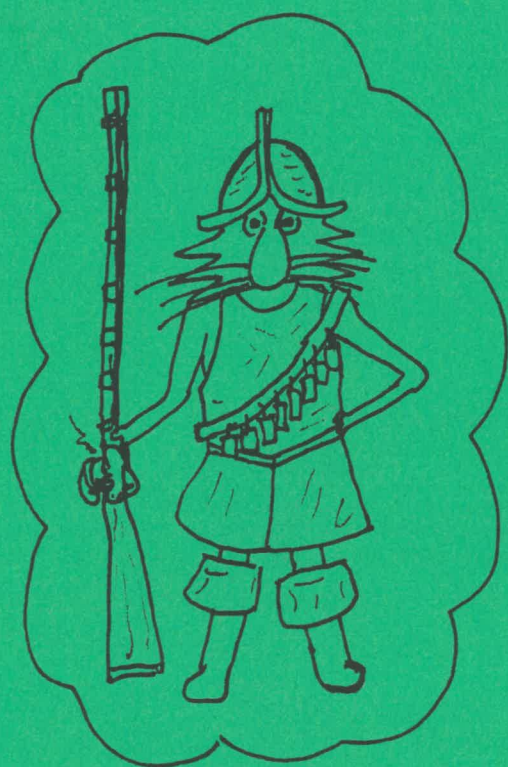
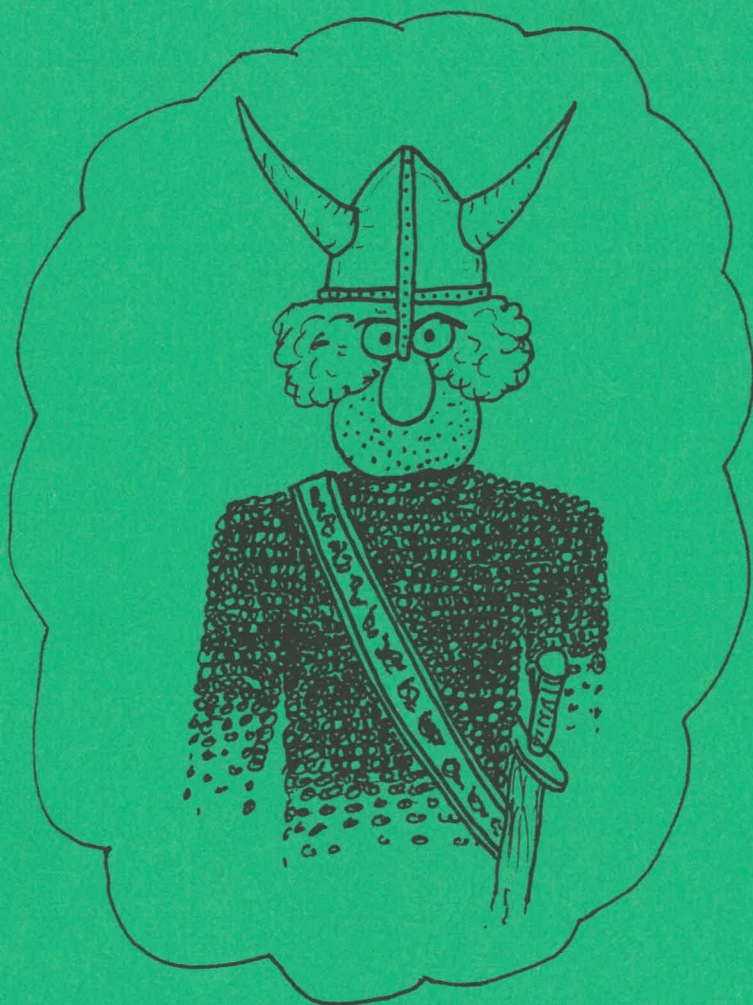




No 35

Nov 1992

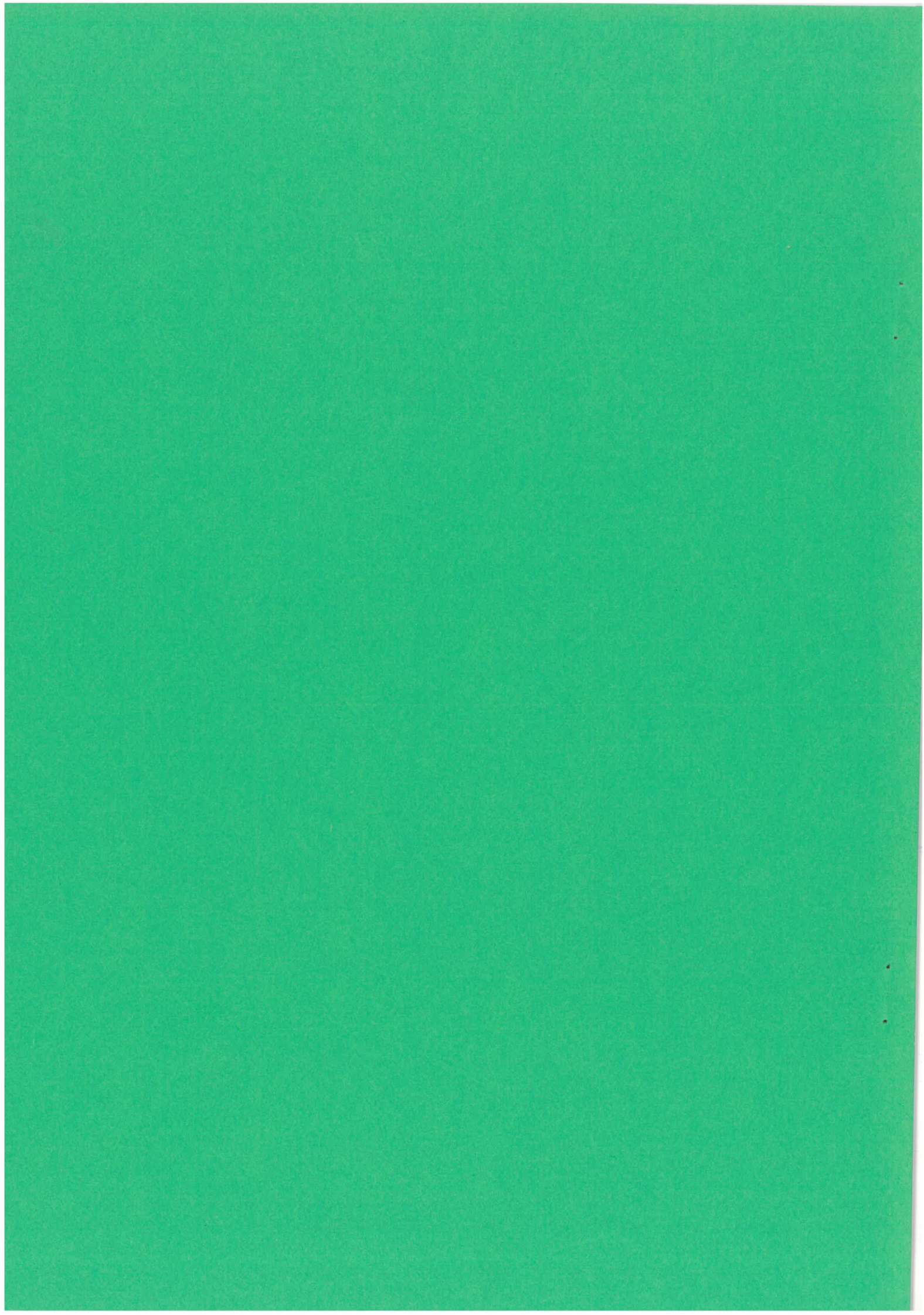
Queensland Wargamer



A Gamer...



... and his Cat



THE QUEENSLAND WARGAMER

A Games Society Publication

November 1992

Issue # 35

Editor: Nick Lawrence
262 Hawken Drive
St Lucia 4067
(h) 3715973

VIKING CONCEPTIONS OF HONOUR

- Graeme McCowie

AD 793. In this year dire portents appeared over Northumbria and sorely frightened the people. They consisted of immense whirlwinds and flashes of lightning, and fiery dragons were seen flying in the air. A great famine immediately followed those signs, and a little after that in the same year, on 8 June, the ravages of heathen men miserably destroyed God's church on Lindisfarne, with plunder and slaughter.

This entry in The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle marked the arrival of the vikings in the history of mediæval Europe, and for the next three centuries they terrorised nations throughout Europe and beyond. In doing so the vikings gained a reputation for being little more than "pirates devoid of honour" (Ælfric 83), which largely resulted from the fact that their victims were the literate Christian nations of Europe and, as it was some time before the Scandinavians acquired the alphabet, written accounts of the vikings in their heyday are almost entirely negative. Reading accounts such as those by Ælfric and Wulfstan, and the records of viking activity in The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, one could be forgiven for assuming that the vikings possessed no moral qualities whatsoever.

It is in the sagas of mediæval Iceland that a more balanced picture appears, showing an organised society where husbandry and agriculture, rather than raiding, were the main activities. It was also organised along typically Germanic lines and held together by the complex system of mutual obligations between the various levels of society. Until the ninth century, when King Harald Finehair subdued the other petty kingdoms of Norway, kings were little more than one chieftain raised by mutual consent above his peers. In return for their support, the king was obliged to provide just and effective leadership. That allegiance to figures of authority was more or less voluntary was an incentive to leaders to perform their duties effectively. Even after Harald subjected Norway to his will the king's position was not independent of the wishes of the populace, which were expressed at the regular regional assemblies held throughout Norway.

The basic unit of Norse society, however, was the family. In an age without state law enforcement, it was the responsibility of the family to seek compensation for injuries to one of their number, sometimes extending as far as third or fourth cousins. Family was for many the sole source of support that could always be counted on in time of need, and to be isolated from the family unit was to be virtually alone. The support of family demanded a return, though: individuals could not endanger the family's reputation, or allow it to lose status. As Johannes Brøndsted says:

It was impossible to pursue a selfish individualistic course of behaviour, for there were duties and obligations to the family which a man must accept, however arduous and dangerous they might prove. A man had to follow and practice these communal obligations (Brøndsted 239).

As the Viking Age progressed and men were often cut off from their families for long periods of time, and as central monarchies became established in the Scandinavian nations there was a slight decline in the strength of family ties. Individuals formed new ties with their king and other powerful leaders as members of their retinue, while viking crews developed a strong sense of loyalty amongst themselves and to their leaders. What this has been leading to is to emphasise the importance that the vikings' society placed on honour and loyalty as the bonds that held their world together.

They also contributed to an individual's own reputation, which was a further incentive for vikings to live by the codes of conduct inherent in their society. The Scandinavians were aware that life was transient, and in Norse cosmology nothing is immortal. There is no eternal afterlife, and even Odin, Thor, and the other Æsir were fated to die. In Hávamál (The Words of the High One) Odin says:

Cattle die, kindred die, every man is mortal:
But the good name never dies of one who has done well.
Cattle die, kindred die, every man is mortal:
But I know one thing that never dies, the glory of the
great dead.

There were various means of accruing honour, wealth, and a reputation, but the most straightforward method was by taking part in viking expeditions:

Conspicuous success might be achieved in other ways - by skill in law or in the manipulation of other people - and be found impressive but it was not sealed with the nobility conferred by a willingness to risk one's life in pursuit of one's aims (Foote and Wilson 425).

