. While Mira is the capital of the new Kingdom, both Taled and Edrienne winter in Sornion.)

Princess Fieres of Tyran* (Athian): Princess Fieres is unfortunately a bubblehead. At an early age she was betrothed to Rolphen, and is haplessly in love (or infatuated, depending on how cynically you approach the subject). Though the Princess has a heart of gold, she only reacts, but does not act of her own volition, and it is said that Rolphen makes sure that no matters of any worth are bought to her attention.

* Princess Fieres rules in name only, having not yet reached her majority. She is currently betrothed to her Regent, Count Rolphen of Flanden (Erimorean).

Prince Sufors of Hectere (Athian): Prince Sufors of Hectere is an aloof man, respected by his people, if not loved. Sufors was originally a regular Athian army commander, who was rewarded with the principality during the Great Crusade. Because of Hectere's isolation, it has maintained its semi-independent position. Sufors' rigid aloof rule is softened by his brother, Sorcors', more caring, hands-on approach. Sufors has Athian party leanings, but would never seek to oppose or undermine the Queen, who gave him the principality. Sorcors is an Ilraemerian party supporter, but gets very little chance to be involved in the intrigues at court.

Cominae Rarharis of Rabaar Ges Tor (Athian): Rarharis is an anti-Erimorean nobleman, and is most certainly the leader of the Anti-Erimorean faction in Ilraemer.

Raharis is a trained Warrior and Mage. He sees the Erimoreans as narrow-minded bigoted people, especially when it comes to magic. As the Lord Protector of the Royal College of Wizardry, he wishes to control Erimorean influence, and maintain the standards of the College of Wizardry.

Duke Adhemar of Sornion (Erimorean): The good Duke is probably one of the staunchest pro-Erimorean people within the kingdom of Ilraemer. He is enfeigned at least nominally but his overlord, Taled, but has on several occasions been reported as saying "He (Taled) is as much a servant of the Emperor (of Erimore) as I." Though rumors abound that Adhemar is the leader of the Erimorean faction within Ilraemer, neither Taled nor Edrienne have moved against him.

Duke Kadisha Pasha of the Great Oasis (Athian): Kadisha of the Oasis is the sort of Ilraemerian nobleman that Erimoreans love to hate. Kadisha is obese, trained in both music and sorcery. Worse, Kadisha is a merchant prince and cunning as all rogues. Many Erimorean (and Athian descended) nobles have found they have got the worse end of a bargain from this man. Kadisha, however, has an almost unassailable position within the desert, and only the sandships of Mira and Gallilarn could possibly bring him to heel.

Kadisha is a loyal Ilraemerian and avoids factional maneuvering on the few times he stirs his huge bulk to Court.

Pasha Reyashaman of Mira (Athian): Reyashaman is the Lord Keeper of the city of Mira and the head of Mira's Judiciary. Reyashaman is one of the last of the Miran Nobles who can claim descent from Old Athian Kings and Queens. Reyashaman, however, is a historian and a follower of Arborn, God of learning and magic. He believes that it is factional fighting that always destroys Kingdoms, and is a foe of all the Factional groups. Reyashaman often sits in judgement in even the Small Courts of Mira and is well liked by Mirans.

Count Vorthis, Castellan of Gallilarn (Erimorean): Vorthis is the classic wrong man at the wrong time in the wrong place! Vorthis is a warrior born and bred. Fearless in battle, and unswervingly loyal to his lord, Taled, he has however no real understanding of governing people. His city is, as was many years ago, a cesspit of crime and smuggling, and despite his best attempts, there has been no integration between Athian and Erimorean.

Orsernus, Warden of the Tower Plains (Athian): Orsernus is the High Lord of the Tower Plains' military power. He is also the Commander of Ilraemer's small, but mobile, standing army. Orsernus is pro-Ilraemerian, but brooks no insult from anyone, and has sympathies for the Athian party.

Rolphen of Flanden (Erimorean): Rolphen is an opportunistic, fiendishly cunning man. Whether or not he is really in love with Fieres, or merely taking advantage of her, is immaterial. Rolphen is not really a member of any of the political groups, but seeks to take advantage of all of them. His dealings with the merchant city states have seriously upset the political applectart, but so far there is little that he has done that is traitorous or

illegal.

Other Important Personalities:

Kandor Ariman **Gararsis** of Tyran, Archmage of the Kingdom, Master of The Royal College of Wizardry. Pro-Ilraemerian.

Ariman **Shazarn**, overall adventurers' coordinator and liason with the Wizards College and Guild.

Ariman **Ferkis** of Rabaar, Mage of Rabaar, second in line after Gararsis.

Corill Wind-Tamer, Shen Mage, commander of the light horse mercenaries in Sornion.

Simmern **Thesieri** (Erimorean), Commander of the Storm Knights. Simmern is the Lord Keeper of the Storm Knights who protect Athis' sacred Shrine. He has chosen to avoid political involvement at this stage, fearing the risks such involvement would bring to his sacred charge.

Forthis the Royal Ariman (Athian). Forthis is the boon companion of Taled, and one of Edrienne's ex-lovers. He is staunchly loyal to both his rulers and his friends.



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ROLLUP

A shareware computer programme for rolling up AD&D Characters

by Steve Beeston

I was given a copy of **Roller** (the sample program for **Rollup**) about two months ago. I found it quite good. It has options to roll up and assign a character's ability scores. You can choose a race and class, and the program works out all your special abilities. As **Roller** was a sample program for **Rollup**, it was limited in what it could do, but I found it quite interesting, so I sent my money to America for the bigger and better version, **Rollup**.

Both programmes (**Roller** and **Rollup**) will generate a new character by rolling 3,4, or 5 dice. They roll seven times, the last dice always being Comeliness. You get to assign the other stats yourself. I have done a "Print screen" of the information that is generated by both programmes. As you can see it, gives all the results of your character generation and racial path, which most people never get round to writing down and have to spend precious time in a game situation trying to find the appropriate page of the rule book!

One of the problems that exists in writing character generating programs is that you have to be careful that you don't breach copyright. This is why, when you get **Rollup**, you have to enter the spells and the proficiencies into the program. This is a big hassle. Apart from being a lot of work, the program has made it harder by having no method of correcting mistakes. Another trap for young players is that, when you enter the spells, they are only separated by level. They appear in the order that they are typed in. I started by entering the spells from the Tome of Magic. I found that when I added spells from the Players Handbook, they did not end up in alphabetic order. This makes finding the spell you want more difficult, especially as, when you look for a spell by name, the programme will only put you into the area of the spell level - you have to hunt through the spells in exactly the same way that you would have to in a book.

There are several other gripes about **Rollup** that I have. Some are small (like the problem that it seems to have overwriting the screen when you are using a CGA [colour graphics adapter] card). Others are really bad (like the fact that the Dexterity bonus is taken into account when calculating the modified THACO for melee weapons).

A significant problem with the advanced version of **Rollup**, as opposed to **Roller** the introductory package, is that you need a version of DOS higher than 2.11. DOS 3.2 works fine. A further problem is that they are having trouble getting the Print function of the program to run. The only way to get a print-out is to use the "Print Screen" option on your keyboard.

It is important to keep in mind that this programme has not been written for commercial gain, and that it is still being worked on. It has a lot of faults, and - I must be honest - I wouldn't recommend paying for the registered version just yet, but it is a very quick way to roll up NPCs or first level characters.

Though I have been pretty negative, and the system has a lot of flaws, it has certain obvious advantages. I run a game with several people who do not have access to their own Players Handbook and who don't know all the rules I expect them to use. Considering **Roller** is free, it is certainly worth playing with. Cunning computer types could do very well redesigning the system, or making up their own. We here at GDD would be very interested in any such program.

Copies of **Roller** are available free through GDD, (you supply the disk, return self addressed stamped envelope and packaging [a small donation to ensure you get a copy before *next* Christmas would be nice!]). I have also uploaded copies on to both *Andrew's Folly* and *The High Tower of Sorcery*.



NAME:	CLASS: Thief	RACE: Gnome
Height: 3ff 2in	Level 1	Diety:
Weight: 116lbs		Hit Points: 7
Eyes: brown		Base THACO: 20
Hair: white		Adj THACO: 18

ABILITY SCORES AND BONUSES

STR 14	To Hit: 0	Dmg: 0	Wgt: 55	Max Pr 170	Open Door 8	Bend Bar 7
DEX 18	Reac Adjust: 2	Mag Att Adjust: 2	Armor Class Adj: -4			
CON 15	HP Bonus: 1	S.Shock: 90%	R.Surv: 94%	Pois Sv: 0	Reg: 0	
INT 14	#Languages: 4	Spell Lvl: 7th	Lrn: 60%	Max Spells/Lvl: 9		
WIS 12	Mag Def Adjust: 0	Spell Failure: 0	Bonus Spells			
CHA 10	Maximum Henchmen 4	Loyalty Base 0	Reaction Adjust 0			
COM 15						

Gnomes have a 20% chance of failure when using magic items other than weapons armor, shields, illusionist's items and items that duplicate thieving skills. Gnomes are +1 to hit kobolds and goblins. Gnolls, Bugbears, Ogres, Trolls, Ogre Magi and Titans are -4 to hit Gnomes. Infravision: 60 feet
 Backstab x2 (Levels 1-4), x3 (Levels 5-8), x4 (Levels 9-12)
 Backstab x5 (Levels 13up)

DWARVES AND MAGIC

Are they really Chalk and Cheese?

by Steve Martin

I have never really liked the restrictions AD&D (I and II) has placed on the magical nature of dwarves. Most sources of fantasy literature have dwarves as recognised masters of - at least - the making of wondrous and powerful items. In AD&D, this is recognised as a kind of curious double-think: dwarves make magical items, but can't cast spells. Ridiculous! One of the best things about *Rolemaster* and *GURPS* is that they allow the player to have dwarven spellcasters. This article sets out to offer some justification and rules for Dwarven Wizards and Bards in AD&DII.

Some people might argue that dwarven spell-casters are not needed. They would say that, if one needs to explain dwarven magical weapons, one has only to look at the rules concerning the priest making magical items, and as dwarves can be priests, the debate is ended. Not so! Many items that are described as being of dwarven nature possess magic-user like powers. Now I know that gods can do anything, **but** if a dwarven god can grant a *Helm of Brilliance* the ability to *Prismatic Spray*, why doesn't she/he/it give that to the priest for standard use? My argument is that a god is unlikely to grant an **item** a power that their priests cannot access. After all, priests can be controlled - items are a lot harder to keep in line!

In one Forgotten Realms setting game I played in, the Dungeon Master allowed me to play a dwarven bard. This character is neat! He is able to cast spells and sing songs. He plays the sagas of the old dwarves, and works as a cultural ambassador for his people. He speaks at least five languages, and is always looking for more books. He has mastered third level spell-casting and, though capable of casting blasting spells, prefers information-gathering ones. The only change that has been made to dwarven racial advantages is that he has lost the 20% chance of non-specific magic items cutting out on him.

Technically, the dwarven bard makes a lot of sense. The modifications to Saving Throws versus Rods, Wands, Staves, and Spells don't affect game balance too drastically, and a character based on a thief's THAC0 and hit points make little difference, as long as the dwarven bard is not compared to a bard of any other race. When thus compared, certain changes should be made.

In my opinion, a dwarven bard should not get the full dwarven bonus vs. giants, goblins, orcs, etc. A +1 to hit and +2 to AC should suffice. The justification for this is that, while other dwarves are learning to battle these creatures, the bard is learning the rudiments of magic. The dwarf keeps some bonus due to small size and the generally-accepted belief, at least in AD&D, that these are the standard dwarven enemies, and may be accounted for as skill and experience.

The other thing that has to be lost is the dwarf's bonus against magic due to Constitution. As Constitution itself gives no modifier vs. Spells for other races, this

toughness inherent in dwarves can be dropped for the bard. Unlike other classes open to dwarves, the bard doesn't reject magic: he actively embraces it.

