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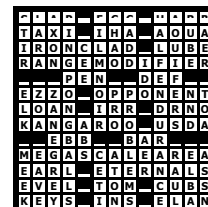


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CHAMPIONS CROSSWORD

Here is the solution for the crossword puzzle from *Digital Hero* #30.



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Mythic Hero by John R. Ivicsek Jr.

Achilles

As we all know, if you ask 15 people how to write something up in HERO, you'll probably get 15 different answers. That's a strength of the system, but it can get a little frustrating for new GMs and players. This becomes even more prominent when you ask someone how to write up a character from some other media. Since no two campaigns are alike, this column offers a "high end" and a "low end" version of characters to provide (for example) an Achilles capable of duking it out with Eurostar and also one more suited to being the best warrior archetype in your Fantasy Hero campaigns.

First up is Achilles, the greatest warrior of his day. In one of the more popular tales, Achilles is dipped in the River Styx by his mother Thetis and thus gains invulnerability everywhere the water flowed across his skin, except at his heel where he was held. In an interesting variant, the earlier version of Thetis' efforts goes like this: Thetis anointed the infant with ambrosia and then placed him upon a fire to burn away his mortal portions; she was interrupted by Peleus, whereupon she abandoned both father and son in a rage.

When Achilles was a boy, the seer Calchas prophesied that the city of Troy could not be taken without his help. Thetis knew that if her son went to Troy, he would die an early death, so she sent him to the court of Lycomedes, in Scyros; there he was hidden, disguised as a young girl. During his stay he had an affair with Lycomedes' daughter, Deidameia, and she had a son, Pyrrhus (or Neoptolemus), by him. Achilles' disguise was finally penetrated by Odysseus, who placed arms and armor amidst a display of women's finery and seized upon Achilles when he was the only "maiden" to be fascinated by the swords and shields. Achilles then went willingly with Odysseus to Troy, leading a host of his father's Myrmidons and accompanied by his tutor Phoenix and his close friend Patroclus.

At Troy, Achilles distinguished himself as an invincible warrior. Among his exploits, he captured twenty-three towns in Trojan territory, including the town of Lyrnessos, where he took the woman Briseis as a war-prize. Later on Agamemnon, the leader of the Greeks, was forced by an oracle of Apollo to give up his own war-prize, the woman Chryseis, and took Briseis away from Achilles as compensation for his loss. This action sparked the central plot of the Iliad, for Achilles became enraged and refused to fight for the Greeks any more. The war went badly, and the Greeks offered handsome reparations to their greatest warrior, but Achilles still refused to

fight in person. However he agreed to allow his friend Patroclus to fight in his place, wearing his armor. The next day Patroclus was killed and stripped of the armor by the Trojan hero Hector, who mistook him for Achilles.

Achilles was overwhelmed with grief for his friend and rage at Hector. His mother obtained magnificent new armor for him from Hephaestus, and he returned to the fighting and killed Hector. He desecrated the body, dragging it behind his chariot before the walls of Troy, and refused to allow it funeral rites. When Priam, the king of Troy and Hector's father, came secretly into the Greek camp to plead for the body, Achilles finally relented; in one of the most moving scenes of the Iliad, he received Priam graciously and allowed him to take the body away.

After the death of Hector, Achilles' days were numbered. He continued fighting heroically, killing many of the Trojans and their allies, including Memnon and the Amazon warrior Penthesilia. Finally Priam's son Paris (or Alexander), aided by Apollo, wounded Achilles in the heel with an arrow; Achilles died of the wound.

So that's the tale of the greatest of Greek warriors. But we have been presented with two differing views of supernatural abilities. In the Iliad, when Achilles learns about the death of Patroclus, he is so overwhelmed with rage and grief that he almost stalks out to slaughter Hector right then and there, even without his armor. Thetis manages to calm her furious son long enough to get armor and a new shield from Hephaestus. But if he is invulnerable everywhere except his ankle, why doesn't he just need a leg guard and maybe a shield? This is touched upon in the movie "Troy" when a young boy says that he has heard that Achilles is invulnerable. Achilles replies "Well, I wouldn't be bothering with the shield then, would I?"