There is no explicitly-stated code by which the vikings lived. This is partly because the great men that dominate the sagas actually fell into two quite different categories, identified by Foote and Wilson (425) as hófsmenn ("just men") and ójafnadarmenn ("unjust men"). Hófsmenn were men of honour and renowned for their heroic exploits. Often they were the companions of kings as well as being popular among their countrymen. They were just and fair men, generous, brave, and willing to reach an honourable compromise rather than engage in a blood-feud that could only hurt both sides. Ójafnadarmenn were harsh, often cruel and violent, selfish and ambitious. People respected and feared them - even admired them - but they were rarely popular. They achieved power and prominence at the expense of their opponents, and were ruthless in pursuing their goals. Both types, however, had a sense of honour that bound them to live by society's standards of conduct, if not its laws, and were noted for their courage.

It is interesting to compare the careers of Gunnar Hamundarson (c.945-c.990) and Egil Skallagrímsson (c.910-990), two vastly different figures who are among the greatest heroes of Old Icelandic literature. They are also perfect examples of a hófsmadr (Gunnar) and an ójafnadarmadr (Egil) and highlight the different conceptions the vikings had regarding codes of conduct. Gunnar is described in Njal's Saga thus:

He was a tall, powerful man, outstandingly skilful with arms. He could strike or throw with either hand, and his sword-strokes were so fast that he seemed to be brandishing three swords at once. He was excellent

at archery, and his arrows never missed their mark. He could jump more than his own height in full armour, and just as far backwards as forwards. He could swim like a seal. There was no sport at which anyone could even attempt to compete with him. It has been said that there has never been his equal. He was a handsome man, with fair skin and a straight nose slightly tilted at the tip. He had keen blue eyes, red cheeks, and a fine head of thick flaxen hair. He was extremely well-bred, fearless, generous, and even-tempered, faithful to his friends but careful in his choice of them (Njal 73).

Already well-known and respected in his native Iceland, Gunnar travelled abroad while still young and spent a year or two raiding throughout the Baltic. During this time he proved himself to be an effective leader and quickly won the loyalty of his men: "The men had seen their leader's courage, and each one fought as hard as he could" (Njal 88). On three separate occasions Gunnar's ships were set upon by other viking fleets, and on each occasion Gunnar was the victor, fighting at the forefront of his men. Before returning to Iceland he stayed at the courts of King Harald Gormsson of Denmark and Earl Hákon, then ruler of Norway. At each court he made a favourable impression, was rewarded generously by both men, and parted from them on good terms. He returned to Iceland with a greatly enhanced reputation, which unfortunately aroused the envy of his enemies.

For the remaining years until his death, Gunnar found himself drawn unwillingly into one conflict after another. On each occasion he was able to come to an honourable settlement, but his continuing success only caused his enemies to become increasingly more aggressive in their efforts to bring him down. After repeated slights, insults and attempts on his life Gunnar was banished for three years after yet another ambush saw him kill more attackers than could be settled for. But Gunnar remained in Iceland, unwilling to be driven from his home by his enemies, and because "Death will catch up with me wherever I am, when it is so fated" (Njal 156). Gunnar was subsequently killed in one of the most famous defenses in Icelandic literature. Of the forty men that attacked Gunnar in his home, two were killed and sixteen wounded, causing one of the leaders to remark: "We have felled a great champion, and we have not found it easy. His last defense will be remembered as long as this land is lived in" (Njal 171). News of Gunnar's death spread and "was condemned throughout the land and many people mourned him greatly" (Njal 172). An epilogue to Gunnar's death occurred when his son Högni and Skarp-Hedin Njalsson saw Gunnar's burial mound open to reveal Gunnar within reciting the following verse:

Högni's generous father rich in daring exploits,
Who so lavishly gave battle distributing wounds gladly,
Claims that in his helmet, towering like an oak-tree
In the forest of battle, he would rather die than yield,
Much rather die than yield. (Njal 173)

Gunnar is a good example of a hófsmadr. He is a reasonable man, intelligent and honourable, as well as a brave and skilled warrior. His life was one of conflict and violence, but much of it was not by his choice and his willingness to seek an honourable settlement added to his honour. Gunnar treated his friends well, and chose to face his final battle alone rather than allow

them to become involved in a blood-feud that could only worsen from there. He was a friend to kings and earls, and enjoyed an unmatched reputation at home and abroad. Gunnar Hamundarson embodied the noblest qualities of viking society, and even after the violence that marked the last years of his life was still capable of wondering "whether I am any the less manly than other men, for being so much more reluctant to kill than other men are." (Njal 135)

A stark contrast is Egil Skallagrimsson. Egil's family emigrated to Iceland rather than live under the rule of Harald Finehair, and had a history of conflict with the Norwegian royal family: Harald had personally killed Egil's uncle, one of his retainers, and Egil's father Skalla-Grim and his men killed four of Harald's kinsmen in return, after which Skalla-Grim sent a short, mocking verse to the King to commemorate the occasion. Egil's world, though roughly contemporaneous with Gunnar's, is altogether a darker and more savage one, and Egil is nothing if not a man of his time. Egil's Saga features this description of him:

He sat upright, head bent down. Egil's features were strongly marked; a broad forehead, heavy brows, a nose not long but very wide, lips broad and full, the chin unusually broad and the whole jawline, a thick neck and shoulders broader than most men have, harsh-looking and fierce when he was angry. He was of good size, taller than anyone else, with thick wolfgrey hair, and he soon became bald...Egil had black eyes and dark brows. (Egil 84)

At the age of seven he killed his first man with an axe, after coming off worst in a scuffle during a ball-game; five years later, in another ball-game, the berserk temper fell upon Skalla-Grim and he killed both Egil's foster-mother and one of his friends. Egil took revenge that same night:

[H]e marched into the hall, went up to a man whom Skalla-Grim valued highly; he acted both as his foreman and paymaster. Egil struck him his death-blow, and then went to his seat. (Egil 57)

His relationship with Skalla-Grim was always somewhat tense after this, and not long afterwards Egil went abroad with Thorolf, his brother, who had befriended Eirík Blood-Axe, the son of Harald and now King of Norway. At a feast, Eirík's queen, Gunnhild, and one of his retainers attempted to poison Egil who, in retaliation, runs the retainer through with his sword and escapes, killing two more of the king's men in the process. Thorolf and others intervene and manage to persuade Eirík to accept compensation for his men, but for obvious reasons Egil could no longer remain in Norway.

He and Thorolf embark on a viking expedition, attacking coastal towns throughout the Baltic. On one such raid Egil and his men are separated from the main body, and taken prisoner, to be killed the following morning (because "it was getting dark, and they [the captors] could not amuse themselves with torturing them" [Egil 66]). Egil contrives an escape, and after killing several servants who have the acute misfortune to get in his way Egil and his men make their way to the ships with as much of their captors' wealth as they can carry. As they go, however, Egil decides that they have gone about their escape the wrong way:

"This expedition is all wrong and dishonourable. We have stolen the farmer's property in such a way that he does not know of it. We must not be so disgraced. Let's go back now to the farm, and let them know what's going on." (Egil 67)

His companions feel differently, though, and Egil returns alone to the farmhouse and fires the building while his former captors are inside celebrating their defeat of the vikings. Escape is impossible, as Egil guards the door and kills all those who try to flee the burning building.

Egil's later career saw him and Thorolf serve as mercenaries under King Æthelstan of England at the Battle of Brunanburh. Both brothers performed heroically, although Thorolf was killed. Egil himself washes and prepares Thorolf's body for burial. He lays his brother in his burial mound, complete with clothes, weapons, and gold rings; he also composes a brief verse in honour of Thorolf (Egil 83):

Flame-hearted Thorolf, fear's foe, Earl-killer, who so dared danger in Odin's dark wars is dead at last. Here, by Vina's bank, my brother lies under earth. This now's become death-bitter. But grief's best laid to rest.

Æthelstan rewards Egil for his service, and compensates him for the loss of his brother. On his departure for Iceland the King also gives Egil two chests of silver to present to Skalla-Grim as compensation for Thorolf's death, which Egil keeps for himself. Father and son went to great lengths not to share their wealth with one another, and Skalla-Grim's final act was to sink a chest of valuables in a swamp rather than allow Egil to inherit it. Egil, however, has the last laugh: when Skalla-Grim is buried "there is no record that money was put into the mound with him." (Egil 102)

Before settling down permanently on his farm in Iceland, Egil has several more brushes with the kings of Norway (both Eirík and his successor Hákon Eiríksson the Good) and leaves several more of Eirík's men, including his son, dead. In his own country Egil was peaceful enough, although the saga's author is careful to add: "On the other hand no-one made any attempt to interfere with his affairs." (Egil 124) Also "on the other hand", living peacefully did not necessarily mean growing old gracefully. In a legal dispute between Egil's son Thorstein and the son of one of Egil's old friends, Egil deceives his friend into allowing Egil himself to name the terms of the settlement. Showing a profound contempt for peaceful compromise, Egil delivers a judgement so completely biased in Thorstein's favour that further hostilities were only avoided through fear of making things worse by aggravating Egil. When old and blind, Egil's wish was to disrupt Iceland's national assembly by scattering Æthelstan's silver across the assembly area:

"I intend to sow the silver and I shall be very surprised if they all share it fairly between them. I hope that there will be kicking and punching, and it might turn out eventually that the whole of the Assembly is fighting." (Egil 169)

His plans are thwarted by his daughter, and Egil "was not pleased about this and frowned a lot." (Egil 170) Instead he has two of his son-in-law's slaves help him load the silver onto horses, and the three ride out together. Neither slaves nor silver were seen again. When questioned, Egil would only say "that he had

killed Grim's slaves, and also that he had hidden his money, but where he had hidden it he told no-one." (Egil 170) He died the following year in his eighties.

Egil's career was distinguished by his long and bitter feud with the Norwegian throne, and by the many battles and duels he fought. He was avaricious, violent, and would take by force what he felt was his rather than compromise. Where Gunnar was genuinely reluctant to kill and only did so when compelled to, Egil had no compunctions about killing men and enjoyed the excitement of battle, often composing verses to celebrate his many victories. Conversely he was also fiercely loyal to those who stood by him, always returned favours, was willing to help friends, and was a resourceful and unyielding warrior as well as an excellent poet. In his way Egil epitomises the qualities of the Viking Age as much as Gunnar did; more so, in fact, as Egil is undoubtedly closer to the historical truth. Both men were respected and admired by their countrymen, and had a compelling sense of honour that saw them refuse to yield to their enemies.

These are simply two examples of the life a man could lead and win honour. There were other areas, too, where particular codes of conduct were expected: hospitality, vengeance, and in battle, for instance. The Germanic hospitality code common throughout Northern Europe required that guests be treated with courtesy:

Fire is needed by the newcomer whose knees are frozen numb;

Meat and clean linen a man needs who has fared across the fells.