Dwarven abilities in detecting dangerous and moving stonework may be left as is, as long as the dwarf lives in the standard underground environment.

Opening up the Wizard class to dwarves has problems all of its very own. Too much magic-use and the wonderful grittiness of dwarven appeal risks being lost; too little, and the dwarves who made Thor's uru hammer, Mjolnir, managed it by luck and just having the right kind of gear!!

Dwarven wizards could not be Mages but should be Specialist Wizards of these recommended spheres:

- Alteration
- Invocation/Evocation
- Divination
- Elementalism:
 - Elemental Earth (Tome of Magic)
 - Elemental Fire (Tome of Magic)

Dwarven wizards may attain only the levels allowed by the Dungeon Master's guide for elves (p15). Note: Dwarves under this system may not be Wild Mages. The justification for this is that dwarven society/"natural character" would avoid the randomness of Wild Magic.

Like bards, dwarven wizards should not be able to access dwarven modifiers vs. Spells (etc) due to Constitution. Likewise, they are not subject to the 20% failure-chance of non-class-specific magical items.

A Word of Warning: dwarven magic use should still be rare and unusual. Even in lands where dwarves are not a diminishing people (yes, that is a short joke!), dwarven spell-casters should appear rarely, if at all. The dwarven wizard is going to be a welcome and honoured comrade, being able to gain wealth and power by helping their own communities, and with the Wars of the Underdark, and would not lightly leave their home to adventure above ground.

One of the biggest arguments against giving dwarves access to wizard spells has to be that of game balance. I have tried, successfully I think, to limit natural advantages for one character over another. More significantly, I may have fundamentally affected the "feel" or "atmosphere" that surrounds dwarves in AD&DII. I do not believe this is the case. Dwarves have always been tough. Now they have the magic power necessary to survive and compete successfully in their underground world.

I hope this article has provoked some thought amongst the DMs out there, and I would be interested in any comments or arguments that there are against what I have advocated.





THE LEGEND OF WALDO THE DRAGON-SLAYER

A Hero's Tale

by Waldo

This is the story of how a simple (but highly intelligent and modest) farm boy became one of the greatest fighters of all time.

You could say that Waldo didn't seek fame and fortune, but that wealth and prestige pursued him. It was at quite a young age that this great hero started to practice with a Long Sword. His first sword was fashioned out of wood when he was just five years old. It took him only two days, and six of his mother's best kitchen knives to carve it out of a branch of his father's oak tree. Though making a sword out of a simple lump of wood was a mighty achievement, the thing that made it obvious to every body in his village that this boy was headed for greater things, was the fact that, when questioned on who had chopped down the oak tree, dropped the axe through the skylight in the toilet, and left a big pile of wood shavings in his bedroom, Waldo came out with (that now famous line) "I cannot tell a lie; it might have been me." But not before he had tried the other famous line, "I was framed!" Legend has it that he didn't even cry out when his dad put him over his knee and gave him six of the best with the wooden spoon.

Every day for the next six years, Waldo could be seen with a chamber pot on his head and his wooden sword in his hand, practicing on a bag of grain that he had hoisted up like a punching bag. This great champion realised even then that a long sword was the weapon for him. He also realised that if he got six of the best for a long sword, making himself a lance could kill him. During those happy days, he took a large toll on the farm's rat population, not to mention the odd stray cat. It has been said that, even then, he could take both wings of a fly with his sword before it could hit the ground.

Waldo always knew that one day he would have to leave home and seek his fortune. He couldn't go on feeding the town's only pig and looking after the communal cow forever.

One morning, after Waldo had peeled the potatoes and milked the cow the night before, the pig died. Waldo was already tired after spending half the night trying to find the knife that he had peeled the potatoes with, which had been lost while he was away feeding the scraps to the pig. Waldo decided to make his big break. He left early the next morning while the townsfolk were doing an autopsy on his late friend, the pig.

It was a roving band of mighty adventurers staying in the next town's tavern that spotted Waldo's rippling biceps as he drank his orange juice. (Such an intelligent lad had even then realised that, to be a mighty hero you had to keep your wits about you at all times. Also throwing up was bad for your image.) He was to become a major asset to the group.

The illustrious names of the people in this team should be carved in stone. They were:

Han Swallow, the bard, who unsuccessfully tried to hide his admiration of Waldo behind a mask of indifference.

Danjiarra was a mighty fighter in her own right. She was a beast-rider. Waldo took her under his wing and the two of them could be seen sparring together regularly. She considered him a simple farmer at first, but Waldo's magnetic personality soon worked its magic. He even got on well with Smiley Don, her great cat.

Kari, the mage, was wise enough to see Waldo's many hidden talents from the start. It was not long before he had turned this above-average fighter into a killing machine that was just about unbeatable.

Saijax, the ranger, was Waldo's best friend. Waldo was big enough, even then, to overlook Saijax's unhealthy fondness for camels. The two of them became an invincible team in the front row of the party.

The party got off to a bad start. They were tricked into handing over all of their weapons to some con-artists. Waldo had made a slight mistake for the first time in his life. This incredibly intelligent farm boy had little experience with the outside world, and it came as a rude awakening to find out that some people were not as honest as our hero.

It looked like luck had deserted Waldo and his merry band of adventurers. They were not long out of town when they were attacked and captured by a wicked band of slaving pirates. Waldo and Saijax killed thousands of them but they were so heavily outnumbered that they were eventually overpowered. The illustrious group ended up as galley slaves. Though all of his friends had given up on ever escaping, Waldo's amazing intellect was constantly employed working out daring schemes to escape. Most of his plans were rubbish by his shipmates. Not because they wouldn't work, but because the toll on the slaves would have been too great. Waldo knew in his heart that his technically brilliant plan to rip the chains that bound him out of the wood and beat his captors to death with his bare hands would work.

One of his plans, to rip a hole in the bottom of the boat and hold his breath until all of the pirates had drowned, was the first sign of his brilliant military mind in action. It was only because he came up with the far superior plan of getting them rescued by a band of seagoing paladins, that his first plan was never played out. Even when just starting out, Waldo was willing to share the limelight.

The paladins struck at dawn, sending in a group of highly trained assassins to sneak aboard first to let the slaves free. Waldo decided that they should wait for the main attack to start before they overpowered the pirates and killed the rest of the crew. It did not take long before Waldo and Saijax had taken a scimitar each and set to the task of dispatching the rest of their oppressors. The battle ended with the pirate ship sunk, and all of the pirates killed.

At the end of the battle, the party was asked if they would like to join the

Paladins, but the group of friends decided that someone had to look after the remaining slaves, as there was not enough room on the paladin's ship for everyone to return to civilisation. Waldo took stock of the situation and realised that the ex-slaves were going to need a cunning and clever leader to survive in the desert, where the ship had put to shore.

One of the survivors was a great cleric of Kylan, named Vyke. It was not long before Waldo had taken him under his wing. It became quite common to see Vyke and Waldo deep in discussion on some serious matter of faith. Waldo helped Vyke understand a lot of the teachings that Vyke had difficulty with. Vyke managed to convert Waldo to serve Kylan. Telling Waldo about unbelievers getting their souls ripped apart by demons probably helped.

The paladins departed, saying that they would send a ship along in a month to rescue everybody. They talked about the ruins that could be viewed from the beach, mentioning that there were undead there at night. There was a legend of great wealth in the ruins, but Waldo's first priority was to organise the eighty surviving ex-slaves into groups, so that they could salvage as much as possible from the wreck of the pirate ship.

The day passed quickly as our heroes and their helpers started to set up a camp on the beach. It was not until nighttime that people started to feel uneasy: from the beach, large fires could be seen burning in the deserted ruins. Waldo spent the night fighting the desire to go and find the cause of the fires, but he decided that his first priority was looking after the survivors. Everybody slept well, knowing that with a fighter of Waldo's calibre around everything would be all right.

The next morning, Waldo and a hand-picked group of men decided to go and look at the fires. The remaining survivors were asked to shift the camp to a ruined castle on a nearby hill. Even someone as brave and mighty as Waldo could see the advantage of making things easier to defend. He did feel that it might make things a bit unfair on any attackers, having to fight their way up to the castle just to have Waldo cleave their heads off their shoulders. Just before the group was about to head off, it was found that a couple of people were missing. Had they decided to try their luck by themselves, or was there some more sinister explanation? Perhaps it was the sand cats that Waldo had heard the paladins talking about...

On the way to the fires, Waldo noticed some canoes on the beach. In a flash of brilliance, Waldo's lightning brain worked out that perhaps the fires were had been lit by cannibals. He talked the party into carrying on. The fires were a gruesome sight. Fried bits of ex-survivor were everywhere. Waldo was slightly annoyed. Nobody ate his friends and lived to digest them! Most of the rest of the day was spent putting out the fires. "That will teach them to upset such a mighty hero," thought Waldo (though he was modest enough not to say it out loud).

to be continued...



Beyond First Impressions

Continued from last issue... by John Knowlton

Scenario 9 To The Square

Rating 50/50%

Attraction: A combined arms assault meets a fair Wermact defense, and OBA makes it's debut in ASL. The Germans do not look too outnumbered, but those 4 T-34/85's and the 80mm MTR Battery sure give the Soviet a nice edge.

German Advantages: HIP. Leaders. SW. Fortifications.

Well, not a whole lot to cheer about. However let's take a look at what there is.

Two HIP Squads, and two HIP Pak 38 ATG. Try to use these to either knock out or disable the AFV's, as these are one of the most powerful items in the Soviet arsenal. The sooner you can neutralise these, the better your chances of winning.

Rubble makes an excellent location for HIP Anti-Tank Squads and their Panzerfausts, no backblast to worry about at all. As for the ATG, there are dozens of places for them, but you cannot cover all of the board. Just be sure to place them where your Infantry can cover them. This will ensure that they will not be one shot wonders. As for the disappointing TK numbers, remember Deliberate Immobilisations (C 5.7). Any gun with a ROF 3 is usually very successful.

As for the Leaders, SW, and Fortifications, these will be covered in the German Defense.

German Disadvantages: Need to defend two objectives. Wide area to defend.

This is sure rough. Fourteen Squads and 2 ATG are supposed to defend a 33 hex wide Battlefield, where the Enemy can choose his objective, and point of attack. Not good.

The only solution is to spread out, but do not go too far forward, this will only get you cut off and dealt to in a piecemeal fashion.

Don't attempt to fight the Russian, only delay him. Hunt the Armour at every available opportunity.

German Defense: What I would recommend is to set up a 'Trip-Wire' defense which will slow the initial advance so as to allow German reinforcements to deploy to favourable defensive locations.

Use the rubble to form a killing ground (the one in the recommended set up is a good example). This will make it very difficult for the Soviets to change position once initially committed.

The main task that you must accomplish as a defender is to establish how the Soviet intends to win, and deploy to stop him.

Here is my recommended set up.

1E4	(?), 4-6-7 Squad.
1H2	(?), 4-4-7 Squad.
1J9	HIP. Pak 38 ATG, 2-2-8 Crew (Fac I9/J8).
1M2	(?), 7-0 Leader, 4-4-7 Squad.
1M9	Rubble.
1O2	Rubble. HIP. 4-4-7 Squad.
1O8	Rubble.
1P7	Rubble.
1P8	Rubble.
1Q3	(Level 2) (?), 8-0 Leader, (2 x) 4-6-7 Squads.
1R7	Rubble.
1Z6	(?), 8-0 Leader, (2 x) 4-6-7 Squads.
21Q7	(?), 9-1 Leader, (2 x) 3-8 LMG, (2 x) 4-6-7 Squads. (This is the 'Fire Brigade' group.)
21R1	Roadblock (Fac 21S2).
21S8	(Level 2) (?), 8-1 Leader. 5-12 MMG. 3-8 LMG. (2 x) 4-6-7
Squads.	
21V4	HIP. 4-4-7 Squad.
20F2	Wire.
20G2	Wire.
20H1	Wire.
20H2	(Level 3) (?) 8-1 Leader. 7-16 HMG. 5-12 MMG. (2 x) 2-3-7
H/S.	
20I2	Wire.
20J2	Wire.
20J3	Wire.
20AA1	HIP. Pak 38 ATG, 2-2-8 Crew (Fac Z0/Z1).

