

PYRAMID[®]

Issue 3/61 November '13

WAY OF THE WARRIOR

MORE POWER TO DUNGEON WARRIORS!

by Peter V. Dell'Orto and Sean Punch

COMING TO GRIPS WITH REALISM
by Douglas H. Cole

THE DEVIL'S FIST
by David L. Pulver

FUSION STYLES OF YTARRIA
by David Thomas Moore

TAKEDOWN SEQUENCES
by Douglas H. Cole

STEVE JACKSON GAMES

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Article Colors

Each article is color-coded to help you find your favorite sections.

Pale Blue: In This Issue

Brown: In Every Issue (letters, humor, editorial, etc.)

Green: Columnist

Dark Blue: *GURPS* Features

Purple: Systemless Features

COVER ART

John Zeleznik

Seek the way that leads to victory!

IN THIS ISSUE

The fluid motion of a drawn sword. The precise shifting of a professional pugilist. The impossibly fast reflexes of a shapechanging slasher. Step into the arena with us, as this month's *Pyramid* shines light on the Way of the Warrior.

Take your coolness to a new level with *More Power to Dungeon Warriors!* From the fantastic minds of the *GURPS Martial Arts* co-designers Sean Punch and Peter V. Dell'Orto comes this mini-supplement with dozens of new power-ups and options (such as double-ended weaponry!) for your *GURPS Dungeon Fantasy* sword-wielding delvers. You can even take a look "under the hood" of some of the game mechanics.

Hit, grapple, takedown, pin . . . there's more to fights than technique names and dice rolls! Find out how you can add flavor to your game with *Takedown Sequences*. Douglas H. Cole – author of *GURPS Martial Arts: Technical Grappling* – matches detailed descriptions of common positions and popular combat sequences to their *GURPS* mechanics. Unlock the power of the rules to bring new excitement and possibilities to your bouts!

Give your villains a style that's all their own, with *The Devil's Fist*. In this installment of *Eidetic Memory*, David L. Pulver – co-author of the *GURPS Fourth Edition Basic Set* – explores the history of a fictional *GURPS* fighting art that might have come from Satan himself.

Whether you seek exotic martial arts for your fantasy campaign or you love to explore the way Yrth mashes cultures, you'll want to check out *Fusion Styles of Ytarria*. The author of *GURPS Martial Arts: Yrth Fighting Styles*, David Thomas Moore, brings you the fringe traditions that he couldn't fit into his supplement. Use these in your own *GURPS Banestorm* campaigns, or put them into any *GURPS Fantasy* setting to add variety and options.

You'll be *Coming to Grips with Realism* with Douglas H. Cole as he sifts through the material that didn't quite make it from his *Technical Grappling* supplement. Peek behind the curtain, then check out some new and alternate rules options, including possibilities for critical hits and misses, horizontal creatures, and more.

Random Thought Table this month invites you to follow in the fictional footsteps of classic sportscasters, while *Odds and Ends* provides several adventure seeds tailored to the new Yrth fusion styles. Whether in the ring, beneath a ruined castle, or on another world, fighters need all the help they can get. With this month's *Pyramid*, you bring the warriors . . . we'll show you the way.

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FROM THE EDITOR

THIS ISSUE'S NINJA-LIKE REFLEXES

On my shelf, I have some well-loved RPGs with pencil marks that contain rules tweaks or clarifications, in all likelihood extrapolated from some magazine or supplement released later. The original *Star Wars RPG* from West End Games had a pamphlet that contained a large number of tweaks, while the Second Edition of White Wolf's *Wraith: The Oblivion* had some vital pieces of errata tucked into its GM screen.

In comparison, just 24 hours ago (from the time I type this), I sent forth via e23 a newer version of the popular *GURPS Martial Arts: Technical Grappling*, with a few minor errata tweaks. And, lo, previous purchasers of that fine supplement were able to log into their accounts and have the new version, as if by magic!

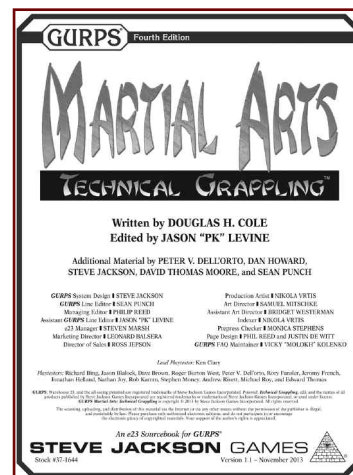
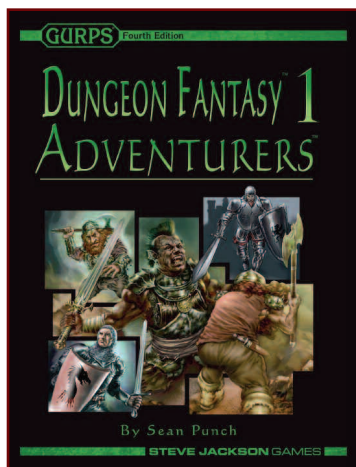
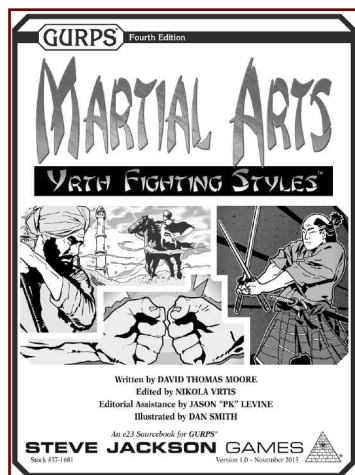
This issue of *Pyramid* is another (small) way we've used the magic of technology to make it even cooler. When we realized that we were going to have two *GURPS Martial Arts* supplements coming out pretty close to each other – *Technical Grappling* and *Yrth Fighting Styles* – we decided it'd be a cool time to do another martial-minded issue. So, many behind-the-scenes machinations later, we got together some cool stuff from

a few of the masterminds of *GURPS*dom. (And that doesn't even include the goodies we *didn't* have room for . . .) While this isn't the first time we've done this sort of thing – *Pyramid* #3/31: *Monster Hunters* involved similar secret scheming – it's perhaps the quickest and easiest an idea has come together.

Attentive readers may also have noticed that we have two Designer's Notes-type articles in this issue, and last month we had Sean Punch's notes at how the *GURPS Dungeon Fantasy* series came to be. They were long a staple of past *Pyramid* volumes (both the paper and HTML installments), but they've been absent for a bit. We're curious to know what you think of them. To wit . . .

WRITE HERE, WRITE NOW

We're constantly tweaking how we do things with our fine publication – and the easiest way for us to do that is by your feedback! Do you love seeing “secret” issues? Are you a huge fan of Designer's Notes and would love if it we tracked down more? Or is there something else you'd like us to be doing (or not doing)? Let the Secret Masters of *Pyramid* know! Send us private feedback and thoughts to pyramid@sjgames.com, or join the public discussion online at forums.sjgames.com.



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MORE POWER TO DUNGEON WARRIORS!

BY PETER V. DELL'ORTO AND SEAN PUNCH

GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 11: Power-Ups describes many tricks for delvers who prefer swords to sorcery. Such power-ups are what passes for martial arts in *Dungeon Fantasy*. Since there's no such thing as "too much power," here are some *new* cool moves!

GENERAL COMBAT POWER-UPS

These combat abilities are for sale to anyone who satisfies the prerequisites.

Combat Perks

These perks follow the same rules as those on pp. 11-12 of *Power-Ups*.

Double-Ended Weapon Training†

You may ignore the -2 to skill when wielding one of the contraptions under *Double-Ended Weapons* (p. 5). You must specialize by Melee Weapon skill.

Heroic Sacrifice‡

Prerequisites: High Pain Threshold and others (see below).

You can burn HP as FP for the tasks listed under *Heroic Reserves* (p. 6). Each level of this perk permits you to pay 1 HP per expenditure; e.g., Heroic Sacrifice 3 [3] would let you spend up to 3 HP at a time on Great Rage. There's no maximum level, but as the majority of feats that qualify consume just 1 FP, the ability to spend more rarely matters.

Put It In His Eye

You're vengeful in a very specific way: If a foe successfully attacks a hit location and you fail to defend, you're highly motivated to return the favor. Regardless of whether *he* struck that body part on purpose, you enjoy +1 on your next attack on that enemy if *you* target that location intentionally. Elapsed time is unimportant – your next shot at him receives this benefit no matter how many turns (or years!) pass between the offending strike and your reply – but targeting any other hit location first wipes out the bonus.

Ramming Speed

You always tackle your foes at maximum speed! Whenever you make a slam, work out damage as if traveling at *full* Move (adjusted normally for encumbrance and injury), regardless of how far you *actually* ran on your previous or current turn.

Retroactive Poisoning‡

Prerequisite: Poisons at 12+.

Once per session per level of this perk, you can poison a weapon *after* successfully injuring a foe. Declare the weapon to be poisoned, mark off appropriate dose(s) of poison from your equipment list, and resolve the effects. You must have the poison on you or spend one Gizmo per dose to produce it. Retroactive Poisoning merely represents a weapon you envenomed earlier but failed to mention – it isn't a supernatural ability.

The GM may limit this perk to professions that have Poisons as a template option. The usual suspects are assassins, druids, evil clerics, innkeepers, necromancers, ninja, thieves, and unholy warriors.

Sacrificial Block†

You're trained at blocking attacks on your buddies. You can try a block defense against any attack that permits a block, comes from in front of you, and is intended for an associate *behind* you. This normally means a strike from a ranged weapon or a melee weapon with Reach 2+ that crosses your hex on the battle map on its way to your companion. If you haven't retreated this turn, you may expend your retreat to step into a spot where this condition is met. Your shield DB aids your roll, but your friend's doesn't (although he may attempt his own defense if yours fails) – and you *don't* get +1 for retreating if you step! In all cases, this "uses up" your block.

You must specialize in Cloak, Shield, or Shield (Buckler).

Third Hand†

You can use the hand(s) holding a weapon or a shield to wield a single piece of non-combat gear *at the same time*. Lanterns, torches, scrolls, potions ready to drink, etc. are fine; cloaks or shields, weapons, or potions ready to hurl aren't. Maximum weight is Basic Lift/20 lbs. in one hand, BL/10 lbs. in two.

The item is considered ready – a torch offers light, a scroll can be read, a potion can be quaffed – and neither penalizes nor is endangered by fighting with the same hand(s). If the weapon or shield is dropped or taken away, however, then so is anything else in hand. Likewise, if you're stunned, you drop the object as usual.

You must specialize by armed combat skill.

Willful Warrior‡

Concentrate maneuvers aren't strictly forbidden when grappled – you can try, but you must make the Will roll to keep your concentration *each turn*, and instead of the usual -3, the penalty equals the effective ST restraining you. This makes it *almost* impossible . . . but not for you! Each level of Willful Warrior grants +3 that you can use only to

cancel the penalty that an enemy grappler's ST imposes on this roll. This power-up also benefits spellcasting, if high skill or Adversity Casting (**Power-Ups**, p. 13) enables you to cast a spell without gestures.

Double-Ended Mastery

5 points/skill

Prerequisites: Any Melee Weapon skill for a double-ended weapon *and* matching Double-Ended Weapon Training (p. 4).

Buy this separately for each Melee Weapon skill useful with the arms under *Double-Ended Weapons* (below). When wielding a suitable double-ended weapon, you can launch a single attack that targets two adjacent foes at full skill, though you must still make a separate attack roll for each opponent.

Double-Ended Weapons

Fantasy warriors adore exotic weapons! A staff with a blade or a crushing head mounted on either end is a classic, and offers several upsides:

- The counterweight eliminates the drawbacks of weapon types that are normally unbalanced, slow to change Reach, and/or made unready by attacking. Sword-based designs become better at parrying (if not *quite* as good as a staff).
- The wielder can attack two adjacent opponents – one with either end – at Reach 1. This is considered a Dual-Weapon Attack (-4), not a Rapid Strike (-6).

- A “broken weapon” outcome smashes only *one end*. A one-ended weapon continues to work, if not as well: Parry is 0U and Reach is 1, 2*, regardless of type, and the special Dual-Weapon Attack is no longer possible.

Downsides are cost, weight (though this helps prevent breakage), and the fact that such weapons give -2 to skill for *all* purposes (and thus -1 to Parry).

The following table presents the options.

| Weapon | Damage | Reach | Parry | Cost | Weight | ST | Notes |
|--------|--------|-------|-------|------|--------|----|-------|
|--------|--------|-------|-------|------|--------|----|-------|

POLEARM (DX-5, Spear-4, Staff-4, or Two-Handed Axe/Mace-4)

| | | | | | | | |
|-----------------------|-----------|------|---|-------|----|-----|-----|
| Double-Ended Halberd | sw+4 cut | 1, 2 | 0 | \$540 | 16 | 14† | [1] |
| or | sw+3 imp | 1, 2 | 0 | – | – | 14† | |
| or | thr+3 imp | 1, 2 | 0 | – | – | 13† | |
| Double-Ended Naginata | sw+2 cut | 1, 2 | 0 | \$500 | 8 | 11† | |
| or | thr+3 imp | 1, 2 | 0 | – | – | 10† | |

STAFF (DX-5, Polearm-4, or Spear-2)

| | | | | | | | |
|--------------------|-----------|------|----|---------|----|-----|--|
| Double-Ended Dao | sw+4 cut | 1, 2 | +1 | \$1,700 | 14 | 13† | |
| or | thr+1 imp | 1, 2 | +1 | – | – | 12† | |
| Double-Ended Sword | sw+3 cut | 1, 2 | +1 | \$1,500 | 10 | 12† | |
| or | thr+3 imp | 1, 2 | +1 | – | – | 12† | |

TWO-HANDED AXE/MACE (DX-5, Axe/Mace-3, Polearm-4, or Two-Handed Flail-4)

| | | | | | | | |
|------------------------|----------|------|---|-------|----|-----|-----|
| Double-Ended Axe | sw+4 cut | 1, 2 | 0 | \$500 | 12 | 13† | |
| Double-Ended Maul | sw+5 cr | 1, 2 | 0 | \$460 | 20 | 15† | |
| Double-Ended Scythe | sw+3 cut | 1, 2 | 0 | \$330 | 6 | 12† | [1] |
| or | sw+1 imp | 1, 2 | 0 | – | – | 12† | |
| Double-Ended Warhammer | sw+4 imp | 1, 2 | 0 | \$500 | 10 | 13† | [1] |

TWO-HANDED FLAIL (DX-6, Flail-3, Kusari-4, or Two-Handed Axe/Mace-4)

| | | | | | | | |
|--------------------|---------|------|---|-------|----|-----|-----|
| Double-Ended Flail | sw+4 cr | 1, 2 | 0 | \$500 | 12 | 14† | [2] |
|--------------------|---------|------|---|-------|----|-----|-----|

Notes

[1] May get stuck; see Picks (p. B405).

[2] Attempts to *parry* this weapon are at -4. Fencing weapons (“F” parry) can’t parry it at all! Attempts to *block* it are at -2.

Additional strikes from All-Out Attack (Double) or Extra Attack can use either end against anyone in reach. You *can't* combine Double-Ended Mastery with Rapid Strike – the two are mutually exclusive.

Techniques: Dual-Weapon Attack (H) Skill+0 [5].

Greater Weapon Bond

5 points/weapon

Prerequisites: Any Melee Weapon skill *and* either Armoury (Melee Weapons) or Connoisseur (Weapons).

You own a melee weapon so suited to you that you enjoy +1 to skill rolls (including Melee Weapon and Fast-Draw rolls), +1 to Parry, and +1 to damage with it. This is a higher level of standard Weapon Bond; the two don't "stack." Like that perk, this gift doesn't supply the weapon – obtain that by buying it, finding it, taking Signature Gear, etc.

There are two catches. First, if you permanently part ways with the weapon, you lose the 5 points spent on this power-up – no refunds! Second, any melee fought without the weapon in hand puts you off-kilter. You must fight *another* battle using the weapon at no bonuses before the benefits return. The GM decides what a "battle" is, but cheesy tricks like squishing vermin and sparring with allies never count.

Advantages: Higher Purpose (Always use this one weapon) [5].

The rules for losing and regaining bonuses cover the built-in Code of Honor.

Heroic Reserves

3 points/level

Prerequisites: Special (see below).

You have hidden reserves of vigor that barbarians call "rage," martial artists know as "chi," holy warriors term "faith," and knights and swashbucklers measure in glasses and pints (of blood or booze). You may spend Heroic Reserves (HR) as FP to fuel athletics, martial feats, and physical extra effort – including *Extra Effort in Combat* (p. B357) and nonmagical special abilities such as Botte Segrete, Breaking Blow, Chandelier Leap, Chi Blasts, Flying Leap, Great Rage, Hand of Death, Heroic Lifts, Kiai, and Power Blow.

You can't burn HR on spells, *magical* abilities (e.g., Emergency Casting or Healing), or extra effort the GM deems "mental." However, effects that sap FP – starvation, and some spells, poisons, and monster abilities – never deplete HR. You can tap HR even at fully negative FP! Moreover, HR recharges separately from FP regardless of your activities: 1 point per 10 minutes normally, or 1 point per 5 minutes with Fit or Very Fit.

You may purchase one level of HR per *full* 10 points in combat skills (melee, ranged, or unarmed – but chi skills *don't* count). For instance, a swashbuckler with 31 points in Brawling, Fast-Draw, Main-Gauche, Rapier, Thrown Weapon, and Wrestling could buy up to HR 3.

Advantages: Energy Reserve (Heroic) [3/level].

Interdiction

5 points/skill

Prerequisites: Any melee combat skill, plus Trained by a Master or Weapon Master.

Interdiction lets you make a quick, low-damage melee attack against anyone who tries to charge past you in combat. Your target must be moving from in front of you to behind you (consulting the diagram on p. B389, from any white hex to any gray or black one) *and* pass within reach of an attack currently possible for the skill for which you have this power-up. For example, a greatsword (Reach 1, 2) could cut at anybody running within one or two yards to flank you, while a halberd held at Reach 3 could only intercept a foe who's exactly three yards away at some point during his pass.

Roll against Parry for your combat skill as your opponent moves by. This never gets a bonus from retreating, shield DB, Shield spells, or special parry options – though Combat Reflexes and Enhanced Parry help as usual, and any *penalties* for bad footing, repeated parries, etc. apply. Failure means your foe slips past untouched. Success lets you roll against skill to attack a *random* hit location.

A successful skill roll means a potential hit. Your target defends normally. If he fails, you inflict your attack's damage at -2 or -1 *per die*, whichever is worse. Though you're technically "parrying" your foe's entire body, contact is sufficiently light that this move doesn't count as a parry against a heavy weapon.

Under the Hood: Interdiction

Using the **GURPS Martial Arts** technique-design system, Interdiction starts life as Parry and acquires these adjustments:

Benefit: Parry counts as low-damage attack. There's no offsetting adjustment for low damage, though – Aggressive Parry sets the precedent that this is simply a natural property of damaging defenses. -1.

Benefit: Parry engages someone who isn't attacking. Enables a "pre-emptive" defense, allowing the fighter to exploit his parry when not being attacked. -1.

Benefit: Parrying a running person doesn't count as parrying a heavy weapon. Lets the fighter "parry" even a huge opponent without regard for mass, relative ST, etc. -1.

Defense against "runaround" attack (p. B391). -2.

Drawback: Limited target selection. Works only on a foe running from front to back within reach (which he could easily avoid if he anticipates this response!), and even then mandates a random hit location. +1.

Drawback: Most Parry bonuses don't apply. Common Parry bonuses – those from shield DB and retreating in particular – are lost. +1.

That makes the default Parry-3. "Uses up a parry" and "Triggers penalties for multiple parries" don't affect this – those amount to "A parry is a parry." Similarly, "Opponent defends normally" is irrelevant; *most* hits let aware opponents defend.

This cinematic technique is Hard because it's defensive. Like any Parry-based technique, it's limited to full Parry.

Failure on your skill roll indicates that you didn't even make light contact – again, your opponent slips past untouched.

Whatever the outcome, each Interdiction attempt counts as a parry with the weapon or hand used (thus, it cannot be used after you All-Out Attack). You may try Interdiction more than once per turn – and intersperse it with true parries – subject to standard penalties for successive parries in a turn. For instance, if you use Interdiction and then parry with the same hand (or vice versa), the second roll suffers the usual penalty for repeated parrying.

You must specialize by melee combat skill.

Perks: Unique Technique (Interdiction) [1].