Water, too, that he may wash before eating, handcloths and a hearty welcome,

Courteous words, then courteous silence that he may tell his tale. (Hávamál)

Hosts ignored the demands of hospitality at their own peril, as some found to their cost. Twice Egil encountered men who sought his death while he was beneath their roof. One was killed; the second was spared at the entreaties of his wife and child, who had alerted Egil to the man's treachery in the first place. Egil settled for hacking off his host's beard and removing one of his eyes. In the legendary Saga of Hrolf Kraki, Hrolf and his champions are invited to a feast by the treacherous King Athils. Athils attempts to kill them, and suffers the indignity of having his buttocks sliced off for his troubles. Kings were not excused from the rules of hospitality: Egil once had the bad luck to be shipwrecked in Eirík Blood-Axe's territory, and instead of trying to escape he presented himself at Eirík's hall. While Gunnhild urged her husband to kill Egil, Arinbjörn (a friend to Egil, and a retainer of Eirík) argued that "No-one will call Eirík the greater man because he killed one foreign farmer's son who was in his power." (Egil 108) When Egil composed a poem in Eirík's honour, the King was then doubly obligated to let Egil live, and had only one option that would not bring dishonour on his name: "Because you came into my power I will commit no shaming act of violence against you." (Egil 112)

Hospitality was one instance where men's sense of honour could preserve at least the pretence of civil behaviour, but honour also drove men to acts of violence which they sometimes found personally distasteful. In Njal's Saga the sons of Njal,

manipulated by the same individual that engineered Gunnar's downfall, kill their foster-brother and themselves become the objects of blood-vengeance. The slain man's kinsman, Flosi Thordarson, is on the verge of making a settlement for the killing (600 ounces of silver - treble the normal amount), but in an exchange of insults with Skarp-Hedin, the eldest of the Njalssons, his honour is pushed too far. In one of the most controversial acts of vengeance in Icelandic history, Flosi and his supporters burn Njal and his sons alive in their home. Flosi offered Njal and his wife safe conduct from the house, but Njal refused. "'I have no wish to go outside,' said Njal, 'for I am an old man now and ill-equipped to avenge my sons; and I do not want to live in shame.'" (Njal 267)

Njal's son-in-law, Kari Solmundarson, escaped the blaze with the help of Skarp-Hedin, charged by the latter to take vengeance for those unable to escape. Kari was true to his word, and hunted down and killed thirteen of the Burners in places as far away as Wales before finally becoming reconciled with Flosi. Flosi himself had found the Burning distasteful (but necessary - to engage the Njalssons in the open would have cost too many men) and did not try to halt Kari's rampage. Each recognised that the other had legitimate grievances against those they slew, and that such acts were an unpleasant fact of life.

Even acts of vengeance such as those of Kari and Flosi pale when compared to the lengths some were willing to go to in the cycle of poems and sagas dealing with the Völsungs and Niflungs. Their excesses of vengeance are too numerous to go into, but included betrayals, murders, child-killings, incest, and so on. The cycle culminates in the poems describing how Atli, King of the Huns, invited his wife Gudrun's brothers to a feast in order to kill them. The Niflungs, aware from Gudrun's warnings and other portents that they are riding into a trap, accepted rather than refuse such a challenge. In the ensuing battle the Niflung company is slain to a man. Gudrun begins her revenge by killing her and Atli's children, and when Atli asks after them she replies:

"You have lost your heirs, as you should not have. You used their skulls as ale cups. When I gave you drink, I mixed it with blood. I took their hearts and stuck them on spits and served them to you saying they were of calves; you alone ate them and left nothing; greedily you chewed as you tested your molars. Now you know of your children... (The Greenland Lay of Atli)

Vengeance was also taken for much lesser things: an insult to one's honour or manhood easily resulted in bloodshed. So much so, in fact, that laws were passed to punish the use of nidh, "a traditional Norse kind of verbal insult, often in verse form, which very often implied an accusation of sexual perversion" (Halstrup 180-81) which frequently led to violence. On one occasion a christian missionary was driven to kill two nidh-makers (Halstrup 181), and it was something Skarp-Hedin Njalsson was particularly inventive with.

Vengeance was also sought for theft, injury, adultery, and even accidents that were misinterpreted. Monetary compensation was an alternative to violence, and there were also legal sentences of greater and lesser outlawry (one was for life, the other for three years). It was not always easy to assess the

appropriate amount of money, either: to accept too little would be yo demean oneself, and to pay too much would do likewise. There were, of course, other alternatives. In Laxdæla Saga Kjartan Olafsson avenges an incident of theft by riding against the offending household "and for three days he forced them all to stay indoors without access to the privy." (Laxdæla 167) It was a temporary, if humiliating, inconvenience but its victims "thought the incident a much greater humiliation and disgrace than if Kjartan had killed one or two of them." (Laxdæla 168) One of the main issues in the sagas is the difficulty and necessity of solving disputes which, as Njál's Saga shows, had a tendency to escalate rapidly.

In battle, vikings were expected to be fierce and unyielding, and loyal to their fellow warriors. There were no set codes of conduct for war: some men like Gunnar would grant quarter to those who surrendered; others like Egil would kill everyone, and neither would be considered to be a man of greater or lesser reputation than the other. Aside from the qualities already mentioned, the only other qualities expected in a warrior were the obvious ones: strength, skill, speed, etc. Gunnar was famed for his speed, agility, and heroic spirit, and the descriptions of Gunnar in action show a highly-skilled warrior:

[Hallbjörn] thrust two-handed at Gunnar with a great spear. Gunnar jerked his shield into its path, and the spear went right through it. Then Gunnar jammed the shield down with such force that it stuck fast in the ground, drew his sword faster than the eye could follow, and slashed down on Hallbjörn's forearm, cutting off hand and wrist. Skamkel attacked Gunnar from behind and swung at him with a huge axe. Gunnar spun round and parried with the halberd, catching the axe at the base of its blade. The axe was wrenched from Skamkel's grasp and flew into the river. Then Gunnar lunged again with the halberd; he speared Skamkel on the point, heaved him up into the air, and dashed him head-first down on the path. (Njal 134)

Egil was also a warrior of great skill, and of tremendous physical strength, as the earlier description of him implies. Even berserks such as Ljót the Pale fell easily to him.

A sharp wit was also greatly admired: during his duel with Ljót, Egil composed short verses to taunt his opponent. Skarp-Hedin had a similar talent for humour at his opponents' expense, combined with a cruel skill with his axe "Battle-Troll":

...Skarp-Hedin swung his axe again; it caught Sigmund on the shoulder, sheared through the tunic he was wearing, and severed the shoulder-blade. Then Skarp-Hedin jerked the axe towards himself; Sigmund was pulled forward on to both knees, but jumped to his feet again at once.

"Now you have knelt before me," said Skarp-Hedin.
"But you will be flat on your back before we part company." (Njál 117)

Berserks were another type of warrior altogether. They did not rely on skill so much as brute strength and manic fury, and were reputed to be immune to iron weapons when the berserk fit was on them. Berserk tendencies ran in Egil's family, although he himself was not one. Berserks were prized warriors, and

kings often collected them and used them as the mediæval equivalent of heavy artillery. Berserks were unruly, extremely violent, and often not terribly bright: King Ólaf Tryggvason of Norway had twelve berserks on his longship, but in his final battle the berserks, in full battle fury, forgot they were at sea, leapt overboard at their opponents...and drowned. A typical berserk fit is described in Egil's Saga: "the berserk temper came upon Ljót so that he began to bellow violently, and to bite at his shield." (Egil 118) In the sagas berserks almost invariably fell foul of heroes such as Egil, and Grettir the strong.

Death in battle was very much a reality for the vikings, but a combination of fatalism and eagerness for fame lessened its terrors. As seen earlier, Hávamál tells of the immortality of fame. Elsewhere Ódin claims:

The coward believes he will live forever if he holds
back in the battle,

But in old age he shall have no peace though spears
have spared his limbs.

To die well in battle brought honour on oneself and one's family, but the vikings were far from being suicidally heroic. They knew the value of pragmatism, and there was no dishonour in retreating from unfavourable odds, only in abandoning one's companions or, worse still, one's leader. Egil, on several occasions, was forced to move quickly to evade the wrath of Eirík, but was not thought the worse for it. Hávamál in fact advocates a degree of self-preservation: for after all "There is nothing the dead can do." Nevertheless, men like Gunnar continued to make their doomed heroic stands, either unwilling or unable to escape, or just plain fey. In such cases men died with great honour and, like Gunnar, immortalised themselves in their country's folklore.

In pre-Christian days, dying in battle meant that the slain warrior would be Ódin's guest in Valhöll (the hall of the slain) until being called upon at the end of the world to fight the enemies of Æsir and humans. The great heroes of Scandinavian myth dwelt there: the Völsungs and Niflungs, Bödvar Bjarki, and many others. Death may not have been actively sought, but when it came the vikings knew how to die well. From the legendary last stand of the Hrólf Kraki and his champions, to that of Harald Hardrádi and his retainers at the Battle of Stamford Bridge, Icelandic literature is full of great and courageous deaths. The heroically-minded met their end not only with courage and determination, but with cheerful defiance and even humour. Foote and Wilson cite the example of Högni the Niflung, laughing defiantly at his enemies as they cut out his heart (432). In Njal's Saga, before the attack on Gunnar's home begins, Thorgrím the Easterner climbed onto Gunnar's roof to see if Gunnar was at home:

Gunnar caught sight of a red tunic at the window.
He lunged out with his halberd and struck Thorgrím in
the belly. Thorgrím dropped his shield, lost his
footing, and toppled down from the roof. He strode
over to where Gizur and the others were sitting.
Gizur looked up at him and asked, "Is Gunnar at home?"
"That's for you to find out," replied Thorgrím. "But
I know that his halberd certainly is."
And with that he fell dead. (Njal 169)

Even the onset of Christianity failed to eradicate the traditional values of the warrior society. Two of the most ruthless kings of Norway, Ólaf the Saint and Harald Hardrádi (Hard-ruler), were Christian. Ólaf, and his predecessor Ólaf Tryggvason, imposed Christianity by force, killing and maiming those who resisted the new faith too vigourously. The new religion certainly did little to halt the drive for vengeance. As late as the fourteenth century, Christian authorities were still trying to simply control the revenge ethic. (Foote and Wilson 430) One of the Norse earls of Orkney led a pilgrimage by sea to the Holy Land in the twelfth century. Along the way they raided and burned along the Spanish coast (Spain was still predominantly Moslem at this time) and, on sighting a ship ahead of them, the following course of action was decided upon:

Every man is to take his place and arm himself with his best weapons. After that we'll attack them. If they're Christian merchants, we'll give them the chance to make peace with us, but if, as I suspect, they're heathen, then in his mercy God Almighty will grant us victory over them. Whatever loot we get, we'll give a fiftieth of it to the poor.

(Orkneyinga Saga 174)

Clearly Christian ethics as the rest of Europe understood them had an uphill battle ahead of them.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Ælfric. King Edmund. Sweet's Anglo-Saxon Primer. 9th rev. ed. Norman Davis. Oxford: Clarendon, 1970. 81-87.
- The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle. Trans. and Introd. G.N. Garmonsway. London: Dent, 1954.
- Auden, W.H. and Paul B. Taylor, eds. and trans. Norse Poems. London: Faber, 1983.
- Brøndsted, Johannes. The Vikings. Trans. Estrid Bannister-Good. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1960.
- Egil's Saga. Trans. Christine Fell. London: Dent, 1975.
- Foote, Peter, and David M. Wilson. The Viking Achievement. London: Sidgwick and Jackson, 1970.
- The Greenland Lay of Atli. Auden 125-35.
- Halstrup, Kirsten. Culture and History in Mediæval Iceland. Oxford: Clarendon, 1985.
- Hávamál. Auden 147-67.
- King Hrolf and His Champions. Eirík the Red and other Icelandic Sagas. Trans. and ed. Gwyn Jones. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1961.
- Laxdæla Saga. Trans. and ed. Magnus Magnusson and Hermann Palsson. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1969.
- Njal's Saga. Trans. and ed. Magnus Magnusson and Hermann Palsson. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1960.
- Orkneyinga Saga. Trans. and ed. Hermann Palsson and Paul Edwards. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1981.
- Snorri Sturluson. Heimskringla: The History of the Kings of Norway. Trans. and ed. Lee M. Hollander. Austin: U Texas P, 1964.