Russian Advantages: OBA. Armour. Optional VC.

At long last Artillery arrives in Battery strength. After reading all of those ghastly rules of C1, it's nice to finally get to use them. (It's not a bad system and worth the effort.) To those of you who have still not got the '89 Erratas, I suggest that

you get your 'A' into 'G'. With Artillery in battery strength, the Soviets have two aces that they have been previously denied: long range firepower, and Smoke (a deadly compliment to a Human Wave (A 25.23)). Also the Armour is looking good in the form of 4 T-34/85's, these are a vast improvement on the T-26 and BT types.

Lastly, the best feature is your VC. Having two Different VC is a real headache to any defender, so try to keep him guessing, at least for a while anyway.

Russian Disadvantages: Time. Tough VC. HIP.

Well, it would seem that there is little to worry about, but with 3 City boards between you and victory, sometimes 10 turns is not enough. It is a long distance for squads who are expected to fight as well, and as for the T-34's, their chances of bypassing HIP squads and ATG without any casualties is not that great.

Your numerical superiority is not that great, so just watch it with the squads, they are *not* expendable.

Russian Attack: Mass your attack on a smallish front. This will allow you to overrun the German defender and get a quick penetration quite early.

Try to isolate German reinforcements if possible, for they will only be met later in very advantageous terrain. Keep the T-34's safe from PF. You can often make a LOS to target possible without exposing yourself by using VBM. Using board 21, here is an example. A German squad is in AA2, and a Soviet T-34-85 is in BB7 in motion facing BB6/CC7. Move the Tank to BB6, then BB5, then to CC5 via VBM across the BB4/CC5 hexside. With the TCA facing BB4/CC4 LOS exists to AA2. Get the idea? This is a lot more sensible than moving to BB3. Remember to protect them with lots of squads.

Place the Radio and the 8-0 Leader in 8V6 at Level 1. This will give you a level 3 Observer (not a bad spot at all). Smoke is really useful, but be careful. It can also be an asset to the Germ trying to re-deploy, or hunt T-34's.

Lastly, for the first few turns, I recommend that you keep your options open as to your objective. The key to winning this scenario as Soviets is knowing when to commit yourself heavily. Don't wait for the opportunity, make it.

Here is my recommended set up in response to the German set up.

8A10 4-4-7 Squad.
8B8 T-34/85 (BU. Fac C9/B9). 4-4-7 Squad.
8B9 4-4-7 Squad.
8C10 4-4-7 Squad.
8D9 4-4-7 Squad.
8E10 9-1 Leader. (2 x) 2-6 LMG. (2 x) 4-4-7 Squads.
8G10 4-4-7 Squad.
8H9 4-4-7 Squad.
8I10 8-1 Leader. (2 x) 4-10 MMG. (2 x) 4-4-7 Squads.
8J9 T34-85 (BU. Fac J10/K10). 4-4-7 Squad.
8K10 (2 x) 4-4-7 Squads.
8O8 T-34/85 (BU. Fac N8/O9), 9-1 Armour Leader. 4-4-7 Squad.

8P9 8-0 Leader, 6-12 HMG, 2-6 LMG, (2 x) 4-4-7 Squads.
 8Q9 T-34/85 (BU. Fac P9/Q10). 4-4-7 Squad.
 8Q10 (2 x) 4-4-7 Squads.
 8V6 (Level 1) 8-0 Leader. Radio.

Conclusion: As the Soviets gently probe the German defense under cover of their T-34/85's, and the Mortars on the eastern side of the Vistula, Germans rush to assemble an organised defense line. Today will be a bitter one for both sides, and in the end neither side may win, particularly the tormented citizens of rubble Warsaw.

Scenario 10 The Citadel

Rating 60% Pro Russian

Attraction: The German must mount a rescue operation to save their comrades. In this scenario, both sides have to attack, as well as defend. From experience, I can tell you that both sides are a delight to play.

Russian Advantages: Numbers. HIP. Pillboxes, Armoured Cupolas. Leaders. SAN.

At first look, having 32 Squads to defend with might seem a tad generous. But also bear in mind that you have a large area to defend. Two of your major concerns should be the OBA and the StuG IIIB's. More often than not, there will not be a lot that you can do about the OBA, but as for the StuG's, use every good opportunity you have to try to close assault them, they are very vulnerable in CC with no MG's. Set up the ATG's to anticipate side and rear shots, or failing that, go for Deliberate Immobilisation (C 5.7).

Placed the Pillboxes where they can interdict a lot of open ground, and reinforce them with a Armoured Cupola, this has a good complimentary effect, since the Infantry will protect the Cupola, and the Cupola can cover the Pillboxes' NCA.

Just one mention of leaders. Having 7 Leaders for 32 Squads in a 1941 Soviet OB is pretty good.

Russian Disadvantages: Wide area to defend. Large handicap on movement.

These two features were very prevalent on the eastern front in 1941, so it is fitting that a Soviet player should experience this burden.

Also the Soviet policy on defence was very inflexible; you were placed in a position, and you defended it unto death. Withdrawal or retreat were unthinkable.

Luckily for the Soviets, Barbarossa was quick to educate them in the error of their ways.

Russian Set Up: First of all, I will discuss your objectives: (1) Take the Citadel; (2) Stop the German reinforcements reaching the Citadel.

If you can clean out the Citadel, you only have to have one unbroken Unit in the Building for the rest of the game in order to win. The toughest objective is taking the Citadel before the rescue party arrives. In order to take the Citadel quickly, make

sure that you can interdict all of it's locations, so that when a German Squad breaks, you can continue to DM the Squad with fire. Also this will not allow the German player to gain concealment.

The eastern edge of board 23 is a bit of an Achilles's Heel for the Soviet player, so try to organise a defensive line to slow the German advance in this region. Numerical superiority is useful here, but do not over commit in one region. When you set up, bear this though in mind: Wherever you place a Squad, chances are that it will have to stay there for some time.

Here is my recommended set up.

20D4	(?), 9-1 Leader, (3 x) 5-2-7 Squads.
20F5	(?), 9-2 Leader, (3 x) 5-2-7 Squads.
20M4	HIP. PTP obr 32 ATG, 2-2-8 Crew (Fac L3/M3).
20M4	(Level 1) (?), 4-4-7 Squad.
20P1	Armoured Cupola (Fac P9/Q1), 3-5-7 Pillbox (Fac P0/Q1), (2 x) 4-4-7 Squads.
20Q2	(?), 8-1 Leader. 4-10 MMG. 4-4-7 Squad.
20T2	HIP. PTP obr 32 ATG, 2-2-8 Crew (Fac S2/T1).
20U2	(?), 4-4-7 Squad.
20U3	9-0 Leader.
20V2	4-4-7 Squad.
20Y2	Armoured Cupola (Fac Y1/Z1), 3-5-7 Pillbox (Fac Y1/Z1), (2 x) 4-4-7 Squads.
20Z2	4-4-7 Squad.
20AA3	4-4-7 Squad.
20AA4	7-0 Leader.
20CC2	4-4-7 Squad.
23D4	(?), 4-4-7 Squad.
23E3	(?), 4-4-7 Squad.
23F2	HIP. 4-4-7 Squad.
23F3	(?), 4-4-7 Squad.
23F6	8-0 Leader, 4-4-7 Squad.
23G4	(?), 4-4-7 Squad.
23G6	4-4-7 Squad.
23H5	(?), 4-4-7 Squad.
23H10	Armoured Cupola (Fac 20H0/20I1).
23K7	(?), 4-4-7 Squad.
23M8	4-4-7 Squad.
23N9	HIP. ZP obr 39 AAG, 2-2-8 Crew (Fac N8/O9).
23O10	(?), 8-1 Leader. 4-10 MMG. 4-4-7 Squad.
23U8	HIP. 4-4-7 Squad.
23V10	(?), 4-4-7 Squad.
23X10	(?), 4-4-7 Squad.
23AA10	(?), 4-4-7 Squad.

German Advantages: Leadership. Assault Guns. OBA.

Eleven Leaders for 26 Squads, a total negative leadership of -9, not to mention the ability to set up second. The leadership will sure give the German player a cool edge.

The StuG IIIB is about the best city Assault Gun that the German player will have the privilege of fielding in 1941, just take a look at the reverse side: sD 7. s9. Very nice. Who needs to break Squads, just render them ineffective. Smoke is one of the more effective ways of dealing with Armoured Cupolas and Pillboxes.

If the AFV's run out of Smoke, well there is always the OBA. The Smoke from the OBA is also very useful in assisting the River Assault early in the game too.

German Disadvantages: Enemy SAN. Canal. Split Forces.

Just a word on the Soviet SAN of 6. Watch out! Keep Leaders with Squads whenever possible.

The Canal can be a real liability too. It can often frustrate a quick exploitation in turns one and two. I will later explain how this can be overcome.

Now, the main headache, you are isolated. The Forces in the Citadel must not overexpose themselves, it is imperative to the German effort that they hold out until reinforcements arrive. Victory will usually rest on how long these forces can hold out.

German Set Up: I firmly believe that the fastest route to the Citadel is to launch a river assault from the eastern corner of board 23.

Deploy three Squads, send them across the river after a good Prep fire to secure Building 23E4 in move one. DM the HMG in Soviet move one (Final Fire Phase). Then send the main group across on move two after your bridgehead of 6 h/s have secured the positions. Remember to use one h/s to Mop Up (A 12.153), this will reveal any nasty surprises, and support your main river assault with some OBA smoke. Consider locations 23C4 and 23F2 as dangerous HIP locations. Be sure to prep at these locations on turn one.

You will notice that in my set up that there is a small group on the eastern side of the northern bank of board 23. Their purpose is to assist the assault guns in reaching the main party in later turns.

In defense of the Citadel, try to establish a point which cannot be fired on by the Soviets. You will need this if you are to expect to rally squads. Force the Russian to come to you. You need not fear about getting swamped by mass numbers for the first few turns anyway. Do whatever you feel you must to hold out, if you can hold out long enough for the reinforcements to arrive, you should win.

Here is my recommended set up.

20F3 7-0 Leader. 4-6-7 Squad.
20G4 4-6-7 Squad.
20H2 4-6-7 Squad.
20H2 (Level 2) 8-1 Leader. 3-8 LMG. 4-6-7 Squad.
20H3 9-2 Leader. 5-12 MMG. 3-8 LMG. (2 x) 4-6-7 Squad.
20H4 4-6-7 Squad.
23C1 8-0 Leader, (2 x) 4-6-7 Squads.
23C2 10-2 Leader, 7-16 HMG, 5-12 MMG, (2 x) 4-6-7 Squads,

(2 x) 2-4-7 H/S.
 23D0 8-0 Leader, (2 x) 4-6-7 Squads.
 23D1 8-1 Leader, (2 x) 4-6-7 Squads, (2 x) 2-4-7 H/S.
 23E1 8-1 Leader, (2 x) 4-6-7 Squads, (2 x) 2-4-7 H/S.
 23L3 Radio, 8-0 Leader, (2 x) 4-6-7 Squads.
 23X6 9-1 Leader, (2 x) 3-8 LMG, (2 x) 4-6-7 Squads.
 23Y8 (Level 1) 9-1 Leader, (2 x) 4-6-7 Squads.

Conclusion: As Haupmann Praxa's fight incredible odds, the distant thud of German 105's and Assault Guns give hope, an a cause to fight on. The will and determination of either side will be hard to break, but whatever the result, tomorrow will still come and leave both sides badly mangled.

THE END

I hope that you have enjoyed my commentaries on the Beyond Valor Scenarios. If you have any questions or comments to make, do not hesitate to ring me on 476 2489.