Techniques: Interdiction (H) Parry+0 [4].

Killer Hair

10 points

You have a long braid with a weight at the end, weave razors into your dreadlocks, or sculpt your hair into a saw-blade Mohawk or sharp spikes using jamming glue (*Treasure Tables*, p 36) . . . and you've studied on maiming with this. You may strike at Reach C using Brawling or Karate – at full skill, even when grappled – as though using a weapon. Armed parries *won't* harm your head! This inflicts thrust crushing damage, at +1 *per die* plus skill bonuses.

You *can* wear a helmet and still use this ability. If the realism of this bothers you, just specify that your headgear is modified to match.

Advantages: Striker (Limb, Head, -20%) [4].

Perks: Unique Technique (Grappled Strike) [1].

Techniques: Grappled Strike (H) Skill+0 [5]. Buys off the -4 to DX while grappled for one *specific* hands-free attack – usually biting or a Striker.

Peerless Slayer Training

Variable

Prerequisites: At least *three* Melee Weapon skills, one at 20+ or all three at 18+.

You're not a specialist at a targeted blow with a *particular* weapon – you're an expert at that strike with *all* weapons. You can use this power-up with any Melee Weapon skill in which you have at least a point, if your current weapon can deal a suitable blow to the specified hit location. Varieties include:

Peerless Slayer Swing at Neck: Any swinging attack on the neck is at -2, not -5. 12 points.

Peerless Slayer Swing at Skull: Any swinging attack on the skull is at -3, not -7. 15 points.

Peerless Slayer Thrust to Eye: Any thrusting attack to the eyes is at -4, not -9. 18 points.

Peerless Slayer Thrust to Vitals: Any thrusting attack to the vitals is at -1, not -3. 9 points.

This is an improved form of Slayer Training (*Power-Ups*, p. 13). The GM may require you to learn that for one and then two Melee Weapon skills before “upgrading” to this version.

Techniques: Targeted Attack! at maximum. Price such a “wildcard technique” like the usual technique and then triple cost to allow it to work with *all* applicable skills – here, Melee Weapon skills.

Two-Weapon Mastery

20 points

Prerequisites: At least *three* one-handed Melee Weapon skills, and Trained by a Master or Weapon Master.

Lets you use Two-Weapon Fighting (*Power-Ups*, p. 13) with *any* two melee weapons you're capable of wielding simultaneously, regardless of Melee Weapon skill. As a side benefit, you're fully ambidextrous and never suffer -4 for using the “off” hand.

There's no need for Two-Weapon Fighting if you have Two-Weapon Mastery. Those with the former may upgrade to the latter by paying the cost difference. The GM might *require* this progression – or call for delvers to acquire one, two, and then three kinds of Two-Weapon Fighting – and specify a minimum number of adventures between steps.

Advantages: Ambidexterity [5].

Techniques: Dual-Weapon Attack! Skill+0 [15]. This is another “wildcard technique,” tripled in cost to allow it to work with *all* one-handed Melee Weapon skills.

Ultimate Ramming Speed

15 points

If you can move even a yard, figure all your slams at *full* Basic Move, regardless of encumbrance, injury, or *actual* speed! This power-up includes Ramming Speed (p. 4).

Example: Honus has HP 25, Basic Move 7, and Ultimate Ramming Speed. Medium encumbrance gives him Move 4, and his wounds make this Move 2. Still, if he slams – even with a step – he figures damage using Move 7. That's $(7 \times 25)/100 = 1.75d$, which rounds up to 2d.

Advantages: Enhanced Move 3.5 (Ground; Accessibility, Only to offset lost Move in a slam, -80%) [14]. The $\times 12$ this gives is more than enough to cancel the $\times 0.2$ for Extra-Heavy encumbrance *and* $\times 0.5$ for being at less than 1/3 HP.

Perks: Ramming Speed [1].

Wizard-Hunter

Variable

Prerequisite: A combat skill at 18+ when floated from DX to Per.

Your aim is so keen that you can penetrate magical defenses with mundane weapons! Spells cannot block your armed attacks, permitting you to shoot arrows through Missile Shields, stab across the edges of Force Domes, ignore Shield and Armor spells, and so forth. For most fighters, this is intensive mundane training, not a supernatural gift, and costs 15 points; for holy warriors, it's a Holy ability worth 14 points.

Martial artists may opt for a version that benefits unarmed attacks instead of weapons. This changes the prerequisite to Judo or Karate at 18+ when floated to Will. It costs only 11 points and is supernatural – a chi-based gift.

Advantages: Blessed (Anti-Magic Weapon) [15], Blessed (Anti-Magic Weapon; Holy, -10%) [14], or Blessed (Anti-Magic Weapon; Accessibility, Unarmed Only, -20%; Chi, -10%) [11]. This new form of Blessed costs 15 points by comparison to Blessed (Ghost Weapon) in *GURPS Powers: Divine Favor* – but despite the name, it isn't always Holy.

BARBARIAN POWER-UPS

These gifts stem from being strong, angry, and from a harsh climate. The GM may permit them to non-barbarians who meet those conditions.

Barbarian Perks

These are Combat Perks (*Power-Ups*, pp. 11-12) that only barbarians can buy.

Mountain of Meat

You're just *that big*. Seriously. Where a "normal" barbarian can increase HP as high as 1.5×ST, *you* can buy HP up to 2×ST (as usual, with Size, -10%).

Sure-Footed†

You're familiar with fighting on a specific type of inhospitable terrain, which lets you ignore the -2 to attack and -1 to defend (*not* general DX or Move penalties) for a specific type of bad footing. Options include:

Sure-Footed (Icy): Frozen streams and lakes, windswept glaciers, etc.

Sure-Footed (Rocky): Loose rocks and pebble-strewn slopes.

Sure-Footed (Sandy): Soft-packed beach or desert that yields underfoot.

Sure-Footed (Snowy): Snow, however deep.

Sure-Footed (Soggy): Swamps, mud, and similarly boggy ground.

You're Next!

A steroidal, barbarian-specific version of Follow-Through (*Power-Ups*, p. 11): At the end of any turn on which you *knock down* or *kill* enemies, you may attempt Intimidation against the same number of remaining opponents as a *free action*. Use *Taunt and Bluster* (*Dungeons*, p. 12). You roll once; multiple rivals resist separately. This an ideal follow-up to Cleaving Strike – scaring away everyone makes being defenseless less of a risk!

Greater Cleaving Strike

20 points/skill

Prerequisites: Any Melee Weapon skill capable of swinging attacks and ST 18+.

As Cleaving Strike (*Power-Ups*, p. 10), with one major difference: You can just keep going! For as long as you continue to meet all the criteria for proceeding with a Cleaving Strike, you can hew through *any number* of foes, provided that they're in front of you, adjacent to each other, attackable given your weapon's current Reach, and unobstructed (by cover or figures you *can't* attack). Consulting the diagram on p. B388, a greatsword (Reach 1, 2) would let you hack up to eight targets in your three front hexes and the five marked "2," while a halberd held at Reach 3 could mow through up to seven victims in the hexes marked "3." You must still attack from left to right, turning in place.

There's no need for Cleaving Strike if you have Greater Cleaving Strike – but as with all power-ups that offer improved versions, the GM may require a gradual progression.

Perks: Unique Technique (Greater Cleaving Strike) [1].

Techniques: Greater Cleaving Strike (H) Skill+0 [19].

Under the Hood: Cleaving Strike

Under the *GURPS Martial Arts* technique-design rules, Cleaving Strike (*Power-Ups*, p. 10) is an All-Out Attack (Strong) with these modifications:

Benefit: *Sheer power*. The enemy has -1 to DX and HT rolls to stay standing. -1.

Drawback: *All you can do*. Forbids all other activity; e.g., no Dual-Weapon Attack, and not even a free action like Fast-Draw. +1.

Drawback: *Limited target selection*. The only option is swings, in a fixed order (L-R or R-L), against frontal foes. +1.

Drawback: *Reduced movement*. All-Out Attack usually allows up to half Move forward – but here, not even a step is permitted, only the mandatory rotation to face foes. +1.

Drawback: *Successive attacks contingent on previous ones*. The warrior suffers the built-in Rapid Strike penalty even if he never gets the extra attacks – earlier blows must miss, be avoided by a dodge or a retreat, dismember, or put the target down. A weak hit or an enemy block or parry ends the fun. +1.

Rapid Strike. Attacking up to three enemies adds two strikes to the basic one allowed by All-Out Attack (Strong). While normally -12, Trained by a Master or Weapon Master makes this -6.

That makes the default skill-3. Losing defenses and gaining bonus damage come with All-Out Attack (Strong), and don't alter this. Letting ST 18+ work like Trained by a Master or Weapon Master merely substitutes an equally steep and fitting prerequisite, and isn't a real benefit.

This technique is Hard because it involves multiple strikes, and limited to full skill because it defaults to less than full skill.

Greater Cleaving Strike

Though this variant technically gives "unlimited" attacks, the *practical* limit is around eight (every frontal foe at Reach 1, 2). Five more than Cleaving Strike adds -15 to the Rapid Strike penalty, for skill-18.

Naked Rage

35 points

Prerequisites: Berserk, Gigantism, and High Pain Threshold.

When your Berserk goes off, it isn't just pain you don't feel – injury genuinely affects you less! While berserk *and* clad in at most ordinary DR 0 skivvies (loincloth, leopard-skin bikini, etc.), subtract any non-armor DR (Armor spells, other barbarian power-ups, etc.) from damage, apply wounding modifiers, and *halve* the final HP loss. Round down, but penetrating damage always inflicts at least 1 HP.

As with Great Rage (*Power-Ups*, p. 19), the GM may allow barbarians seeking this trait to exchange other disadvantages for Berserk. Unlike that power-up, this one *does* require the user to flip out!

Advantages: Injury Tolerance (Damage Reduction 2; Accessibility, Only when not wearing armor, -10%; Only When Berserk, -20%) [35]. The Accessibility is just -10% due to the rarity of armor-wearing barbarians in general and because stripping down is free and easy (whether it's a good idea is another matter, but Naked Rage makes it a *less-bad* one). The GM is advised to forbid full-spectrum Damage Reduction without building in similar downsides!

HOLY WARRIOR POWER-UPS

These capabilities flow from faith. The knight power-ups Rallying Cry (below) and Weapon-and-Shield Fighter (p. 10) also fit the holy warrior's *modus operandi*.

Emergency Casting

5 points/spell

Prerequisite: Holiness.

You can sacrifice to your gods to cast a specific clerical spell in times of need. Only a few combat-specific spells are available; each is its own power-up. All require Holiness equal to the spell's usual Power Investiture level:

Holiness 1: Armor, Might, Shield, Vigor.

Holiness 2: Resist Cold, Resist Fire, Resist Pain, Resist Poison.

Holiness 3: Flaming Weapon.

Spells have normal casting times, effects, and durations. All are cast at base Will, not IQ, and Holiness *doesn't* add – it isn't Power Investiture! Energy costs are paid in HP, not FP.

Perks: Charm (Cleric Spell) [1/spell]. The modified casting rules (Will and HP vs. IQ and FP) are considered a wash.

Spells: Clerical Spell (H) Will [4/spell].

Holy Weapon

15 points

Prerequisite: Holiness 5+.

Any weapon you wield has the ability to harm evil spirits! Treat it as having Affects Insubstantial (p. B102) against malevolent, supernatural beings (GM's decision). When battling an extraplanar entity that cannot truly be slain, you can still banish it: at -HP or worse, it must make *Will* rolls when mortals would make HT rolls, and at -5×HP, it fails automatically. This sends the creature away exactly as a successful Banish spell would.

Advantages: Blessed (Ghost Weapon; Holy, -10%) [14]. Blessed (Ghost Weapon) hails from **GURPS Powers: Divine Favor**, and acquires the Holy modifier for symmetry with other forms of Blessed in *Dungeon Fantasy*.

Perks: Shtick (Spirits "slain" personally are banished) [1].

KNIGHT POWER-UPS

Knights are leaders and protectors, and get power-ups to assist those duties. The GM may offer these to other "team player" warriors, too.

Bodyguard

5 points/level

Prerequisites: Combat Reflexes and either Code of Honor (Soldier's or Chivalry) or Sense of Duty (Adventuring companions).

You're adept at hustling hapless squishies out of harm's way. You get +1 per level (maximum three levels) when you attempt a sacrificial dodge (p. B375) or a sacrificial dodge and drop (p. B377). This never benefits *your* defenses!

Advantages: Enhanced Dodge 1-3 (Sacrificial) [5/level]. This variant is much cheaper for reasons that should be obvious!

Rallying Cry

5 points

Prerequisites: Born War Leader 2+, Leadership 12+, and either Code of Honor (Soldier's or Chivalry) or Sense of Duty (Adventuring companions).

With a mighty holler, you can snap allies out of *mental* stun caused by surprise, Fright Checks, etc. This is a *free* action and requires no special combat maneuver; simply roll against Leadership, at -1 per stunned ally past the first. The affected radius is HT yards (HT+3 yards with Penetrating Voice). You may try this once per turn.

Success gives your friends immediate *Will* rolls to recover from mental stun, at +1 if you have Penetrating Voice. Those who succeed recover instantly; they shed the defense penalties for being stunned and may act normally on their next turn.

Advantages: Rapier Wit (Reversed) [5]. This variant has the opposite of the usual effect at the same price.

Tactician

5 points/level

Prerequisites: Special (see below).

You can avert many combat disasters through strategy and leadership. You may buy one level of Tactician (maximum three levels) per *full* 12 points in the Born War Leader advantage and Leadership, Strategy, and Tactics skills. Each level gives you one Tactics Point per game session to spend as a character point on *Buying Success* (p. B347), for you or anybody you can see on your side! Tactics Points refill at the start of each game session.

There are limits on what Tactics Points can accomplish. First, they work only in battle. Second, they can aid attack, defense, and DX rolls, and all of the mundane tasks under *Combat (Dungeons, pp. 10-12)* – feigning death, hasty bandaging, identifying monster weaknesses, shouting advice, taunting, and even backstabbing by your friendly assassin – but cannot affect passive HT or resistance rolls, spellcasting, or supernatural abilities. Finally, you can't buy *critical* success; you're limited to turning failures into successes (1 point), or critical failures into failures (2 points) or successes (3 points).

Advantages: Destiny [5, 10, or 15]. This cribs Destiny Points from **GURPS Power-Ups 5: Impulse Buys** and gives them

the faster regeneration of Wildcard Points in return for extra prerequisites tying them to specific feats.

Weapon-and-Shield Fighter

10 points

Prerequisites: Combat Reflexes, a one-handed Melee Weapon skill at 17+, and Shield at 17+.

You're accomplished at coordinating your one-handed melee weapon and shield. Whenever you have a suitable weapon ready to parry *and* a shield ready to block, and are attacked in a way that would permit you to choose either defense, you get +1 to Block or Parry vs. that attack. A side effect of being so well-coordinated is that you don't suffer shield DB as a penalty to one-handed weapon attacks in close combat (p. B392).

The active defense bonus doesn't work against attacks you can't parry (strikes from the shield side, most missiles, extremely heavy weapons, etc.) or ones you can't block (notably attacks from the weapon side or on weapons). It also vanishes if you don't have both a shield *and* a weapon ready. On the upside, it's cumulative with all other defense bonuses, including shield DB and additional Enhanced Block and Enhanced Parry.

Advantages: Enhanced Block 1 (Accessibility, Requires weapon, -20%; Limited, Attacks that can be parried, -20%) [3]; Enhanced Parry 1 (All; Accessibility, Requires shield, -20%; Limited, Attacks that can be blocked, -20%) [6].

Perks: Rules Exemption (No DB penalty on one-handed weapon attacks in close combat) [1].

MARTIAL ARTIST POWER-UPS

These abilities flow from chi. See *Wizard-Hunter* (p. 7) for another example. The GM decides whether other supernatural powers enable similar gifts.

Chi Blasts

Variable

Prerequisites: Chi Talent 2+ and Trained by a Master.

You can channel your chi into superheroic energy attacks! See the *Chi Blast Table* (below) for point costs. Several kinds of Chi Blasts exist, but all share these rules:

1. You cannot buy higher damage dice than *thrust* figured only from basic ST plus Striking ST with the Chi modifier (ignore ST and damage adjustments from high skill, Power Blow, items, etc.). The exception is Chi Edge, which can't exceed *swing* figured from that ST. You may always use less damage than you paid for.
2. If you have several of these abilities, you pay full cost only for the *most expensive*. The others become "alternative attacks" (p. B61) that cost 1/5 normal, rounded *up*.
3. They can harm insubstantial beings: ghosts, phased-out wizards, etc.
4. Chi Talent adds to all attack rolls!

Chi Edge

A blade of chi appears in hand, allowing you to inflict *cutting* damage, and to parry, as though you had a Reach 1 sword. You may opt to create two, one in each hand, for Dual-Weapon

Attacks and additional parries. The blades persist at no FP cost. Wielded with any sword skill.

Advantages: Cutting Attack (Affects Insubstantial, +20%; Chi, -10%; Melee Attack, Reach 1, Dual, -15%; Variable, +5%) [7/die].

Chi Thrust

As Chi Edge, but *impaling*. With both power-ups, you create a cut-and-thrust blade, but you can only use one damage type per turn.

Advantages: Impaling Attack (Affects Insubstantial, +20%; Chi, -10%; Melee Attack, Reach 1, Dual, -15%; Variable, +5%) [8/die].

Dragon's Breath

An exhaled flame jet strikes a single target for *burning* damage. It counts as a Reach 1-5 *melee* attack that can be blocked or dodged, but not parried. Costs 1 FP/use. Roll against Karate to hit.

Advantages: Burning Attack (Affects Insubstantial, +20%; Blockable, -5%; Chi, -10%; Costs Fatigue, 1 FP, -5%; Increased 1/2D x2, +5%; Jet, +0%; Reduced Range x1/2, -10%; Variable, +5%) [5/die].

Flying Fists

Punching at air, you smite a distant target for *crushing* damage. This attack has Acc 3, 1/2D 10, and Max 100. A visible, fist-shaped distortion lets the victim attempt any active defense. Costs 1 FP/use. Roll against Karate to hit.

Advantages: Crushing Attack (Affects Insubstantial, +20%; Blockable, Can Be Parried, -10%; Chi, -10%; Costs Fatigue, 1 FP, -5%; Variable, +5%) [5/die].

Yin/Yang Blast

A shining psychic bolt disrupts the victim's chi, doing *fatigue* damage. This requires a Concentrate maneuver and *winning* a Quick Contest of your Karate, at -1 per yard of distance, against the target's Will. A mentalist's Psychic Armor or similar psychic DR works against this damage. Costs 1 FP/use.

Advantages: Fatigue Attack (Based on DX, Own Roll, +20%; Chi, -10%; Costs Fatigue, 1 FP, -5%; Malediction 1, +100%; Psychic Armor protects normally, -10%; Variable, +5%) [20/die].

Chi Blast Table

| Damage | Point Cost | | | | |
|--------|------------|------------|-----------------|--------------|----------------|
| Dice | Chi Edge | Chi Thrust | Dragon's Breath | Flying Fists | Yin/Yang Blast |
| 1d-2 | 3 | 4 | 2 | 2 | 8 |
| 1d-1 | 5 | 6 | 4 | 4 | 14 |
| 1d | 7 | 8 | 5 | 5 | 20 |
| 1d+1 | 10 | 11 | 7 | 7 | 26 |
| 1d+2 | 12 | 13 | 8 | 8 | 32 |
| 2d-1 | 12 | 14 | 9 | 9 | 34 |
| 2d | 14 | 16 | 10 | 10 | 40 |
| 2d+1 | 17 | 19 | 12 | 12 | 46 |
| 2d+2 | 19 | 21 | 13 | 13 | 52 |
| 3d-1 | 19 | 22 | 14 | 14 | 54 |
| 3d | 21 | 24 | 15 | 15 | 60 |

Fists of Power

8 points

Prerequisites: Karate at 18+, Trained by a Master, and either Claws (Blunt) or Iron Hands.

You can launch devastating hand strikes taught only in certain monasteries in remote reaches of distant lands. These count as punches but are so forceful that they're hard to intercept – they enemy's Parry and Block are at -1 (Dodge is unpenalized). A hit does +2 damage or +1 *per die*, whichever is better. However, the strike is so vigorous that you can lose your balance! On a miss, or if your opponent successfully dodges, you must roll vs. Karate or DX to avoid falling down.