Claws of Bagh Nakh: A Champions Column
Game Reality and Superhero Games

Game reality? What is game reality? It is the structure of the game world. If it all makes sense, we have a realistic world. If our game universe is realistic, it will be easier for the players to believe what happens, to treat the world as real. Developing a realistic superhero world presents some unique problems, so these problems will be examined and some solutions suggested.

Many players are familiar with fantasy roleplaying, and have built their own fantasy worlds in the past. A big part of doing a reasonable job of it is coming up with a reasonable physical universe. On a basic level, the physical universe in a superhero game is easy to do: just take the regular everyday world and add superheroes. At first glance this seems quite simple. But what must be different to allow us to have superheroes? How will they make the world different? There are ways around these problems, by only allowing realistic superpowers (i.e. you'd better use foci) and by having superheroes being a recent phenomenon (no need to worry about their effects on past history). The campaign then ends up being quite different to the classic superhero campaign. Another solution is to use reasonable superpowers only, and to take into account the major changes superheroes can bring about. For examples, see "Marshal Law" or "Watchmen". Again, we obtain extraordinary campaigns which deprive us of our great advantage that our game world is the real world with added superheroes. Maintaining a normal campaign is hard enough; I don't want to inflict extra work on myself.

The standard superhero world is very similar to ours. Why haven't superheroes (usually appearing in large numbers during WWII) had any significant effect on world history? I've yet to see any good explanation of this. This best thing to do is to just ignore this problem, and if puzzled players ask, tell them that it's just like in the comic books. (This convention is very similar to many in fantasy



Wise superheroes say:
"Before you use your base superleap, think how stupid you will look." (Buy a real movement power!)

gaming, such as the existence of bizarre monsters and nonhuman races. Why are they so? Well, they're in the Monster Manual, so they must be okay.)

The other problem is the powers themselves. How can people have heat vision, fire powers, or the ability to grow into a giant? We can't do much about exactly how the powers work, but it will be a big start if we can have some kind of pseudo-scientific explanation for how it works (eg. our hero absorbs cosmic rays, stores the energy, and can fire this energy in the form of powerful plasma blasts). Having an explanation (even a poor one) can satisfy our curiosity enough to stop us from investigating further.

The other thing to consider about powers is "why?" Why does the character have superpowers? The chemicals the character was exposed to while being struck by lightning altered his cellular structure, enabling his metabolism to speed up incredibly. The character is a mutant, and mutants have superpowers due to alien genetic experiments on humans in the far past. The character has superpowers because he is Thor, the god of thunder, and gods are magical beings from other dimensions. (But why does magic work?) Explanations like these are better than none at all. Throw in a few more, such as why space aliens look so human, why superstrength and invulnerability go hand in hand (combine them with flight and you have a strong case for some kind of telekinesis), and where people with growth or density increase get their extra mass from and then it will put a veneer of logic and sense over the peculiarly bizarre classical superhero world.

Don't forget to have reasonable explanations for the actions of the supervillains as well. Supervillains can be an odd lot who do strange things, but you can try to have some idea of why they do what they do. The best of comic book villains have real motivations which give them distinctive behaviour patterns. If the NPCs behave with logic and sense, maybe the PCs will do the same. One can always hope.

Timo Nieminen



superhero Artist's
Shortcut # 15
"Sound effects
save detail."

A Spell Point System for AD&D

by Paul Kinsler

This article is an attempt to make spell casting classes in AD&D more flexible by removing the rigid "spell memorisation" rules, thus allowing characters more freedom to be creative with magic use. No longer will low level magic users curse that they felt forced to take the formidable 'sleep' spell when what they really need now is 'message' - a spell no low level magic user can afford to take down a dungeon. The system is applicable to both first and second edition rules.

Instead of memorising a particular subset of their spells, spell casters now study the spells in their spell books, in order to be able to cast spells during the rest of the day. They draw on their knowledge and experience to cast magic, as opposed to storing magical patterns in their head. Clerics still mediate and pray in order to receive the power to cast clerical magic - but can now cast any of the spells they are allowed to. The other changes are the addition of a casting roll to determine if a spell was correctly cast, and fatigue costs.

Firstly, I define some terminology to avoid the confusion caused by the AD&D rules use of 'level' for many different things. The level of experience of the character will still be called 'level', but I will refer to spell level as 'rank' (thus wish is a rank-9 spell). Spell 'power' is the level of effect at which a spell is cast. This is now variable, as opposed to the standard rules which fix spell power at the level of the spell caster. Spells can now be cast at a lower power than the level of the character. For example a fifth level magic user can cast a magic missile at the same level of effect as a first level magic user (doing 1d4+1 damage at 70').

SPECIALISATION

Spell casters also specialise in types of spells. Magic users select spell schools, clerics have spell spheres. The schools for magic user spells are listed just after the title in the spell lists in the players handbook, and the second edition has additional tables listing them separately. The clerical spheres are listed only in the second edition handbook.

There are five classes of specialisation: Major, Minor, Other, Minor Opposition and Major Opposition. First level magic users select a major school, and this choice fixes their major opposition school to that specified in the 2nd edition rules. For example, a choice of 'alteration' as a major specialisation fixes the characters major opposition school as 'abjuration'. Initially, spells in all other schools are classed as 'other', but upon reaching second and forth level a magic user can select one extra minor school. Choice of a minor school causes the school in opposition to this to become a minor opposition school. Opposition schools cannot be chosen as minor specialisations.

Clerics have their major and minor spheres fixed by their deity, although there may be some room for choice in their Minor or Other spheres. Opposition spheres should be determined by the DM according to the nature of the cleric's deity.

For example, 'Stefania', a new first level magic user selects 'divination' as her Major school, thus setting her major opposition schools to be 'conjuration' and

'summoning'. Upon reaching second level she picks 'necromancy' as a minor school, causing 'illusion' to become a minor opposition. When she reaches fourth level she selects 'abjuration' as her second minor, so 'alteration' becomes a minor opposition.

Spell casters get bonuses to their chance to successfully cast spells, depending on their specialisation. A spell cast in a characters Major adds +2 to the casting die roll for success, Minor are at +1, Others at +0, Minor oppositions at -1, and Major opposition spells are at -2. Spells cast in chosen specialisations are also less tiring.

CASTING SPELLS

Spell casters get a number of 'spell points' equal to their level per day, subject to being well rested, and spending at least ten minutes of study, meditation, or prayer per spell point gained. Unused spell points are not lost at the end of the day, but a character cannot accumulate more spell points than they have levels. Casting a spell of a certain rank uses up an equal number of spell points. For example, casting the rank-3 'web' spell costs three spell points.

The chance of successfully casting a spell depends on several factors. The spell works if the spell caster rolls the 'target number' or greater on 1d20. This is called the casting roll. The target number to successfully cast a spell is:

$$9 + 3 \times (\text{spell rank}) + (\text{spell power}) - 2 \times (\text{level}) - \text{STAT} / 2$$

For magic users, STAT is intelligence, and for clerics it is wisdom (round down). Spells that have no listed dependence on the spell caster's level must be cast with a power equal or greater than its rank. Spells cannot be cast at a power greater than the level of the spell caster, or at a power less than one.

Casting spells is a tiring business, costing energy as well as spell points. To reflect this, casting a spell costs a number of hit points proportional to the spell power. The amount varies according to the type of hit dice used by the casters class and the school or sphere of the spell, and the base fatigue cost is given by the hit dice factor from the following table multiplied by the spell power.

Hit Dice Type	d4	d6	d8	d10
Major, Minor	1	1.5	2	2.5
Other	2	3	4	5
Opposition	3	4.5	6	7.5

If the target roll is made by more than five, the hit point cost is half the base fatigue cost; if it is made by ten, one quarter; by fifteen, one eighth; and so on. Furthermore, failing a casting roll by more than five doubles the hit point cost, failing by more than ten multiplies it by four, by fifteen multiplies it by eight, and so on.

Fatigue costs for spells that restore hit points are treated differently. Examples of such spells are cure light wounds, cure serious wounds, and heal; but not spells like cure disease, raise dead, or resurrect. When casting these spells, treat the

specialisation as one class better on the table: Minor and Major specialisations cost no hit points, Other are treated as Major/Minor, and Opposition as Other.

These fatigue hit points are lost regardless of whether the spell succeeds or fails, but can be regained at a rate of one hit point per half hour of rest. As a result, a separate total of hit points lost to spell fatigue should be kept. Note that the spell caster will still die if their remaining number of hit points, including the losses due to spell casting, is less than -10.

ADDITIONAL RULES

CLERICAL BONUS SPELLS: Under the standard rules, very wise clerics gain extra spells. Including these as bonus spell points will give such a first level cleric too many spell points, so my solution is to treat these spells under the old rules. They are considered to be a gift from the deity or its minions to particularly wise clerics, and as such are chosen by the cleric (or given by the deity) while meditating, for later use. Casting rolls are still made, but fatigue costs are not applied.

DISPELLING MAGIC: When casting dispel magic, use the power the spell is cast at rather than the level of the caster to determine success or failure. This applies for both the original spell, and the dispel magic.

SCROLLS: Casting spells off scrolls does not cost spell points, and the spell should be treated as being cast by the scribe of the scroll, and not by the reader. The only exception is that the STAT modifier of the reader should be used instead of that of the scribe. Depending on the way the spell was scribed, the power of the spell may or may not be able to be varied by the reader.

MAGIC ITEMS: The abilities relevant to spell casting need to be defined for the item, and can be no better than those of its maker. These are: level, spell points, specialisations, intelligence or wisdom, and fatigue hit points. The item then casts spells as specified by those abilities. However some items may use the wielders characteristics instead. For example, fatigue casts may be applied to the wielder instead of giving the item a 'hit point' total for accounting purposes.

OPTIONAL RULES

CONVERTING FAILED CASTING ROLLS: a failed casting roll can be turned into a success by a reduction in power of the spell. However, it is still treated as a failed roll. If Pring the Conjuror attempts to cast a power-9 fireball, but fails his target roll by two, the result would be a power-7 fireball. If he had failed by six, a power-3 fireball would result, but his fatigue costs are doubled.

OVERCASTING IN RANK: DM's who like to play fast and loose with game balance might allow low level magic users to cast high level spells if they take several days to cast. It would take a character as many days to cast as it takes to get the spell points required, but it should be understood that it takes the entire time used to accumulate the spell points as it does to cast the spell. For example, Rufus, the first level Cleric could try to cast the rank-3 locate object if he took

three days to do so. However, his chance of success would not be good, even if he could withstand the strain - and the consequences of failure should be dire. This kind of overcasting can be a lifeline for desperate spell casters.

OVERCASTING IN POWER: similarly, DM's may allow spell casters to cast spells at a higher power than their level. However, the casting roll is not really designed to cope with this, so if it is used then fatigue costs should be at least doubled when power overcasting.

EXAMPLES

Imagine Stefania, the sixth level MU, who has intelligence 11 and 10hp, is threatened by a cloud of poison gas and tries to cast a power-4 version of the rank-3 alteration spell Gust of Wind, to disperse it. The spell is in her Other specialisation. Her spell point total drops by 3 (from 6 to 3) and the effort has a base fatigue cost of $2(\text{other}) \times 4(\text{power}) = 8\text{hp}$. She now has to check if she successfully casts the spell - her target number is $9 + 3 \times 3(\text{rank}) + 4(\text{power}) - 2 \times 6(\text{level}) - 16(\text{INT})/2 = 2$, which she easily manages, rolling a 13. This is a success by more than 10, so the fatigue cost is $8(\text{base})/4 = 2\text{hp}$, so her hit point total drops from 10 to 8. The gust of wind generated is 10 yards wide, and $10 \times 4(\text{power}) = 40$ yards long. Now safe, she rests for half an hour, and regains one of those hit points.

