

The warrior alternative

Generating non-magical characters for the DQ game

by Craig Barrett

Of all role-playing game topics, my favorite is fantasy. I enjoy working with simulations of magic, provided that the magic is treated as something special and is used in moderation. This statement seems contradictory in light of the fact that the fantasy RPG I have worked with most frequently is the DRAGONQUEST™ adventure game. Contradictory, because the DQ game system not only encourages every player to make his character a practitioner of magic but actually penalizes a player who doesn't.

It's not that the DRAGONQUEST game doesn't allow for non-magical characters, because non-Adepts abound. For example, non-magical characters are described in the game rules (see 31.0 and 31.4), in game supplements (from "Camp of Alla-Akabar" to "Blade of Allectus"), and even in Gerry Klug's article "DragonNotes" (ARES™ Magazine, issue #11), which deals with the issue of randomizing NPCs. So, nothing in the rules prohibits a player's character from being a non-Adept, but nothing encourages

to start with some Ranked skills besides languages may find this option intriguing.

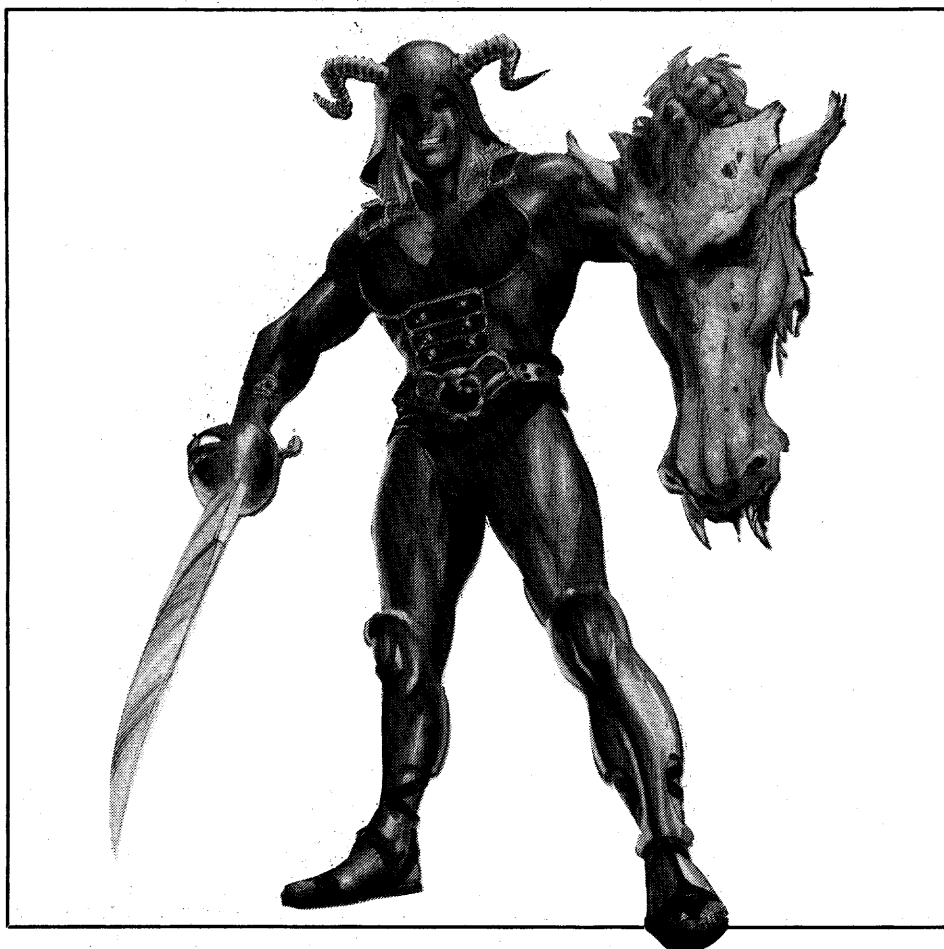
If a player examines the game rules (up to Rule 8.7) for resources available to his character, he realizes that his character must pay *something* in order to be initiated into a magical College. The most valuable clue to this *something* is found outside the regular DQ game materials, in Chaosium's *Thieves' World*. When Eric Goldberg, one of the original DQ game designers, adapted the game to fit the universe of Robert Asprin's fine *Thieves' World* anthology series, Goldberg directly contravened Rule 34.5, which prohibits Adepts from learning the magic of a College other than his own. The revised procedure goes like this: In exchange for a six-month term of study and 5,000 Experience Points (EPs), the initial magic of a College of the same alignment as a character (see 34.1) can be learned; for a twelve-month term of study and 7,500 EPs, the initial magic of a College of a different alignment can be learned.

In this setup, it's easier to learn the magic of a different but similarly aligned College than it was for the Adept to learn the magic of his original College, because, at this point, the character is building on a familiar foundation. A non-aligned College is more difficult since the character is hampered by the training gained from his first College. By splitting the difference between the two costs — say, a nine-month term of study and 6,500 EPs — we arrive at the initiation cost for a character's first magical College.