Fists of Power is the generic term for something that inevitably has a cool local name: Buddha's Palm, North Star Fist, Hammer of Oyama, or something equally badass.

Perks: Unique Technique (Fists of Power) [1].

Techniques: Fists of Power (H) Karate+0 [7].

Grand Flying Kick

20 points

Prerequisite: Seven Secret Kicks (**Power-Ups**, p. 30).

You can launch a massive flying kick capable of plowing through multiple foes. This has the potential to strike *everyone* in the path of your forward jumping movement. It's a variation of All-Out Attack (Strong) that uses the following rules instead of the standard ones.

Start with a running broad jump, which requires a DX or Jumping roll. Then roll vs. Karate to attack the first target in line. He parries at -2 (Dodge and Block are unaffected) – and because your entire body is behind the kick, it's considered a weapon with weight equal to your ST in pounds.

If you hit, damage is that of your usual kick, at +2 or +1 *per die*, whichever is better. This stacks with Seven Secret Kicks, Unarmed Master, etc., but you cannot combine it with Lethal Kick. Your victim suffers -1 to all DX and HT rolls to avoid falling down due to knockback or knockdown.

If you miss (and don't fall!), if your opponent successfully dodges, or if you knock him back or down (automatic if he's killed), *you keep going*. You must roll this attack on the *next* person in the path of your jump – who *can* be a previous victim, knocked back along that line! If you hit but your rival blocks, parries, or isn't knocked down or back – and in any event, when you run out of jumping movement – your attack ends.

Failure on the initial roll to jump, or on any attack roll, requires a DX-8 roll to avoid falling down. Regardless, you must make the same roll to stay standing when your attack ends! A fall inflicts damage for a collision with an immovable object (the ground) at an effective Move equal to the full distance of your run and jump.

You cannot defend yourself on a turn when you use Grand Flying Kick.

Perks: Unique Technique (Grand Flying Kick) [1].

Techniques: Grand Flying Kick (H) Karate+0 [19].

Under the Hood: Fists of Power

Using the **GURPS Martial Arts** technique-design system, Fists of Power is a punch that gets -3 because it gives -1 to enemy Parry and Block, and another -4 for +2 damage or +1 per die – but *also* +1 due to the DX roll to avoid falling if the attack misses or is dodged. That comes to Karate-6. It's Hard mostly because it requires Unique Technique!

Under the Hood: Grand Flying Kick

Grand Flying Kick is Greater Cleaving Strike (p. 8) – which defaults to skill-18 – with tweaks. It replaces the +1 for reduced movement with -2 for *increased* movement (full Move plus a jump): -3. It gets -4 for -2 enemy Parry, and another -1 for counting as a heavy weapon. However, the need for a DX or Jumping roll to start gives +1, the DX-8 roll to avoid falling adds another +3, the mandatory DX-8 roll at the end gives a *separate* +3, and serious damage on a fall gives +1. Thus, the default remains skill-18. (Seven Secret Kicks removes the -2 to hit with a kick, so that isn't built into the default.)

Hundred-Handed Strike

Variable

Prerequisites: Chi Talent 2+, Trained by a Master, and Karate.

You launch 100 high-speed punches, 50 with each of two hands! Roll twice to attack a *single* foe at Reach C with Karate. Both attacks have -4 for Dual-Weapon Attack, +6 for 50 blows, and a bonus equal to Chi Talent. Each success lands one punch plus extras equal to *twice* your margin, to at most 50 per hand.

Your target may dodge, parry, or block separately against each hand, at the standard -1 for a Dual-Weapon Attack if both hands hit. Each success lets him avoid one hit plus extras equal to twice *his* margin. No matter how he defends, intercepting your punches cannot harm you!

Damage per hit is purchased specially for this attack, and cannot exceed that of your basic Karate punch. When finding your limit, only traits that benefit *every* punch matter. Ordinary ST, Striking ST, Karate skill, and any power-up that's always on (like Claws or Unarmed Master) all count. Conditional bonuses, equipment bonuses, and abilities with FP costs, recharge times, or limited uses do not, eliminating things like Higher Purpose, brass knuckles, and Power Blow. Starting with whole dice, treat each ± 1 to damage as ± 0.3 die, multiply effective dice by 15, and round *up* to find cost.

Example: Chong Li boasts ST 13, DX 16, Chi Talent 2, Claws (Blunt), Striking ST 2, and Karate-17. His basic punch inflicts 1d+3 crushing; that's 1.9 dice, for 29 points. He attacks a troll with Hundred-Handed Strike: 17, -4 for Dual-Weapon Attack, +6 for 50 punches, +2 for Chi Talent, and +1 for target SM gives effective skill 22. He rolls 10 and 11, succeeds by 12 and 11, and thus lands 25 and 23 punches. The troll retreats and tries two dodges at -1, making one roll by 2 and the other by 1, avoiding 8 punches; the other 40 hit. The GM uses average damage for 1d+3 (trolls have DR 0) or 6.5 points, and calls this 260 HP of injury. That takes the troll past instant death at 220 HP, buying Li's party just under four minutes to incinerate it and allowing them to focus on the *other* trolls.

This attack is **EXTREME!** You must use the full 50 strikes/hand and cannot pull your punches. You're left without active defenses that turn, as on an All-Out Attack. And it's so demanding that you can try it just once per day – and doing so costs you 1 FP and 1 HP.

Advantages: Crushing Attack (All-Out, -25%; Chi, -10%; Cosmic, Rapid Fire on melee attack, +100%; Costs Fatigue, 1 FP, -5%; Costs Hit Points, 1 HP, -10%; Limited Use, 1/day, -40%; Melee, Reach C, Dual, -20%; Rapid Fire, RoF 50, Very Rapid Fire, +210%) [15/die].

Martial Artist Perks

These Combat Perks (**Power-Ups**, pp. 11-12) are reserved for martial artists.

Chain Belt

Prerequisites: High Pain Threshold and Trained by a Master.

You're a karate man – you bruise on the inside. Whatever your injuries, they don't show! If an enemy injures you, you may try Intimidation against that foe as a *free action* at the start of your very next turn. Roll as explained in *Taunt and Bluster* (*Dungeons*, p. 12). You receive the *best* applicable bonus from among the following: +1 if the injury was a major wound, +2 if it reduced you to 0 or fewer HP or crippled a limb, +3 if it sent you to -HP or worse, or +4 if anything was dismembered.

Inner Alchemy†

Prerequisites: Chi Talent and Trained by a Master.

You can adjust doshas, yin/yang, or similar aspects of your being to make your *bare hands* (never weapons!) equal to other forces for the sole purpose of exploiting monster weaknesses. Each equivalence requires its own perk (the GM may invent others):

Inner God: Barehanded blows count as a *holy* weapon. **Prerequisite:** Chi Talent 3+.

Magic Touch: Barehanded blows count as a *magical* weapon. **Prerequisite:** Chi Talent 4+.

Pitta Fist: Barehanded blows count as *fire*, though damage doesn't become burning. **Prerequisite:** Chi Talent 2+.

Silver Soul: Barehanded blows count as a *silver* weapon. **Prerequisite:** Chi Talent 1+.

Mr. Pushy

You can turn *any* Karate strike into a shove (p. B372). Declare this before resolving the attack. On a hit, roll damage normally and double it, but count it only for knockback – it inflicts no injury. The victim has -2 on the DX roll to avoid falling due to knockback if you hit a leg, -3 if you struck the skull, face, or neck. You *can* combine Mr. Pushy with Grand Flying Kick (p. 11) to shove multiple foes!

Master of Lethal Strikes

4 points

Prerequisites: Karate and either Iron Hands or Unarmed Master.

You've mastered the art of converting your unarmed strikes from crushing to *piercing* attacks. When making a Lethal Strike (p. B404) with a punch or a kick, ignore the extra -2 to

hit. The standard -1 to damage still applies, but bonuses for Karate, Claws (Blunt), Unarmed Master, etc. add normally. Punches require handwear with individual fingers (e.g., gauntlets); mitten-style garb or anything that fully encloses the hand won't work.

Perks: Unique Technique (Lethal Blows) [1].

Techniques: Lethal Blows (H) Karate+0 [3]. This buys off the -2 for Lethal Strike with kicks *and* punches. It's more fairly priced than buying Lethal Kick and Lethal Strike in *Dungeon Fantasy*.

Rolling Throw

5 points

Prerequisites: Trained by a Master and Judo.

You know a secret Judo throw (p. B203) that launches *you* over your rival. Until it's time to decide where your victim lands, treat this like a standard throw: it requires empty hands and a previous parry or grapple, is an attack at Judo skill, and can be parried. If it works, however, *you* are the one who moves! You land behind your foe, with any facing you like, in his hex or one of his back hexes (you pick).

This differs from but isn't much more effective than *Evading* (p. B368), with two exceptions. First, as size and weight are no obstacle, you can use it to travel a long way over a huge monster; e.g., you could force an SM +4 dragon to head-toss you 10 yards, regardless of your Move. Second, all movement counts as a step, so if you use Rolling Throw first in a series of multiple attacks, and it works, you can execute the remaining attacks from behind; they count as "runarounds" (p. B391), giving -2 to defenses.

Perks: Unique Technique (Rolling Throw) [1].

Techniques: Rolling Throw (H) Judo+0 [4].

Under the Hood: Rolling Throw

This starts life as a Judo Throw, but acquires -1 for the special benefit of changing who moves, plus the -2 for a technique that gives (significant!) bonus step distance. It defaults to Judo-3.

Serenity

10 points/level

Prerequisites: Trained by a Master, plus Chi Talent 1+ for Serenity 1 or Chi Talent 4+ for Serenity 2.

Once per game session, you can enter a state of flawless physical grace. Roll 1d per level (maximum two levels) and add the result to DX. This bonus lasts for 3d seconds, after which DX reverts to normal.

The GM may allow a variant which adds 1d to Basic Speed (boosting Dodge and Move). If so, these are *separate* power-ups, and it's possible to take two levels in both.

Advantages: Blessed 1 or 2 (Heroic Feats) [10 or 20]. This version replaces the implicit requirement for pious behavior with the drawbacks of Chi, -10%; thus, that limitation applies but doesn't affect cost.

Unarmed Master

25 points

Prerequisites: Chi Talent 2+, Trained by a Master, and Karate.

Four of your existing limbs – two arms and two legs, unless the GM rules otherwise – are considered weapons when you strike or parry. You aren't subject to the free attacks on your limbs specified under *Parrying Unarmed Attacks* (p. B376), and enemies cannot elect to shift an attack to your limb if you fail at *Parrying Unarmed* (p. B376). You also ignore *Hurting Yourself* (p. B379) against high DR – even on critical failures at Breaking Blow. Attacks aimed at your limbs can still injure them normally, however.

Perhaps better, you enjoy +1 *per die* to your usual punching and kicking damage. This *is* cumulative with the per-die bonus from Claws (**Power-Ups**, p. 29) and Seven Secret Kicks (**Power-Ups**, p. 30).

Advantages: Striker (Crushing; Chi, -10%; Cosmic, Stackable*, +50%; Limb, -20%) [6] *four times* – twice for arms, twice for legs – for a net 24 points.†

Perks: Rules Exemption (Cannot hurt self) [1].

* Cosmic, Stackable allows *this* instance of Striker to add its damage bonus atop that of Claws or *other* instances of Striker.

† These *aren't* bought as alternative abilities because they work simultaneously. The martial artist could kick with both legs and parry with both arms, all in one turn, and not worry about “switching” between Strikers to gain the benefits.

SCOUT POWER-UPS

Being a swift, outdoorsy archer has its advantages. These gifts rarely suit non-scouts, though one is shared with barbarians.

Mifter Teef (“Mr. Teeth”)

10 points

Prerequisite: Heroic Archer.

You've practiced pulling arrows from your quiver using the hand that holds your bow (maneuvering the weapon around your body) and, more impressively, drawing and shooting the bow with one arm and your *teeth*. This enables one-handed archery, avoiding the difficulties of losing an arm, and freeing a hand to wield a shield, melee weapon, or another bow (though you can only shoot one at a time without additional mouths). The incredible neck and jaw strength this entails

grants +3 to ST and HT whenever you bite or roll to resist chokes, strangles, Neck Snaps, etc.

Advantages: Striking ST 3 (One Attack Only, Bite, -60%) [6].

Perks: Hands-Free (Draw Bow) [1]; Hands-Free (Ready Arrow) [1]; Hands-Free (Shoot Bow) [1]; Iron Neck [1].

Scout Perks

These are Combat Perks (**Power-Ups**, pp. 11-12) specially suited to scouts.

Flawless Fast-Draw

Prerequisites: Heroic Archer and Fast-Draw (Arrow) at 16+.

You've practiced quickly drawing arrows to the point where you no longer fail under ordinary circumstances. As long as your effective Fast-Draw (Arrow) skill is 16+, don't bother rolling – you succeed *automatically*. If penalties (e.g., shock from injury) reduce effective skill below 16, though, you must roll the dice.

Flawless Nocking

Prerequisites: Heroic Archer, plus *either* Bow at 19+ or Weapon Master (Bow) and Bow at 17+.

You've honed the art of quick-readying a bow (**Adventurers**, p. 14) to such an extent that you don't normally fail. As long as your effective Bow skill is 16+, you needn't roll against Bow for this purpose. This has no effect on the ensuing attack roll.

This feat is normally at -3, so this perk requires Bow at 19+. With Weapon Master (Bow), the roll is at -1 and Bow 17+ suffices. Regardless, if penalties reduce effective skill below 16, you must roll the dice.

Sure-Footed†

See p. 8.

Wind in the Trees‡

Any scout may increase Basic Move by up to six levels. If you find that inadequate, each level of this perk (maximum three levels) lets you buy *another* level. Effectively, Basic Move +1 to +6 cost the usual 5 points/level, while +7 to +9 cost 6 points/level.

SWASHBUCKLER POWER-UPS

These abilities are restricted to ultra-fast masters of whippy swords and stylish couture.

Then there came before him the burly leader of the Nagas, who threw down his weapons and stripped off his tunic, saying, “I will wrestle with you, deathgod.”

– Roger Zelazny, Lord of Light

Great Void

10 points

Prerequisites: Combat Reflexes, Weapon Master, and Basic Move 7+.

You're *very* mobile when fighting. When retreating, you may step an *extra* yard away from your foe. This doesn't boost your retreat bonus – it just lets you cover more ground when falling back.

Perks: Unique Technique (Great Void) [1].

Techniques: Great Void! Defense+0 [9]. This “wildcard technique” is priced as if Hard and then tripled in cost to allow it to work with *all* active defenses.

Relinquishment

5 points/skill

Prerequisites: Combat Reflexes, Weapon Master, and any fencing or sword skill at 20+.

You can sense when your blade is about to shatter on a parry, and allow it to be swept from your grasp instead. This transforms weapon breakage on a parry into a disarm (this power-up synergizes nicely with Not Without My Weapon). Such a parry still counts if odds of breakage don't exceed 6 in 6 (p. B376). If they do, you're disarmed and the parry *doesn't* count – but you may try a dodge at +1 for the heroic effort, and if you retreated on the parry, the dodge gets the retreat bonus, too.

You must specialize by sword or fencing skill.

Perks: Unique Technique (Relinquishing Parry) [1].

Techniques: Relinquishing Parry (H) Parry+0 [4].

Under the Hood: Great Void

In the **GURPS Martial Arts** technique-design system, a defensive technique that lets you retreat *two* steps defaults to the defense at -2. Being defensive, it's automatically Hard and cannot be improved past the defense to which it defaults. Normally, buying off that penalty costs 3 points – but a “wildcard” version triples this to 9 points.

Under the Hood: Relinquishment

Relinquishing Parry is another Hard defensive technique, capped at full Parry. It has -1 from the special benefit of turning weapon breakage into a mere disarm, another -1 from the potent ability to use a backup dodge without needing All-Out Defense (Double Defense), and a *further* -1 for the +1 to that dodge. Default is Parry-3.

Swashbuckler Perks

Only swashbucklers are slick enough for these Combat Perks (**Power-Ups**, pp. 11-12).

Blinding Strike‡

You're hard to beat to first blood. For the sole purpose of determining *who acts first* in a situation settled by Basic Speed – usually but not limited to the combat sequence – add your Blinding Strike level (which cannot exceed Basic Speed) to your Basic Speed. For instance, with Basic Speed 7.00, you

could buy up to Blinding Strike 7 – and if you did, you'd act when someone with Basic Speed 14.00 would act, though Basic Move and Dodge would still be determined from 7.00.

This is priced by noticing that Basic Speed [20/level] is equivalent to Basic Move [5/level] and Enhanced Dodge [15/level], leaving little room for the price of acting first. Rather than call that a zero-cost feature, this power-up makes it a leveled perk.

Caped Crusader

When wearing a loose cape or cloak that weighs at least 2 lbs., you can baffle foes by swirling it in their faces. Once per battle *per opponent*, you may invoke this perk for +1 on a Feint (thus, victory means an extra -1 to defenses) or a Deceptive Attack (half as effective, but works immediately).

Like Lightning‡

Where most swashbucklers are stuck raising Basic Speed by at most +4.00, you can break the rules further. Each level of this perk (maximum two levels) allows you to buy a *further* +1.00 – with Like Lightning 2 [2], you could buy Basic Speed +6.00.

Van Gogh My Van Dyke

There's a reason for those snappy beards swashbucklers favor – they can save your life! Once per *adventure*, you may declare that a successful frontal attack on your *face*, however nasty, merely lopped off your beard. You suffer no other ill effects. After that, you must grow out your beard . . . which conveniently happens in time for the next adventure.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Peter V. Dell'Orto of New Jersey started gaming with **Dungeons & Dragons** in 1981, and has played **GURPS** since *Man to Man*. He has been writing, editing, and playtesting **GURPS** books since 1996. Peter is the author of numerous **GURPS** articles for *Pyramid* magazine; author or co-author of several e23 items (including **GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 12: Ninja**; **GURPS Dungeon Fantasy Monsters 1** and **GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 15: Henchmen**, both with Sean Punch; and **GURPS Martial Arts: Gladiators**, with Volker Bach); and a co-author of **GURPS Martial Arts** and **GURPS Low-Tech**. He is also an enthusiastic martial artist, and has competed both in Japan in amateur MMA and in the United States in submission grappling. He currently trains Kachin Bando and holds a shodan rank in Kendo. His other interests include fitness, reading, painting miniatures, and studying Japanese.

Peter presently runs a **Dungeon Fantasy** campaign for his long-time victims, err, players, where he tests out his many rule and monster ideas . . .

Sean “Dr. Kromm” Punch set out to become a particle physicist in 1985, ended up the **GURPS** Line Editor in 1995, and has engineered rules for almost every **GURPS** product since. He developed, edited, or wrote dozens of **GURPS Third Edition** projects between 1995 and 2002. In 2004, he produced the **GURPS Basic Set, Fourth Edition** with David Pulver, followed by many supplements, including the **GURPS Action**, **GURPS Dungeon Fantasy**, and **GURPS Power-Ups** series . . . and the list keeps growing. He lives in Montréal, Québec with his wife.

TAKEDOWN SEQUENCES

BY DOUGLAS H. COLE

Sure, grappling is bone-crushing throws, vicious locks, and air-denying chokes. The ground game and the stand-up clinch. The triangle choke and sweeping out your foe's legs with a dueling halberd.

Mostly, it is a series of moves, done with precision and timing, to transition from a neutral to an advantaged position, and then ending a fight through capitulation or crippling – or worse.

While it's possible to treat **GURPS** grappling as a flavorless series of die rolls – hit, grapple, takedown, pin – doing so misses a lot of the narrative power that exists in the **Basic Set**, **GURPS Martial Arts**, and **GURPS Martial Arts: Technical Grappling** – more so if you combine them. This how-to guide can help you get the most out of unarmed grappling. Doing a fairly well specified sequence of moves can speed play and help the GM and players imagine what is happening in a fight, aiding immersion.

POSITIONS

“Positioning” is a foundational principle in grappling. It's a great common ground for starting sequences of moves, and many grappling lessons begin with having achieved a certain amount of positional control over your opponent.

*Never contend with a man who
has nothing to lose.*

– Baltasar Gracián

THE CLINCH

A common starting position from standing grappling is where one or both (usually both) participants have mutual grapples on each other. A typical clinch might involve a one-handed grapple of the neck while the other hand is grabbing the same-side arm or wrist. Kickboxers frequently use both hands on the neck, to allow ugly things to happen with knees. Especially in Sport grappling, these grapples are virtually unopposed, the focus being to establish a framework for future moves rather than to deny any purchase whatsoever.