Pring, a 9th level Conjurer with intelligence 18, wisdom of 4, and 20hp is in desperate straits. He has managed to steal a copy of the rank-9 wish spell from Chasark, Iron God of the Northern Hordes, and risks everything attempting to avoid retribution by casting it. It will cost him all of his maximum number of spell points. His target number is $9 + 3 \times 9(\text{rank}) + 9(\text{power}) - 2 \times 9(\text{level}) - 18(\text{INT})/2 = 18$. Since he has Conjunction as his Major school he gets a +2 to his die roll to give him a 25% chance of success. Casting the spell costs him 9hp - or 18hp if he fails by 5, 36hp if he fails by 10, 72 if he fails by 15, etc. This may seem too easy, since the standard rules do not allow rank-9 spells to be cast until 18th level, but Pring has the best possible qualifications, and the consequences of failure should be understood to be so horrible that no one would attempt this without good reason. In particular, note that the fatigue rules leave him with a 25% chance of being killed by the strain.

Note also that if Conjunction was not Prings Major, but was classed as Other, then it would have cost him at least 18hp. And in this case, a casting roll failed by more than five (65% chance) would kill him on the spot.

Senna Flash, a 67th level wizard has two hit points and three spell points left. If she can light the oil trap in front of her, she will be spared a horrible (and embarrassing) death at the hands of the five Kobolds charging at her. She wants to cast the rank-3 lightning bolt spell at power-1 to ignite the oil. Her target number is $9 + 3 \times 3 + 1 - 2 \times 67 - 16/2 = -123$, an automatic success. Invocation is an Other spell according to her specialisations, and the base fatigue cost is 2hp. However, even if she rolls a one, she has succeeded by 124, and the hit point cost is $2/2^{124}$ (since $124 = 5 \times 24 + 4$), which rounds down to zero.

Bix, a second level cleric who has wisdom of 16, and worships the deity Foop, casts a cure serious wounds spell from a scroll. The scroll was inscribed by NeNeHa (wisdom 18, level 20, Major in Healing), the renowned cleric of Foop. The target number is $9 + 3 \times 6(\text{rank}) + 6(\text{power}) - 2 \times 20(\text{scribe level}) - 16(\text{reader's wisdom}) / 2 = -15$, an automatic success. Since the spell restores hit points, and Healing was NeNeHa's Major sphere, it costs no hit points in fatigue to cast. If the scroll had instead been cast by ReReHa, NeNeHa's evil twin, for whom Healing is in opposition, it would be treated as other, and cost a base of $2 \times 6 = 12\text{hp}$. Bix now rolls a 16 on his casting roll, which is a success by 31 ($16 - (-15) = 16 + 15$), so the fatigue cost is $12 / 2^6$ (since $31 = 5 \times 6 + 1$), which rounds to zero anyway.

DISCUSSION

The greatest possibility of unbalancing the relationship between the various classes by using this system comes from the greater flexibility that spell casters have. They can now cast any spell from their repertoire at any time. This is a great advantage, which corrects for the particular weakness of magic-users at low level. However, to avoid over compensating, I have introduced casting rolls and fatigue costs. In particular, the introduction of varying fatigue costs depending on the chosen specialisation of the spell caster will add more 'colour' to the class. No longer will all magic users seem the same, casting any type of spell with equal facility - they will have to consider the costs of casting an unfamiliar spell.

The other major adjustment is that now spell casters can cast spells of higher level than they could under the old rules. This is a dangerous thing to allow, which is why I introduced a casting roll designed to make this difficult to achieve, and increased the fatigue costs for comprehensively failed casting rolls. In addition to these mechanics, the DM should be alert to twist the intended effect of the spell when a cast fails - especially so for spells well out of the caster's league.

Note also that high level spell casters will have to undercast most of their spells in power in order to keep their fatigue costs under control - a reduction in power by ten reduces fatigue costs on average to a quarter.



An Improved AD&D Monk: Revisions.

HIT DICE:

The hit dice should be changed to d8's, starting at 1d8, increasing to 9d8 at ninth level, and adding +2hp per level gained thereafter.

THE WANDERING MASTER

The only modification is that Wandering masters may only accumulate up to 1000gp, a maximum of three magic weapons, and at most four other magic items.

STANDARD ABILITIES: these supersede or add to those in the original article.

(5) Open hand attacks: If the target is over 12', or a supernatural creature, then the open hand damage is halved.

(5a) If the target of a monks open hand attack is hit by an amount that exceeds the number required to hit by the "stun number" in the table below, the target is stunned. A stunned creature never gets initiative and loses DEX bonuses to their AC. They can recover from being stunned by successfully making a save versus poison - this is made when they would normally make a melee attack, but only one save can be made per round. If the creature has more hit dice than the monk, they get a bonus to their save equal to the difference in their hit dice.

(5b) A monk can kill an opponent with a single blow if they have just succeeded in stunning them with that blow. The chance of killing them is a percentage equal to the targets armour class, plus the monks level, less the stun number. The opponent then gets a save vs poison to avoid death, modified by the level difference as above. A failed save leaves the opponent with zero hit points, less the damage done by the monks attack.

(5c) The monk may voluntarily reduce the amount of open hand damage to that of a lower level monk, but the intention to do so must be stated before the to-hit dice roll is made.

Type	stun number
No armour	5
Leather armour	6
Metal armour	7

Add one to the stun number if the opponent is not humanoid.

(6) Weapon damage: The bonus of 1/2hp per level only applies to those weapons with which the monk has proficiency. The maximum bonus is +6, achieved at twelfth level. The bonuses with missile weapons are half (round up) those with melee weapons. Monks only get a single attack per round when using weapons.

(7) Non weapon proficiencies: For those using these second edition rules, monks get non weapon proficiencies as clerics.

HINTS ON TELEPATHS FOR CHAMPIONS

Telepaths (or Egoists if you want to use the terminology of the Champions handbook) have perhaps the most potential of any of the four basic character types (Martial Artist, Egoist, Energy Blaster, Brick). The original concept combines power with flexibility. Imagine having the ability to read and manipulate someone else's thoughts, or being able to simultaneously cause every nerve ending in a person's body to register pain! Upon looking at the Champions rules system, however, one quickly realises that telepaths have a harder time of it than at first glance. To be a competent telepath is very expensive; to be a powerful telepath even more so. This article is not intended as an exercise in maximising character points to squeeze the most you can out of a character, but to suggest some ideas worth considering the next time you generate a character with mental powers.

The most important decision to make regarding a telepath is what do you want them to do. How versatile do you want to be, how powerful do you want to be, what sort of telepath do you want to be? As a few examples of the sorts of telepaths who appear in comics, there are Professor Xavier (a very powerful, all-round telepath - I bet he's a NPC!), Jean Grey (a telepath-telekinetic), the Martian Manhunter (a flying brick with limited racial abilities). If you want to replicate these people in a 250 point balanced campaign, forget it! The range of powers each of these people possess is only available to PCs in campaigns where the GM does not enforce balanced characters. If you are restricted to 250 points, you must have a more limited conception for your character. I have seen a player in one of my campaigns use a character with Mind Link and a largish Ego Blast and succeed handsomely as the group telepath. It is possible to be a successful telepath on a handful of points, but you must keep your perspective.

One thing I would strongly suggest to any player who wants a versatile character is to never use Multipowers. It is very sad to see a character which has Telepathy, Ego Blast, and Mind Scan, all in Ultraslots. Having Mind Scan is far less useful when you cannot use your other powers through it. Only in balanced campaigns do multipowers for mental powers make any real sense, and if you can cope with waiting much longer to buy new powers I would still suggest Elemental Controls.

As a GM, I consider it important that a character has a reasonably well-justified set of powers. While it is possible to do many wondrous things with telepathy (at least in theory), this is not a blank cheque to have whatever powers you want. Special effects should always be taken into account. If you have otherwise purely mental powers and a force field, such as Esper in *Classic Enemies*, I would have to ask why you have a force field when it is not otherwise part of the character conception.

Your powers should make sense (or as much sense as having any sort of superpower does). Often, the simplest designs work best, for example, Karma from the New Mutants, who could mentally control her target and make them do things they would not remember. This is simply a lot of Mind Control, enough to ensure EGO+50 regularly, with the appropriate advantages and limitations. A flawed design often ruins an otherwise perfectly acceptable character, as design faults will often become obvious when the character is tested in combat, and by then it is really too late.

Unusual powers often require extra thought. For example, you may want to be able to kill people by attacking your opponent's brain

using your telepathic powers. If your GM feels this is OK, don't just buy a RKA with invisible effects based on ECV without thinking about it. How does Mental Defence affect this attack? How does this attack work? If it is a mental power, it should not physically damage the brain by itself. My suggestion would be to have a 1d6 BODY Drain, based on ECV, usable at range (=50 active points). For every 2 points of Mental Defence the target has, the amount of BODY lost is reduced by 1. By using your telepathic abilities, you can "turn off" parts of another person's brain that controls involuntary functions such as breathing and the heart beating, and this meshes much more neatly with the special effects of your other powers.

Special effects are often the best part of creating a telepath. If you want to limit your character's range of powers, I would suggest basing your mental powers on emotions. The obvious powers for this character to have are Mind Control, based on emotions, Sense Emotion (an unusual sense that is the equivalent of Telepathy), and possibly Ego Blast, based on emotions (if you can make someone so happy that they will lie there and not do anything for over a minute, it sounds to me like they are on -21 STUN or worse!). Such a character would be distinctive, and more challenging to use than just a "straight" telepath.

A simple telepathic power combined with other abilities or equipment can make an otherwise straightforward martial artist interesting. "The Force gives me power over weak minds." Another good trick for a martial artist is to have a defensive power that only works against telepathic attacks, such as a Flash against mental senses, or telepathic shields of unparalleled strength (+30 Mental Defence or more). Power suit weeds might also want to give this some thought, as they are frequently easy pickings for telepaths. Villains with quirky telepathic powers help spice up a campaign: Manslaughter, who appeared in a few New Defender comics right towards the end, had the mental power of being unnoticeable to the casual observer.

In short, telepaths can be whatever you want them to be, versatile or specialised, powerful or skilled, exciting or boring. All that is limiting you is your imagination. Have fun!

Gary Johnson



1001 FUN THINGS TO DO WITH PEDESTRIANS :

A "WHATEVER SYSTEM I'M THINKING ABOUT AT THE TIME" COLUMN

Hi there everyone. This article has been thrown together in the wee small hours (because I said I'd do it and, as is well known to all my fellow gamers, I'm never wrong). As little of my writing is intelligible I advise those of you who believe you are still sane to turn back now.

Understanding Your GM (or "Just Why Your GM Should Be Locked Up")

Players tend to think of the GM as the opposition. It (cos GMs aren't real people) sits at the end of the table and eats their characters, throws gold and quests at them, and generally makes the game worth playing. Spare a moment and think about how It acts, how It thinks about the game. NO, DON'T RUN AWAY. To save you a bit of time I've done a bit of classification and found some types.