The First ten scenarios from ASL Module Beyond Valor are all enjoyable to play, and quite different from one another. They are all worthy of the time and effort to play. I have played each scenario at least four or five times, and each occasion, the game has followed a different path. I believe that this is the best feature that you can hope for in a board game.



DARKLORDS REVIEWED

or "Mummy, Mummy, there's something nasty in the woodshed!"

by Avon

TSR seem to be onto a rather good thing with this *Ravenloft* gear. As ever, the onus is on the Gamemaster to ensure the appropriate atmosphere is set - and, in this case, make sure the players get scared witless. The *Ravenloft* setting is horrendous enough that the players' imaginations get hypercharged: they terrify themselves!

The latest addition to the range is no exception. Darklords is an accessory, not a module, providing over half a dozen ghastly nemeses. A word of warning though: most of these have their own individually fleshed-out settings, but not all. Three of these horrors are, so to speak, a "package deal". Thus I find TSR's mention on the accessory's back cover of "16 dark Lords and Ladies" to be a trifle misleading. That aside, there is only one real incongruity in the whole package - a completely unnecessary reference to Hansel and Gretel, which does nothing for the otherwise consistently fiendish tone of the collection.

And fiendish they sure as hell are!! Take, for instance, the Headless Horseman, an itinerant psychopath who can surface anywhere in *Ravenloft*, or even beyond, if you're in a particularly vicious frame of mind. Even a miss from this lovely personality can cause a lethal injury, and a hit, (not a roll of 19 or 20 or anything similarly fancy, just a simple hit) is a truly... breathtaking experience. And if he doesn't (by some miracle) do enough damage, there's always his clean up crew....

Overall, I fail to see the justification for the minimum character level of 5. I honestly don't think there's a single encounter in the entire book which an averagely-skilled and -equipped fifth level party would survive, if the encounter's full potential for mayhem was utilized. One of the Darklords in this collection recently appeared in *Dungeon* magazine in a fully-fledged scenario, and while I think it was handled **very, very** well, and I will be using it eventually, (don't say I didn't warn you, guys) I'll be making more than a few changes prior to doing so.

The said Darklord is one of two in the collection who bear absolutely no resemblance to anything human. The other is a beautiful version of the original Hammer Horror style "House that dripped Blood", detailed - as they all are - magnificently, with a useful potted history, but at the same time leaving the essential elements up to the DM so that s/he is free to be as nice (which I wouldn't recommend, as it sort of tends to defeat the purpose of this Ravenloft thing) or nasty as seems appropriate at the time. Another advantage of this method of package writing is that any players stupid enough to spoil their enjoyment by reading the material before play, will not appreciably increase their chances, provided the DM has taken one or two sensible precautions.

The product, as a whole, is well worthwhile - the Headless Horseman is particularly suited to pop up in non-Ravenloft settings, but in fact any of these nasty pieces of work could be inserted, with a little preperation into just about any campaign.

Players - nothing in here for you, so keep your mitts off. To the rest of you - enjoy. Oh, and don't forget to lock the door before you start, will you...



HOMEBAKE ROLEPLAYING SYSTEMS

A Guide for Prospective Game Writers

by Cassandra

The concept of "the perfect system" is a myth. Even despite some of the (debatable) logical arguments presented in favour of any one system, I firmly believe that this nebulous "perfect system" has not been and never will be invented. This is based on the generalisation that it is impossible to please all of the people all of the time. It is simple fact that roleplayers play for different reasons, and develop different tastes for the various options, flavours, styles of the different roleplaying systems available. Thus this roleplaying system would have to be so infinitely flexible as to cease to be a roleplaying system and become a faerie-vague shape of a half-idea which would leave just about every option up to the particular referee, and be so huge, to cover each possible style option, that one would find it simply unusable.

The point? Most of us play a few different systems, pick the one that least conflicts with our ideal, and stick with that. Some of us are just so overwhelmed by the plethora of systems offered currently that we, for the sake of sanity and preserving memory-space, stick with the one they first play.

Sound bleak? Don't be silly! Almost everyone I know has discovered at least one system that caters for a good portion of the goals of play for any one person. I personally play *AD&DII* by preference, but I certainly recognise that it has its flaws.

The solution to playing imperfect games? If you find that you really can't apply yourself to any system, as you feel they all have too many flaws to satisfy you as a roleplayer, you have an option. Invent your own.

"Good lord!" you say, "do you know how long it takes to invent a game system!? How much effort it takes!?" I do. Yes, it takes a long time... but the end result is a system that (hopefully) will satisfy your roleplaying goals, and that also gives you a brainchild of your own that you may or may not want to market. It will cater for all the flavours and options you think are utmost in the mythical ethereal "perfect system". One warning, before I belabour you with suggestions... do not be fooled into thinking that just because this is "the perfect system" for you, that it will be the epitome of a system for everyone.

Below is a list of points to ponder, which may foreshorten any heartwringing "go-back-and-rework-this,-because-it-doesn't-fit-with-the-rest-of-it" once you get to the playtesting stage. They are in loosely prioritised order.

1. New or Used?

Are you going to take the basic playing concept from an already extant system, or are you going to start from scratch? Will you convert those rules you don't like to a more amenable form and still call it "a version of x", or will you adulterate so far that it is no longer recognisable as x, and call it y, based on x? Also, if you aren't going to call it a variation on the original, think of a name to inspire you early on: it helps when you try to tell others about it.

2. Genre: Specific or Pan-galactic?

Are you going to limit to a specific genre? Or are you going to turn it into a "GURPS" or "Palladium" style system, that has the facility to cater for any genre.

3. Begin at the beginning

Are the characteristics of each character going to be based on a universal label (like AD&D's *First Level Magic User*, or will each beginning character be significantly different. How proficient at anything will a beginning character be? How different will characters be? Are the average player characters planned to be a specific rank/caste in the game society, or is it open?

4. Roll or buy?

Will starting characters begin with randomly-assigned characteristics, or will they be chosen by the player? Is there a certain proportion of each? What proportion, then, and is there some way of moderating an unluckily-created character, so that the player is not at a disadvantage compared to the other players?

5. A matter of Experience...

How will characters develop? At what speed? What style of play will benefit the character most? Will the benefits of developing be assigned by the player or the gamemaster? Does the character also develop disadvantages? Will the characters develop in jumps (like RM and AD&D levels)? Or will they develop the most used features of their character the most, and leave unused skills undeveloped?

6. Details! Details!

Equipment lists, prices, skills descriptions, all these have to be included. What aspects of these detail-lists are applicable to game-play, and what is applicable more to the player's conceptual grasp of exactly what is entailed? Tables don't always have to be explained in excruciating detail, but always get a proofreader, so that they can tell you if something doesn't make sense, or doesn't appear to fit with the rest. Mind the jargon, too. You can borrow some terms of reference with no risk of plagiarism, but others are closely linked to specific games (eg, the label "Dungeonmaster" for AD&D, rather than "Gamemaster", which is relatively generic). Don't invent too many new terms, or you will lose not only your players, but also your playtesters, and probably your initial proofreaders as well.

Fantasy only: Is magic common? How accessible is it to the average Joe or Joanne in average society, or in the portion of society used by PCs. You will need to work out exactly how spells work. How broad an effect will any one spell have? How does magic work in general terms? Does a spell have to be memorised for a special occasion? Does it drain any physical attributes, any mental, any "magical"? Does using magic have a permanent effect on the character? Can a character call on higher magics than normal in a crisis? What effect will this have? Can a character know high magics at a low development stage? Do some magics have prerequisite skills or other magics?

7. World or not?

Will the game setting be ambivalent, or will it be specifically designed for a specific campaign setting? If specific, there are myriad options, too many to discuss here. If generic, then what "Laws of Physics" are taken for granted which will effect the game setting?

8. Combatting the System

In combat, which surely must be included in most systems, is damage set by weapon type? Is it rolled? How radically does armour effect damage? How likely is it that combat will prove deadly to the average Joe? To the average PC? Is combat designed to be common? What effect do various cunning manoeuvres have, and are they catered for in the basic combat chances, or do combat-knowledgeable players have an advantage in combat? How detailed is your unarmed combat? What time labels will you include? Is a "combat round" or "turn" a second? A minute? Ten minutes?

9. Oops!

How well do the character's skills serve? Do they have a fairly good chance of succeeding at beginning levels? A few skills at very proficient levels, or a wide range that aren't terribly good? And what happens when the character fails at a skill? Fumbles? What happens if they succeed on a dice roll by the biggest margin possible? Critical Successes?

10. Dice

Will the game system use just one type of dice? How many will the player need for the average game? (Okay, we're getting into the later numbers, and this is quite trivial.) Will the average player have to invest in huge amounts of dice for the game, or will they be able to steal the d6 from the family's Monopoly set?

11. Style and Flavour

Chocolate art deco? No, seriously... Will your system be strongly combat-oriented? Will it be an "Investigator" style, like *Cthulu*? Will it have a strong air of tension, with the Gamemaster knowing all and the players knowing nothing, or with the players being able to keep secrets easily from the other players, and/or the GM?

With all these things to think about, will you ever actually do it? I hope so. The more original gamewriting that goes on out there, the more satisfied gamers there will be (and if they get marketed, the more good games there will be). So, if you are unhappy with all the game systems you've come across, make a move and do something about it, other than drop gaming altogether, which I think would be a shame. And don't forget, proofread, playtest, and don't **ever** say "I'll never change that bit".



ORC BASH!

An AD&DII Adventure for 4-6 PCs of levels 4-5

by James Shaw

For the DM:

Annathar was in trouble, and he was angry. Somehow his young apprentice, Barrada, had managed to sway his elite Orog guard away from Annathar's loyalty, and was now using them against him.

All seven were here, his once loyal henchmen. Seven who he had given a chance, who he had raised far beyond the potential of the rest of their race. It was he who bought them professional training, once he had taken over their tribe of orcs; training that allowed them to progress to heights otherwise unattainable within the uncivilised limits of the tribe. All he had asked was their loyalty, and now his over-ambitious apprentice had taken that away.

It was worse than that: together they were also close to taking his life away as well. Some form of signal was given, and the attack seemed to fall off, as the fighters faded away into the shadows. He was struck by three arrows, jumbling the words of the Teleportation spell in his mind. Seconds later there was a mind-numbing flash, and Annathar fell steaming and lifeless in his hall.

This is a short adventure, designed for a good session's play. It is combat oriented, and throws the party up against some very tough orcs. This is much more than a simple orc-bash, as the title implies, and as the party is set up to believe.

I have used Second Edition rules, including ones from the Complete Fighters Handbook, to turn a bunch of orog henchmen into a bunch of highly-trained and efficient warriors (who happen to be orogs) the advanced form of orc given under that description in the Monstrous Compendium. The adventure should rapidly turn into a stiff challenge, as the PC's are facing the equivalent of an NPC party - one overly reliant on fighters, but one that knows what it is doing. The DM should play them as such, employing maximum intelligence and co-ordination on the part of the orogs, especially in the ambush. You should prepare the balance first, reducing the orog numbers for a weak party, or doubling up on one or two if you think your party could walk all over this.

The module is set in a generic forest, and starts on a generic road. The main encounter area is in a small religious commune in the forest, and as such, this adventure should fit into almost any campaign with a similar wilderness and could easily be adapted to others.

The young wizard from the text, Barrada, has taken the orc tribe's warriors on a quest for the honourable end of quickly gaining as much loot, magic, knowledge and power as possible, before leaving the vicinity for parts unknown (especially to anyone he may have offended en route).

The latest target selected to aid in his wise and benevolent search is a small temple devoted to the God of Magic. There, an isolated sect of priests and wizards contemplate the majesty and nature of their god from within the confines of a natural catacomb.

They have the secondary mission of providing excellent targets for homicidal megalomaniacs with bad attitudes. Such as Barrada, and his orcs, who provide such overwhelming firepower that the temple's magic simply doesn't hold out, and the reclusive gurus are slaughtered.

