

THE COMPETITIVE QUEST

is a D&D fanzine by Samuel Edward Konkin III, Box 9026, Long Beach, CA 90810, for Alarums and Excursions (the D&D APA), trade, selected friends, fellow fighters, magic-users, clerics and thieves in Long Beach, and on request if I have any left over. DAAWOL!!!

Volume I Number One for A&E 6

STATISTICS TABLE (Clip and Save)

Probability Table for Dice Throws

How to read them: "#" means the number that the dice throw adds up to. "%" means the probability out of one hundred per cent that said number will be generated by the dice throw. "N" is the number of permutations of the dice that will generate the number in question, useful mainly for statisticians who want to check the results and who may wish to derive the algorithm (which I have yet to do) for generating their own tables. "#" on the right side of the table is the same as "#" on the left--dice throws are symmetrical so this way of tabling makes the table more compact. Below each table is the standard deviation, more or less.

Example: Say you are told you need to make a saving throw against poison and beat a 13 (you need fourteen or better). You have three dice. Well, you have a 9.7% chance of throwing a 13 (break even). Excluding that, you have a 6.9% chance of getting a 14, a 4.6% chance of 15, a 2.8% chance of 16, a 1.4% chance of 17, and a .5% chance of 18. Only rule you need to know is that probabilities are additive; so your total probability of getting 14 and better is 16.3%. Now the fraction 1/6 is 16.7% which means you have less than one chance in six of making the saving throw. Another way to look at it is that you have five-to-one odds against you. You should be sweating.

For Two Dice

#	%	N	#
2	2.8	1	12
3	5.6	2	11
4	8.3	3	10
5	11.1	4	9
6	13.9	5	8
	16.6	6	
		7	

For Three Dice

#	%	N	#
3	.5	1	18
4	1.4	3	17
5	2.8	6	16
6	4.6	10	15
7	6.9	15	14
8	9.7	21	13
9	11.5	25	12
10	12.5	27	11

Between 5 and 9 prob. = 67%

Between 8 and 13 prob. = 67%

Four Six-Sided Dice

#	%	N	#
4	0.077	1	24 ((Anybody
5	0.309	4	23 feeling
6	0.77	10	22 artistic
7	1.54	20	21 out there
8	2.70	35	20 may wish
9	4.30	56	19 to graph
10	6.37	80	18 these into
11	8.02	104	17 the obvi-
12	9.65	125	16 ous bell-
13	10.80	140	15 shaped
	11.23	146	curve))

14

I hope it is well-known that if only one die of any number of sides is thrown, the probability of getting any number is exactly one over the number of sides. Example, 25% chance of getting any number of the 4-sided die, 16.6% (16.7% to round up) of getting any number on the 6-sided die, and so on. Another observation of some interest is that when you get to higher numbers and orders (8th, 9th level, etc.) the probability gets large that you will get near the mode (around the middle so to speak). Finally, note that when using the 3-sided for individual characteristics, you have 1/200 chance of getting 18.

THE ARISING OF THE LONG BEACH GAME

It all began when The Thornton and I observed a D&D game at the Mythopeic Society Picnic last month. I had heard about D&D in APA-L and in conversation, and seen the display at NASFIC, but it was the observation of actual play that intrigued me. We then found out that Sandy and Steve McIntosh had purchased the rules, and I figured that anything with three volumes of basic rules and several supplements was sufficiently complex that I would not get quickly bored and which would really give my imagination something to sink its teeth in. Naturally, Steve and Sandy were the first to make dungeons, but the Thornton and I ~~threw~~ threw our activist training (Libertarian Movement) into recruiting players until we had nearly gotten the Speculative Fiction Association of Long Beach (SFALB).

Until Jack Harness gave me the A&E 5 at a LASFS meeting, the only guide we had was what we had seen, Hilda Hannifen's Mockturtle D&D zine in APA-L, and the rules. So we had already had some fights over interpretation. For example, Steve insists there is no prohibition against edged weapons for clerics in the official rules, the controlling statement only prohibiting "magical edged weapons". Spell control was utterly subjective until we got A&E 5. And Sandy's dungeon was such a killer that she at one point wiped out History to save half her party from a Gargoyle on the first level.

A big problem which seems to be unique to LB D&D is that when the party gets over 4, the game slows and acrimony grows rapidly. (See Illuminatus on the "Law of Fives" concerning bureaucracy for a theoretical explanation that makes sense to me. Though little else in the book does...)

Another problem which rankles at least me is the problem of ego-tripping, again aggravated in large groups. That also may be more of a statement of the individuals involved rather than any peculiarity in the game.

Anyways, we are going to try to solve the problem by running simultaneous dungeons at our gatherings. For example, this coming Saturday, Craig will have a host dungeon with The Thornton bringing his along for the overflow. Any suggestions will be read with interest.

We have 5 prospective DMs here at the moment. All are big on putting their philosophy in, especially zapping unlawful acts (as they construe them) by lawful characters. For example, Sandy had a room which, when opened, revealed a previous quester who had been trapped there and babbling out of his mind. We were nearly paranoid enough to zap him as some sort of trap, but finally we got him out and checked for treasure. Then an argument ensued as to whether he should be dragged along or abandoned, which narrowly was decided by the "take him along" group when I volunteered to carry him if necessary. At that point, he disappeared, and "God" informed us that had we left him, we would all be dropped a level. The Thornton is planning rooms which will annihilate questers who have lost a few Lawful brownie points along the way. (Enough to make one wish to cast a spell to Immanentize the Eschaton, already!)