Evolution

GMing comes in three basic evolutionary stages :

1) One of the most common types of starting GM is the "I just want to be loved" GM a.k.a the Monty Haul GM. It runs the game to make it fun for the players (what a sicko). It may be doing this because It is doing the players a favour or, if It is true GM material, It may be trying to get the players hooked on the system so that It can jump to the last stage in GM evolution without them running away. It throws lots of gold/karma/XP/Character points at the characters for very little risk. This works out fine for a few games. Then it becomes boring. With no challenge the players (or at least those who are not brain-dead) find the game mundane. It loses excitement and is not worth playing. When the GM realises this It may go to a later stage or may just give up. IR : 1.

2) This is the ideal stage for a GM. It understands the proper level of challenge in the campaign to make it interesting but not lethal. Really good GMs can keep on this level indefinitely occasionally going to stages 1 and 3 for a change of pace. IR:2.

3) The final evolutionary stage of GMs is the Psycho Killer stage. This GM understands the true nature of the RPG. It must kill all the PCs (or at least make their lives living hells - sounds 'bout right to me). PCs are meat for the beast. NPCs and the GM are in a symbiotic relationship. The NPCs kill all the PCs, and the GM rewards them by making them all powerful. Players who understand the order in this game realise that the only NPCs that their characters can ever really get rid of are the friendly ones. Anything with any real power over the outcome is either a bad guy or doomed to die in the opening moves of the great game. IR:4.

Perspective

Entirely separate from the game threat is the workings of Its mind. How does It think about the game? Here are some examples.

1) It doesn't. It turns up and throws something pointless and unrelated at you. Little campaign continuity. IR:-2.

2) It plans out the world and the campaign in horrific detail, making and shading in maps, making up NPCs the PCs will never encounter. It's sick, but It knows what is going on. IR:3.

3) The Player. It's not a GM. It's a player. It just gets to take more liberty with the rules than most. If your GM is like this It will probably have a few central NPC/PC things made up and the rest of the detailed campaign is centred around them. If the players go into uncharted waters It may flounder about for a bit until It works out how the plot is related back to Its beloved NPCs or realises that they cant be put in and gets on with the game. IR:3.

GM Tendencies

Kleptomania: The PCs can get anything they want - millions of gold pieces, an Ares MP laser, a +5 Vorpal Axe. The problem is they aren't allowed to keep it. If a PC at any time has more gear or material wealth than when it started the GM feels it is doing something wrong. POOF! It's gone. Mechanics vary - thieves, taxes, bribes and fines are all examples, not to mention the shoot up cyberdeck trick. IR:1.

CraigSyndrome: The GM understands all the rules in the book or at least all the loopholes. If there is a way to abuse the rules the GM knows and uses it. The NPCs are definitely challenging. By the way if your PCs try any of this stuff they will probably be eaten by the Vorpal Bunny, but for GMs it's O.K.. Note this tendency is highly compatible with RulesFreak (below) and to a lesser degree with FreeForm (also below). IR:2.

RulesFreak: The GM knows all the rules by heart. If there is a rule for a situation the GM can tell you which of the 27 books it appears in and probably the page number too. If you try something not covered in the rules (like asking "Which came first, the chicken or the egg?") the GM will probably melt screaming, "It's not in the RULES! SYNTAX ERROR". Incompatible with FreeForm. IR:3.

FreeForm: The GM probably doesn't know the rules but does a pretty good imitation. It rolls dice infrequently and just seems to go with the flow. NPCs do things which aren't covered in the rules so so can you. IR:2.

Babe in the Woods: The GM does not know the rules. IR:-1.

EVALUATION STAGE

Thank you for participation in this study. Next to each section above there is an insanity rating(eg IR:3). Please add together the IR points for all statements applicable to your GM. Below is a rating scale.

<u>IR Total</u>	<u>Evaluation</u>
Below 0	This creature is not a GM. Probably merely a pure strain human.
0 to 3	The subject is almost sane
4 to 7	Serious GM.
8 to 10	GM. Quite insane. Watch for sudden movements.
Above 10	Final stage GM. Quickly put 20 dollars in stamps on Its back and mail to your nearest psychiatric institution.

Build And Weight For Giants

Just a comment on height and weight for RPGs. In many systems the creators give some pathetic little system for generating heights and weight for characters. Throw them away. Remember one thing. If build remains the same then the Height³:Weight ratio remains a constant. So next time a rulebook tells you that a three metre troll built like a brick has a weight of 120Kg laugh and say, "Beanpole. Chummer".

Shadowrun Second Edition

After having a look through the NEW, IMPROVED. second edition rules I realised that they(the great sorce book creators) had decided to change everything. Scream! All the hard work in writing up pages of rules clarifications was wasted. Sob! Then I had a second look and discovered that some of the changes were quite good.

The main changes in second edition are the removal of almost all auto successes and staging changing to two for practically everything. Say goodbye to auto-successes for initiates and elemental aide. "How does armour work now?", I hear you say. I'm glad you asked.

With the removal of auto successes armour has a new effect.

Instead of giving damage resistance successes it lowers the power of the attack. A heavy pistol shot doing 9M2 (although the staging of two is implied in the new rules) is reduced to 4M2 if the target is wearing an armour jacket. Yes, heavy pistols do hurt now. Needless to say power ratings have gone up. A Ranger Arms SM-3 sniper rifle now does 14S2 damage. Fun, eh?

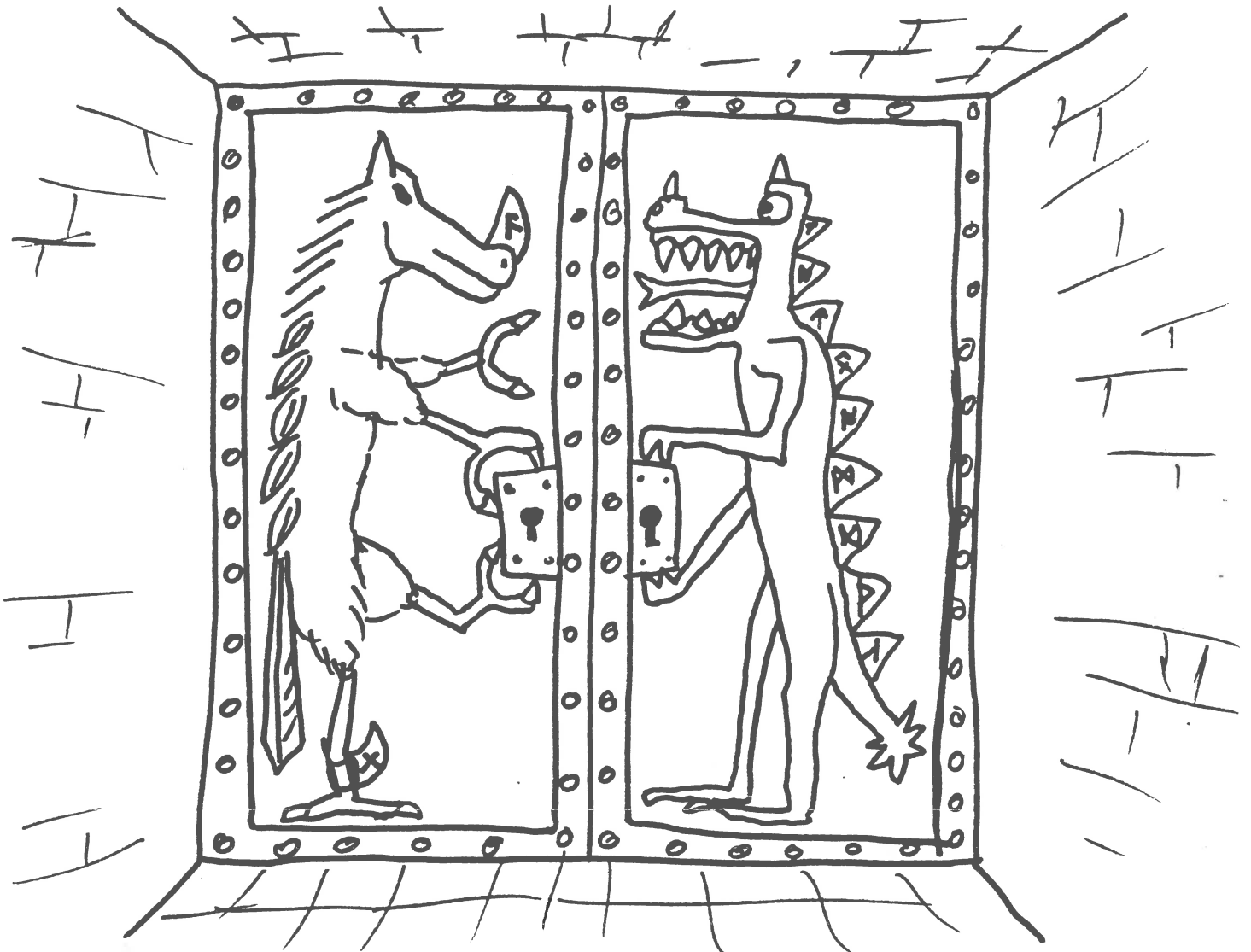
There are many other cute changes. The dodge and defence pools are now replaced by the combat pool. The combat pool is larger and can be used with almost all dice rolls in combat. The combat pool can be added to attack dice, giving a lot of dice to throw at the bad guys. Critters now have no normal pools. Instead they all have threat ratings. These add to all tests the GM feels they should. Scary.

To balance things up a bit the mob at FASA have invented a gizmo called a Karma pool. I'll leave it up to you to guess what it does.

All up, the second edition rules are pretty good, although they take a bit of getting used to. The hardest thing to come to grips with is the product number on the side, 7900. Shadowrun gamers will soon be able to experience a new level of poverty as FASA releases 7901, 7902, 7903...

Happy Nightmares.

Robert "I prefer Abnormally Sane" Thiem



Men of Harlech

(unofficial lyrics)

From an old Boy Scout song book.

What's the use of wearing braces
Shoes and boots with fancy laces
Spats and hats you buy in places
Down in Brompton Road!

What's the use of shirts of cotton,
Studs that always get forgotten?
These affairs are simply rotten.
Better far is woad.

Woad's the stuff to show, men (da, da, da, da)
Woad to scare your foemen (da, da, da, da)
Boil it to a brilliant hue,
And rub it on your back and your abdomen (do-men).
Tramp up Snowdon with your woad on.
Never mind if you get rained or blowed on.
Never want a button sewed on.
Tailors, you be blowed!

(deep breath)

Romans came across the Channel,
All dressed up in tin and flannel.
Half a pint of woad per man'll
Clothe us more than these!

Saxons, you can waste our stitches
Building beds for bugs with breeches.
We have woad to clothe us, which is
Not a nest for fleas!

Romans, keep your armours;
Saxons, your pyjamas.
Hairy coats were made for goats,
Gorillas, yaks, retriever dogs, and llamas (llamas).
Ancient Briton never did hit on
Anything as good as woad to fit on
Neck, or knees, or where you sit on
Go it, Ancient B's!

Battletech Alternative Infantry Rules.

Chu-i Asano scornfully looked down on the infantry fleeing before his SHADOWHAWK before his finger caressed the button for his right arm medium laser. Two men vanished before its azure blast. Here was no challenge for a true mechwarrior of the Dragon.