MOUNT

This is the classic advantaged position in ground fighting. One fighter is effectively sitting or crawling on top of the other,

grappling with all four limbs. The aggressor most often sits on the hips, providing both stability and control (see *Stability, Technical Grappling*, p. 10). The legs are used to grapple and control the torso (or sometimes the foe's legs, in a move called the *grapevine*), while the arms grapple some combination of the torso, neck, or one or both arms. *Pass Limb* (*Technical Grappling*, p. 24) can even be used to isolate and trap one arm between the two fighters while the advantaged grappler works on the neck or free arm.

Using the concepts in *Technical Grappling*, mount position has the grapplers in each other's front arcs, with common superimposed orientation. The disadvantaged fighter is supine (on his back facing up), while the advantaged one is facedown and gains the benefits of *Weight Advantage* (*Technical Grappling*, p. 9), if using those rules.

North-South

This mount-position variant retains many of the features of mount, but with two key differences. The fighters are in an orientation where their torsos are in close combat with each other, but the legs are usually pointed in opposite directions. The advantaged fighter loses the extra strength provided by grappling with the legs, but in turn, his own legs are out of reach. Likewise, the disadvantaged fighter is more stable, but can't use his legs to facilitate escapes or reversals. The two fighters need not be truly North-South: The advantaged fighter might opt to be canted to the side, to make it more difficult for his foe to reach him with the opposite arm.

UPPER SIDE MOUNT

A strong position for the fighter with a weight advantage, this seated posture can be represented with a one-handed grapple of the foe's neck, combined with another one-handed grapple of the arm on the same side of the foe as the aggressor is seated. Effectively, the aggressor is sitting on one hip, facing his opponent's head, grappling the neck and one arm. This posture requires the use of Change Position (*Technical Grappling*, p. 35) to establish a weight advantage by using the legs to bridge up and press the torso down on the foe. This position is often used to work for submissions by applying joint locks to the same-side arm, while using Hands-Free Parries (*Technical Grappling*, pp. 22-23) and control of the arms to avoid being grappled.

Lower Side Mount

This variation uses a very similar position, but instead of securing the head and arm, the advantaged fighter sits on the belly or hips, grappling the torso or legs. This usually denies mobility, power, and strength to the grappled fighter, but the aggressor has to watch out that he doesn't allow a grapple of his own head from the rear arc.

SIDE MOUNT

Another top-advantaged position, this one has the fighter crosswise to his opponent. The elbows and knees can all be used to grapple and control the foe, with the neck and head both in convenient reach of one arm. The legs can also be extended, relying on weight advantage and keeping them out of the disadvantaged fighter's reach. One goal of side mount can be to pass *both* of the foe's arms (usually one at a time) between the fighters, trapping them and leaving the bottom fighter little recourse but to try squirming around, leveraging exhausting explosive movements to open space and begin to extract limbs. Especially for lighter fighters, being trapped under someone heavy can be exhausting and disheartening, and a weight-advantaged fighter can take time to recover wind (if using *The Last Gasp* from *Pyramid* #3/44: *Alternate GURPS II*), or work joint locks or other finishing moves more or less at leisure.

GUARD

A favorite of some styles and stylists, this position seeks to neutralize the foe's weight advantage for a fighter finding himself beneath his opponent. The disadvantaged fighter grapples his foe's torso with his legs, leveraging the fact that already being on the ground means takedowns and many mass-based moves are irrelevant. The double-leg grapple of the torso leaves the fighter free to interfere with the "advantaged" fighter's actions through acquiring and spending Control Points, while himself either grappling the neck, torso, or arms of his foe.

This is a surprisingly versatile position despite the weight disadvantage. Many chokes and locks are accessible from this position, including the common *triangle choke* (pp. 19-20) and some surprisingly painful "compression locks" of the notionally advantaged fighter's knees! Some fighters *deliberately* try to obtain this position in order to utilized moves based on this common starting point.

REAR MOUNT

Often – but not always – the beginning of the end for submission and blood fighting, rear mount has one fighter in the other's rear arc, grappling him with all four limbs from behind. Though in many cases this counts as a side grapple for the purposes of defending, rear mount is incredibly powerful for the advantaged fighter, who has more or less free access to his foe's head, face, and neck (there are some astoundingly painful pressure points on the face and head), while also being largely unreachable by his foe.

But not entirely unreachable. The defending fighter might be able to catch his foe in some nasty foot and leg locks in a submission match. Elbow Strike (*Martial Arts*, p. 71) is custom-tailored to visit pain on foes behind the victim in less restrained conflicts. Also, limbs that reach the defender's front arc can be grappled at no facing penalty.

KNEELING CONTROL

These positions leave the fighter more mobile than going fully to ground, as anyone can go from kneeling to standing as part of any maneuver that contains a step – optionally including retreats.

Quick-Lock

This position usually secures one arm and controls the torso and neck with one or both legs. Referred to as a "Quick-Lock" by Hwa Rang Do 8th Dan Taejoon Lee, it is a natural and fast way to transition into strong control after forcing your opponent to the ground. During a throw or takedown, Control Points are retained on one arm, while one or both legs are used to secure the neck, the torso, or both after the opponent is rendered prone.

Knee Mount

This kneeling-control position is effected with a two-armed, one legged grapple of the foe. The knee is placed into the torso, and the arms (which grapple the opponent's torso or arms) are used to provide counter-pressure, pulling the advantaged fighter's knee into his opponent's stomach. This can be a supremely uncomfortable experience, and can be represented by inflicting pain via application of Pressure Points (*Technical Grappling*, p. 33), or even by allowing the advantaged fighter to use Bear Hug (*Technical Grappling*, p. 34) to induce compressive asphyxia (induce Fatigue Point loss).

LEG CONTROL

While grappling the torso, neck, and arms is exceptionally common, good grapplers can control their foe without even approaching within reach of the arms (Reach C from the torso). Leg control is established by grappling the opponent's foot (ankle) or leg, and securing the hold by using one's own legs to provide additional restraint on the foe's legs or torso – usually the hip. This is done in an attempt to prevent the foe from rolling out of an ankle lock, or to provide an anchor point for a Leg Lock such as a knee-bar.

The usual order can be reversed to leverage an ankle lock and *force* a posture or position change, often by expending Control Points or using pain compliance to cause a fighter to roll prone.

GRAPPLING SEQUENCES

“Grappling sequences” show which maneuvers, techniques, attacks, and options can be strung together to accomplish certain common goals. They aid players through sensible choices of **GURPS** mechanics and cut through potential option overload.

Each move has a description that includes the move’s purpose and a list of the sequence of attacks, techniques, and movement that best describes the action, using the higher-resolution options presented in **Technical Grappling**. Recommendations are made about how to turn the sequence into Combinations (**Martial Arts**, p. 80) – efficient ways to represent practicing and drilling the set of actions until they’ve become second nature.

Many of these sequences work fine using only the **Basic Set** or **Martial Arts**, as there are clear substitutions for the more precise moves in **Technical Grappling**. The lack of spendable Control Points may well be offset by the relatively large DX penalty that is the staple of a standard rules-as-written grapple: that -4 is the equivalent (more or less) of an 8 CP grapple, which on the average requires Trained ST 23 to achieve in one attack!

BASIC MOVES

These basic grappling sequences can be used to achieve an advantaged position while taking your foe to the ground. Grapplers using this strategy had best ensure they have a superior ground game than their foe, either by dint of raw skill, buying off posture penalties, or both.

Clinch to Takedown

There are several ways to facilitate the grounding of a standing foe, and all are easier with a significant Control Point advantage. A fighter can proceed to the mechanics for a takedown (*Force Posture Change* in **Technical Grappling**) directly, or leverage a Sweep or offensive Judo Throw. Combining this with a grapple of the legs or a *Destabilizing Strike* (p. 18) with an All-Out Attack (Double) or Rapid Strike will help get your foe on the ground.

If you used Sumo Wrestling or Wrestling to destabilize the foe, it may seem like a good idea to retain some Control Points beyond the end of your own turn, but since your foe can increase control himself without suffering penalties for hit location (grapples are mutual in **Technical Grappling**!) this is just asking to have the same trick pulled on you – and if you All-Out Attacked, you can’t do much about it.

A fighter may also utilize Beats (**Technical Grappling**, p. 21) and Feints to stack up penalties for the next turn; some combination of Beats and Feints are likely what is being employed as two stylists do several seconds of standing grappling, each trying to gain an advantage before a big takedown.

Note that in any case, you will suffer the usual penalties to Force Posture Change for how far you’re trying to lower your

foe’s posture, and how many levels of your own posture change you make as well.

Sequence

The sequence starts from a standing grapple.

- Feint or Beat (Quick Contest, Feint or Beat).
- Kick out the leg (Attack to grapple, destabilize, or injure with appropriate skill).
- Execute a Force Posture Change, Throw, or Sweep, spending all CP from the previous step.

Combinations

The Destabilizing Strike or grapple and Force Posture Change must be paired together to be effective; they make a natural combination.

While technically the sequence ends with the posture change, another common combination is to immediately attack to improve control. In fact, many useful combinations can *start* with the Force Posture Change.

Extra Attacks Make for Awesome Grappling

The combinations in this section are presented as if they were the most natural thing in the world to do. In fact, as per the usual rules, a two-move combination is a Rapid Strike at -6 to each one, while a three-move combination forces the aggressor to deal with -12! Improving such combinations can be very expensive if you want to know several.

Very rapidly, a more effective strategy will be to purchase Extra Attack, possibly with Limitation: Grappling Only, -10%. You may also use the Single Skill limitation at -20% (**Martial Arts**, p. 44) if you are willing to restrict yourself to one option. Note that in order to use a two-handed grapple more than once in a turn, you *must* also purchase Multi-Strike (**Martial Arts**, p. 44). This makes Extra Attack (Grappling Only, -10%; Multi-Strike, +20%) [27.5/level] the most appropriate build for cinematic grapplers.

Altered Time Rate at 100 points is, of course, even better and more versatile, as is the “fully featured” Extra Attack with Multi-Strike (30 points). Anything that lets you make extra attacks per turn will either speed up the rate at which you increment Control Points, allow more actions in combination, or permit increasing CP and then immediately spending them on things like applying pain or injury.

Grapple, Take the Back, Takedown, Mount

This sequence is often done from the clinch, as it benefits (in real life) from the grapple of one of your foe’s arms. The goal is to slide around your opponent, gain firm control from the rear arc, destabilize one leg, and use your own body weight to take him down, falling sideways. Immediately on impact, the aggressor attempts to obtain mount position, executing a two-legged grapple of the torso to add to the two-handed existing grapple.

Sequence

The sequence starts from a standing grapple of one arm and the torso.

- Change Position from front to rear arc (Quick Contest, Change Position at -6).
- Release the arm, and attack with both arms to improve the torso grapple (Attack, grappling skill).
- Optionally, destabilize the left or right leg (Attack, Destabilizing Strike, below).
- Spend CP while executing a Force Posture Change with both fighters driven to prone (Quick Contest, Force Posture Change). Retain some CP on the torso if possible.
- Grapple the torso with both arms and legs while obtaining a weight-advantaged position (obtain mount position, p. 15) (Attack at -6).

Combinations

Good combination pairs include the position change and attacking from the rear arc, as well as the destabilization and the takedown. The destabilization can also be subsumed into the spending of CP to lower your foe's resistance to the Quick Contest, leaving the Force Posture Change and attacking to acquire mount position a good way to ensure the takedown is leveraged into proper control.

Destabilizing Strike

While it's obvious that the Control Points inflicted on a grappled leg can unbalance the foe, some styles teach this sort of unbalancing move with a strike. This is similar to a Push Kick (*Martial Arts*, p. 78) performed with an appropriate striking skill, armed or unarmed. On a hit, instead of rolling for damage, roll for Control Points using the appropriate progression. Unlike a grapple, these CP are temporary, and disappear at the end of the foe's next turn. If enough CP are inflicted to impart more than a -1 penalty to DX for that limb, it may not be used to provide stability (*Technical Grappling*, p. 10). If this renders the foe unstable, CP spent against him in moves such as sweeps, takedowns, and throws count double!

The limb has been struck, not grappled – no ST penalties are inflicted, only DX. Since those penalties disappear at the end of the foe's turn, taking advantage of such a move to force a posture change will require more than one attack before the opponent's turn ends.

Single-Leg Pickup and Takedown

A classic move used in mixed martial-arts fighting (and executed flawlessly by technically proficient fighters such as Georges St-Pierre), this move is most often performed as a Committed Attack with two steps to shoot in, grapple the leg, and spend CP to perform a takedown on the destabilized foe. The defender will often attempt to counter with a Sprawling Parry (*Technical Grappling*, p. 40).

Sequence

- Committed Attack with two steps to a single leg; change position to kneeling (Attack at full skill (Determined) or skill-2 if Strong).
- Force posture change on the foe, driving him from standing to prone, while the attacker drops from kneeling to crawling

or prone himself (Quick Contest, Force Posture Change at full skill to -3, depending on attacker's posture change).

Combinations

The obvious combination is executing both moves together. Additionally, the takedown is rarely the end game – choose a good finisher (below).

Pulling Guard

This extremely common move probably occurs more often in sporting competitions than it will happen in *GURPS*. Following a grapple of the torso, the attacker falls backward, dragging his foe down on top of him while grappling him with both legs on the torso.

The strength of the technique can probably be best represented by giving the attacking fighter the temporary benefit of weight advantage during the takedown, balanced by the fact that if this plan works, the weight advantage goes immediately to the person being pulled into guard.

The advantage of this position is that it allows all four limbs to be used to grapple the foe. It can be used effectively with Pass Limb (*Technical Grappling*, pp. 24-25) to maximize CP, prevent the opponent from using three or four limbs, and work the head and neck for a choke.

Sequence

- Grapple the opponent by the torso or neck (Attack at full skill or skill-3).
- Execute a Force Posture Change, falling supine while pulling the foe prone (Quick Contest, Force Posture Change). Retain some CP from the torso/neck grapple.
- Execute a grapple with both legs to the foe's torso (Attack at -2).
- Follow up by improving the grapple with a series of attacks with both arms and legs; this maximizes the applied CP over a very short period of time (Attack at -2).

Combinations

While the first three moves – the torso grapple, takedown, and the grapple with the legs – can be an effective three-move combination, the best pairing is made by linking the takedown and the leg grapple.

Executing that combination as an All-Out Attack (bold, but usually unwise in *GURPS*) or Committed Attack is common. If this one fails, the defender might just shake you off . . . or deliver a Piledriver (*Martial Arts*, p. 86).

FINISHERS: LOCKS AND CHOKES

These moves are all based on obtaining a lock or a choke on a foe that has been taken to the ground. Some of these moves are high risk in a melee where facing only one opponent at a time is not guaranteed.

Note that many of these sequences can be quite long, since the attacker is attempting to move to a completely dominant position while giving his foe little or no space to respond.

Things tend to speed up if the defender makes a mistake (best represented by a critical failure) or suffers so many penalties due to posture, position, and control that the aggressor can make safe use of All-Out Attack (Double).

Arm Bar from Mount

An arm bar is the archetypical Arm Lock, and with higher resolution options for grappling, it can be rendered more precisely. From mount, the grappler obtains a two-handed grapple of one of his foe's arms, usually while moving to kneeling (and still retaining a stable two-legged grapple of his foe's torso). He then exploits a posture and orientation change to put the torso out of reach while retaining the arm and leg grapples of his foe's body. From this position, attacking with all four limbs to gain and spend CP each turn, he can apply pain and/or injury until his foe is finished.

The defense against this move is to perform a hands-free Escaping Parry (*Technical Grappling*, p. 36) while using a retreat to *also* attempt a posture and position change. Ideally, the victim rolls to crawling, breaks the lock, and either neutralizes or reverses the weight advantage. For obvious reasons, this can take several turns.

Sequence

While an arm bar can be obtained in a nearly insane number of ways, this particular one starts from the mount position (p. 15).

- Obtain a two-handed grapple of one of the foe's arms (Attack at -1).
- Change posture from prone to kneeling (over the opponent) using Force Posture Change.
- Change Posture *again*, this time from kneeling to supine (+2 to the attempt), but also changing Position to put the attacker's torso adjacent to that of the hex containing the foe's shoulder (at a net -6: -2 for the hex of resisted rotation, -2 to shift the torso out of close combat, and a further -2 as this move acquires the defender's side arc; Quick Contest, Positioning Move – see below – at -4). Control Points may be spent to facilitate this.
- Apply an Arm Lock to the grappled limb (Attack, Arm Lock).
- Apply pain or injury as a free action on your turn (Quick Contest, Trained ST with required CP spend), but always attack to improve the grapple (Attack at full skill). Optionally, spend CP from either the torso or the arm for this purpose.

Combinations

The Force Posture Change and Change Position can be executed as one move. As this is intensively drilled as part of learning this sequence, the two moves should be allowed to be purchased as one technique (see *Positioning Move*, below). Similarly, the posture and position change *plus* the arm lock are drilled as a smooth movement. The initial setup moves, the two-handed arm grapple and the shift to kneeling are most often done as a slow and sure ratcheting up of control.

Ankle Lock

This straight-forward technique hews almost exactly to the rules in the **Basic Set**: obtain a grapple of the foe's foot, and then

apply a Joint Lock. *Any* grapple will do, and on the ground, it's usually best to grapple the leg (a slightly easier target), then shift to the foot, spending CP to cancel out location penalties for the attack.

Sequence

- Leg grapple (Attack at -1).
- Shift grip and attack the Foot (Attack at -1).
- Apply the Foot Lock (Attack, Foot Lock).

Combinations

Any of these steps, simple as they are, make logical inclusions into combinations, though it may well be worthwhile *not* doing so, in order to build up more and more control as you work closer to the lock.

Positioning Move

Average

Defaults: Lower of Change Position or Force Posture Change; cannot exceed DX or prerequisite skill.

Many grappling techniques and sequences utilize simultaneous shifts of what **GURPS** considers posture, position, orientation, and relative facing. To represent this in a sensible manner, one can treat a known and defined movement as a technique, which can be executed in a single attack, and whose penalties can be bought off. This is referred to as a Positioning Move.

Only changes in posture and position may be combined in this way, but that may include posture, position, relative facing, or orientation. No matter what, if the Positioning Move results in an impossible position (*Technical Grappling*, p. 11), the grip is lost.

Positioning Moves must be explicit, with a starting and ending posture specified, and any position changes likewise detailed.

Example: Moving from crawling to lying face up (a one-level change) would usually give +1 to drop a level, -2 because you are rolling from face-down (crawling) to face up (supine). Doing so while also shifting your feet to a hex out of close combat with your foe via Change Position (assuming your foe has no CP on your legs) is an additional -2. The player describes this as a Positioning Move from mount to upper side mount, and would roll vs. Positioning Move-3.

Triangle Choke

The triangle choke is simply a carotid choke (see *Chokes*, *Technical Grappling*, p. 36) that uses a leg grapple instead of the arms or a collar grab. To make a proper triangle, the attacker usually must pass an arm in order to get the right leverage. While not strictly necessary (all that is required is the clean grapple of the neck with either both legs or one arm and one leg), passing the arm limits attempts to break free to one-handed grapples, which suffer reduced effectiveness vs. the much-stronger legs.

Sequence

This attack is most often, but not always, done from the guard position (p. 16), which starts assuming a two-legged grapple of the torso; attacks suffer the -1 to Choke Hold due to attacking from the front arc.

- Grapple one of your foe's arms with your own (Attack at -1).
- Pass Limb to trap the arm between the two fighters (Attack at -2).
- Obtain a one-legged grapple of the foe's neck (Attack at -5).
- Optionally, control the opponent's head using one or both hands (Attack at -3).
- Attack the neck with a two-legged attack vs. Choke Hold, spending CP as required to reduce the defender's ability to loosen the choke (Attack vs. Choke Hold-2 for using the legs).
- Apply fatigue damage on subsequent turns until the opposing fighter passes out.

Combinations

The second two attacks in the sequence – the Pass Limb and one-legged neck grapple – are often done as one motion. Optionally, combine the one-legged neck grapple with a one-handed head grapple, following up with the second leg to the neck at a later time.

Guillotine

This is simply a choke hold applied from an orientation similar to north-south position (p. 15), where the aggressor has acquired the foe's rear arc. This is most often a result of a botched attempt to shoot for the legs, or a successful Sprawling Parry.