All except one, who makes it through the forest to the road, and although badly wounded, manages to scrawl out a message for a bunch of PC's who just happen to be travelling along to find, and read! It should be noted to the PC's that they are obviously the first to find the body, and that whatever happened, it may not yet be finished, judging by how recently the body gave up on it's owner.

1. DEAD ON ARRIVAL

Read to Players:

Ahead of you on the road, you see the outline of what appears to be a large, lumpy sack. As you come closer, however, you realise that it is in fact a person propped up against a tree, sleeping or unconscious.

If the party investigates, they will find that the man, dressed in functional robes, with a symbol of the God of Magic on him, is dead, and has in one fist a message. It reads:

Help we are overcome orcs after our magic we are the Temple of [Name of God] that lies due west of the White Lodge

The White Lodge is a way-tavern further up the road, frequented often by travellers, woodsfolk, and the Temple members. The Temples' location was supposed to have been a secret, as the PC's will find out there, but some malicious or absent-minded wood-being may have let slip. Not far from the Lodge, the party will find a small hidden trail that leads off into the forest.

The trail is intersected at some stage by a large swathe cut by an obviously numerous group of beings that weren't too worried about the local ecology. Following this trail a bit further, the party will begin to hear the delicate sounds of a cheerful group of restless orcs, thoughtfully chewing over the day's work (that is, the hermits...).

This is the orc-bash part of the adventure, designed to gently cajole your party into a false sense of security and brashness, necessary in order to get the correct reaction when you later pull the rug out from under them! Give them as many orcs as you want: the PC's should butcher large numbers with relative ease. Use straight Monstrous Compendium Cannon Fodder for this one.

2. ONE TOUGH ORC!

Some way further up, the PC's come across a small clearing dominated by a large statue of the God. Here they will meet, and should kill, Alak, one of Barrada's orog henchmen, doing guard duty. The encounter ought to be long enough for Alak to blow into his whistle, alerting the others, and to get in a full round of dart attacks.

Read to Players:

Ahead of you, through the trees, you can see a small clearing of high grasses and daisies. It is dominated by a twenty-foot statue of [Name of God] in the center. You can vaguely hear the sound of trickling water.

As soon as the party steps into the clearing, read the following.

No sooner do you step into the clearing than the sound of trickling ceases and a huge orc step out from behind the statue, seemingly adjusting his belt. He is dressed entirely in bloodied plate armour, and hefts an enormous black two-handed sword on his back. Seeing you, he blows into a small whistle on a neck chain, and reaches for some mean looking darts at his waist.

ALAK, Orog warrior: AL LE, Lvl F5, AC2, HP40

Str 18/01, Dex 11, Con 16, Int 13, Wis 8, Cha 9

Weapons:

2H-Sword: #AT 3/2, THAC0 11, Dam1d10+7, Spd 6

Dagger: #AT 1/1, THAC0 13(12), Dam1d4+4(5), Spd 2(1)

Darts: #AT 3/1, THAC0 15, Dam1d3+3, Spd 2, Poison #K

Gear:

+2 Two-Handed Sword, +1 Plate Mail, +1 Dagger, +2 Dagger, 12 Darts, Dart Poison Int Type K, whistle.

The party ought to slay this dude quite simply, but he should surprise them with his speed, ability to hit and induce damage, and survive fairly inordinate amounts induced by the party. He *ought* to get them thinking...

3. WAAAAGH! IT'S THE ORCS!

Alak's whistle alerts the other members of Barrada's gang, and they immediately swing into action, laying a pre-determined ambush. This encounter is pretty much the crucial one, and if you play it right, then you may even get to kill off a few of those bastard PC's that keep mucking up your best laid plans!

About half way up to the temple area from Encounter 2, the players will arrive in another clearing, longer and thinner than the first. Markat and Hochar, two pretty competent warriors, are running headlong into the party, as if they are the ones sent to investigate the alarm. However they retreat only half way up the clearing before it becomes filled with the arrows of Balreem and Stalaat, hiding in the bushes.

These two will concentrate all their fire on, first, the PC's wizards, second, their clerics, and, third, their rogues. This is to even out the odds, as the orog warriors will have their hands full with the PC's warriors.

It is at this point that you may decide that the party is too tough, and to double up on one of the warriors, having him leap out of the bushes as the attack begins. Also try to make it very difficult for the party to see exactly where the arrows are coming from, as this is the orog ambushers' strength.

Read to Players:

You follow the trail further up towards the hillock of the Temple. You judge that you are about halfway, when you almost collide with two more orcs, of about the same size and fierceness as the one you fought at the statue.

They see you, and appear to be sizing you up, before committing themselves.

Play up the concept that the PC's are really tough, look at the orogs' stats, and then say something like " Nah, you outnumber them three to one. No way. They start backing up and look ready to run. "

MARKAT, Orog Warrior: AL LE, Lvl F4, AC0, HP 30

Str 18/60, Dex 13, Con 15, Int 13, Wis 14, Cha 12

Weapons:

Bastard Sword: #AT 3/2, THAC0 11, Dam 1d8+7, Spd 4

Flail: #AT 1/1, THAC0 14, Dam 1d6+4, Spd 7

Harpoon: #AT 3/2, THAC0 13, Dam 2d4+5, Spd 4

Gear:

+2 Bastard sword, +1 plate mail, +1 shield, flail, 2 harpoons

HOCHAR, Orog Warrior: AL LE, F4, AC3, HP 32

Str 18/01, Dex 9, Con 17, Int 12, Wis 10, Cha 8+

Weapons:

Longsword, right hand #AT 3/2, THAC0 13, Dam 1d8+6, Spd 4

Longsword, left hand #AT 2/2, THAC0 13, Dam 1d8+6, Spd 4

Whip: #AT 1/1, THAC0 16, Dam 1d2, Spd 8

Entangles

Gear:

2 +1 longswords, whip, plate mail

BALREEM, Orog Archer: AL NE, Lvl F5, AC4, HP 38

Str 18/60, Dex 17, Con 12, Int 13, Wis 7, Cha 13

Weapons:

Comp. Longbow: #AT 2/1, THAC0 11, Dam 1d8+3, Spd 6

Longsword: #AT 3/2, THAC0 12, Dam 1d8+5, Spd 3

Dagger: #AT 1/1, THAC0 13, dam 1d4+3, Spd 1

Gear:

+1 Composite longbow, longsword, 3 daggers, +3 studded leather

STALAAT, Orog Archer: AL NE, Lvl F3, AC3, HP 26

Str 18/01, Dex 14, Con 16, Int 8, Wis 10, Cha 6

Weapons:

Light crossbow: #AT 1/1, THAC0 15, Dam 1d4, Spd 7

Bastard Sword: #AT 3/2, THAC0 14, Dam 1d8+6, Spd 5

Gear:

+1 Bastard sword, light crossbow, 12 bolts, plate mail

4. *IT'S THOSE HOMOCIDAL MANIACS WITH BAD ATTITUDES AGAIN!*

Hopefully, the PC's will have acted in a coherent manner to destroy the ambushers, although we hope that it was at some cost to themselves. By all rights, the party ought to be wounded, down on spells and hoping for some form of weak ending. Barrada sent his main body of hench-things down to the ambush in order to buy himself time, looting the Temple.

There remains only his faithful ogre, and the Big B himself. Just the two of them could do some serious damage to the PC's however, as Breem the Orog has five attacks every two rounds, and Barrada a reasonably full complement of spells. If the party shows the kind of coordination that the orogs used, it shouldn't *kill* them.

THE TEMPLE

A. The main sanctum of the God of Magic, this area has been thoroughly looted, and there is much blood on the floor.

B. This area is where the 15 initiates who once served the temple had their common living area. For the amount of people here, the room is cramped and spartan, but looks of high quality, and comfortable. It too, has been fully searched and looted.

C. The room in which the priests and wizards did their research, this is crammed with all sorts of interesting magical paraphernalia. As the purpose of the residents of the temple was to explore the boundaries of the power of their diety, the type of magic looked into here was enhancement magic, that which enhances other forms. A succesful Spellcraft roll at -3 will be able to tell this, the stiff penalty applying because of the looting that has taken place.

D. Three low-to-mid level mages lived in here, including one gnome, who was instrumental in creating many of the items the temple produced as experiments and testaments to their work.

E. The three priests who lived here are presently having their rooms searched by an increasingly frustrated Barrada, who is having trouble getting past the magical and holy wards, set up to frustrate looters with high blood pressure! There is a secret door, magically disguised on the south "wall", and once Barrada's attention has been turned away, it will not be easily found by any other than him: 10% chance of finding the door per level if a Wizard, 5% chance per level for clerics, thieves have their normal Find Magical Traps roll at -10% to find the secret door and its opening mechanism - see F

below. If the party find this door, the only way to open it without the Amulet is to smash the stone, requiring a Bend Bars/Lift Gates roll. Smashing the door down will do 5-30 pts of damage to all within 10 feet.

In the secret room are the works of the temple, plus offerings given to it by the devoted, still to be used in the temple's research, and much of the results of that work.

Barrada:

6th level Wizard: Invoker. AL:CE THAC0:19 AC 2. Hits:20

St:10, Int:17, Wis:12, Dex:16, Con:17, Cha:16.

Spells Memorised:

1st level

Detect Magic

Magic Missile (x2)

2nd Level

Flaming Sphere

Fog Cloud

3rd Level

Lightning Bolt

Barrada's opening will be to aid or call on Breem his Ogre henchman and to Lightning Bolt the party. Barrada carries a Wand of Magic Missiles with 18 charges, which he will use if forced into hand-to-hand combat.

Barrada has used already two of his first level spells, one of his second level spells and two of his third level spells. Like many invokers Barrada likes power and his favourite spell is lightning bolt, closely followed by magic missile, if pressed Barrada will use his Wall of Fog spell to flee the combat. If threatened with death he will surrender.

Gear:

Wand of Magic Missiles, Bracers of defence AC4, +1 dagger.

F: The Last of the Temple's defenders lie at the end of this corridor, where they made their final futile stand. There is very little to determine exactly the sex or power of these people, for Barrada used one of his Lightning Bolts to deal with the defense. On one of the corpses is a gold amulet which, when brought into contact with the southern wall in E, reveals the secret door outline and key hole. Placing the Amulet over the keyhole will open the door.

G: Happily pulling the arms, legs and heads off the four defenders that fell here is Breem the Psycho-Killer Ogre, who was once called "Sir" by a hill giant. When Breem sees the party enter, he will happily smile and amble toward them, muttering "Oh goody new toys - the last lot broke!" Breem fights until cut to pieces.

Breem the Ogre:

Ftr:5th, AL: CE, THAC0: see below Hits: 52, AC: -1, At: 5/2

Str:18/100, Int:8, Wis:8, Dex:16, Con:17, Cha:7

Breem has Two-Weapon style, Ambidexterity, Blindfighting and Specialisation in Bastard Sword, two of which he may use one-handed because of his immense size.

Bastard Sword, R Hnd: #AT 3/2, THAC0 10, Dmg 2-8+10, Speed 4

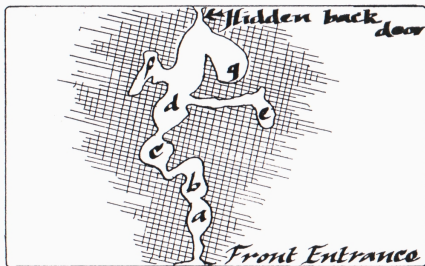
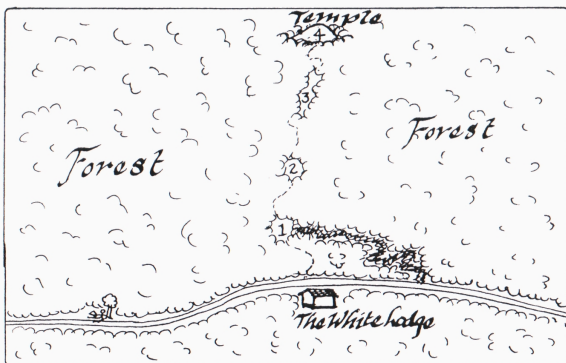
Bastard Sword, L Hnd: #AT 1/1, THAC0 12, Dmg 2-8+8, Speed 6

Gear:

+2 bastard sword, non-magical bastard sword, +2 plate mail, bag with choicest body bits.

