

DragonNotes

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A regular feature for DragonQuest Players by David Ritchie

Both *The Palace of Ontoncle* and *The Blade of Allectus* are now in stock and should have already reached dealers' shelves. Due to scheduling difficulties, the next *DragonQuest* products will be delayed until March. At that time, *Arcane Wisdom*, *The DragonQuest Randomized Dungeon Kit*, and *Frontiers of Alusia* (currently in the Art Department) will be ready to ship.

The Frontiers of Alusia is a product about which we here at SPI are particularly proud. Designed by renowned FRP grognard Rudy Kraft, *FOA* consists of a four color 22" x 34" map of a mountainous frontier area together with a booklet of descriptions of the known features of the area and instructions for using the map in creating adventures. Though the booklet is keyed to the *DragonQuest* rules and the terrain portrayed is drawn exclusively from *DragonQuest*, the map can be used with virtually any fantasy role-playing game currently on the market.

Ultimately, *FOA* will connect to two other maps showing the "civilized" area to the north. These succeeding maps will be part of a major adventure package and will be accompanied by 70+ pages of support material describing the predominant cultures existing in the area portrayed. If that package is a success, we then plan to market a series of additional maps covering the steppes to the east, the land beyond the western sea and the rich and sophisticated kingdoms of the lands south of the *FOA* map. Assuming that all of this comes to pass, the final result would be a Warm Europe-size map of an entire continental mass with over 150 pages of support material detailing a score of societies (including their customs, religions, political and economic systems, class structures and the like). All future *DragonQuest* adventures would be placed somewhere in this continent and we might even attempt a few board games based on the history of the area.

Also in the works currently is a third *DragonQuest* supplement dealing with that hairiest of processes, the generation of a world in which to set adventures. Nobody has yet come up with a system for painlessly doing so, though endless rivers of advice on the subject has flowed from the pens of GM's writing in various fanzines. So...SPI has tapped another veteran role-playing designer "roll-playing" if you write copy for Avalon Hill) to come up with a step-by-step guide as to just how to do it. Steve Jackson, designer of *Melee*, *Wizard* and *The Fantasy Trip* (among others) is currently hard at work between issues of *The Space Gamer* developing what we think will be the most interesting (and sorely needed) set of rules in FRP gaming. If all goes well and the barn don't burn and the creek don't rise, look for this release at *Origins*.

SPI's *MonsterQuest* was, if anything, too successful. At first, it didn't look like anyone had even read our ad and I was spending a lot of time in occult book stores looking for material and mentally preparing myself to research and write the entire fifth book of *DragonQuest*. Then, about Christmas, I started getting these bundles of letters.... Now, I am engrossed in the sorting, collating, and editing of piles of exotic ghoulies, ghosties, demons, and things that generally go bump in the night. Most of them are quite good and I am often amazed at the variety of sources consulted (though I wonder if a few respondents are not putting me on). In a month or so, the supplement should be finished

and we will notify everyone who sent us material of the status of their submission. Look for this product late in the spring.

That's about it for new product for the upcoming year. We have a few other things in the works that might come to fruition next fall. I'll talk about those if and when I manage to get them past the ogres who guard the integrity of the production schedule. Meantime, I promised to answer some questions in this column, so....

Drake Letcher wants to know: Why can *everyone* be a magic user without penalty?

Drake feels that a beginning character who is designed not to be a magic user starts with a disadvantage since he won't have the benefit of all that free training (plus, in some cases, a rather generous endowment from his College in the form of expensive tools and supplies). Hmm...I questioned that idea when we wrote the rules, then dismissed it because a non-magic user got that wonderful benefit to his magic resistance while a beginning magic user was usually cooked meat early in the game unless he made arrangements to have himself protected by some tough swordsmen. Under the provisions of the rules governing adventures (especially 79.4), an Adept who seeks such protection will usually receive only a half share of any loot. I would say that in general the benefits of being a magic user are fairly well balanced against the drawbacks, but for Drake and others who may disagree, I suggest the following procedure be followed:

Any character who starts the game as a magic user should have his total allotment of silver pennies *decreased by half* (round up). Any character who decides not to be a magic user should have his experience points with which he starts the game *doubled*.

Aside from being a balancing factor, this procedure can be justified on the grounds that a character who spends his time being tutored in a (presumably) monastic environment is less likely to have accumulated any money or experience outside of that imparted to him by his tutor(s). On the other hand, a character who has lived outside of the stringent rules of apprenticeship in the magical arts is more likely to have acquired secular experience and modest wealth.

Norman Heib asks: How do you modify the Fatigue and Endurance of a Shapechanger who has suffered wounds in one form and changes into another form? Oops! We don't seem to have covered that one. So, ok, here goes....

The Fatigue and Endurance levels remaining in one form should be directly proportional to those same levels in another form. Proportions should be calculated independently for each characteristic as follows: Divide the number of points remaining by the maximum value for the same characteristic while in the same form.

For example, a Shapechanger who had a maximum Fatigue of 30 while in Human form and who had suffered 15 Damage Points to Fatigue would have 15 Fatigue Remaining. Therefore, the remaining Fatigue (15) would be divided by the maximum Fatigue (30) to yield a result of .50. This is the percentage of Fatigue remaining to the Shapechanger while in Human form (50%). The maximum Fatigue of the Shapechanger while in Beast form is then calculated by multiplying the maximum Fatigue of the Shapechanger's Beast half by this percentage. Thus, if the Shapechanger was a Wolf in Beast form with a

Fatigue of 20, the Shapechanger would have 10 Fatigue remaining if he changed into Wolf form ($20 \times .50 = 10$).

This procedure should be used whenever *any* characteristic has been decreased in one form to convert the loss when the Shapechanger adopts another form. The same procedure should be followed in the case of Werewolves, Demons and others who may adopt a variable form.

Note: Whenever a fraction of a percentage exists or whenever rounding is necessary, the GM should use his judgment and a bit of dramatic license to determine whether to round up or down.

Norman also wanted to know it we meant it in 6.6 when we said that a Giant's Difficulty Factor for doing Minor Magic is *increased* by "1" (making it easier to perform the magic). The answer, strange as it may seem, is yes. Minor, in this context, means "simple" rather than "small." Thus, the idea was to alleviate the fact that Giants will have a lessened Magical Aptitude by giving them a bonus when performing simple types of magic to offset their overall lack of magical ability somewhat. Good question, though.

Salutations until next time.