Sequence

The primary option assumes the defender can afford to utilize Sprawling Parry, but an option is provided in case he doesn't want to do so.

- Defend against an attempted grapple of the legs using Sprawling Parry, or Grabbing Sprawling Parry. If the defender does not wish to leverage the posture change that is part of the Sprawling Parry, a Grabbing Parry of the head or neck (at an additional -3 for hit location) may also be employed. (Wrestling Parry.)
- Attack the neck from behind with a two-handed grapple (Attack at -3).
- Optionally, utilize Pulling Guard (p. 18) to establish more firm control over the foe.
- Utilize Choke hold to apply any variety of choke once sufficient control is established (Attack, Choke Hold).

Combinations

The most logical combination is a *defensive* one that links the parry with the neck grapple.

Shoulder Lock from Mount

Another common submission hold after achieving an advantaged position, this sequence works for an arm lock by leveraging the strength of two arms against the defender's one, plus makes use of Pass Limb to help retain torso control.

Sequence

The sequence starts from mount position (p. 15), and assumes both legs are grappling the torso, and at least one arm is grappling the head or neck. The passing of the head represents using the elbow to secure the head or neck while using the hand to grapple the opponent's arm.

- Employ Pass Limb to retain control of the neck/head while removing that arm. (Attack at -2)
- Grapple one of the foe's arms with both hands (Attack at -1).
- Apply an Arm Lock (Attack, Arm Lock).
- Inflict pain or injury (Quick Contest, Trained ST with mandatory CP spend).

Combinations

The most common moves to combine are the Pass Limb and the two-handed grapple of the arm. The arm lock itself is most effectively applied as a slow steady pressure, so separating the lock and pain across multiple turns is reality-compliant.

Knee Compression with Body

This interesting lockout puts the aggressor's ankle or shin into the back of the foe's knee, and then presses the opponent's foot closer to his torso. This leverage separates the joint, which can be painful or damaging. This can be a surprisingly effective move from unusual positions, such as guard (p. 16).

Sequence

This move assumes the fighter is in guard, but can be accomplished any time a fighter can reasonably insert a foot into the back of his foe's knee *and* reach his foe's same-side foot with the right leverage to provide compression. Face-up, this means the foe will probably need to be brought to a crawling position with legs and torso in one hex. Face-down, this can be done with the body.

- Execute a one-legged grapple of one of the opponent's legs (Attack at -1).
- Execute a forced Change Position maneuver to bring that leg into arm's reach (Quick Contest, Change Position).
- Grapple the foe's foot with one or both hands (Attack at -2).
- Apply Leg Lock (Attack, Leg Lock).
- On the next turn, inflict pain or injury (Quick Contest, Trained ST with mandatory CP spend).

Combinations

The most useful combination is Change Position and the grapple of the foot (to prevent the defender from switching position back on his turn). If there is sufficient skill, or if the attacker is willing to risk All-Out Attack (Double), executing the leg lock at the same time will make for a surprising finish to what probably was believed to be an attempt to acquire half-guard as a defensive measure.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Douglas H. Cole has been roleplaying since 1981, and playing *GURPS* since 1988. His gripping release, *GURPS Martial Arts: Technical Grappling*, is finally out! Go buy it. For more background details, see p. 35.

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EIDETIC MEMORY

THE DEVIL'S FIST

BY DAVID L. PULVER

Most martial arts have heroic traditions, but sometimes you need a version for the bad guys! The Devil's Fist is a fictional martial-arts form with deep occult roots that can work as an eccentric real-world style or in historical or fantasy campaigns.

RENAISSANCE ORIGINS: *IALPORIM IADNA QVASB*

Dr. John Dee (1527-1608) was an eccentric Welsh mathematician, astronomer, occultist, and a tutor of Queen Elizabeth I. In the 1590s, Dee and his guru, the medium Edward Kelley, engaged in spiritual exercises to contact angels. Dee even transcribed an angelic language, which occultists refer to as Enochian.

To spread word of his discoveries, Dee traveled Europe, visiting the court of Stephen Bathory (former prince of Transylvania, and then king of Poland). There, one of Bathory's courtiers presented the occult scholar with a mysterious manuscript from the royal library. It had been brought to Europe by the conqueror Attila the Hun in the fifth century, and had been held by a succession of illustrious owners, among them Vlad Tepes. Dr. Dee recognized the writing in the codex, previously untranslated, as Enochian. He was fascinated to have discovered external proof of his own experiences.

Dee and Kelley spent many nights perusing this tome. Its celestial language seemed cruder, debased compared to the Enochian forms that Dee was familiar with. Dee at first assumed these were transcription errors. What was more interesting were the subject matter and woodcut illustrations. These depicted duels between angels and demons in meticulous detail, to the point where the codex appeared to be a manual of arms.

Dee returned to England, and over the next few years, devoted spare time to translating this "Hunnish Codex." To help evaluate the technical elements of the work, he enlisted the help of Simon Gisborne, an expert swordsman who was a member of the Company of the Masters of Defense of London (a fighting school). Gisborne was enthralled by the combat style described in the Hunnish Codex. He studied the various

moves detailed in the text and diagrams, and even tried to replicate them, pronouncing them brutally effective. An excited Dee theorized the Hunnish Codex described the fighting styles of the angelic hosts in the war that cast Satan from Heaven. Gisborne began practicing these moves, incorporating them into techniques he taught his students.

Yet as his translation progressed, Dee became uneasy. He eventually concluded the debased Enochian language in the work was *not* a transcription error, but an angelic dialect in its own right – one lacking poetry and beauty. He came to believe the focus was not the martial styles of angels, but rather of their opponents. In a diary entry, which has survived, Dee records a terrifying realization: "its title *Ialporim Iadna Qvasb* should be translated as the Infernal Art of Destruction, for I believe it is no less than a treatise penned by a fallen angel for the purpose of instructing the very Legions of Hell in arms." He speculated this indeed may explain how it fell into the hands of Attila the Hun, a conqueror known as the "Scourge of God" for his devastation of Christian lands. Surely it was a gift from Satan!

Surviving diary entries of Dr. Dee record that he contemplated burning the Codex and urged Gisborne to cease teaching the infernal art to his students and destroy the copy he'd made. Whether he did is unknown; no further entries mention it, and Dee died a few months later. Gisborne vanished from history, save a brief mention in one London legal document to "ruffians from the Gisborne school" and a tantalizing reference in the 1640s that suggests his granddaughter Ann was persecuted by the witch-finder general Matthew Hopkins.

DEVIL BOXING

Dee's voluminous diaries were discovered after his death by the antiquarian Sir Robert Cotton, but no trace of the Hunnish Codex was found among his occult and scientific papers. It took over three centuries before any proof of its existence turned up.

In 1899 in Manchester, a retired soldier, occultist, and amateur boxer named Peter Seward advertised something he called Transylvanian Devil Boxing, the "ultimate darkest fighting art" based on Dr. Dee's lost Hunnish Codex.

A lurid newspaper account in the Times mentions an event hosted by Seward in which a “particularly brutal and bloody display of pugilism” saw Devil Boxing matched off against challengers using another fighting fad, Barton-Wright’s Bartitsu style (a blend of western and Asian martial arts). The display “reminded your correspondent more of savage Red Indians or Fuzzy Wuzzies than any form of boxing or wrestling suitable to proper Englishmen.”

The noted Dee scholar, Dr. Duffy Gordon-Sykes of the Royal History Society, investigated Seward’s claims, more from interest in the Codex than the style. But Seward proved paranoid and secretive, claiming rivals were trying to steal “advanced techniques.” He displayed what appeared to be a few loose pages of the Codex but refused to permit Gordon-Sykes to study it closely enough to authenticate it.

The investigation was sidelined in 1902, when Seward got into trouble with the law after one of his students broke an opponent’s neck in a violent Devil Boxing match. To escape bad publicity and legal action, Seward left England and traveled to Italy. However, whatever copy of the Codex existed may have been lost when Sykes perished in a suspicious house fire in Naples in 1903. Some conspiracy theorists allege the fire was set to cover up a burglary, either by Barton-Wright students or black magicians. Although a few students continued to practice the style, without Seward, it faded away. The last known student of Devil Boxing, one “Black Tom” Norris, died at Ypres in 1914.

THE ORDO SATANICA AND THE PUGNO DEL DIAVOLO

Some martial-arts styles have links to esoteric Chinese and Korean religions or philosophies, but the “Pugno del Diavolo” is the only one connected to western Satanism: the Ordo Satanica, or “Order of Satan.” The Ordo’s roots were in the Brotherhood of Moloch, a Satanist revival or “Left Hand Path” occult church founded in San Antonio in the late 1990s. It was noted for orgiastic black masses in which celebrants witnessed summoning of demons, though the copious amounts of LSD also consumed make these claims dubious.

One member, a charismatic black magician, kickboxer, and ex-Navy petty officer named Dylan Cavallaro, grew disillusioned with the group’s approach. In 2000, Cavallaro traveled to Europe for a summer. When he returned, he broke from the old order. Using the name Brother Raker, he founded a new group, the Ordo Satanica Temple Militia. This emphasized physical as well as occult training. This included “psycho-magickal” conditioning through repetitive practice of a particular martial art that Raker claimed to have learned during his Italian Pilgrimage: The Pugno del Diavolo, or “Devil’s Fist.”

Raker originally claimed Pugno del Diavolo was taught to him by the “Master of Goats,” a century-old Italian warlock he had met on the slopes of Mount Vesuvius near Naples, and that it was the secret fighting art that was practiced by the Legions of Hell. Raker made bold claims for this style as the “primal fighting art” and recruited a core of students willing to learn

his mix of black magic and martial mayhem. He soon got a chance to demonstrate his prowess, as the low-rent neighborhood in which his Satanic Temple was located was infested by rival drug gangs. Raker and his students began putting their Satanic martial-arts philosophy into practice by using “counter-terror” against the gangs, driving them from the neighborhood in a series of bloody street battles. According to rumor, he also performed a ritual murder of at least one gang member who fell into their clutches.

Temple Militia members were frequent participants in underground no-limits fighting circuits, and began to make a name for themselves. This success went to Raker’s head – he claimed to have summoned demons from Hell who instructed him in secret techniques, which he passed onto his inner circle of Temple Militia enforcers, the Hell-Rakers. Some of these were permitted to establish their own franchise “grottos” in other cities to teach Pugno del Diavolo, although they were expected to regularly report to and send any earnings back to Raker in Texas.

In 2003, after repeated complaints by other tenants and police harassment, the Temple Militia were evicted from the San Antonio studio that served as their headquarters. (The landlord later died when his SUV flipped over during a tornado. Raker is said to have boasted that it was a demon he summoned). Raker left Texas for the Pacific coast, purchasing a rural compound on a 60-acre wine orchard in Washington State, which he named Wormwood Grotto. It was incorporated as a martial-arts business and church, but was the new headquarters of Ordo Satanica Temple Militia. Now members lived in dormitory-like barracks, were fed little, and subject to cruel, relentless martial-arts training to exhaust their bodies and dull their minds, followed by diabolic rituals, sex, and drugs. Injuries were common, but the goal was to instill fanatical loyalty and ruthlessness. In 2008, local law enforcement investigated rumors that two Ordo Satanica members had been forced into a “death match” duel as a punishment for defying Raker’s commands and one, Alan Nabo, had died. Witnesses proved unreliable (or intimidated) and no body was found.

Supernatural Practitioners

Was the Hunnish Codex a clever forgery, possibly perpetrated by Dee’s Swengali-like partner Kelley? Or was it real? If so, adventurers in a *GURPS Monster Hunters* or similar campaign could encounter actual demons who know this style, which might come as a nasty surprise! If the fantastic stories of its origin are true, demons in historical settings or even Yrth might know it.

It’s also possible that Brother Raker and his cult are delusional regarding their demonic theology (Satan doesn’t exist), but the style was still developed and practiced by demons, vampires, or some other “real” supernaturals.

CONRAD BACON AND THE DIRTY WARLOCK DOJO

Conrad Bacon (“Brother Bael”) was a former auto mechanic and martial artist who got sucked into the Ordo Satanica Temple Militia cult in 2007. He and his girlfriend Ardeth were known as loyal and skilled Ordo Satanica members until 2010.

Then, fearing for the safety of his teenage daughter, Lilith (who Raker was making inappropriate advances toward), Conrad Bacon fought his way free of the cult. His wife stayed loyal to Raker and remained.

Bacon hated Raker, but while he figured Satanism wasn't his thing, he still appreciated the flashy martial-arts style he'd mastered during his time with the Temple Militia. He moved south to California (the teenage Lilith wanted to make movies) and opened his own martial-arts studio in San Francisco, the Dirty Warlock Dojo. There, he began teaching the Ordo Satanica's "secret" Pugno del Diavolo techniques to anyone who wanted to learn, under the anglicized name Devil's Fist Style. He figured this was a way to get back at Raker for doing him wrong.

Bacon decided to incorporate as Devil's Fist Enterprises. He and his daughter published a series of well-received books, comics, and DVDs with titles like "Devil's Fist: The Demonic Fighting Art Revealed" and "Fight Like a Demon: Secret Fighting Arts from *Dante's Inferno*." Lilith, whose talent for compulsive lying had been nurtured growing up in the Satanic temple, turned her memories of Raker's teachings into a cinematic back story. While attending film school, Lilith produced mockumentaries in which lost manuscripts of Dante's *Inferno* were said to have incorporated illustrations depicting demons employing moves from the Pugno del Diavolo. Interviews with (face-shadowed) elderly Italians claimed Satanists, vampires, and *strigoi* had used it to fight martial-arts battles against the Inquisition, Jesuit warrior-monks, and the Vatican's Swiss Guard.

It didn't take long for this crass commercialization of the Ordo Satanica's secrets to come to the notice of the ascetic Raker. He thought of Pugno del Diavolo as his personal source of power. He denounced the Bacons as traitors: "Who will bring me the heads of these apostates?" He also sued, claiming the Bacons was infringing on his property.

While battling Raker's lawsuit and death threats, Conrad Bacon was contacted by martial-arts historian Brenda Chang. She was able to prove Pugno el Diavolo was not Raker's creation, but was in fact the same style as Peter Seward's Transylvanian Devil Boxing. Chang had traced Seward's movements to Naples at the turn of the century. She theorized Raker's mysterious Italian "Master of Goats" had gotten his hands on Seward's copy of the Hunnish Codex. Chang speculated that Raker really had a copy of John Dee's lost Codex in his possession.

Thus, the Ordo Satanica Temple Militia did not have any exclusive right to the name, because the martial art had a deeper history. However, if the Bacons thought this revelation would end their conflict, they were mistaken. Thwarted on legal grounds, Brother Raker instead ordered his Hell-Rakers to California to challenge the upstart's Warlock Dojo students. Who were strongest – the true believers wielding the Pugno el Diavolo, or the Bacons' heretical and secularized Devil's Fist students? Raker threw down the gauntlet: If the Warlock Dojo could beat 13 of the Ordo Satanica martial artists, Raker would back off and accept the Warlock Dojo as a franchise of his order (whether they like it or not). If not, it would be total war!

Before, Conrad Bacon had half-convinced himself that Raker was just a nutty egotist. Now, the idea that his cult might really be connected to an ancient Satanic power sent chills through him. He, Lilith, Chang, and other Warlock Dojo students who know what's what are wondering if they are over

their heads. Should they accept the Ordo Satanica's challenge, or try to somehow stop Raker or steal the Codex from him?

PUGNO DEL DIAVOLO

6 points

Pugno del Diavolo ("The Devil's Fist") is the controversial martial art learned by members of the Ordo Satanica Temple Militia cult and by the Warlock Dojo. It may be the same style taught in Victorian and Edwardian England as "Transylvanian Devil Boxing" and (if the legends are true) also the "Infernal Fighting Art" (*Ialporim Iadna Qvasb*) of Dr. Dee.

The style emphasizes flashy street fighting and strength-based wrestling techniques intended to inflict permanent damage or injury. It also teaches the use of whip, knife, and (for advanced students) trident, as well as methods for interrogating prisoners and the mental strength to resist pain. Critics call it a hybrid of pro-wrestling and street fighting.

Ordo Satanica teaches that it is the fighting style demons use in battle and to punish damned souls. It is intended for individuals with claws, fangs, and superhuman strength who wield the infernal armament of whip and forked trident. Dedicated students do weight training to best employ its techniques. Devil's Fist Enterprises DVDs suggest the style is suitable for vampires, and was historically employed by Dracula and others due to its biting and grappling techniques. However, this may just be Lilith trying to market it to Goths.

With the exception of trident training, the style's optional and cinematic traits are mostly only found among the Ordo Satanica. People who have learned the style from the Warlock dojo rarely have them.

Skills: Brawling; Interrogation; Karate; Whip; Wrestling.

Techniques: Arm Lock; Attack from Above; Choke Hold; Crack; Entangle; Eye-Gouging; Head Butt; Hook; Neck Snap; Targeted Attack (Brawling Bite/Neck); Wrench (Limb); Wrench (Spine).

Cinematic Skills: Mental Strength.

Cinematic Techniques: Eye-Pluck, Sweep (Brawling).

Perks: Biting Mastery; Power Grappling.

Optional Traits

Advantages: Languages (Italian or Latin); Magery.

Disadvantages: Bloodlust; Fanaticism; Sadism.

Skills: Broadsword; Religious Ritual (Satanic); Occultism; Spear; Theology (Satanism).

Cinematic Skills: Language (Enochian); Necromantic spells.

Perks: Exotic Weapon Training (Trident).

ABOUT THE COLUMNIST

David L. Pulver is a Canadian freelance author. An avid SF fan, he began roleplaying in junior high with the newly released **Basic Dungeons & Dragons**. Upon graduating from university, he decided to become a game designer. Since then, David has written over 70 roleplaying game books, and he has worked as a staff writer, editor, and line developer for Steve Jackson Games and Guardians of Order. He is best known for creating *Transhuman Space*, co-authoring the *Big Eyes, Small Mouth* anime RPG, and writing countless **GURPS** books, including the **GURPS Basic Set**, *Fourth Edition*, **GURPS Ultra-Tech**, and the **GURPS Spaceships** series.

FUSION STYLES OF YTARRIA

BY DAVID THOMAS MOORE

Banestorm was the second *GURPS* world I ever played in (the first was *GURPS International Super Teams*, since you ask), back in 1990 when it was still called *GURPS Fantasy*. It is still my favorite world. I have returned to Yrth often over the years; a few years back, I even wrote an article on Ytarrian martial arts for this very magazine. So when a *GURPS Banestorm* martial-arts project appeared on the e23 wish list, I jumped at it . . .

You get a limited word count with one of these projects, so even at the planning stage, I knew I would have to carefully pick my content. It would mostly be racial styles, of course; the audience would want to know how dwarves, halflings, and reptile men and the like fight (it's what *I'd* want). There would be other fantasy styles as well, for magicians (or for bringing down magicians!), for shapeshifters, and for underwater combat. And, while most human styles would be familiar to an Earth reader, I should include a couple of uniquely Ytarrian cultural styles.

I had initially also planned to include a number of Ytarrian "fusion styles," born out of the mix of cultures made possible by the *Banestorm*. Societies that, on Earth, only came together in modern times have mingled for centuries on Ytarria, even clashed with wholly *alien* cultures. New martial-arts styles have arisen from the wash, especially in those parts of the world – like Cardiel and Sahud – where many disparate societies have been thrown together. But as I got a feel for how much space I had, I realized that it wasn't gonna happen. Alquetalle (*GURPS Martial Arts: Yrth Fighting Styles*, pp. 12-13) stayed in, as a model example of a fusion style, but the others went. The product would focus on strongly defined, iconic styles.

I didn't forget about them, though. *Banestorm* isn't just medieval-Earth-plus-magic. It's a rich, believable world blending history and fantasy. The fighting styles of the world should reflect that. So here they are, fresh off the cutting-room floor, just for *Pyramid* readers. These fusion styles, little-known martial arts of Ytarria, developed on the fringes between communities, where warriors learn from their enemies – and friends – and forge new ways to make war.

CARDIEN SAIF-AND-BUCKLER SCHOOL

5 points

Fencing (*GURPS Martial Arts*, p. 156) has been a part of Yrth's military traditions since the arrival of the French in Araterre in the 16th century. Every major style of European

fencing has appeared in Ytarria since, alongside uniquely Aralaise styles like the Estoc School (*Yrth Fighting Styles*, pp. 13-14). Fashions for fencing come and go in Megalos, but in Cardiel – where Aralaise sailors are a more common sight and fencing blades are more reasonably priced – there are always a few men to be found carrying rapiers or sabers. Techniques from fencing styles have infiltrated both Christian and Muslim fighting arts.