Treasury:

- At least:
- 1 Tome of Silver Magic
 - 3 or 4 new spells (perhaps from the *Tome of Magic* especially Augmentation 1 and 2 and Far Reaching)
 - 1 Book of Clear Thought
 - Spell components to the value of around 35,000 gps



Net-Traps

*This is a set of traps taken from the **rec.games.frp** section of **Tornado**,
Wellington Computer Bulletin Board*

All of the following, save the first, and the last two were by unknown creators, and collected by grms@marist.bitnet. The first is by ibad01!mfh@oac.att.com. The last two are by A Gamemaster from Hell <arxt@midway.uchicago.edu> and The Dreamer (asg102@psvm.psu.edu)

A Roleplaying Trap

Location type: Room

Context: A rusty lever protrudes from the far wall. Overhead, a tremendous block of iron hangs from a cable.

Trigger type: Mechanical

Trigger: Pulling lever

Effect type: Mechanical

Effect: The GM should listen to the characters' debate about what to do.

If they decide to pull the lever for reasons such as "To leave no stone unturned" then pulling the lever opens a secret door. If they decide to pull the lever "Just for the hell of it", then pulling the lever will drop the block, crushing all in the room.

The Big Bag Bang

Game system: AD&D

Location type: Room

Context: Circular room 20' in diameter and 15' high, with a catch on the ceiling with a leather bag, and a 2' diameter hole in the floor, directly below the bag.

Trigger type: Magical

Trigger: About 5 seconds after anyone enters the room, the bag starts falling toward the hole.

Effect type: Magical

Effect: Explosion when the Bag of Holding enters the Portable Hole

Variants: For low-level parties, the bag might be subject to Feather Fall to let people have more time to do something, or the ceiling might be higher.

Double Vision

Location type: Chest

Trigger type: Mechanical

Trigger: Failing to pick lock

Effect type: Mechanical/magical

Effect: A blade chops off a piece of the player's finger, teleporting it to a high-level mage's tower, where the mage will create a duplicate (Clone) of the character.

Familiar Faces

Game system: AD&D
Location type: Door
Context: 20' x 20' room, with 4 kobolds (originally)
Trigger type: Magical
Trigger: Any party member touches door to enter room
Effect type: Magical
Effect: A bright flash of light blinds the players, and when their vision clears each player is in a room with many kobolds. Each player in the party is teleported to a different location in the room, and an illusion spell is cast on each party member. Each party member sees the other members of his party as kobolds but none of his/her companions are anywhere in sight. Only the extra four kobolds of course.

The "Juvenile" Chest

Game system: AD&D
Location type: Chest
Trigger type: Mechanical
Trigger: Opening lock
Effect type: Magical
Effect: Within the lock of the chest are poison needles. If the character fails to save against the poison, he/she loses 3 wisdom points, 4 strength points, and 5 intelligence points. The character will also turn into a juvenile (13 to 15 years for humans). The "aging" poison can be cured with a Remove Curse by a high level mage.

Glass Storm

Location type: Room
Context: Any large circular room. Thousands of glass shards (like broken window panes) lying about the entire room. A pillar in the center of the room, with some valuable object sitting upon it
Warning: Touching the object causes a wind to blow through the room, causing the shards to jingle together
Trigger type: Magical
Trigger: Making the object
Effect type: Magical
Effect: A constant wind storm causes all the crystal shards to fly about the room striking the party. Each party member in the room will take damage (3d6 per round) until the object is put back or the party can leave the room.

Hole in Two

Location type: Room
Context: Any room not on the lowest floor. A large hole is cut in the floor of this room. On the far side of the hole is a shelf on which is sitting a valuable object. Through the hole, the floor below can be seen. The hole is actually a pane of glass thick enough to hold up a

person. A spell has been cast upon the window pane to give it the look and feel of stone. (Have characters find this out on their own, so they will hope the hole is an illusion)

Trigger type: Mechanical or magical

Trigger: Picking up the object

Effect type: Mechanical

Effect: The illusion on the object is dispelled: it's really a small rock. Large boulders fall from the ceiling directly onto the window pane, shattering it, and the person who took the object will fall through to the floor below taking damage (2d6) from the fall.

The "King Arthur" Syndrome

Location type: Room

Context: There is a mound of earth surrounded by a moat of acid. A strong-looking rope is magically held so that anyone could take hold of the rope and swing across to the mound. Stuck in the mound is a quite beautiful sword.

Warning: The rope is really frail and decayed, but disguised by an illusion.

Trigger type: Mechanical

Trigger: Swinging on the rope breaks it

Effect type: Mechanical

Effect: The character falls into the moat.

The Pointless Trap I

Location type: Lock

Trigger type: Mechanical

Trigger: Early in the adventure, the characters will find a large (2') Crystal Key. After some time (hours?) of wandering, the characters will find a keyhole that the Crystal Key will fit perfectly into.

Effect type: Magical

Effect: Keyhole swallows Key. As characters continue through the maze, if the place where Key was found originally is crossed again, Key will be there.

Pointless Trap II

Location type: Room

Context: Machine with 24 levers and lots of pretty lights next to a door

Trigger type: Mechanical

Trigger: Pulling lever

Effect type: Magical or electrical

Effect: The door cannot be broken through or opened; it's false. If any lever is pulled, everyone in the room feels an electrical jolt, but suffers minimal damage (1 point). Lights change colour. The purpose of this trick is to see how long the characters will pursue a completely irrelevant track.

Slime Ball

Location type: Room (spherical)

Trigger type: Magical or mechanical

Trigger: Entering room

Effect type: Mechanical

Effect: The room is actually a sphere within a sphere. The inner surface of the outer sphere and the outer surface of the inner sphere are lubricated with highly slippery slime (non-toxic.) When someone enters, the door will close. Due to Newton's Law, for every action there is an equal and opposite reaction. When the character tries to move one way, the inner sphere will rotate and the outer sphere will rotate in the opposite direction.

Slime Slide

Location type: Pit

Context: Any pit big enough for one individual (human) is perfect. It contains a waist high pool of slime (non-toxic, no ill-effect) that acts as an extremely effective lubricant.

Trigger type: Mechanical or magical

Trigger: 1-4 rounds after entering pit

Effect type: Mechanical

Effect: The floor will drop out from under the person in the pit, who will fall onto a slightly tilted slide. It would be best to use the Slime Ball trap as the destination of this slide.

Topsy Turvy

Location type: Room

Context: Any large cave (at least 20 x 20'). Upon close examination of the floor and ceiling, many holes about the size of dimes and nickels (in the thousands on both) are clearly visible. A large amount of treasure on the opposite end of the room is piled against a wall.

Trigger type: Mechanical

Trigger: The first player to step over the holes will set off the trap.

Effect type: Mechanical

Effect: The holes on the floor will lift the character into the air with a constant blast of air (up to 350 pounds). The holes in the ceiling will also blast air of the same force downward, sending the character spinning and tumbling in mid-air. The character caught in the trap will get sick and suffer 1 point of damage after quarter of their constitution score (rounding down) in rounds has passed. If the character is in the trap more than 5 rounds, they will black out.

Disarm: Behind the holes are large fans run by magical means. If a staff of considerable strength (magical, etc.) is shoved into the holes, and a strength roll is successful, the fan is jammed; otherwise, the character attempting to disarm it will suffer d4 of damage. If the floor

fan is stopped first the character in the trap will be forced to the floor, suffering damage; vice-versa for the floor fan.

Water Water Everywhere

Game system: AD&D

Location type: Room

Context: A 40' circular chamber with exits on opposite sides. Contains a 30' circular pool with a 7' diameter base for a 20' high statue of a minotaur in the center of the pool. The statue looks loose. Moving the statue causes it to fall down and block the door through which the party entered; below it appears to be a tunnel down to a passage parallel to the line between this room's entrances. This is actually an illusion.

Trigger type: Mechanical

Trigger: Entering "tunnel"

Effect type: Magical

Effect: The character who entered the tunnel will see that s/he is in a concave 6' deep pit. A force field goes up covering the top of the pit. When another character tries to poke at the force field, s/he will be pushed into the center of where the statue used to be by a rising wall of water. A Water Weird (see Monster Manual/Monstrous Compendium) will attack the party. As long as the water weird is alive, the force field covering the pit will drop 4 inches every round. When the Water Weird is dead, the force fields will be broken.

The Infinite Hallway

Location type: Hallway

Warning: The characters will begin to feel very disoriented and have a lack of energy. This may warn them that there is something afoot. Also, any character carefully studying the wall may notice that the patterns of stone are exactly the same every ten feet

Trigger type: Magical

Trigger: By some magical enchantment not known to any, including the vile Gamemaster, the electrical impulses from a character's body striking the first teleportation field are channelled back and activate the second teleportation field. Any contact with the second teleportation field provides energy to it by the same use of human (or elven or dwarven) vital energy.

Effect type: Magical

Effect: As a party of characters walks down a hallway, they contact a (permanent) teleportation field, instantaneously teleporting them back ten feet and creating a second teleportation field just behind them. The teleportation is of a such a nature that it is too fast to be noticed, except for a slight feeling of disorientation. Thus, the party would walk, contact the field, be teleported back, and continue walking without any stop. After about ten minutes of walking, the characters may begin to get worried. If, however, they turn and go back the other way down the hall, they will encounter the second field and be teleported just before the first field, and much the same thing will happen.

Disarm: The only way to disarm this trap that I can see, other than digging around it, is that the second teleportation field times-out after twenty minutes of the characters' not contacting either of the fields, thus not providing the field with any energy. The first field, as stated before, is permanent.

A Different Kind of Spiked Door

Location type: Hallway with doors

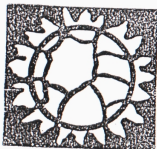
Context: A false door that looks important to the party. It should look like it opens inward and is locked (unpickable).

Trigger type: Mechanical

Trigger: Trying to force open the door

Effect type: Mechanical

Effect: The door is a thin panel of wood attached to springs. Behind the panel is a set of spikes. If the party tries to force the door open the springs will compress and the panel will give way, which usually means that the person forcing the door open will impale him/herself on the spikes. The damage done is adjustable by the number of spikes that were behind the panel and their depth, but should follow something like (for AD&D): $3d4 + Str$ damage bonus of the person trying to knock the door down (since the harder they push the door, the more forcefully the spikes go in).



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MUNCHKINS HANDBOOK

Chapter Two
GENERIC

Favourite FRPG

Real Men play AD&D
Real Roleplayers play RuneQuest III
Loonies play Toon
Munchkins play anything by TSR

Favourite SFRPG

Real Men play Star Trek: The Roleplaying Game
Real Roleplayers play Space Opera
Loonies play a variant Spawn of Fashan
Munchkins play anything by TSR

Favourite 1920's RPG

Real Men play Gangbusters
Real Roleplayers play Call of Cthulhu
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Munchkins play anything by TSR

Favourite SHRPG

Real Men play Champions
Real Roleplayers play Superworld
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Munchkins play anything by TSR

Favourite Modern Day/Spy RPG

Real Men play James Bond, 007
Real Roleplayers play Justice, Inc
Loonies play an unrecognizable variant Spawn of Fashan
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Favourite Post-Holocaust RPG

Real Men play Twilight 2000
Real Roleplayers play The Morrow Project
Loonies play an extremely unrecognizable variant of Spawn of Fashan
Munchkins play anything by TSR

Favourite King Arthurian RPG

Real Men play Chivalry and Sorcery

Real Roleplayers play Pendragon

Loonies play a variant of Spawn of Fashan so variant it shouldn't be called Spawn of Fashan any more

Munchkins play anything by TSR

Favourite World/Setting

Real Men play in Greyhawk/Sanctuary

Real Roleplayers play in Glorantha

Loonies play in Southern California

Munchkins play wherever has the most magic items

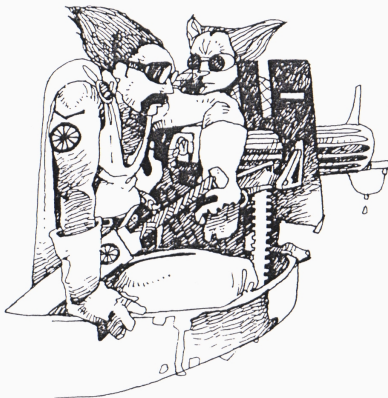
Favourite Gaming Magazine

Real Men read The General

Real Roleplayers read White Dwarf

Loonies read the last few pages of Dragon and comic books

Munchkins read anything by TSR



Space Empire Elite Goes Intergalactic!

by Steve Beeston

First of all, I guess I should explain that *Space Empire Elite* is a game played on *Harbour Board*, a local computer bulletin board. *Space Empire Elite* is best described as a strategy game. The goal of the game is to win points by building the biggest empire. At the end of each month the person with the most points (usually the person with the most planets) is the winner. The game was written by Doc Wynne and David Jones.