With all these dungeons, I am faunching for some different and thus volunteered to go for a Wilderness/Sea game. I have been holding back, seeing what I can learn by playing, and waiting for payday to get my own rules. In doing so, ideas have been building up to the point where it threatens to get really out of hand. Read on.

MELLURIA

This, then, is what I mean by a "competitive quest." I am throwing out raw ideas at this point so all you experienced types out there can tell me "such-and-such is ridiculous; it will never work. I know because I tried it or saw it tried and thus-and-such happened."

Melluria is a small world, symmetrical around a central island with a mean dungeon. However, that is the last obstacle of the questing parties. Surrounding this island is a sea, and around that a chain of mostly impassable mountains. Right on the coast across from each other with the isle in between are two towns which will have ships for sale and other such. Actually I may have the goal island off to the north or south so as to put an island full of pirates or something for a dummy, misleading isle. Maybe I will have them close together and a Scylla-Charybdis on either shore with a swift channel flowing in between.

OK, back to the mainland. To the south on each side will be swamps, to the north Northern Waste, and in between desert to allow me to use the full range of monsters and treasures. Finally at the far west and east will be a 3-story castle with a two-level dungeon underneath (the tower will be the "third level" with a lord of opposite alignment). Each of these will be relatively easy so that the questers can get gold to take care of themselves for the adventurous, different and fun stuff out in the Wilderness.

Now for the competitive aspect. The West side will be a Lawful kingdom; the East a Chaotic domain. There will be deliberately chosen two parties, one Lawful and one Chaos. By now I think you get the idea. The Lawful party will appear at the Chaotic castle; the Chaotic party at the Law stronghold.

MORE MELLURIA

Now to mix in the final ingredient (unless I think of more). To each of these parties will appear an apparition, a top-level Thief (Neutral) who will explain the following:

In this small world a relative peace (isolationism may be a more appropriate term) reigned, with the kingdoms each going their own way and the central area being a point of trade (where thieves and pirates naturally flourish). In each realm, those of the most abilities embarked on a plan of research and development. There are 6 principals: Lawful Wizard: Uses his power to maintain a stalemate with his opposite number. By cancelling out high-level magic, he makes the coming Final Battle hinge on small fluctuations.

Lawful Patriarch: Calls upon his god for the Ultimate Weapon and is reward with (from another dimension) The Holy Grail.

Lawful Lady (Tenth level Lord): Wife of the magic-user above and keeper of the Lawful castle.

On the other side is a Chaotic Wizard cancelling, a Chaotic Lady womanning the keep, and an Evil High Priest who also called upon his God for the Ultimate WEapon--the One Ring.

If the Chaotic party arrives first, they can slip on the One Ring and take over, giving Chaos the victory. If the Lawful party arrives first, they can throw the ring into the Holy Water in the Holy Grail and dissolve it forever. Chaos will fall, etc.

The top-level Thief's wife will be in command of the pirate island. The top-level thief himself, being Neutral, has nothing but vacuum to look forward to upon his demise, but he is growing bored with the

MELLURIA (Concluded)

Cosmic Quest. For him, the action is everything. He wishes the game to be afoot, so to speak, so he dextrously ripped off the dimension-teleporters from each side and selected the parties to tip the balance. They could simply meet on the Central Isle and wipe each other out. Or they could lose one party to the dangers. The other would then win for their side. The Top Thief tells them he will teleport back and forth, and may tell them how the other group is doing from time to time to spur them on. He swears not to steal anything from them as they acquire it, because then he would only be stealing from himself.

And they go to it!

So that's my ideas so far on Melluria, the Competitive Quest. Obviously complex; I am going to try to get it ready for a marathon game over the Christmas holidays.

Comments and suggestions are once again invited.

CRYSTAL BALLING

Jack Harness: Thanks for trusting me with the A&E 5 and here are four pages to fulfil my obligation.

Libertarians are very lawful (except Stirnerites, who are Neutral, but that's an in joke.) Keep listing all that good stuff, but how about a list of places which you can walk in to shop? Advantages are that you can pick up what you want and have it then and there instead of waiting for mail. In fact, some people might even want someone in NY or LA area to pick up something for them and mail it, rather than having to wait for orders to be processed. If you know any places in Southern California which carry the books, I intend to head out there Friday (after the LASFS meeting).

Put me down for one each of the reprints. I pass them around LB.

CRYSTAL BALLING (concluded)

Dick Eney: Romance and sex in the dungeons? Wow! What is Brilliant Jade's resistance to incubi? Considering the elaborateness and story-telling that went into DP 1, I would love to have you in Melluria. Just so you could write up the story (how about a Bard character?) More!

Sherna Burley: Jeez, I left NYC fandom in June and never heard a word of D&D until I hit LA. Would you be interested in introducing a few of my old friends in NYUSFS to a D&D fame? Come to think of it, I'll offer the same to any reader of A&E in the Long Beach area to help get them into their first Dungeon. Anybody else out there volunteer their addresses. I'll check my address book.//Test out your hit area idea and see if it violates Eney's Rule against complications.

Bob Sacks: Your steward idea got a good laugh in Long Beach, and some thoughtful consideration.

Nicolai Shapero: Horrible repro. Lots of dynamite data. I am pushing adoption of the spell casting times in Long Beach, perhaps with modifications.

Wayne Shaw: Sounds like Temporalana could out-compete Melluria. More detail, please?

Dick Eney (again): I cannot agree too strongly on your statement that the DM dice throws create Blanks, not people. Ghu, do different DM's make a difference in whether you have an adventure or just rack up points! Form a good idea; may xerox it. (Thanks)

Hilda Hannifen: Already commented on you in Apa-L.

Elst: I have heard a lot about you from afar. You are witty.