The *saif* is a light Hazi scimitar (*Martial Arts*, p. 223; use the statistics for a shortsword), accompanied by a small buckler in the off-hand, using moves adopted from Aralaise saber-dueling. Saif-and-Buckler fighters emphasize speed and defense, standing square on to the foe and using the buckler to block attacks while slashing with the sword. Stylists then move in with shield-bashes, grapples, and takedowns when they see an opening. The Defensive Attack and Attack maneuvers are preferred until the enemy is off-balance or wounded. However, surprise is valued, and practitioners unpredictably resort to lunges – taking the Committed Attack or All-Out Attack (Long) maneuvers – or to unarmed strikes, or to tricks such as throwing dirt into the enemy's face (*Martial Arts*, p. 76). Sharpening the buckler's rim (*Martial Arts*, p. 223) also allows for an unexpected attack.

The *saif* is used with Saber skill. Stylists learn the Weapon Adaptation (Saif to Saber) perk as soon as they have spent one point in Saber (*instead* of the usual 10 points in skills and techniques). Legends of the abilities of saif-and-buckler fighters resemble both Muslim heroic legends and Aralaise tales of fencing prowess. Stories are told of great leaping lunges, of masters cutting arrows out of the air, and of heroes fighting off many foes at once.

The Cardien Saif-and-Buckler School is mostly taught in western Cardiel, in the houses of wealthy Muslim lords, but a few teachers can be found in both Al-Haz and Al-Wazif. In Araterre, fencing schools sometimes offer training in the style as a curiosity.

Skills: Brawling; Saber; Shield (Buckler); Wrestling.

Techniques: Bind Weapon (Saber); Disarming (Saber); Feint (Buckler or Saber); Kicking; Retain Weapon (Buckler or Saber); Targeted Attack (Saber Swing/Neck); Trip.

Cinematic Skills: Flying Leap; Mental Strength; Precognitive Parry.

Cinematic Techniques: Dual-Weapon Attack (Buckler or Saber); Dual-Weapon Defense (Buckler or Saber); Flying Lunge (Saber); Grand Disarm (Saber); Whirlwind Attack (Saber).

Perks: Sure-Footed (Uneven); Weapon Adaptation (Saif to Saber).

Optional Traits

Advantages: Combat Reflexes; Danger Sense; Enhanced Block; Enhanced Parry (Saber).

Disadvantages: Overconfidence.

Skills: Acrobatics; Fast-Draw (Sword); Jumping; Knife; Parry Missile Weapons; Shortsword.

Cinematic Skills: Power Blow.

Perks: Weapon Bond.

DEFENCE BOXING

4 points

The knights of Caithness's western border have fought the orcish hordes throughout the young nation's history. Fighting on horseback, with a lance or longsword, a knight is more than a match for an orc on foot. But once a knight is unhorsed and disarmed, the orcs' strength and ferocity usually carry the fight. Most dangerous are the rare orcs disciplined enough to master Smasha (*Martial Arts*, p. 210). Knights learn grappling and striking as part of their weapons training, but nothing like the clinical brutality of the orcish martial art. Starting in the late 1920s, young knights in Caithness began adopting some of the techniques they saw being used against them. They developed more pragmatic tactics, and gradually founded a system of combat called Defence Boxing.

Know your enemy is an ancient saying, and there's truth in this, but perhaps some danger with it: you risk becoming what you have sworn to fight. Defence Boxers throw themselves into their training, frequently maiming and crippling each other in their efforts to outdo the orcs in violence. The image of the one-eyed, nine-fingered Defence Boxer is a common figure in Caithnesser plays and songs. A very few even emulate the enemies' culture, wearing orcish tattoos and taking trophies from their kills, although this is a certain path to social estrangement. The majority of knights frown on the style, calling it unchivalrous and savage, but a few knights in every generation are drawn to it.

Inspired by the grappling techniques in Longsword Fighting (*Martial Arts*, p. 180), Defence Boxing employs more locks and throws than Smasha. The aim is to get the opponent on the floor and within reach of the attacker's boots. Emphasis is placed on fighting in armor, using the hardened surfaces (in full plate – essentially all-over brass knuckles – *all* of a knight's unarmed strikes are at +1 damage). Some practitioners even sharpen the edges of their bracers and greaves to do more damage (elbow and knee strikes inflict *cutting* instead of crushing damage, but without the +1). Defence Boxers fight aggressively, choosing the Attack or Committed Attack options and preferring the Aggressive Parry in defense.

Boxing teaches precise, effective punches. Brawling extends the knight's repertoire to kicks, head butts, and slams, while Judo gives grapples, locks, and throws. The style teaches a number of punishing techniques, and knights train to toughen their bodies and harden their fists. In spite of traditional knights' disapproval of the style, legends of Boxers' abilities abound, including great feats of strength and crippling strikes that can fell a great orc in one blow.

Defence Boxing is taught among knights in western Caithness, and in the Academy of Defence in Carrick. The Academy of Defence in Durham refuses to offer training in the style; it is

rumored Lord Peredur forbade the teaching of the style in his city, and the restriction is maintained in his memory.

Skills: Boxing; Brawling; Judo.

Techniques: Aggressive Parry (Brawling); Choke Hold; Counterattack (Boxing); Disarming (Judo); Elbow Strike; Eye-Rake; Head Butt; Knee Strike; Neck Snap; Stamp Kick; Sweep; Targeted Attack (Brawling Stamp Kick/Neck); Trip; Two-Handed Punch; Wrench (Limb).

Cinematic Skills: Immovable Stance; Mental Strength; Power Blow; Pressure Points; Pressure Secrets.

Cinematic Techniques: Backbreaker; Pressure-Point Strike; Roll with Blow.

Perks: Armor Familiarity (Judo); Chi Resistance (Kiai); Clinch (Boxing or Brawling); Iron Hands; Neck Control (Boxing or Brawling); Special Exercises (DR 1 with Tough Skin); Special Exercises (Striking ST 1); Sure-Footed (Uneven); Technique Adaptation (Aggressive Parry).

Optional Traits

Advantages: Combat Reflexes; Enhanced Dodge; Fit or Very Fit; High Pain Threshold.

Disadvantages: Bloodlust; Bully; Callous; Overconfidence.

Skills: Acrobatics; Jumping; Karate; Knife; Stealth; Wrestling.

Techniques: Dual-Weapon Attack (Knife); Ground Fighting (Knife).

*The few surviving samurai
survey the battlefield.*

*Count the arms, the legs, and
heads, and then divide by five.*

*– They Might Be Giants,
“Certain People”*

GOBLIN SWORDPLAY

4 points

In spite of their origins on different worlds, the goblins and halflings of Yrth have a great deal in common. Smaller than humans and more agile, both peoples are wholly integrated into human faiths and lifestyles and live in human communities. Goblins are more organized and less peaceful than halflings, but still on occasion have to defend against oppressors who are larger and better armed than they are. In these situations, the skills and tactics taught in Harmony (*Yrth Fighting Styles*, p. 17) come in useful. There are no reports of the mysterious blue-cloaked master himself coming to goblin communities, but his students sometimes pass on the knowledge to their green-skinned neighbors, and this in turn has influenced goblin sword-fighting techniques.

*Though a quarrel in the streets is a thing to be hated,
the energies displayed in it are fine; the commonest man
shows a grace in his quarrel.*

– John Keats

Goblin swordsmen fight with a shortsword, keeping their off-hand free to grab, shove, or punch. The style's sword strikes are influenced heavily by Harmony stick techniques, including light, swift strikes (Deceptive Attacks) to the wrists and ankles to disable, and using the flat of the blade in grapples and locks. The stylist is reserved to begin with, preferring Evaluate and Wait maneuvers until his opponent attacks, then steps in close with a parry, arm lock, and takedown or other follow-up attack, generally taking Committed Attack (Determined) for the extra step and takedown. Once the enemy is on the ground, the goblin dispatches him with sword thrusts, preferring vital strikes, including Committed or All-Out Attacks (Determined) to the chinks in his armor.

Stylists fight with Smallsword skill, learning the Weapon Adaptation (Swordsword to Smallsword) perk as soon as they have spent one point in the skill (*instead* of the usual 10 points in skills and techniques). Brawling and Wrestling skills are used for the various grabs, shoves, and locks taught in the style.

Few goblins are interested in the humility propounded by the Harmony philosophy (*Yrth Fighting Styles*, p. 27). Even so, some of the lessons and practical examples are taught for their application in combat. A handful of students take the moral lessons to heart.

Goblin Swordplay is popular in Megalan cities with large goblin populations, such as Yibyorak and Sho'joor, although there are classes teaching it in most large cities. Non-goblins are generally explicitly or tacitly forbidden, but some teachers may take on human students at a prohibitive cost.

Skills: Brawling; Smallsword; Wrestling.

Techniques: Arm Lock (Swordsword or Wrestling); Armed Grapple (Swordsword); Disarming (Swordsword); Feint (Swordsword); Kicking; Retain Weapon (Swordsword); Targeted Attack (Swordsword Swing/Hand); Targeted Attack (Swordsword Thrust/Vitals Chinks); Trip.

Cinematic Skills: Pressure Points; Pressure Secrets.

Cinematic Techniques: Dual-Weapon Attack (Brawling or Smallsword); Dual-Weapon Defense (Brawling or Smallsword).

Perks: Special Setup (Brawling Parry > Arm Lock); Sure-Footed (Uneven); Weapon Adaptation (Swordsword to Smallsword).

Optional Traits

Advantages: Combat Reflexes; Enhanced Parry (Swordsword).

Disadvantages: Overconfidence.

Skills: Acrobatics; Fast-Draw (Sword); Knife; Philosophy (Harmony); Shield; Shortsword; Stealth; Theology (Christian).

Perks: Weapon Bond.

KICIZAPI

4 points

In the holding of Clan Metsuo, between the foothills on Zarak's northern border and the coast, the influence of Native American culture can be seen in almost every aspect of life. The Sahudese tea ceremony is conducted on a woven blanket rather than a grass mat. The local practice of the Sahudese religion (*Banestorm*, p. 80) focuses on the sometimes comical stories of animal *kami* who are believed to have shaped the world many years ago. A number of words from the Lakota language have crept into the local dialect. In some villages, it is still spoken by the lore-keepers and priests.

Kicizapi (*Kikitsapi* or *Kikitsapijutsu* in the Sahudese language) is the wrestling discipline of the local common folk, based on an ancient Native American tradition and influenced by Te (*Martial Arts*, p. 169) and other Japanese unarmed styles. Young men of Clan Metsuo sometimes pick up the style in their youth, although it is not part of their formal *samurai* training.

Tests of strength are a central part of Kicizapi, which serves as an opportunity for young folk to prove themselves or to show off. In frequent contests – both formal and informal – stylists attempt to knock or trip each other over, often without being allowed to grapple their opponents, or use their arms at all. These bouts quickly degenerate into butting contests, as the opponents resort to Committed and All-Out Attacks with the Strong option to slam or shove. When fighting in earnest, all bets are off; slams and shoves are still favored, but stylists use punches, kicks, grapples, and locks to get the better of their opponents, still choosing Committed Attacks to drop their opponents to the floor quickly. To this end, Kicizapi teaches sweeps and kicks to the legs, along with Te-style knuckle punches and blows to the face and neck to knock out or disable.

Kicizapi is little known outside the lands belonging to Clan Metsuo. A few men of the area have progressed to Sumo training and gone on to compete in Kinkaku, but these champions generally play down their origins, and practice a more or less pure Sumo style by the time they reach high ranking. Travelers who hear of the style and come to the coast to learn it will have little difficulty finding a teacher, although they may find themselves being knocked over a few times for their trouble!

Skills: Judo; Karate; Sumo Wrestling.

Techniques: Arm Lock; Disarming (Judo); Exotic Hand Strike; Feint (Judo or Sumo Wrestling); Low Fighting (Judo or Karate); Sweep (Judo); Targeted Attack (Karate Kick/Leg); Targeted Attack (Karate Exotic Hand Strike/Neck); Trip.

Cinematic Skills: Immovable Stance; Power Blow; Pressure Points.

Cinematic Techniques: Pressure-Point Strike; Springing Attack (Sumo Wrestling).

Perks: Power Grappling; Special Exercises (Lifting ST 1); Sure-Footed (Uneven).

Optional Traits

Attributes: Improved ST.

Advantages: Combat Reflexes; Fit or Very Fit; Language (Lakota).

Skills: Bow; Brawling; Intimidation; Knife; Spear.

Techniques: Ground Fighting (Judo or Karate); Hammer Fist.

NOMAD CHAIN FIGHTING

6 points

For the past five centuries, the Nomad Lands have been a constant thorn in Sahud's side, raiding the Heavenking's coastal towns and attacking his ships. Sahud sends punitive raids in turn, and has made the occasional attempt to conquer and civilize the Northmen, invariably meeting in failure. The enemies have had little influence on each other, but some ideas cross the Koriryu. *Samurai* from the north of the Sahudese peninsula, for example, train to use a shield with the katana or yari.

The kusari came to the Northmen around the beginning of the 17th century. Sahudese troops landing on the nomads' shores would carry swords or spears, but nomads invading Sahudese soil found defenders using a variety of weapons, including the weighted chain. Impressed by their foes' ability to fight with a mere length of chain, the Hyldung tribe brought the weapon back with them and incorporated it into their own wrestling and knife-fighting styles. Over the coming generations, chain-fighting trickled across the western reaches of the Nomad Lands, although it remains unknown farther east.

For most Northmen who train with it, the chain is held in reserve, worn as a belt or wrapped around the body until they lose their main weapons. A few, of course, insist they are more effective with their chains than any hero or chief is with a spear and shield – and will readily duel any man foolish enough to scoff the claim.

Nomad Chain Fighting is more brutal than Kusarijutsu (*Martial Arts*, p. 179), emphasizing entangling attacks to bring the opponent into close combat or bear him to the ground before moving to punches or knife attacks to finish him off. Stylists keep their distance initially to Wait or Evaluate and assess their targets. At the first opening, they move in quickly with Committed Attack (Strong) to bring their opponents down, and follow up with Committed or All-Out Attacks to incapacitate or kill with whatever attacks they can.

The chain is wielded two-handed, as in Sahud, but fighters learn to draw a knife with a free hand and attack in a single motion once the foe is helpless, or to use knee strikes, head butts, or stamp kicks. The legendary fighter Volf Hyldung was said to have wielded his chain with terrific strength, in one battle stunning two giants with strikes to the head and pulling the third and largest off his feet.

Nomad Chain Fighting is little known outside the western extent of the Nomad Lands, where it is taught alongside wrestling and knife-fighting techniques. Chain Fighter Erik Tyrsson, a slave-gladiator fighting under the name *Serpens*, is

currently a rising star on the Megalan circuit, provoking some interest in the style in the Empire.

Skills: Brawling; Fast-Draw (Knife); Knife; Kusari; Wrestling.

Techniques: Arm Lock (Kusari or Wrestling); Back Strike (Kusari); Choke Hold (Kusari); Disarming; Entangle; Head Butt; Knee Strike; Return Strike (Kusari); Reverse Grip (Knife); Stamp Kick; Targeted Attack (Brawling Stamp Kick/Neck); Targeted Attack (Knife Thrust/Vitals); Targeted Attack (Kusari Entangle/Leg); Targeted Attack (Kusari Thrust/Face).

Cinematic Skills: Immovable Stance; Power Blow (Kusari).

Cinematic Techniques: Binding; Dual-Weapon Attack (Kusari).

Perks: Off-Hand Weapon Training (Knife); Special Exercises (Lifting ST 1); Special Setup (Brawling Parry > Wrestling Arm Lock); Special Setup (Kusari Parry > Arm Lock).

Optional Traits

Advantages: Weapon Master (Kusari).

Disadvantages: Bloodlust; Overconfidence.

Skills: Flail; Karate; Spear; Shield; Thrown Weapon (Spear).

Techniques: Back Kick; Kicking; Spinning Strike (Kusari).

Perks: Weapon Bond.

*Fighting styles of many cultures
merge to create new forms.*

SILATTE

4 points

In 1872, the Banestorm deposited a large number of immigrants from Bali into Araterre, bringing the *Bali Silat* school of Pentjak Silat to the southern archipelago. Today the style – similar to Kumango Silat (*Martial Arts*, p. 190) – is still taught in remote islands and villages. Meanwhile, the docks of Sauvons and Ansonne are witness to a wholly new style, born out of the clash of Silat and Savate (*Martial Arts*, p. 193). Balinese sailors sparring with Aralaise *savateurs* at the end of the 19th century started to incorporate fast kicks and aggressive close-combat techniques from Savate into their own Bali Silat, at length developing a new set of techniques that became popular with both Asian and white Aralaise. The term *Silatte* was coined around 1910, when Gerard du Pré's *école* in Ansonne offered training in the style. Today, while Savate remains the more popular of the two, both Silatte and Savate are found everywhere in the archipelago. In smaller towns, the terms are used interchangeably.

Silatte includes both hard and soft tactics, encouraging students to mirror their opponents. Strikes are met with aggressive parries and fast blows to the neck, torso, and groin, while grapples are met with counter-grapples, takedowns and close attacks. Fighters maintain a low stance throughout. Kicks, both spinning and straight, are fast and low, targeting the groin or shins. Deep kicks, using the All-Out Attack (Long) maneuver, are made with one knee and one hand on the floor.

The *kris* (*Martial Arts*, p. 219) is central to the style, and is used to strike at the enemy's "life" – primarily thrusts to the vitals, but students learn a range of crippling and painful strikes, both armed and unarmed. The kris is attributed supernatural power by both Hindu and Christian silatteurs. It is regarded as a focus for the fighter's soul, and capable of dealing killing or disabling blows even at a distance.

Silatte teaches that the soul is an extension of the warrior's will, which can defend him from harm and strike out at his enemy. Mage stylists learn Body Control and Protection magics, frequently using the kris as a focus or prop in their spells. The student is taught the need to purify his body and mind and to constantly exercise his will over his soul.

There are both Christian and Hindu teachers of the art, and the two faiths have influenced one another over the years. Ideas about the Trinity, Brahman, spirits and angels have blended, and silatteurs superstitiously observe many small ceremonies and taboos. The Jesuits stamp out this heretical belief where they find it, so Silatte teachers keep these beliefs quiet, only introducing very senior students to the more mystical teachings of the style.

Silatte is taught in *écoles de savate* in Sauvons and Ansonne, and in smaller Aralaise towns with large Balinese populations, where the two styles may be confused. Otherwise, informal instruction can be found on the streets and docks almost everywhere.

Skills: Judo; Karate; Knife.

Techniques: Aggressive Parry (Karate); Arm Lock; Counterattack (Karate or Knife); Evade; Exotic Hand Strike; Feint (Karate or Knife); Kicking; Leg Grapple; Low Fighting (Judo, Karate, or Knife); Spinning Kick; Sweep (Judo or Karate); Targeted Attack (Karate Kick/Groin); Targeted Attack (Knife Thrust/Vitals); Trip.

Cinematic Skills: Mental Strength; Power Blow; Pressure Points (Knife and Unarmed); Pressure Secrets (Knife and Unarmed).

Cinematic Techniques: Lethal Kick; Roll with Blow; Springing Attack (Karate).

Perks: Naval Training; Rapid Retraction (Kicks); Sure-Footed (Slippery); Technique Adaptation (Low Fighting).

Optional Traits

Advantages: Language (Balinese); Magery.

Disadvantages: Bloodlust, Devotions of Faith (Christian or Hindu).

Skills: Acrobatics; Judo Art; Karate Art; Main-Gauche; Meditation; Smallsword; Staff; Theology (Christian or Hindu); Whip.

Techniques: Acrobatic Stand.

Spells: Agonize; Armor; Bane; Bladeturning; Deathtouch; Total Paralysis; Staff; and all prerequisites.

Bali Silat Path Magic

The spirituality of Silatte is unique, mingling elements of Balinese folk Hinduism and Aralaise Christianity. Spirits – *les anges* and *les démons* – are seen as both servants and emanations of God (who is seen as both Brahman and Jesus Christ). They may be bent to the will of a powerful mind acting in accord with God's wishes. This distinctly Ytarrian blend has given birth to a system of ritual magic not unlike Earth *Vodoun* . . .