A player can buy the first two hundred planets, but after that planets become harder to get, so you have to take them from other players. There are three kinds of planets: Food, Ore, and Industrial.

Food planets produce food to keep your empire from starving. *Ore planets* generate money by selling ore. *Industrial planets* produce other things that you are likely to need, things like: heavy space cruisers, troops, fighters, carriers, Generals (to command the troops), and defence stations.

Getting the right number of each type of planet is very important. Too many food planets is wasteful, too many Industrial planets will either cause your population to starve, or you will run out of money to pay your police force and troops. The result is the same both ways: half of your empire breaks away, and you lose half of your assets. This is just about impossible to recover from. Even if you get the balance right you still have to fight off attacks from other players.

Harbour Board has been constantly updating their version of *Space Empire Elite* and making little changes to make the game more interesting for the bulletin board's users. Chris Thorpe, the bulletin board's sys-op (system operator), has set up a section on the board, called *Water Sports*, for people to comment on the games that are run on this bulletin board. He obviously monitors this very closely. A problem with *Space Empire Elite* that came up a few months ago was fixed very quickly. Due to the fact that some of the older empires were getting very big, it was impossible for new players to get anywhere. The bigger empires would attack them and take their planets. A few of us commented on this problem in *Water Sports* and Chris started to reset the game at the end of every month.

Just recently *Harbour Board* replaced its version of *Space Empire Elite* with an updated version. The new copy had an intergalactic option. This meant that, rather than fighting the other players in your galaxy (bulletin board), you could join up with the other people in your galaxy, and raid other bulletin boards. This sounded like lots of fun to most of us who play the game, so it was not long before there was a big discussion in *Water Sports* about going intergalactic.

Going intergalactic in *Space Empire Elite* is a big step for a bulletin board. As, to my knowledge, all of the other boards that play *Space Empire Elite* are overseas, it is expensive! Chris left a message in *Water Sports*, asking if people wanted to take this

step. To go intergalactic, a faster modum had to be found, if the price of the toll calls wasn't going to break the bank!

Chris managed to get all of this organised, and just recently *Space Empire Elite* went intergalactic. It is too early for anybody to know exactly how this is going to affect the game, but time will tell! There are fourteen other bulletin boards that players can now attack (all from either Canada or USA). The latest messages on *Water Sports* are suggesting that everybody should hold off attacking each other and we should gang up and attack another bulletin board. One person has even suggested that people should gang up and attack anybody from our bulletin board that attacks another player from our galaxy that fights any of the other members of our bulletin board.

This is quite a novel idea, as - up to now - all of the attempts at getting *Space Empire Elite* players to work together have been in vain. People are starting to realise that you have to form alliances to survive. I have noticed that the suggestion about not attacking your own team has been ignored by some of the players: some people never learn!

Going intergalactic has added a new set of options to the game. A player may now send a Recon Team to other galaxies, or they can send Terrorists. There are two other interesting options. One is: you can set up raiding parties to go to other boards and steal planets. These can be either run by an individual, or they can be formed up by using equipment from several players working together. There is also a "Death Star" option. The death star is so expensive that it is really only a multi-player option. One is already being constructed on our bulletin board!

Harbour Board is not a "commercial" bulletin board. That is to say, it is not run by a computer company to advertise their product. It is run by the Atari Computer Club (this does not mean that owners of other computers are not welcome, in fact the opposite appears to be true). I run a IBM clone, and feel very welcome on what must be one of the most friendly boards in Wellington. There is no charge for joining *Harbour Board*: you just dial up on your computer and log on as a new user. *Harbour Board* will register you in the next few days, and then you are free to play the games. I find that the games on this board are different to the ones on other computer bulletin boards. I have been unable to find these games on any other board, including some of the ones that ask for a donation before you can use their games!

I would just like to sum up by saying that, if you have a modum and you have not looked at *Harbour Board*, you don't know what you are missing! The phone number is 4762-852.

Harbour board currently has 237 active users. In my humble opinion, it is the best bulletin board for games. Some boards have more, but *harbour board* has games that are unseen on any other bulletin board. By the way, this is the board that has *Axolotyl Football*. I don't know what this is, by the way, but the name has always fascinated me! Time for me to go and plug into *Harbour board* now. It's well worth it!



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How to run a Convention

By Dillon Burke

Is organising a convention too difficult and expensive? I think not. With a lot of work on your part you can run a rewarding convention. This article is based on my own experience at organising conventions in New Zealand and several articles from overseas magazines.

Goals

The main goals of a convention should be (a) to have a lot of fun and (b) to avoid a financial disaster - i.e. break even at a minimum.

Focus

First one must decide the focus of the convention: will it be a roleplaying convention, a wargaming convention, or a mix of both? When deciding the focus of the convention, take into account other events being staged around the country. For example, there is no point in organising a wargaming convention during Easter as the National Wargaming Convention is always held then.

Once the focus has been decided on, an appropriate venue must be sought, depending on the numbers expected. For the National Wargaming Convention, you can expect to see about three hundred people. Most other con's I have been to have had about fifty people attending. The date of the convention is important. People are normally able to travel further on a holiday weekend for example. The cost of the venue brings the consideration of financial expenses.

Finance - Expenses

You must organise your finances properly if you are ever going to stage more than one convention. The biggest outlay of money for the convention is likely to be for the venue. This is where local clubs can help: everyone has contacts which could result in lower rent facilities available. University clubs can often book very cheaply at their university. This is not always true however. The University of Canterbury Fantasy Gaming Society recently paid \$300 to book several rooms on a Sunday, as a security guard had to be hired according to University policy.

Other major costs to budget for will include: postage, photocopying, stationery, guest speakers, printing, advertising, prizes, etc. When you have budgeted your costs, you can start deciding registration fees and other sources of income. Pre-registration for a convention should be encouraged, as it will make budgeting easier. If you are planning on running the convention again in future years, it may be worthwhile to set a small reserve aside in case of a drop in attendance for one reason or other.

Finance - Revenue

Unfortunately, in New Zealand there are no big game companies to grease up to, but most cities will have a local hobby store which can be approached for backing. Shops can be asked to donate prizes, or give some financial backing, in return for advertising at the convention. Another way of making money is to let space at the convention venue for the store to set up a stall selling its wares.

Advertising is essential if you are going to make money. Most of it will be coming from entrants to the convention. Local hobby stores, clubs, GDD, Raiders Digest, radio stations, newspapers and public community services are a necessity to getting the message out for an upcoming convention. Don't be afraid to advertise at a distance, to encourage out-of-town gamers to attend. If you want out-of-town gamers to attend, try to organise some cheap accommodation (such as billeting) to help them with their costs. When advertising, be very clear about what you are offering, and especially about how to find the convention venue!

Registration fees will be the largest provider of income. Other possible sources are: convention trinkets, food and drink sales, advertising in the convention brochure, etc. You must decide what the registration fee gets the entrant at the convention - free range of all events or entry into only a few? If you are running a convention over more than one day, allow people to attend on a day-to-day basis, otherwise you will just cut your own throat.

Organisation

It is obvious that not even a Hercules can manage all of the tasks required to put on an organised convention. Never *ever* turn away volunteer help! You will have to delegate as many duties as possible and make sure that people *do* complete what they promised to do! Some areas for delegation should include: advertising, playtesting, judging, registration, umpiring, etc. The more people involved, the easier it will be to cope with a surprise situation; for example, I have seen at least one GM turn up with a sore throat, unable to speak for a roleplaying convention. It is a good idea to allow volunteers to register for free at a convention.

All things go better with planning. You should start planning at least several months in advance. Thank you notes should be sent to all sponsors. Critique forms should be made available to convention participants at its end. This feedback will be important for improving the convention in the future: it will tell you what you did right *and* where you went wrong.

You may wish to have a figure painting competition. In order for this to work, you must have a large number of entrants, and make some attempt at categorisation. Judging should be based on the quality of a figure's artwork, not quantity or size of the miniatures involved.

A good starting time for a convention is the earliest time that a person travelling by bus in your city can reach the convention venue. At one roleplaying tournament I went to, one of the GMs turned up an hour late, because no one had looked at the bus timetable for a Sunday.

As for the scenarios you run at a convention, I feel that they should be based as little as possible on any current roleplaying system. I say this because nothing gets up my nose more than being forced to play a character who has skills and abilities I'm not familiar with, which wastes half an hour of valuable roleplaying time checking out a rule book (for example a high level AD&D Wizard). This also avoids the problem of rules lawyers: there are no well-known rules to invoke! Players will appreciate an imaginative scenario, even if they all die horribly.

Well that's all I have to say on the matter. If you organise a convention I hope you will find this information valuable.



DAMAGE IN ROLEPLAYING GAMES BASED ON INDETERMINATE VALUES

by Euan Ritchie

Ever been bothered by the way damage is handled in roleplaying systems? I find it annoying that someone who has been injured can have such an accurate knowledge of their injuries, and also be precisely aware of exactly what injury they can risk from an opponent. Players then do not play out their injuries very accurately, as someone who is injured to within half their life will often rush gung-ho about, because they know that the only opposition is next-to-incapable of inflicting sufficient further damage to endanger their life.

An injured person can convey their status to other players exactly, who then can (what would be, in reality) callously ignore their comrade until a more convenient time. To illustrate my point, in a fight Silvia is run through with a sword. Her companion Brutus is facing another enemy, but spares her a glance. Silvia tells Brutus, "It's okay, I'm down a lot but still active". Brutus then continues to confront his enemy, unworried by his friend who he knows is going to be okay.

On the face of it, there is nothing wrong with this instance. Silvia was injured, but not so badly as to render her unconscious, and this is what she told Brutus. My dissatisfaction is that Silvia knows she is okay, and could plan on doing any number of things in the sure knowledge that her injuries will follow an exact course of effect. I would prefer game systems to keep everybody in suspense about the exact effect of damage, thus introducing a scary indeterminate worry for the players.

What I am suggesting is that injuries are not, as is the usual case, marked off hit points at a one for one correlation to damage, but instead be tracked as probabilities. Once injured, a persons ability to act becomes conditional on their physical state. We would not know at any given time how injured a person is, we would know the probabilities involved (Silvia is badly injured, though it seems not mortally), but not exactly how a wound will affect someone.

To more precisely illustrate my point, let us presume a few things about some rules developed more fully using this concept, and suppose that events could follow thus:

Annette continues to run down the alley, sure that two of the gang had fled this way. She pulls up sharply at the protruding edge of a building and cautiously peeks around the corner. She sees one person fleeing further down the alley and immediately gives chase. As Annette passes the other edge of the building the second gangster she'd been chasing fires his Saturday Night Special at her, hitting her in the thigh.

[We see whether this is an obligatory knock down, potential damage vs. size - it isn't a small hand-gun; we then calculate the exact damage, weapon potential less armour for the thigh, and check the immediate effect - Annette falls over]

Stumbling on her injured leg Annette flings herself at a pile of garbage for cover. The gangster fires twice more at her, missing both times.