Across the road an old Davion sergeant glared at his squad of youngsters who stared in fear at the oncoming SHADOWHAWK. Something had to be done before they joined the other squad routing past. With a grunt he grabbed a bag of anti-tank grenades and bounded across the road to beside the enemy mech. While his squad watched on he scampered up the SHADOWHAWK's left leg and wedged the bag into the knee joint as the mech carried him forward. After pulling the timer cord and pausing to hear it tick he threw himself off and rolled painfully across the concrete pavement. Behind him the charge blew and reduced the mech's left knee to flying shrapnel. For a moment the mech stood before slowly toppling to the left with both arms flailing helplessly. After all, the bigger they are, the harder they fall....

The following are a set of rules to use Squad Leader (SL) boards and counters in Battletech to enlarge the role of combined operations. This article assumes some familiarity with basic SL rules, or someone to teach you. Squad Leader provides many boards with various terrain types and a myriad of counters representing everything from militia squads to anti-mech infantry with demolition charges, flamers and rocket launchers, from trucks to tanks and everything in between. A veritable military hardware lies ready to be mobilised, complete with the leaders and heroes to control them.

Most mechwarriors look down on infantry and are quick to rip out their machineguns in favour of "real" weapons or heatsinks. Since I owned Squad Leader it seemed a pity to waste all these lovely infantry counters and their support weapons. It was relatively simple to convert Battletech weapons over to Squad Leader levels. After trying a Recon lance against two companies of infantry holed up in a city with lots of support weapons there were a lot of dead infantry and two dead mechs. Machine guns are good but assault engineers with demolition charges are deadly. Well placed and equipped infantry turn cities into the death traps they ought to be, rewards combined arms tactics and makes the Vulcan a great infantry killer.

BATTLETECH INFANTRY RULES.

1. Counters.

Basic squads (3 for House infantry platoons, 2 for Jump infantry), Leaders and heroes, and all support weapons may be fielded.

2. Sequence of Play.

Infantry are moved before mechs, with initiative resolved with the normal rules. If only one player has infantry then he moves them all before the mechs start to move. When both sides have infantry then all of one player's squads are moved, then the others and then the mechs as normal.

Three extra phases (*) are added for infantry combat.

RALLY PHASE * Both players may attempt to rally broken squads and repair support weapons.

MOVEMENT PHASE All unbroken squads and leaders may be moved.

FIRE PHASE. All fire combat results are determined now, with the results applied immediately.

ROUT PHASE * Broken units must rout to cover if not in some form, or if adjacent to enemy infantry. The order is as for initiative.

CLOSE COMBAT PHASE * Infantry may move into an adjacent hex to combat other infantry/attack mechs or vehicles. Infantry versus infantry, and versus vehicles is done in squad leader fashion while molotovs/demo charges may be placed on mechs.

3. MOVEMENT.

Infantry squads have 2 MF (Movement factor)

Leaders, and infantry stacked with them, have 3 MF

Movement Costs.

Open ground, shell holes, wheatfield	1MF
Onto a road hex from a none road hex	1MF
Onto a road hex from a road hex	1/2MF
Woods, enter building, move within building	2MF
Cross wall or hedge	1MF+COT
Moving to a higher elevation	2*COT

COT- Cost of Terrain of hex.

Jump Infantry have Jump 2 capability so can move 2 hexes in any direction, and up to 2 elevation levels.

Support Weapons may not move alone but must be carried. A squad has 4 portage points, a Leader 1, with extra portage points carried being subtracted from the stack's movement facots. At least one hex can be covered by a stack carrying 5 portage points/ squad, or 3 for a leader/hero.

4. STACKING.

Each player can have 4 infantry counters (maximum 3 squads present) and 10 portage points of support weapons per hex (or level therein for buildings). The stacking limit may be exceeded during the movement phase, provided that these conditions are met at the end of the turn.

5. LINE OF SIGHT.

All sighting is determined by drawing a straight line from the white dot at the centre of the firing hex to the target hex's centre. Any terrain features that cross this line are counted as cover. Irregardless of terrain, a unit may fire into the adjacent hex.

6. FIRE COMBAT.

Infantry vs Infantry:

A stack's firepower is totaled, with adjacent stacks firing at the same hex being added, and applied to the target hex. Roll 2D6, apply any appropriate modifiers, read off the result on the Infantry Fire Table (10.3) and apply the result to all in the target hex. Support weapons other than flamethrowers, demo charges and antimech weapons are added to a squad's fire factor. These afore mentioned weapons are determined separately if used against infantry.

Infantry vs Mech:

Squads firing roll D6 per squad and any support weapons firing and damage is determined on the table below. Beside the appropriate firer find the D6 result and look up the column to determine damage. Leaders may make their normal fire adjustment.

Weapon	Damage				Weapon
	1	2	3	4	
Squad-					
SMG/Rifle	6-4	3-1			SRM
Laser	6	5-4	3-2	1	LRM/LAW
LMG (2 dam)	3-1				ATM/AMM
MMG (4 dam)	6-4	3-1			D6 damage
HMG (6-8)	6-5	4-3	2-1		and a critical
					hit roll on
					location.

Infantry vs Vehicles:

As per individual support weapons or close assualat.

Mech vs Infantry:

Roll to hit hex (stationary target, -4 to hit) for any weapon other than machineguns, autocannons or flamers. Then roll on the Infantry Fire Table under the appropriate firepower (FP). Each weapon must roll separately, except for machineguns which may combine fire.

Weapon	FP	Weapon	FP
Machinegun- Light Mechs	6	SRM, 2 pack	4
Medium Mechs	8	4 pack	8
Heavy plus	12	6 pack	12
Flamer	24	LRM, 5 pack	4
Autocannon 2	20	10 pack	8

Autocannon 5	16	15 pack	12
Autocannon 10	12	20 pack	16
Autocannon 20	20		
Small Laser	2		
Medium Laser	4		
Large Laser	6		
Particle Projection Cannon	8	(12 if target in hard cover)	

Physical attacks-	Punch	tonnage/20
	Kick	tonnage/10
Thrash and bash *		tonnage/5

*this attack requires at least three limbs and disallows any other combat (like a charge) while the prone mech goes berserk. However, it will inflict the same damage to the building if undertaken in such a hex. Although infantry may attempt to fight back they must first pass a -1 Morale Check.

7. RALLY PHASE.

Rallying may be attempted if a friendly leader is present with the routers. To rally, a unit must roll equal to or less than its morale on 2D6, modified by the leader present.

If the unit has been fired upon since the last rally phase, or has an enemy mech within line of sight (or adjacent if the unit is in cover), then it must roll against its Desperation morale. This is their normal morale -4.

Leaders and special units (eg anti-mech infantry, Kuritan DEST teams) may self rally against their desperation morale, or, with a leader, against normal morale.

There is no penalty for failing to rally.

8. LEADERSHIP.

Leaders may influence any units in the same hex as themselves. The leadership modifier may be applied to firing and rally rolls of units of the same nationality (same House or mercenary unit), or at +1 for units not of the same House/unit. Only one leadership modifier may be used.

If a leader breaks then all units stacked with him must check morale, or break. Leaders in hexes of routing units may accompany them. A leader who passes his antimech morale check may apply his leadership modifier to units stacked with him. If he fails then there is no other penalty.

Two leaders may fire a support weapon at no penalty, or one fire it at half firepower. Single leaders may use 1 portage point support weapons without penalty (BEWARE of 9-2 leaders with SRM or Demo charges). This is how the Dispossessed regain their mechwarrior status!

9. FATE.

In combat when a 12 is rolled firing support weapons then one breaks down, is flipped over and is inoperative. Repair may be attempted in the Rally phase by rolling a 1 on D6,

modified by a leader if present, while a 6 means it is destroyed/ out of ammunition. A unit attempting to rally which rolls a 12 is eliminated.

Morale checks of a 2 make the unit go berserk. Berserk units charge the nearest enemy (including mechs - ever seen the look on an ATLAS pilot charged by infantry?), and don't need to check morale. Such units may return to normal after killing an enemy squad/ vehicle or damaging a mech and passing a morale check. Berserk leaders may make units stacked with them berserk by rolling their Desperation morale.

10. FORCES.

Campaign battles can use X points of squads and equipment, while scenarios designate particular platoons.

Rifle	Normal squads
Machine gun	Normal squads, + 1* MMG, 2* LMG
Laser	Elite Squad
SRM	Normal, + 5 Panzerfausts/ Bazookas

Plus one random leader per platoon works well.

For actual counters we used the following mix.

Davion	American squads, plenty of support weapons.
Kurita	Russian squads, less support but suicidal leaders. 6-2-8 squads DEST teams/ antimech.
Liao	French units. (Yes we hate the Capellans like everyone else).
Marik	English squads.
Steiner	German squads. SS counters for the Lyran Guard (who can resist the Black and white counters).
Mercenary	Whatever counter mix you prefer that isn't being used already. (I use German + SS antimech troops).
Periphery/ Pirate	Whatever minor nationality you like with their limited support weapons.

Using these rules makes combined operations far more interesting, makes machineguns useful and turns cities into the deathtraps they really are. Good Luck and good hunting...

QUICK AND DIRTY.

A recipe for Battletech scenarios.

Before one takes to the field for a quick Battletech game one needs a scenario, the forces, terrain and objective.

FORCES.

Mech forces of X lances of Y tonnage, for example each side of 1 Recon Lance of 150 ton.

TERRAIN.

Using SL boards, use 1/2 board per lance involved for a satisfactory battlefield with room to manoeuvre. Each player chooses a board until the total are chosen. Then roll D6 each, the highest chooses to set up the boards, or to choose whether to set up first/ or enter the battlefield. The lower takes the other option.

OBJECTIVE.

Those of you interested only in destroying other mechs will have started battling by now, if not, then here are some objectives to determine who wins the engagement. Roll for one or more, or choose one which may, or may not be revealed to your opponent. This way it is possible for both to claim some sort of victory, or lose all their forces but still achieve a victory of sorts.

1. Recon Mission.

Gain line of sight off the opponents board for three turns spent stationary to observe the enemy positions.

2. Breakthrough.

Exit 75% of force off the opponents side of board to raid behind enemy lines, or shatter a defensive line.

3. Prisoner of interrogation.

Capture an enemy mech warrior for questioning.

4. Eliminate Enemy leader.

Kill the opposing leader to demoralise the enemy.

5. Terrain Objective.

Take and Hold an enemy terrain feature like crossroads, building, hill top, water source.

6. Destruction of Enemy.

Either destroy 50 % enemy (unacceptable losses)
destroy greater tonnage than lose (attrition)
destroy enemy totally, or remove from field.

Now there is a reason to fight, good luck Mechwarriors.

Richard Shepherd.

INFANTRY WEAPONS.

Weapon	Damage				Weapon
	1	2	3	4	
Squad-					
SMG/Rifle	6-4	3-1			SRM
Laser	6	5-4	3-2	1	LRM/LAW
LMG (2 dam)	3-1				ATM/AMM
MMG (4 dam)	6-4	3-1			D6 damage
HMG (6-8)	6-5	4-3	2-1		and a critical
					hit roll on
					location.

BATTLEMECH WEAPONS.

WEAPON		FP	WEAPON	FP
Machinegun-	Light Mechs	6	SRM, 2 pack	4
	Medium Mechs	8	4 pack	8
	Heavy plus	12	6 pack	12
Flamer		24	LRM, 5 pack	4
Autocannon 2		20	10 pack	8
Autocannon 5		16	15 pack	12
Autocannon 10		12	20 pack	16
Autocannon 20		20		
Small Laser		2		
Medium Laser		4		
Large Laser		6		
Particle Projection Cannon		8 (12 if target in hard cover)		
Physical attacks-	Punch	tonnage/20		
	Kick	tonnage/10		
Thrash and bash *		tonnage/5		

*this attack requires at least three limbs and disallows any other combat (like a charge).