The GM with *GURPS Thaumatology* may allow Aralaise individuals schooled in Bali Silat to learn Path Magic (*Thaumatology*, p. 121), particularly the Paths of Health, Luck, and Protection. The *kris*, of course, is an ideal mystic symbol (*Thaumatology*, p. 124).

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

David Thomas Moore is a lifelong gamer and passionate geek. He first played a roleplaying game in 1986, and first played *GURPS* with his brother in 1990. He has been published in *Pyramid* magazine several times, and has a new PDF, *GURPS Martial Arts: Yrth Fighting Styles*, now available from e23. Australian by birth, David lives in Reading, Berkshire, in the United Kingdom with his wife, Tamsin, and baby daughter Beatrix. You're glad you met him.

GURPS

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COMING TO GRIPS WITH REALISM

BY DOUGLAS H. COLE

Whether violence is the *right* answer to any given question, it can certainly wind up being a *final* one. Thus, many roleplaying games – **GURPS** included – have a lot of detail on combat.

Yet roleplaying-game rules for grappling are such an apparently difficult subject – despite being perhaps the oldest form of combat on the planet – that it has its own section at TV Tropes (tvtropes.org): *Grappling with Grappling Rules*. To paraphrase the entry, most striking combat is often boiled down to “did I hit what I aimed at, did you defend, and if not, how much damage did I do?” The article then goes on to list the apparent complexities of grappling:

- One participant will often have the advantage, which changes the respective options of the grapplers.
- You have to have rules for attempting to escape the grapple.
- You have to figure out how disabled the participants are, if somebody outside the grapple tries to attack one of them.
- The chance that an attacker aiming for one participant in the grapple might hit the other.
- What kinds of attacks are available, and/or what the results of the grapple are.
- (optional) As if that weren't enough, you can potentially still engage in a limited form of standard combat while grappling, possibly even against people you are not grappling with.

And those are just the obvious things you need rules for. There are other problems that show up when you add in more detail.

– “Grappling with Grappling Rules,” TVTropes.org

While of course tropes have their value, this assessment is overstated to make its point. Regular-old fighting has to grapple (ahem) with all of these issues as well. Wrestling is not unique in that respect, and similar statements can be made about armed and unarmed striking with respect to advantage and initiative, disengagement, combat options, and dealing with a swirling melee.

Still, the basic three questions are asked and answered in **GURPS** essentially the same way for grappling and striking. The attack roll is the same in both cases – a roll based on skill. The defense roll is also the same – an Active Defense roll. Good so far. The effect roll for striking combat is a damage roll. With grappling, that roll is eschewed in favor of a toggle switch that says the victim is grappled and at -4 to DX. That toggle then allows the opponent to do certain things, most of which are then resolved by winning a further Contest of Skill. Those later events provide the variable effect possibilities that are usually part of damage rolls in striking, though where and how the grappler strike (location and tool) can provide interesting side effects.

MISSION STATEMENT

Right now, it's beyond weird that the solution to buying time when Smart Hero wants to pick the lock that Big Guard is watching is to send Strong Hero over to have a fistfight.

– Sean Punch

THE CONCEPT

The basic hypothesis for **GURPS Martial Arts: Technical Grappling** was simple: Can we hew to the core **GURPS** rules and mechanics while providing a more variable effect roll for grappling?

The base concepts just used a die roll that imparted variable penalties centered around that -4 to DX. It also made sense that stronger and more skilled grapplers would have more of an effect than weaker and unskilled ones. So what is ST-based, and already familiar to all **GURPS** players? The obvious answer was the damage roll. From this came the assignment of “effect points” in the same magnitude of a typical damage roll, and converting that roll to a penalty to DX. (This later evolved to cover both DX and ST in equal measure.) While the manuscript did anything *but* “write itself,” moving from that core concept into a set of principles that guided the application was straightforward.

Not *easy*, but to paraphrase Clausewitz, despite it being *simple*, those simple things could be very difficult.

The original proposal set out a list of things that would be attempted, and the response from Steve Jackson Games blessed some goals in particular: Any system that provided a less “binary” outcome for grapples would be a win, especially if it involved some sort of incremental progress, with special effects available along the way. Even better would be a way of equating grappling success with injury. Icing on the cake would be that such a method might actually take longer to achieve a decisive result.

At the time, I’d already decided that the effect roll I wanted to utilize was a roll on the thrust-based *Damage Table* (p. B16) with which every **GURPS** player is already familiar. So the publisher’s directions were music to my ears. My final proposal then laid out some things that I wanted to introduce, expand, and clarify.

Expansions, clarifications, and more!

NEW STUFF

There were a few new key concepts that I wanted to include.

Control Points: This was the core new mechanic. An effect roll based on the thrust column of the *Damage Table* was created to represent how good a grip you have on your opponent. The “pin” as a move was to be eliminated, with pinning now a result of Control Points bringing the victim’s ST or DX low enough that he can’t make skill rolls (or lift himself).

Stability: A lot of initial effort was dedicated to what body parts are required to keep balanced based on posture. This section was cut down fairly brutally from the first submitted draft, as it was too complex to be enjoyable in play. It wound up being simplified drastically and beneficially.

Weight-based penalties: Weight matters a lot in grappling, and extra penalties to ST and DX based on your opponent’s weight are presented as an optional rule. This allows the GM to turn off the ability for a 110-lb. Judo expert to throw a T-Rex on his tail following a successful Judo Parry (though common sense and Rule Zero have said “nuh-uh” for years). The sections on weight tone down some of the suspension of disbelief issues encountered when it came to throws. Locks were left mostly alone, since they’re based on range of motion.

EXPANDED CONCEPTS

Some things already present in **GURPS** received more loving attention.

Weapons: The supplement contains a chapter dedicated to grappling with weapons. The section contains an extensive – and hopefully comprehensive – list of *characteristics* of such weapons, which help to describe how they impact grappling. The rules for what happens when long weapons are used while grappling were imported into William Stoddard’s **GURPS Underground Adventures** as well, as the rules are equally suitable for describing the use of weapons in confined spaces.

Positioning: Grappling in the real world has a lot to do with positioning, and this was reflected in the manuscript.

The concept of *relative facing* was introduced, as well as the notion of *orientation*, which explained how one part of a body could be in close combat while other parts were *not* in that condition. Adding the concept of relative facing (being in your foe’s front, side, or rear arcs even while in the same hex on a battle-map) was a real boost to verisimilitude!

Maneuvers: A few new maneuvers were added, such as Change Position and a generic version of a Takedown called Force Posture Change. Further, some basic moves were redefined: Breaking Free, for example, was no longer an “action after a grapple,” but rather an Attack maneuver. The “pin” as a Regular Contest was removed completely, and is now just a narrative result of having so many Control Points applied to a person that he is effectively helpless.

Trained ST: Expanding the boosts to ST received for Wrestling and Sumo Wrestling (and to some extent similar behavior in Weapon Master’s damage bonus) into a generic method by which skill boosts effective strength was a lot of fun. It’s easy to see how one can adapt this to other areas: *The Last Gasp* (found in *Pyramid* #3/44: *Alternate GURPS II*) did exactly that with Action Points, which get a boost using the exact same skill-to-bonus progression as used for Trained ST.

Using Lots of Limbs: How to combine limbs (plus the core and head) to increase your applied ST got a lot of attention: Grapplers are actively taught to use their entire body to restrict the opponent’s motion. That proved mathematically challenging. With the help of playtesters, I eventually worked it out by combining a sort of limb-specific Basic Lift into a net ST score. That, in turn, allowed me to envision more easily what happens when a character gets dogpiled by a swarm of goblins (for example).

CLARIFICATIONS

A few things had the edges filed off during the playtest, to help ensure things played nicely together.

Resistance rolls: To work correctly, certain moves require precision in your own technique as well as your foe making an error. The resistance roll is a seldom-used part of the **GURPS** rules (usually only for supernatural effects), but we clarified that yes, for some moves – locks in particular – you not only had to do it *right*, but your victim had to fail to defend. This wasn’t classified as a true resistance roll, but that was the model, and it provided a distinct subtype of Quick Contest. Techniques with a ST-based (rather than skill-based) default remained based strictly on margin of victory.

Everything else: It shouldn’t have surprised me, but it did: Changing the basis of grappling to Control Points rippled through the entire system. While most things stayed the same, a lot needed to be tweaked out. Powers and Magic in particular were no small headache to reconcile with Control Points (Telekinesis and Innate Attack, I’m looking at you). Advantages, disadvantages, and perks that were grappling-related were dealt with along the way. I think this supplement addresses all of them, but **GURPS** is a big system!

IMPROVEMENTS

Overall, the basic changes to how grappling is resolved were relatively minor. The good news, from the playtesters’ point of view, was that it put a damper on a few of the more egregious violations of suspension of disbelief.

The “Arm Lock Reign of Terror,” was the phrase used to describe a Judo or Wrestling parry seemingly inevitably followed by crippling arm lock. Arm Lock is trivially purchased to Default+6, and the subsequent Quick Contests are weighted heavily in favor of the attacker.

They're Called What?

Amusingly enough, while Control Points were fairly instantly accepted as the defining effect of a successful grappling attack, one of the longest discussions in the entire playtest was about what to call them. Grappling Points, Leverage Points, Setup Points . . . even a differentiation of Control into both Restraint (for penalties) and Leverage (for locks and throws) all received active and passionate discussion. Why? Largely because some people use “CP” as an abbreviation for Character Points in casual language – but that abbreviation is *not* a term of art in canonical **GURPS**. In the end, they stayed Control Points, since that is fully descriptive (and, one might add, generic) for all cases.

That phenomenon was severely tamped down as an emergent behavior of the rules in the text. A properly working arm lock requires maneuvering to a place that puts you out of reach of the victim’s body parts that are *not* locked. The first playtest fight (a boxer vs. an Arm Lock specialist) ended very quickly with the boxer, after being parried and locked, beating the wrestler hard about the head, and in the words of one tester, “walking off with the wrestler’s girlfriend, having taken away his milkshake.” In the rematch, the wrestler leveraged the new position rules to step into a side arc of the boxer, and then things went better for him (girlfriend and milkshake retained).

Realistic grappling takes time to resolve, but design switches exist to make cinematic grapplers almost crazy-good and lightning-fast. Despite it taking longer, the ebb and flow of CP provided a tension in fights that was quite fun.

TECHNICAL ALTERNATIVES

The mission of **Technical Grappling** was to present a less binary and more flavorful method of resolving combat by grappling. The Control Points mechanic, which is nothing more than a damage roll applied to manhandling, provided a nice unifying method of bringing core, pre-existing mechanisms to bear on the issue.

Still, for those who like the **Basic Set** rules more or less the way they are, a few options allow you to avoid some of the die rolls and optional mechanics of the full-on system while still leveraging the expanded detail of **Technical Grappling**.

Two concepts require more bookkeeping than some groups might like: *keeping track* of Control Points, and *spending them*, either to set the upper bound on an effect roll (such as applying damage to a locked limb), or to lower a foe’s roll in a Contest of Skill.

FIXED EFFECTS

The **Basic Set** rules give any successful grappling attempt the same effect: -4 to DX. **Technical Grappling** introduces a variable Control Point roll instead, based on the *Damage Table*. However, since it assigns penalties to ST and DX based on those applied CP, the GM can skip the intervening step of a roll, and just apply the penalty directly. Of course, as noted in *Bigger and Stronger* (**Technical Grappling**, p. 9), be sure to scale things appropriately!

On each successful grappling attack, a combatant will increase the penalties applied to his foe by an amount equal to 1.5 - Trained ST/4 (round normally). So with Trained ST 12, each successful attack increments the penalty by -2 (1.5-12/4 = -1.5, rounded up). Trained ST 23 will impart (1.5-23/4 = -4.25) -4 to ST and DX for each successful attack.

Note that the scaling factors from *Bigger and Stronger* are based on applied CP. If the foe’s ST is much larger than his

DX (such as for a giant), scale down the DX penalty: divide it by the defender’s (Trained ST)/10. If the foe’s ST is much smaller than his DX (such as for a mouse), it’s easier to *multiply* the DX penalty by 10/(Trained ST).

Examples: Bog the Grappler has Trained ST 18, and will inflict -3 to ST and DX to a normal foe for every successful grappling attack! If he attempts to grapple a combat robot that is DX 10, Trained ST 30, every attack will still impart -3 to ST, but only -1 to DX (-3 divided by the scaling factor of Trained ST of 30 divided by 10). If he decides to tussle with an angry kitten (DX 12, Trained ST 5), Bog inflicts the same ST penalty of -3, but the DX penalty is multiplied by 2 (10 divided by the cat’s Trained ST 5). Thus, the cat will suffer -3 to ST and -6 to DX for each successful grappling attack.

Naturally, if the foe attacks *back* to lower your control, he will offset your penalty by an amount proportional to his own Trained ST. So if two combatants that are equal in Trained ST are going at it, the first might attack and apply -2 to his opponent’s ST and DX. If his foe attacks back to break free, he would remove that -2, and break the grapple if he chooses (if not, he retains a grip, but his foe is unpenalized by that grip).

Other concepts should apply in a straightforward way. If the GM allows spending CP, voluntarily giving up -1 of a penalty gives -2 to your foe’s roll in a Contest of Skill. Likewise, if “spending” penalties to set the upper bound on an injury, every -1 given up is equivalent to 2 HP that might be inflicted.

For referred control, if only one location is grappled, everywhere else takes half the penalties (drop fractions). If multiple locations are grappled, add *all* the penalties, divide by 4, drop fractions, and apply that additionally to all locations.

This was not playtested, but since it’s based on 2 CP being equal to -1 to both ST and DX, it should hold up under pressure.

NO SPENDING CP

The grappling rules are meant to emulate struggling to achieve control over a subject, and when the time is right, leveraging that control to do nifty things, like perform throws, locks, or takedowns. The concept of the one-time spend basically reflects that the act of doubling down on your control also gives your foe some room to maneuver, which is ideally compensated for by the fact that you just dropped him on his head or pulled off an arm.

To keep things simpler and faster, disallow the spending of CP. Instead, wherever **Technical Grappling** refers to spending CP to set the upper bound on injury, instead limit injury to half the total CP you have obtained on the location being impacted (or, if using the fixed penalties from the previous section, the ST penalty currently being applied). So if you have someone

grappled by the Arm for 8 CP and the Torso for 6 CP (including the impact of referred control) your damage you can apply by using Wrench Arm is capped at 4 HP.

Faster and simpler, true. The disadvantage is that by not allowing CP to be spent, once a grappler puts the crank on his foe, there's really going to be very little other than a set of critical hits or misses that allows the victim to turn the tables. With the spending in place, after a big move that doesn't go quite as planned, the defender might find himself – however briefly – significantly less restrained!

Not being able to spend CP is more or less offset by not being *forced* to spend them to cause injury or other effects. Unlike some of the other rules presented here, this one *did* receive some extensive review: This is a “house rule” that has been used by one of the playtesters for more than a year in a real game.

OUTTAKES

In any book, there are things that must go. This manuscript was no different, but even with deletions, the supplement wound up being *more than twice as long* as my original estimate. Of a necessity, certain things were removed. Some were not core to the book's grappling mission. Others were actually just fine but cut for space. Here's a hodge-podge of both.

USING PROGRESSIONS WITH OTHER SKILLS

The GM can extend the concept of Trained ST to any application where he thinks it would fit. It would suit realistic non-combat skills that give ST or damage bonuses to slow applications of force; e.g., Forced Entry might use the *fast* progression – you get your first bonus at DX+1 – when shoving or prying rather than battering. Likewise, when a cinematic striking skill is creatively used to grapple – e.g., a Heroic Archer pinning someone to the wall with arrows through clothing, or someone with Throwing Art doing the same with hurled sais – follow the usual rules for Weapon Master (**Technical Grappling**, p. 29).

This started life as a way to apply the Trained ST progressions to all melee-combat skills. That was so clearly off-mission – good idea or not – that it had to be toned down or dropped pretty fast. The final version above is a fine idea, and suitable for use with the existing draft. It is, however, a pretty niche case, and so it received the flying armbar of doom.

HORIZONTAL CREATURES

Many creatures have a naturally Horizontal posture (p. B139 and **GURPS Martial Arts**, p. 115). Treat them by default as *crawling* when using the rules in **Technical Grappling**. They also suffer different penalties for their natural orientation, as shown in the table below.

New options for you to test in your combat scenes.

Horizontal Posture Table

| Posture | Attack | Defense | Target | Movement |
|------------|--------|---------|--------|-----------------------|
| Standing | -4 | -3 | -2† | 1 yard/second |
| Crouching | -4* | -3 | -2† | 1/3 (+2 per hex) |
| Kneeling | -2 | -2 | -2 | None |
| Crawling | Normal | Normal | Normal | Normal; may sprint |
| Sitting | -2 | Normal | -2 | 2/3 (+1/2 per hex) |
| Lying Down | -2 | -2 | -2 | 1/3 (+2 per hex) |

* Only reach “C” melee attacks are allowed.

† If attacker is at the same or lower elevation and farther away than his own height, he attacks your torso as if it were half exposed (-2 to hit), and cannot attack your groin, legs, or feet at all. If you also have your head down, he cannot attack your neck, eyes, or face.

This one made sense intuitively. The posture assumed by most quadruped animals is what humans do when crawling. The table above just rearranged the exact same lines on the human-based posture table and called them different things. I didn't need to spend words doing that, though. It would not go too far amiss to have the GM tweak posture tables for specific creatures, but a supplement about realistic grappling wasn't the place to revisit this concept.

HIGH-RESOLUTION CP

One concept from an early draft was that instead of every 2 CP giving -1 to both ST and DX, that each CP first imparted a penalty to DX, then to ST, then back to DX, and so on. So instead of 5 CP just giving -2 to ST and DX, it would have been -3 to DX and -2 to ST. That way, each additional CP had *some* incremental value.

While the idea has some appeal, “divide by 2, drop fractions, and odd CP can be used to make small adjustments in die rolls” was more compelling from a simplicity point of view.

HARSH REALISM

Roleplaying games are built around fun, and a certain amount of convention is often useful to keep the players entertained and likely to undertake the kind of adventuring that is the reason you play these games to begin with. However, every now and then, Willing Suspension of Disbelief – and therefore fun – can be shaken. **GURPS** supplements tend to call these out in sections that explain potentially disruptive mechanics, with advice on toning them down. These typically go by the moniker “Harsh Realism,” with such examples as *Harsh Realism for Unarmed Fighters* (**GURPS Martial Arts**, p. 124) and *Harsh Realism for Tactical Shooters* (**GURPS Tactical Shooting**, p. 32).

Two “harsh realism” notes made the final draft – one on *Scaling Trained ST*, and the other involving *Judo Throw*. Here are two harsh-realism-flavored *cuts*. The first one treated an edge case and was dropped. The second could have driven a rewrite of the entire manuscript to accommodate it. On the surface, the playtesters liked the concept, and so did I, but I judged it was taking optional complexity too far. I *do* like the flavor – it’s how I was trained to actually grapple.

Entangling Weapons

Entangling a foe with a weapon, such as a whip or kusari, imparts Control Points, restraining your foe. These CP can be spent to influence a Contest using the basic rules, *somehow* giving up CP by pulling on a rope in order to lower your foe’s ability to win the Contest. Optionally, do not allow this expenditure – an entangle restricts your foe and enables any grappling move that defaults to ST, but that’s all.

Setting Up Locks and Holds

Technical Grappling treats all Control Points as interchangeable. Control Points accumulated for an attack to apply a lock or hold can be spent to influence a takedown, and a generic grapple can be leveraged to cause pain or injury in a lock. While the rules about spending CP in adjacent locations take care of most abuses, a group that doesn’t mind extra book-keeping can treat CP accumulated for certain techniques, such as Arm or Hand Locks, as *only* usable on executing those moves. You may only spend CP to set the bounds on injury from that pool of control.

CRITICAL HITS AND MISSES

Critical hits and misses are an important part of combat, and the addition of Control Points allowed a more manhandling-specific table! These tables were created in a very early draft, but were cut before it went to playtest, so they never got a shake-down cruise. Still, for a game that supports critical hits for head blows, having one for hits and misses for grappling seemed logical.

Grappling Critical Hit Table

Use this table with attack maneuvers, but not for Contests. All doubling or tripling of CP refers to the *final* CP applied. No active defense is permitted if a critical hit is scored.