[Annette is aware that she has been shot in the leg by a bullet of a certain damage potential. Our rules are constructed such that the odds are a weapon that size is not very dangerous to a leg, so Annette doesn't think she's too badly hurt. Perhaps it works out that there is only a 20% chance that she'll pass out from this injury. The gangster doesn't know yet if she's passed out - he hasn't checked. Neither has Annette.]

Jose stops, and peers out at the cop. She isn't moving. In the distance her partner's footsteps are approaching. Jose knows that hitting someone in the leg with a .38 isn't normally lethal. She's probably shamming, but if he gets in a fire fight with two cops he's not going to get away. So Jose takes careful aim...

[The gamemaster doesn't let Annette react to this, his contention being that she chose to play dead, even though she may actually be dead - remember no-one's checked to see if she is conscious, and Annette cannot see from her position what Jose is doing]

...and shoots at the prone cop, hitting her in the left arm.

[Annette then states that she is going to roll over and return fire. We use our rules at this stage to find out if she can. Now that someone has decided to test her state, we resolve what it is. With the damage inflicted from the two bullets, it turns out on the roll of a dice with calculated modifiers, she did not pass out. Although that much injury modifies her physical performance, Annette does roll over to face Jose, and is aware that her injuries will put off her aim]

Annette quickly squeezes off two rounds from her service beretta, both missing Jose, who then begins to run away, unwilling to confront a nine millimetre automatic. Annette follows him with her weapon and hits Jose twice as he runs. The gangster falls over, shot in the thigh and abdomen.

[Bad news for Jose: these are more dangerous bullets. But maybe he's still conscious. If it's not too disruptive in play, perhaps we are checking every damaged person's state each turn, so in the next turn, we're all surprised when Annette faints, trying to call to her partner. This is serious because that's one possible outcome closer to death for Annette]

Harry arrives on the scene, first seeing his partner lying in a pile of rubbish bags. He slows up; he cannot see her assailant, though he heard the shots.

[This is the important effect of these rules: Harry does not know Jose's state. Even though the player may be aware of the preceding action, he does not know for sure if Jose's out, so Harry is encouraged to show proper caution and concern for his partner. Two .38s in the limbs isn't usually lethal, but so far it's been enough to put Annette down and out and maybe it'll do more]

Cautiously, Harry proceeds around the corner and sees Jose lying beside the wall. Harry advances, covering Jose with his weapon, and checks his condition.

[Jose had not tried to run because he figured that he'd be caught up with quickly carrying two slugs, and when Harry approaches with a beretta pointing his way, Jose forgets about getting away]

The gangster, it turns out, is still conscious, so Harry disarms him, and handcuffs him by the wrist to a nearby drainpipe. Then he glances around for the

second man, while reaching for his radio. Hurrying to Annette to administer first aid...

Our rules allow for the improvement of her recovery chances, according to attention, equipment and expertise.

...Harry summons an ambulance and waits.

There are problems here which need sorting out. First, we have to avoid too many dice throws and minimise the number of conditional checks, which detracts from the whole concept. Second, we must specify exactly when to check a condition - this is awkward. If Harry wanted to see if Annette was dead on the spot, how is that handled? How complicated do the odds calculations get?

The benefits of this system include a high visibility of results, which is to say that when Annette was shamming, no-one had to hide a dice throw. Normally, when people can be bothered, the damage done by Jose would be thrown secretly by Annette, and the results concealed. This achieves much the same result of what I suggest. However that method is open to abuse, and does not have as many of the effects inherent in the system I envisage, such as the gamemaster having no more knowledge of the effects damage than anyone else. I like that, it maintains a high tension because there can be no suspicion of fudged results. Also, having to make your own dice throws for damage checks appeals to me because it involves you in the process. Ever felt frustrated being told that you've been hit and have fallen down, never having any involvement in the process yourself? Not only does throwing the dice yourself involve you, but it keeps you accurately informed on events.

I have long mused that an elegant and versatile game system could be designed which inherently shared information among the players at the right time, to the correct amount, without making demands on the players and game master to suspend their knowledge or awareness of the game world. Is this a feasible concept for an RPG rules?

[We would be interested to hear from any of our readers who have comments on this system or who have used anything of the like. This is a concept which has been discussed at length around the editorial game-table many times. -Ed]



Club Notices



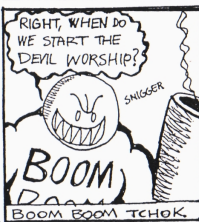
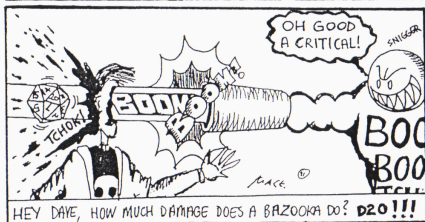
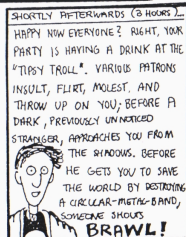
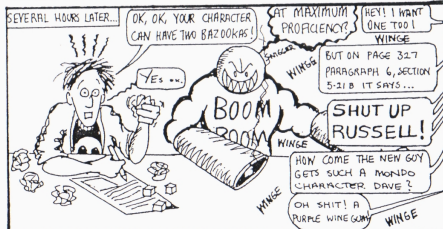
Club Notices is published in order that Clubs can notify GDD readers of upcoming events, changes, interesting or otherwise tidbits. Each club may have up to half a page published free of charge. Send notices to "Club Notices, GDD, P O Box 11-861, Wellington".

Please add to the list of games clubs printed in last issue the following:

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Our apologies for missing you out, guys. [Dillon, make sure you get them down, too!]
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Previews & Reviews

AD&D Trivia

A Review of TSR's Boardgame/RPG Aid

Paul C. Ewbank

Doctoral student in Chemistry,
Carnegie Mellon, Pittsburgh, PA

I paid the \$20+ for the AD&D trivia game and, judging from some Bulletin Board talk, thought that others might be interested in what it's like.

Play goes more or less like this: each player selects a card with a picture (I should say here that the artwork is typical TSR, in fact, I've seen some of these pictures on or in other TSR products) of a PC-class member (i.e. rogue, warrior, cleric, mage) or monster, to be his/her character for the game. Order of play is determined by luck of the draw and a player selects a question difficulty level (these run from one to five with Level One questions being things like "What does XP stand for?" and Level Five questions that involve particulars of high-level spells and such).

If the player answers the question incorrectly, nothing happens and play passes to the next player. If the player answers the question correctly, however, he/she draws cardboard chits, one for each difficulty level for the question answered (so draw three chits for a correct third level question). Each chit will have a symbol that corresponds to one of the classes that the player cards represent. For example, I am running a warrior and answer a [second level] question correctly, I would draw two chits (let's say, I get one with a rogue symbol and another with a warrior symbol). I would play the rogue chit on another player (whose character card is a rogue) and thereby wound his/her character. I would then play the warrior chit on my own character and heal one of his/her wounds. If a player receives 6 (I think) wounds the character dies and he/she is out of the game. Play continues until only one player is left.

I read the rules once (rather quickly) and so may be wrong about some of the particulars, but I think you get the general idea. My wife and I quizzed each other (by just pulling questions from the box) and found them to be interesting and challenging, but we have not yet "played" the game. With regard to the question that is displayed (without an answer) on the cover of the box - the question says that "So-and-so the Dwarf finds a Ring of Invisibility and puts it on, but only his legs disappear, why is this?" - we stumbled upon this Third Level question (it appears in a slightly different form inside the box) in our quizzing. There was some Bulletin Board talk about what the answer to this is, and, as it turns out, someone out there guessed the correct answer (that is that the dwarfish innate resistance to magic fouled up the ring's effect).

My only reservations about the game (other than the cost) is that there are 600 question cards included (100 for each level of questions with 200 third level questions) and only one question per card. So, unless TSR is planning to sell expansion sets (which is likely), players will quickly run out of new questions - especially if they fall to the temptation of quizzing one another.







Letters



Mightier than the Sword



Don' leave me a'hind!

Sir,

Could you please add our club to the list of Wargames Clubs published in GDD #19. [See Club Notices for address]. Don't you just hate it when you publish a "comprehensive list of something, and someone gets missed out!

Thanks and Regards,
S Brown

P.S. Was impressed with the standard of the magazine, though surprised we hadn't seen it before, as it appears to have been around a while! Still, we know now, and shall advise our members of its existence. Keep up the good work!

[Thanks, S., for your encouragement. Yes, we've been going for nearly two years now... that might almost be a record for an NZ gaming mag'! Hope to hear from you folk in the big Haitch soon, and see your contributions!!! (And maybe a sub' or two???)]



Oh, by the way...

I got GDD #20 in the mail earlier this week and enjoyed reading it very much. I am attempting to find the time to write a couple of short Traveller articles.

I appreciate very much the adverts which your magazine has carried for Eriol Games and Circle Games. I have made contact with both of these PBM organisations over the last year and I am looking forward to playing *Lizards* and *Nuke III*.

Now for some interesting gossip from HIWG: Richard Bool, head of HIWG New Zealand, has just had an interesting letter from Ed Edwards, who runs HIWG in the States. Marc Miller has left GDW. The remaining Alien Modules have been put on hold by Digest Group Publications as they concentrate on producing AI (whatever the hell that is, and neither Richard or I think it means Artificial Intelligence). There are rumours of a new edition of Traveller (dropping "Mega-" from the title) in Fall 1992. World membership for HIWG is about 120 at the moment. There are five HIWG members in New Zealand already, with about five more expected to join by the end of the year. I hope this is of some use to you.

Yours sincerely,
Dillon Shiel Burke

P.S. I am trying to get a few friends to write non-AD&D articles for GDD. Expect a small parcel from me soon.



Oi! You lot!

Greetings, Staff and readers of GDD,

I've been quite impressed with how far the magazine has come over the last few years. But, as Steve well knows, I still have some complaints. I'm well aware, as Steve points out so often, that Science Fiction is not highly popular at the moment. So, I ask, where are the decent Sci-Fi contributions in GDD? Sci-Fi contributions have come in at a moderate dribble, but the coverage of systems is patchy at best. I know that the volume of material getting to Steve is not the fault of GDD, but a consequence of the readers' contributions. How about some of you Sci-Fi boardgamers and wargamers get your acts together and get the Sci-Fi quality and quantity in GDD up to par with the excellent Fantasy side of the magazine. Since Shadowrun and Battletech are currently the main Sci-Fi systems being used, how about some more regular contributions, guys? After all, a decent page would be enough.

As for myself, I've contributed Megatraveller (mainly, Robotech and Mechanoids articles. More recently, I did some articles on Fed RPG, my own system, I haven't been able to contribute anything more as we are working on the Second Edition Rules and the Uplift War campaign has started at the Forum on a fortnightly basis. For those who are interested, our address has changed:

Future Systems
P O Box 27-025
Wellington

I am still interested in contributing something, but am unsure as to what the readers want. I could possibly start up a regular column discussing Sci-Fi across the board. How does that sound? What do you think Steve? Anyway, you readers out there, get scribbling!

Martin Rait
a-human, ul-chimp, ul-dolphin
alias the Martian Rat

[Thank you, David Brin. As you are well aware, Martin, and other readers, all contributions are welcomed with interest especially on topics and games not covered previously.]

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Anyone interested in *Tales of the Reaching Moon* - international magazine concentrating on Glorantha, can drop me a line for details (I should have details soon).

Contact: Niel Sanson
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Wellington Ph 385 4891

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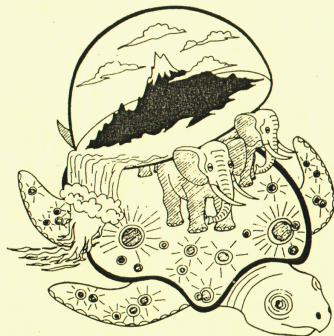
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