

# The Fantasy Trip

# Melee™

Man-to-Man Combat With Archaic Weapons

*Third Edition*

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Credit for this game must be shared (in general) with everyone who has ever designed or played a fantasy game, written about other and stranger days, or simply dreamed . . . and (specifically) with a number of excellent playtesters – namely Howard Thompson, Robert Taylor, Ben Ostrander, Kenneth Schultz, Robert Schultz, Patrick McLaughlin, Edmund Hack, Jay Rudin, Michael Sienkiewicz, Richard Boriskie, Buell Jannuzi, and Drew Pritsker.

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## CONTENTS

I. INTRODUCTION .....	2	Weapon Table.....	14
II. COMPONENTS .....	3	Thrown Weapons .....	15
III. CREATING A FIGURE .....	3	Missile Weapons .....	16
Strength .....	4	Hitting Your Friends .....	17
Dexterity .....	4	Hand-to-Hand Combat.....	17
IV. TURN SEQUENCING		Multiple HTH Combat.....	18
AND OPTIONS .....	5	Disengaging .....	19
List of Options .....	6	Disengaging from	
V. MOVEMENT .....	8	HTH Combat .....	20
Shifting .....	8	Defending and Dodging.....	20
VI. FACING.....	9	Forcing Retreat .....	20
VII. ATTACKS.....	10	Reactions to Injury.....	20
Rolling for a Hit.....	10	Dropped Weapons .....	21
Rolling for Damage .....	11	VIII. NONHUMANS.....	21
Armor and Shields .....	12	Monsters and Beasts .....	21
Pole Weapons.....	12	Fantasy Fighters.....	22
The Left-Hand Dagger.....	13	IX. EXPERIENCE.....	22
Shield-Rush Attacks.....	13	X. COMBAT EXAMPLE .....	23

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# I. INTRODUCTION

Flavius Marcellus, youngest centurion of the Legion, was angry. They had been in this forest for three days. The German barbarians weren't showing themselves, except to pick off an occasional scout. And now Honorius was overdue from sentry duty. If that old fool was dozing off again, there'd be trouble.

As he stepped into the little glade, Flavius saw movement at the other end. Honorius? No! He sensed, rather than saw, the shaggy clothing – and the ready bow. His soldier's reflexes launched him into a charge. Burdened as he was by his armor, he could still probably get that barbarian before . . .

An arrow snapped. Flavius felt pain, but not much; thank the gods for that armor. He moved in, weaving to spoil the archer's aim. A second arrow missed. As Flavius neared, the barbarian moved to put his back to a tree. His third arrow went off as the Roman swung his sword. It glanced off Flavius' armor. His own swing went wild, but his opponent was forced to abandon his bow.

Now the German tribesman had come up with an enormous broadsword, and the two were trading hacks. Slowed by his armor and shield, Flavius despaired of striking his agile opponent. Somehow, he did, wounding the barbarian badly.

The bleeding German tried to sidestep, but Flavius cut him off. Then the tribesman's desperate stroke hit home. Glancing off the shield and through armor, the broadsword bit into Flavius' side. Giddy from the shock, he abandoned the attack for a few seconds, content to parry and wait. The swords clashed and sparked.

Then, suddenly, it ended. Flavius' shortsword went under the German's wild slash and bit deeply. The unarmored savage staggered back; Flavius followed quickly and struck again. The barbarian collapsed, either dead or too badly wounded to stand. Flavius was hurt, but well able to walk. In the bushes he saw what was left of Honorius – but *he* was all right. He had revenge for his man, and maybe a prisoner. He bent over the savage . . .

*Melee* is a game of man-to-man combat with archaic weapons. It can be used to simulate combat between single opponents or small groups in any period.

Players create figures and send them into combat against a variety of opponents. Selection of weapons and armor, the strength and dexterity of the fighters, and the tactics the players choose will combine to tell which figures will survive. Successful fighters increase their strength and dexterity by gaining experience; losers die.

The narrative above was taken from an actual game. The *Combat Example* (page 23) takes the same fight and shows, using the *Melee* rules and dice rolls, how Flavius bested his foe.

*Melee* can also be used as a tactical aid for fantasy roleplaying. Players will find that the *Melee* system meshes easily with most rules, allowing tactical combat to be worked out in a logical manner. *Melee* lets the Game Master regularize movement and attacks on a small scale, taking one of the biggest headaches out of fantasy gaming.

*Melee* is basically a two-player game, but solitaire and multiplayer games are possible. Each player may control any number of figures; the only limit to the possible scenarios is your imagination.

## II. COMPONENTS

This *Melee* game contains:

- This rule booklet.
- One arena map, divided into hexagons (“hexes”) to govern movement, and larger dark-bordered “megahexes” to govern missile weapon fire.
- Over 70 counters representing men, animals, monsters, and dropped weapons.
- Three six-sided dice.

You will also need pencils, scratch paper, and a straightedge. Miniature figures are not necessary, but add interest.

## III. CREATING A FIGURE

*Melee* is a game of man-to-man combat, in which the most important factor is the ability of the individual fighters. Each counter in *Melee* represents a “figure” with its own capabilities, chosen by the player before the game begins. A fighter’s basic attributes are Strength (ST) and Dexterity (DX).

When a figure is first created, the player sets its ST and DX as follows: A human figure starts with 8 ST, 8 DX, and 8 extra points to be allotted as the player chooses. Thus, each figure begins with a total of 24 points – 13 to ST and 11 to DX, or any other combination adding to 24. Neither ST nor DX may begin at less than 8 for a human figure. (Animals and monsters go by other rules, which will be discussed later.)