So that's our goal, two versions of Achilles. One is the greatest warrior of his day, perhaps of all time. The other is a demigod born of the nymph Thetis and the mortal king Peleus, invulnerable and nigh invincible unless the gods get involved. Now the main differences are going to be in his stats and powers, so the terms "High-End" and "Low-End" might be a bit misleading. Both versions should be fully capable of trouncing most opposition; they'll just do it in differing fashions. It should also be noted that in a standard heroic level campaign where the characters do not pay for equipment, Low end Achilles would save another 49 points.

artwork by Bill Jackson

AUTHORS' NOTE

The authors would like to thank Steve Long and Hero Games for permission to use Eurostar and Fiacho. Text from the background of Monsieur Lefèvre was taken from Fiacho, featured in *Conquerors, Killers, and Crooks*.

EuroGuard

 by Bill Keyes and Denver Mason

EuroGuard

Membership: Watchman, AngelFire, Bielo, Passion, Purple Juggler, Speed, Tick Tock

Background/History: While only officially “ready to go” a little over a year ago (and taking into account years of building, recruiting, and preparing), EuroGuard has existed in one sense since 1988. It was born in the mind of Monsieur Mathieu Lefèvre, when he and the rest of the world were introduced to the horror of Eurostar. He was not alone. As the depredations of Fiacho and his group increased, an increasing demand for an organized defense against their attacks began to rise. Established superhero teams of various nations acquitted themselves well enough, but their own countries were, of course, their first priority. UNTIL had limited resources, with which they had to police the whole world.

Finally, those pushing for an EU-sponsored superteam won the day. Mathieu Lefèvre was put in charge of the project as official liaison and unofficial recruiter. His first candidate was Bielo, “The White.” When the barbaric deity was caught on television stopping a natural disaster and saving dozens of lives, Lefèvre realized he had found a fellow with a similar vision of Europe, and a cornerstone upon which build the rest of the team.

One of the last superheroes one would have expected soon stepped forward after that. The Watchman was well known as a nationalist who had serious misgivings about the EU. The Pole felt it his duty to volunteer for service, and in doing so remind everyone that each member state was its own nation first and a part of the Union second. Despite this differing point of view, his technological expertise proved to be absolutely essential for many of the future team’s resources.

Soon, others joined the ranks. The popular Spanish AngelFire, and Speed (the embittered hero from Malta) brought a better public image and hard-won experience against Eurostar, respectively. Tick Tock, by its own request, was released into EuroGuard’s custody after a brief sojourn as a villain in the United Kingdom. Der Purpurjongleur was hardly the most prominent or respected German hero around, but he was the first to try and meet the training requirements. A mentalist was badly needed, and Passion of France was accepted – despite her grating attitude.

Some nations treated the EuroGuard project as a dumping ground for their less desirable heroes, wanting to keep the crème de la crème for their own national teams. Others strove to send their best, and many countries let the heroes

decide for themselves if they wanted to try. The team might look very rag-tag indeed if it weren’t for a mandatory and intense six-month training course and evaluation for each applicant. And still the trainees come.

Applications also meant rejections. Some personalities were too volatile, too unwilling to work in a team environment. Politics and bureaucracy reared its ugly head in the selection process. There was tremendous pressure from within the EU to push certain candidates through, while rejecting others. The media played its part as well, and at times it seemed the public was ready to demand reality TV-style call-ins to see who would be admitted. Fortunately, somewhere in this mix, some good men worked with the heroes to establish standards and stick to them.

Bastion-1 was built in the North Sea, and at last the EuroGuard had a home. Of course, someone pointed out that half the team had no way to get there; the request for a team vehicle had never gotten EU approval. A plan in which the latest in European transport vehicles would be showcased was set into motion. Everything from combat-ready mega-copters to swift hydrofoil yachts has been used by the team.

It was a sleek jet by UK-based Corporation Sky-Buss that brought EuroGuard into their first encounter with Eurostar. Fiacho had ordered the destruction of the American Embassy in Brussels. No super-powered American forces were present (or could be called in time), so a request for assistance was sent out. This incident, later known as “the Brussels Situation,” turned out to be the defining moment for EuroGuard. With the element of surprise on their side, and knowing their foes better than their foes knew them, EuroGuard not only saved the embassy, but they managed to capture an enraged Durak! Of course, at least one EuroGuardsmen would have died if not for Bielo’s healing that day... but that was neither here nor there – the mission was considered a roaring success.

This victory was fleeting, for the rest of the villains escaped and Durak would later be freed from an UNTIL installation by his teammates – but it had proven a point. EuroGuard could hold its own against Eurostar. Europeans everywhere hailed it as a triumph. Members of the EU congratulated themselves on their foresight, and the plans for further development were suddenly a bandwagon everyone wanted to jump onto. By 2010, the team is expected to triple in size, and to have at least one other base completed.

photography by Bill Keyes