3 – The grapple inflicts triple CP. Up to half may be applied as actual HP of injury instead!

4 – The grapple inflicts double CP. Up to half may be applied as actual HP of injury instead!

5 – The grapple inflicts double CP.

6 – The grapple inflicts maximum normal CP.

7 – If any CP are inflicted, the defender must roll vs. DX-4 or drop two levels of posture (see *Changing Position*, **Technical Grappling**, p. 10).

8 – If any CP are inflicted, the defender must roll vs. DX or drop two levels of posture.

9, 10, 11 – Normal CP only.

12 – Normal CP, and anything the victim is holding becomes unready, regardless of whether any CP are scored.

13, 14 – If any CP are inflicted, the defender drops anything he is holding. If it cannot be dropped, it becomes unready.

15 – The grapple inflicts maximum normal CP.

16 – The grapple inflicts double CP.

17 – The grapple inflicts triple CP.

18 – The grapple inflicts quadruple CP.

Grappling Critical Miss Table

Use this table only for critical misses when rolling for or defending against attack maneuvers. This includes initiating a grapple and reattacking to increase CP. At the GM’s option, a critical success on a defense roll can cause the attacker to roll as if he rolled a critical miss!

3 – You knock yourself out! Details are up to the GM – perhaps you trip and fall on your head, slam your skull into the ground during a posture or position change, or you bash your face into the opponent’s shoulder while attempting to defend against a takedown. In any case, you suffer 1 HP of injury to your skull (ignoring all DR), you’re knocked out, and your opponent is unharmed. Roll vs. HT every minute to recover.

4 – If attacking or parrying with a limb, you strain it: take 1 HP of injury and the limb is “crippled.” If using any other body part, you pull a muscle. In all cases, you suffer moderate pain (p. B428) for the next (20-HT) minutes, minimum one minute, and lose your grip on your opponent, which removes all accumulated CP.

5 – You hit a solid object (wall, floor, etc.) instead of seizing your foe or parrying his attack. You take crushing damage equal to the CP you would have rolled making this attack to the body part you were using; DR protects normally. *Exception:* If attacking a foe armed with a ready impaling weapon, you fall on his weapon! You suffer the weapon’s damage, but based on your ST rather than his.

6 – As **5**, but half damage only. *Exception:* If attacking with natural weapons, such as claws or teeth, they break, and you have -1 damage on future attacks until you heal (for recovery, see *Duration of Crippling Injuries*, p. B422).

7 – You misjudge your maneuver badly. On an attack in which you stepped toward your opponent, you advance one yard past him, and end your turn with him in *your* rear arc, regardless of his facing. On a parry, you fall down. If you were standing and retreating, you fall backward and land lying face up. If you were in any other position and retreating, roll 1d: 1-3 means you land face down; 4-6, you land face up. If you were ground fighting and already lying down, you must take a Ready maneuver before you attack again, but may defend at -2 in addition to any posture penalties. You may not use All-Out Defense until you regain your equilibrium through the Ready maneuver.

If you had already grappled your opponent, you lose all CP and lose your grip!

8 – You lose your balance and fall down; see **7** for special cases. If you had already grappled your opponent, you lose half your CP in every location that you had grappled him.

9, 10, 11 – You lose your balance. You can do nothing else (not even a free action) until your next turn, and all your active defenses are at -2 until then. Lose half your CP in all locations in which you had grappled your foe.

12 – You lose your balance; see **8**.

13 – You drop your guard. All your active defenses are at -2 for the next turn, and any Evaluate bonus or Feint penalty against you until your next turn counts double! This is obvious to nearby opponents. You are at -4 in any Contest that follows for the next turn, and you lose all CP (but not your grapple).

14 – You misjudge your maneuver; see **7**.

15 – You tear a muscle. Take 1d-3 of injury to the body part used, or a random body part (GM option). You are off balance and at -1 to all attacks and defenses for the next turn. You are at -4 to any action involving that body part (all actions if you injure your torso or neck!) until this damage heals. Reduce the penalty for using that body part to -1 if you have High Pain Threshold; increase it to -8 if you have Low Pain Threshold!

16 – You hit a solid object; see **5**.

17 – You strain a limb or pull a muscle, as in **4**. *Exception:* An IQ 3-5 animal fails so miserably that it loses its nerve. It will turn and flee on its next turn, if possible. If backed into a corner, it will assume a surrender position (throat bared, belly exposed, etc.).

18 – You knock yourself out; see **3**.

FINAL SUBMISSION

After the draft was finalized in October of 2011, the playtest kicked off for real in early November. The group continued to test the system, running actual fights and making meaningful contributions to the draft right through March of 2012. I can't emphasize enough the value of those actual fights. Some rules that seemed like they might not work "on paper" were just fine, while others that had us all saying "yep, you bet, no problem" in the draft had to be rewritten. There really is no substitute for *playing the game* when it comes to this sort of thing!

The biggest thing that I took out of the playtest is something worthwhile to pass on: The Control Points mechanic takes a few fights to get used to, but once that happens, things progress fairly intuitively. Play out a few gladiatorial-style combats to get a feel for the rules, *then* tweak out your character concept accordingly. You should be able to port most characters right in, though.

The most surprising result of the new system was that, given the "reality bias" of the rules, I'd expected the system to squeak hard around the edges when used for cinematic combat.

Exactly the opposite occurred.

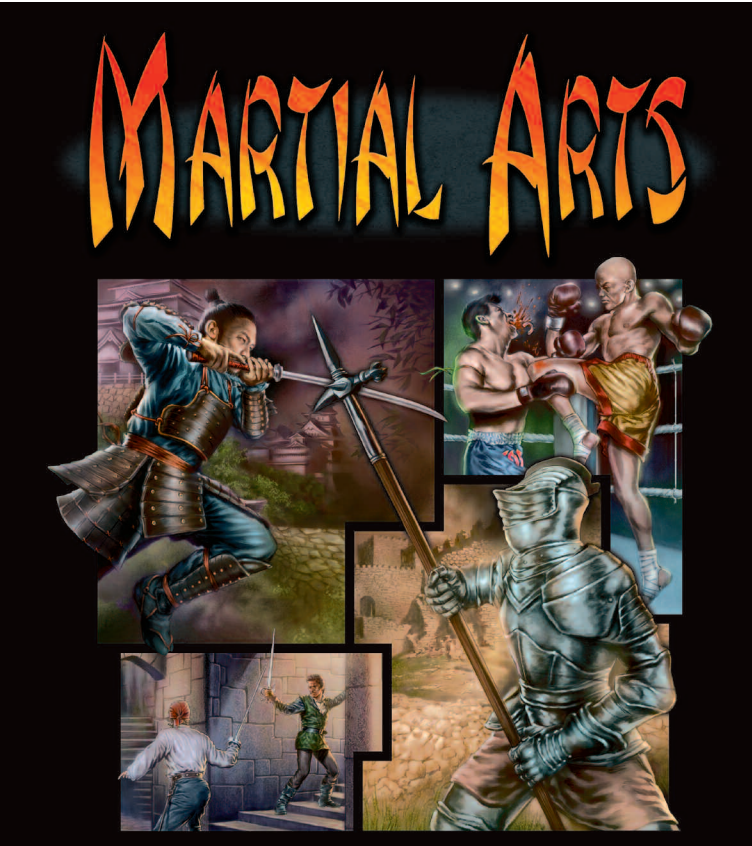
We ran a test fight with the "double CP awards" switch turned on, and the playtesters found that the huge CP totals allowed truly awesome things to be done. The scene in *Iron Man 2* where Black Widow (Scarlett Johansson) takes down a dozen bad guys with over-the-top grappling action? Totally doable, even natural, with the CP system.

Technical Grappling has been more than two years in the making, much of that thanks to a certain dread cybertank. I hope you enjoy playing it as much as I enjoyed writing it!

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Douglas H. Cole acted as lead playtester for *GURPS High Tech*, *GURPS Tactical Shooting*, and *GURPS Loadouts: Low-Tech Armor*. He blogs

about roleplaying and other geekery at Gaming Ballistic (gamingballistic.blogspot.com). He lives in Minnesota, where many are cold, but few are frozen. For more *Technical Grappling* goodness, including bonus author information, see pp. 15-20.



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RANDOM THOUGHT TABLE

CLOSE YOUR EYES AND THINK ABOUT BASEBALL

BY STEVEN MARSH, *PYRAMID* EDITOR

For decades, millions of baseball fans would experience beloved games that had more in common with *Hamlet* than what we would watch nowadays on a big-screen television. In fact, these games were more similar to (say) a *GURPS Martial Arts* bout than nine innings on the sandlot.

But let's back up. Before ESPN, color reception, or even black-and-white monstrous televisions that were the size of a sofa but had screens the size of a mass-market paperback, people used to listen to baseball on the radio. Many of these radio broadcasts held a secret: They didn't exist. At least, they didn't exist in the sense that the broadcast listeners *thought* they existed – the broadcast reporter wasn't necessarily sitting in the bleachers, sticking the microphone out to record the sound of ball on bat or the roar of the crowd.

Rather, it was entirely possible for a commentator to receive teleprinter transmissions of the nuts-and-bolts mechanical aspects of a game: who's pitching and batting, whether a pitch was hit, was it caught and – if so – by whom, etc. But *how* these events happened were left to the discretion of the sportscaster. The reporter knows the ball was hit to the centerfielder for an out, but was it a slow-floating high-arc hit that falls effortlessly into his glove, or an over-the-fence dramatic catch that saves the game? From the standpoint of the game's outcome – its "mechanics," if you will – there isn't the slightest bit of difference: Plus one out thanks to the centerfielder, next batter. But to the listener, it made all the difference. And more

interesting to consider is the fact that it was entirely possible for two sports broadcasters to report the same game, and interpret the results differently for their audience. After all, there was no underlying "truth" to the events being reported, outside of the mechanical aspects of the facts in the game. In this way, each game broadcast was like a production of *Hamlet*, where immutable fact – either Shakespeare's words or Teletype stats – are interpreted (either by actors and director or the sportscaster).

Of course, as tabletop gamers, we're all like these fake "sportscasters," interpreting our own nonstop stream of stats into something interesting. We just happen to do so with a lot more snacks on the table. In *Takedown Sequences* (pp. 15-20), Douglas Cole provides some excellent advice for injecting flavor into the mechanical details of using the *GURPS Martial Arts: Technical Grappling* rules. Here, then, are a couple more ideas for how to transform your own stream of data into something amazing.

TIME IS ON YOUR SIDE

In the classic 1960s British television series *The Avengers* – not the movie series with the black-leather-clad Scarlett Johansson – the first episode featuring Diana Rigg's character of Emma Peel (who was, um, clad in black leather) had a remarkable fight scene. In "The Town of No Return," the two heroes – leather-clad Mrs. Peel and bowler-hat-wearing John Steed – are separated, with Mr. Steed on the other side of a steel door with four trained enemy agents. Peel attempts to rescue her teammate by activating the switch, but is thwarted at first by a woman from an earlier combat (who Peel dispatches with relative ease) and then an elongated fight scene with another agent who is intent on both killing her and keeping her from flipping the switch that would open the door to release her compatriot from being trapped with four enemies.

Recommended Reading

There are numerous accounts of sports broadcasters creating color commentary from wire-received data; it was an early specialty of none other than Ronald Reagan. However, an interesting short overview can be found online with "The Magic Land of Radio and Baseball" – naplesnews.com/news/2011/nov/06/the-magic-land-of-radio-and-baseball – which also includes a fascinating peek into how the sound effects were added.

Let's see how awesome you were in that battle.

It's a minutes-long knockdown drag-out fight, from which Peel emerges exhausted but victorious; she darts to activate the switch. The steel door opens, revealing Steed, who – looking completely relaxed and composed – tips his bowler hat and smiles; the camera pans to the four agents, in various states of unconsciousness throughout the room.

It's a problematic scene in some senses (it basically says that our heroine can barely hold her own against one combatant at the same time her associate dispatches four with ease), but it's so stylish and amusing that it's easy to overlook any negative subtext . . . and it makes a good point for gamers. Namely, that not all moments of combat are made equal.

Fans of *The Avengers* to that point had three seasons with Mr. Steed; they knew he was a top-notch agent. However, it was one of the first moments where Mrs. Peel got to prove her mettle one-on-one; it made sense to show how she could handle herself solo. Likewise, in a combat where you've got the choice of lingering on half the party fighting a bunch of nameless mooks the same way they have a dozen times before, or on the two heroes who recently learned the Tag Team Touch of Death, it can make sense to speed up the action on the same-old combat to spend a bit more time lingering on the good bits.

Similarly, if there's a fight that's looking like it'll be pretty straightforward, then it can be useful to say, "Okay; let's just roll some representative attacks and see how awesome you all were when you killed them." Or for the GM to ask, "Are there any secondary objectives you want or need to accomplish this combat?" (see *123, What're We Fighting For?*, below). Because then you can be cool.

THE SECTION WHERE WE ENCOURAGE YOU TO BE COOL

One purpose of controlling the flow of time is because – essentially – it's pretty realistic. We have all been in moments where we can recount in excruciating detail the tiny bits of a fleeting encounter, describing in an hour what took place in a minute.

Taking some extra time, then, to interpret the stream of data the RPG generates can result in moments where you get to be cool. For example, let's say the sword-wielding enemy rolls a hit, and the hit location determines it was on the shoulder: 2 points of damage. How'd that happen?

Well, you can go for the obvious – "the guy swung his sword and he nicked my shoulder." That certainly makes sense, but it might be a little flat.

Or you could say, "I saw his sword coming right for my head, and – in trying to twist out of the way – I pivoted up my shoulder to catch the blade."

Or if you scored a decisive hit later in the round, you might say, "I lick my wound and say, 'Enjoy your moment of triumph; that was the last act of your life.'"

Or you could even say, "My hero was in the middle of a dramatic speech: 'I'm gonna kill you, and you don't have the stones to do anything about- YOW! You *hit* me?! He interrupted my taunt! Can he do that?!'" (Talk is always free in *GURPS* . . .)

Of course, if you allow this kind of improvisational embellishment, then you need to make sure there aren't any game-mechanical effects. Saying you deflected the guy's sword into your shoulder with an extra bit of defensive flourish doesn't mean you start having a freebie extra-defensive flourish every turn, in the same way the sports commentator's embellishments don't have a lick of influence on the game.

If you control the flow of time in the game, you can even get through a second or two of combat, and then backtrack to figure out what it all "meant," asking anyone if they did anything cool or character-developing (again, using the already-generated outcomes as the basis). Then, if there's anything that needs additional time for the narrative ebb and flow, the game's timing can be adjusted accordingly. For many folks, RPGs aren't meant merely as a mathematical exercise, but as a way to figure out what was awesome or awful about an encounter. You know *what* happened, but *how* it happened can be as cool as you all want it to be.

1-2-3, What're We Fighting For?

The easiest way to mix up a humdrum combat is to have a secondary goal. For example, the players and GM might be well aware that the heroes are going to make mincemeat of these mooks . . . but what if the PCs need to capture one of these guys to interrogate them? And what if they have instructions to commit suicide rather than be captured? Suddenly the adventurers must rely on a much different skill set. Maybe the protagonists need to break out *GURPS Social Engineering* to intimidate someone into surrendering, or trick him into thinking the heroes aren't as much a threat as they obviously are (and thus make the mooks easier to capture). Maybe it's the perfect excuse to break out the enhanced options from *Technical Grappling*, letting the protagonists capture someone before they can off themselves. Regardless, a *very* minor tweak (such as "we can't kill *everyone*") can greatly change the flavor of a standard combat.

Or the heroes might use a stun gun or sleeping spell and end the combat in the usual three seconds. Players are good like that.

ABOUT THE EDITOR

Steven Marsh is a freelance writer and editor. He has contributed to roleplaying game releases from Green Ronin, West End Games, White Wolf, Hogshead Publishing, and others. He has been editing *Pyramid* for over 10 years; during that time, he has won four Origins awards. He lives in Indiana with his wife, Nikola Vrtis, and their son.

ODDS AND ENDS

REASONS TO FIGHT

by David Thomas Moore

Any of the fighting arts can inspire an adventure or campaign (see *Yrth Fighting Styles* for several setting-specific martial-arts story ideas), but the styles presented in *Fusion Styles of Yrth* (pp. 25-29) offer a number of unique possibilities.

Talent Scouts

John Glorius of Kethalos is a minor Megalan nobleman looking to bring up his status. He's sponsoring a gladiatorial spectacle in a month to curry favor with the Imperial Court, and needs to fill the bill. He's paying three popular professional gladiators to compete, and has bought two bears, three orcs and a minotaur for crowd-pleasers, and 50 slaves for a great set-piece depicting the Legions' defeat of the Goblin Kingdoms. What he really needs to impress the jaded nobles of the Megalan court is to find something – *anything* – genuinely new.

The PCs are retained as agents for Glorius, sent into the world to find exotic stylists and persuade (or “persuade”) them to participate in their employer's games. Finding warriors may be a challenge in itself; they then need to blackmail, cajole, or fight them into accepting the role they're offering . . .

Staring into the Abyss

On Caithness's western border, three young knights – John of Ferrier, Kieron of Sterling, and Peredur of Wallace – vanished three months ago during one of the sporadic orc raids. All were passionate Defence Boxers, and were known to revel in the stigma the training brought them, even going so far as to emulate orcish tattoos and to carry grisly trophies of their kills. Now, reports suggest one of the orcish tribes is being *led* by three human warriors, dressed and tattooed as orcish warriors. The men show a detailed knowledge of Caithness defenses and tactics and are taking the orcs into ever more daring and successful attacks.

The PCs are agents of the Silver Hand (*Banestorm*, p. 110), sent at the king's order to identify and bring an end to the threat. If, as Connall suspects, the human chieftains are the young Caithnesser knights, the heroes are to try and bring them back alive so that their delusions can be soothed and they can be brought back into the arms of the Church. If not, or if this proves impossible, they are simply to kill the men, pray God to accept their souls, and find a way to drive the orcs back into the Orclands.

The Warrior Cult

The curious hybrid of Christianity and Hinduism taught by the Silatte masters of Araterre – and the strange, destructive magic they practice – have been a concern to the Jesuit monks of the islands for many years. Whenever the pagans come to the attention of the Order, the ungodly ideas are suppressed,

but the cult always manages to survive and go into hiding, resurfacing again a few years later. Now, the monks are determined to stamp them out forever.

The PCs are monks or agents recruited by the Jesuits to infiltrate the pagans. They are to enter one of the ad hoc matches on the docks of Sauvons, draw the attention of a Silatte master, and enter training. They must make their way up in the style's hierarchy until they start to receive instruction in the art's pagan faith. Their ultimate goal is to identify the leaders of the cult and call Church raids on them, which may prove harder than it seems. The masters have access to powerful spiritual magics to see through the PCs' deceptions, and the heroes could end up fighting for their lives. And, of course, after weeks or months living and training among them, the heroes may find their loyalties torn . . .

*You are agents, sent to bring
an end to the threat.*

The Greatest Warrior in the World

An evil is coming. A sect of wise monks (such as those from the An'Fo'Tama monastery in *GURPS Banestorm*, p. 80) have received a vision telling them that a mystical portal is about to resurge (in Yrth settings, this the Banestorm). This time, it will connect the world to the Eight Hundred Hells and release a fierce dark fighter. There is hope, for the prophecy also says the “Greatest Warrior in the World” will become a champion for good, empowered to defeat the evil warrior.

To find this great hero, the monks have sent messengers around the world, finding acknowledged masters of different styles: Sir Richard of Durham, the champion of last year's tournament at Harkwood; Oman ibn Rashif, the winner of the Furusiyya contest at the Great Games; Nakatori Tenshu, last spring's Sumo champion; and so on. Dozens of masters have been invited to compete in a great tournament, to find the greatest warrior. They haven't been told *why* they're competing yet.

All of the major fighting styles are represented. However, the conservative monks – unaware (or disdainful) of lesser known styles – have failed to invite an *alquetalliste*, a *kikit-sapika*, a *silatteur*, or one of many other less-common styles

The PCs are martial-arts masters, trained in modern or unusual styles, who have heard about the contest and insist on a chance to represent themselves. They will have to find the monastery, talk their way past the guards, and argue their case before the monks – maybe after fighting to prove their ability. Then they must compete with the other champions. And, of course, after being declared the world's greatest warrior, one of the PCs will be informed of his destiny to fight for the future of Yrth with a champion of Hell!

ABOUT *GURPS*

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