Note that this is only Inner Sphere material of about the 4th Succession War. Next issue will have updated errata for Clan and New tech.

EXPANDED HORIZONS.

... With a suddenness that surprised him, the forest finished before open fields. Lieutenant Harold brought his WOLVERINE to a halt and surveyed his screen to check that the rest of his lance had halted at the treeline. The chateau directly ahead was the enemy command post and towered over the mechs parked in its shadow. The grounds around the chateau were empty but for the adjacent walled orchard that was alive with men and vehicles. A convoy of three hover vehicles were nosing their way across the bridge to move up the avenue to the chateau. Idly, he wondered if the Kuritans knew that they were there, it was all so peaceful.

His ruminations were shattered as the forest erupted with the missiles of the Fire lance's full LRM spread launched at the unsuspecting Kuritans. At this sign, he and his lance surged forward to attack.

Yes, the snakes were surprised....

Soon after I first started playing Battletech (BT) I realised how boring the two original boards were. Since both my opponent and I also played Squad Leader (WWII squad level, single tanks, guns, and more) we had a score of different boards. These were at the same scale as the BT maps but full of more interesting terrain. As an added bonus the hexs are about half the BT size so a battlefield of just over twice the BT size can be played in half the area. Also, if you use a combined arms force then there are literally hundreds of counters for infantry, leaders, armour and equipment, plus sundry counters.

To play on Squad Leader (SL) boards does however need two preparations:

1) New Counters, 5/8" square of mechs involved. Some standard Inner Sphere mechs are at the end of the article. These may be photocopied and pasted on thin card before play. In play, mechs facing is the direction of their feet, torso twists announced (or use the SL turrent counters) while downed mechs are simply turned over.

2) Some Terrain types must be defined in BT terms. Note that each hex has a white dot in its center for tracing line of sight- very helpful as any terrain crossed from firer dot to target hex dot is counted as cover.

Terrain Types.

OPEN GROUND no other features.
ROAD -thick grey or yellow line which modifies
movement only through the road hexside.

SHELLHOLES-brown splotches across the hex, is treated as open terrain for mechs and vehicles but as cover for infantry.

SUNKEN ROAD -a road bordered by two tone brown contour line (darker on the outside). This counts as a -1 level depression for units within.

ELEVATED ROAD -a road bordered by two tone brown contour line (darker on the inside). This counts as a level 1 obstacle which mechs must declare being beside or atop. Movement cost is 2MP (changing elevation level) and blocks line of sight.

BRIDGES -A manmade structure spanning a stream or gully which is ignored by mechs, but vehicles and infantry may use to cross the obstacle. Fire crossing the side of a bridge strikes vehicles/infantry as if they were behind a wall.

WALLS & HEDGES-Grey and dark green hexsides respectively which only affect infantry, and walls affect wheeled vehicles, as a half level obstacle.

HILLS -Each level higher is a darker shade of brown for each elevation change.

CLIFFS -A serrated black brown hexside of the sudden drop between the two hexes. Mechs and vehicles can fall down the cliff while infantry cannot cross one unless Jump infantry.

WOODS -Forested areas of dark green which may be designated light or heavy by the scenario. If not so declared then treat a forest hex surrounded on all sides by other forest hexes as Heavy Woods, and all other hexes as Light.

ORCHARD -Four green splotches of Light woods, but only count as a level 1 obstacle.

GRAIN -Yellow or buff hexes of cultivated fields that have no effect on mechs or vehicles, but provide cover for infantry. Flammable.

MARSH -Dark bluish green hex with swamp symbols on it, treated as rough and level 0 water.

CRAGS -Hex of four irregular boulder symbols treated as rough.

GRAVEYARD -Hex of small grey-white rectangles representing a typical graveyard of stones and mausoleums which is treated as rough.

GULLY -Represented by a thin black line on a thicker brown line with a dark green margin. Counts as a -1 depression.

STREAM -A gully with water within (a blue line within) which counts as a -1 depression and level 0 water, unless made deeper by scenario rules.

WATER OBSTACLE -A thick blue line, straight edged mostly of a Canal that counts as level 1 or 2 water.

POND -A hex containing a large patch of blue of a pond which is level 1 water.

RIVER -Usually a multihex feature predominantly blue whose depth is usually stated by the scenario. If not then consider the marginal hex rows as level 1 water, each row of hexs next into the river count as another 1 deeper until a maximum of level 4 water.

BUILDINGS

WOODEN -Brown rectangular structures.

STONE/CONCRETE -Grey rectangular structures.

All one hex buildings are treated as level 1 obstacles while all multihex buildings are level 2 or more obstacles.

Building hexes containing a white square have a staircase for moving up or down within the building.

Multihex buildings may be designated as higher than level 2 and are assigned CF factors as per building type in Citytech. Building CF factors and damage can be noted by hex on scrap paper and rubble counters placed when the CF is exceeded.

ROWHOUSE -A multihex building with thick black lines across internal hexsides are rowhouses wherein each hex is sealed against the adjacent. Consequently, crossing these internal hexsides counts as entering and leaving the building for damage and piloting rolls. Vehicles and Infantry cannot move from hex to hex across these hexsides unless previously breached by mech, fire or explosive charges.

SPLITLEVEL -A multihex building that crosses an elevation level is counted as level 2 on the highest level and the rest of the building as level 2+the difference. (eg. a building across one contour level is level 2 on the higher level and the rest is a level 3 obstacle).

If you do have access to SL then some useful counters are

RUBBLE for levels/buildings destroyed.

FIRE counters for pyromaniacs, and **SMOKE**.

TURRENT counters for torso twists.

TARGET counters for shutdown mechs.

ROAD BLOCKS)

WIRE) For fortifications.

BUNKERS/TRENCHES)

and any infantry, tanks, guns, leaders and support weapons you may think are useful. Hopefully this article will expand your battles to more interesting and, dare I say it, realistic battlefields.

To convert a BT scenario just grab two half boards of similar terrain for each BT board. For city fights there are boards of varying degrees of urbanisation, the buildings on

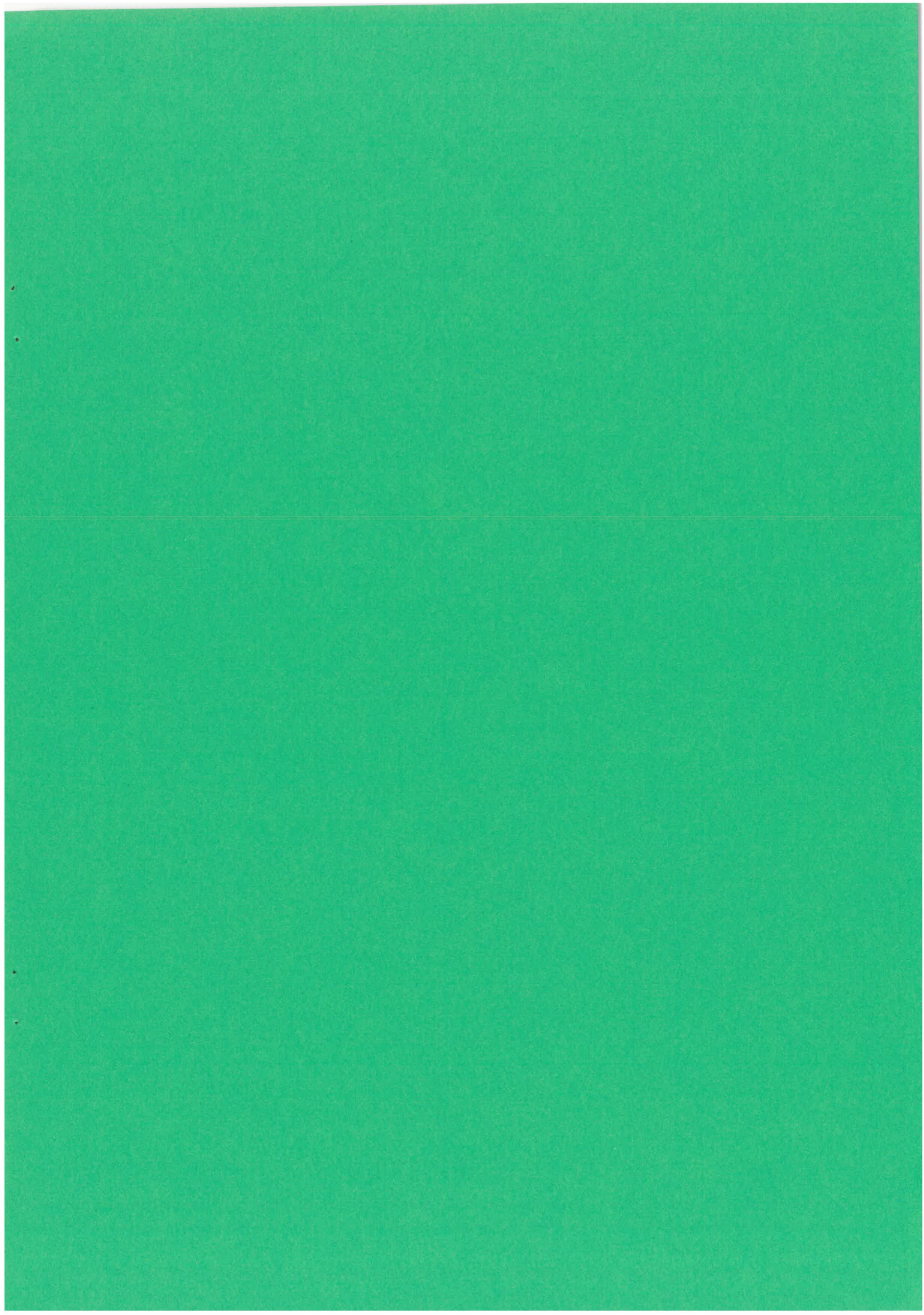
just need typing and CF to be recorded by hex number before play. If you don't mind a little bookkeeping then it is helpful, especially in bigger engagements, to record the mechs involved and each turn write the number of hexes moved, prefixed by a W, R, or J for Walked, Ran or Jumped respectively. When fighting company level actions, or bigger, this becomes necessary lest you forget who moved how far.

The different terrain of the SL boards means that BT scenarios may be refought in different terrains each with their own tactical complexities. Fighting over SL boards allows larger scale battles to be fought at a manageable level. Personally, I have fought a battalion level contested river crossing in open to urban terrain, across 9 SL boards (about 4 1/2 BT boards) in a long day. Since I began piloting a mech the nature of Battletech warfare has changed, especially since the Operation Galahad exercises-- 4th Succession War tactics of Hanse. No longer is it the norm to see two lances sqaring off for battle, rather war has become a larger affair of companies and combined arms-- mechs, armour and infantry. These battles are much better fought across the more varied terrain of the SL boards, with the accompanying armour, infantry and support equipment counters that may be fielded.

Mechs; Locust, Wasp, Stinger, Commando, Urbanmech, Valkyrie, Jenner, Panther, Whitworth, Blackjack, Hatchetman, Phoenix-Hawk, Vindicator, Centurion, Hunchback, Trebuchet, Griffin, Shadow-Hawk, Wolverine, Dragon, Rifleman, Catapult, Crusader, Thunderbolt, Archer, Warhammer, Marauder, Orion, Victor, Battlemaster, Stalker, Atlas.



Richard Shepherd.



What if ⁰⁰⁰
The Fabulous Furry
FREAK
BROTHERS
BECAME
WARGAMERS?
by Time apologists to Shogun