Let's suppose that, while a character's classmates are busy with their spells and potions, he decides to go a different route. The character knows that he can always be initiated into a magical College later (for nine months of study and 6,500 EPs); however, he currently wants an education that offers more tangible survival benefits. Instead of entering a school for magic, he enters a different kind of school.

Unless the Gamemaster has created a highly detailed DRAGONQUEST world, a player does not have to worry about identifying this other school that his character attended, any more than he would if all characters attended a magic-teaching school. Instead, this player should follow the standard Character Generation rules until he reaches Rule 8.5; at this point, he stops. The player now has nine months and 6,500 EPs to spend on his character for the development of skills other than magic.

These EPs can't be spent indiscriminately. Because players don't want to mess



Those who've played the DQ game know what I mean. Reading the Character Generation rules leads the player face to face with Rule 8.7: "The player may want to . . . choose a college of magic for his character (see 34). . . ." But what if the player doesn't *want* to choose a College for his character? Tough. No alternative is offered; no compensation for not making a character an Adept is provided. The rules trot blithely on, and the player is left wondering why such an empty opportunity exists.

it, either. The offer of a magical College for one's character is a gift; forgo the gift, and nothing is offered in its place.

This situation doesn't seem fair, because the courage required to engage in a DQ campaign without the recourse of personal magic deserves some reward.

Hence, the "warrior alternative" offered in this article. This option provides immediate martial privileges for players who are willing to sacrifice intermediate-range magical advantages for them. Players who wish

up the play balance, some restrictions are in order (see 87.7).

First, every character who chooses the warrior alternative expends 2,500 EPs on characteristic points: either for one Fatigue Point, which raises the character's total no higher than 23 and has no effect on Endurance (see 5.3), or for 3 Perception Points, which are added to his initial 8 PC points.

Second, a character selects one skill from Chapter VII that he majored in and expends sufficient EPs to raise that skill to Rank 2. Then, he selects a skill he minored in and expends enough EPs so that the skill is at Rank 1. Players should be able to defend skill choices if the Gamemaster challenges the relationship of these selections to the character being role-played. A school for Assassins, for example, might provide a supplementary course in Spying or Courtesy (the character has to get close to his target if he's to kill him), but not one in Alchemy or Navigation. A school for Thieves could also train Merchants (this way, a character could double as a fence for stolen goods), but not Military Scientists (though soldiers are also foragers and, therefore, might minor as Thieves).

Since the warrior alternative is the point of discussion here, choices for a major skill should be limited to Assassin, Beast Master, Military Scientist, Navigator, Ranger, Spy, and Thief. Neither the major nor the minor skill should be a language.

Once the character has selected his major and minor skills, he selects three weapons consistent with these skills and expends sufficient EPs to earn Rank 2 with one of them and Rank 1 with each of the other two. Thus, an Assassin *must* select either the sap or the garotte as a tool of his trade, and he probably wouldn't choose a broadsword or shield, while a Military Scientist (particularly one from a family of the Greater Nobility) probably would. These weapon choices shouldn't be unduly restricted, but should remain reasonable.

When weapons have been selected, all of the character's 6,500 EPs may have been used. Of any EPs remaining, only up to 500 can be held in reserve to be added to the EP bank once the procedures in Rule 8.7 are completed. Any EPs in excess of this amount are permanently lost. Remaining EPs can now be spent for more Fatigue or Perception points, for Stealth to Rank 1, for Horsemanship to Rank 1, for Hunting to Rank 1 (see Paul Crabaugh's article in DRAGON® Magazine, issue #78, p. 84), or for any affordable combination of these.

When remaining EPs have been spent, the player proceeds with Rules 8.5, 8.6, and 8.7. EPs acquired under Rule 8.5 can be spent in any manner desired during this process. (I recommend immediately using the bargain price of 100 EPs for one skill — Rule 8.6 — for a language skill. Under Rule 49.6, this means a character begins play with Rank 8 in that language. He already has 7 to 10 Rankings in other skills, so why pass up this chance if 8.5 has given him the EPs to spend?)

If the character is human (this variant is mainly designed for humans), he is credited with being able to read, write, and speak Common at Rank 8 (see Rule 49.0, paragraph 3, and Rule 49.6).

When the character generation process is completed, a player adds to the EP bank those EPs he's been holding in reserve from his character's "education fund" of 6,500 EPs. Finally, the player assigns his character a name (see 8.8), and his work is done.

Gamemasters should deal with the newly created non-Adept in a liberal fashion and should be patient as the non-Adept works out the duties of having sudden Rank. An Assassin of Rank 2, for example, must pay 700 Silver Pennies per year as "hush money" and such (see 51.9). Since the character won't be able to afford that sum of money right away, the Gamemaster should give the new Assassin plenty of time to gather the needed funds during his first year of operation. The Gamemaster must treat all skills with similar generosity.

One final note: These Ranks should be seen as fair just compensation for an audacious character who is willing to brave the dangers of a DRAGONQUEST world without the benefit of personal magical powers. By the character's abstinence, he's contributing to the value of the magic being used by others; therefore, he should be given a little bit of an edge in other areas. □

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