

PYRAMID



Issue 3/61 November '13

WAY OF THE WARRIOR



MORE POWER TO DUNGEON WARRIORS!

by Peter V. Dell'Orto and Sean Punch

COMING TO GRIPS WITH REALISM
by Douglas H. Cole

THE DEVIL'S FIST
by David L. Pulver

FUSION STYLES OF YTARRIA
by David Thomas Moore

TAKEDOWN SEQUENCES
by Douglas H. Cole

STEVE JACKSON GAMES

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IN THIS ISSUE

The fluid motion of a drawn sword. The precise shifting of a professional pugilist. The impossibly fast reflexes of a shapechanging slasher. Step into the arena with us, as this month's *Pyramid* shines light on the Way of the Warrior.

Take your coolness to a new level with *More Power to Dungeon Warriors!* From the fantastic minds of the **GURPS Martial Arts** co-designers Sean Punch and Peter V. Dell'Orto comes this mini-supplement with dozens of new power-ups and options (such as double-ended weaponry!) for your **GURPS Dungeon Fantasy** sword-wielding delvers. You can even take a look "under the hood" of some of the game mechanics.

Hit, grapple, takedown, pin . . . there's more to fights than technique names and dice rolls! Find out how you can add flavor to your game with *Takedown Sequences*. Douglas H. Cole – author of **GURPS Martial Arts: Technical Grappling** – matches detailed descriptions of common positions and popular combat sequences to their **GURPS** mechanics. Unlock the power of the rules to bring new excitement and possibilities to your bouts!

Give your villains a style that's all their own, with *The Devil's Fist*. In this installment of *Eidetic Memory*, David L. Pulver – co-author of the **GURPS Fourth Edition Basic Set** – explores the history of a fictional **GURPS** fighting art that might have come from Satan himself.

Whether you seek exotic martial arts for your fantasy campaign or you love to explore the way Yrth mashes cultures, you'll want to check out *Fusion Styles of Ytarria*. The author of **GURPS Martial Arts: Yrth Fighting Styles**, David Thomas Moore, brings you the fringe traditions that he couldn't fit into his supplement. Use these in your own **GURPS Banestorm** campaigns, or put them into any **GURPS Fantasy** setting to add variety and options.

You'll be *Coming to Grips with Realism* with Douglas H. Cole as he sifts through the material that didn't quite make it from his **Technical Grappling** supplement. Peek behind the curtain, then check out some new and alternate rules options, including possibilities for critical hits and misses, horizontal creatures, and more.

Random Thought Table this month invites you to follow in the fictional footsteps of classic sportscasters, while *Odds and Ends* provides several adventure seeds tailored to the new Yrth fusion styles. Whether in the ring, beneath a ruined castle, or on another world, fighters need all the help they can get. With this month's *Pyramid*, you bring the warriors . . . we'll show you the way.



Article Colors

Each article is color-coded to help you find your favorite sections.

- Pale Blue:* In This Issue
- Brown:* In Every Issue (letters, humor, editorial, etc.)
- Green:* Columnist
- Dark Blue:* **GURPS** Features
- Purple:* Systemless Features

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FROM THE EDITOR

THIS ISSUE'S NINJA-LIKE REFLEXES

On my shelf, I have some well-loved RPGs with pencil marks that contain rules tweaks or clarifications, in all likelihood extrapolated from some magazine or supplement released later. The original *Star Wars RPG* from West End Games had a pamphlet that contained a large number of tweaks, while the Second Edition of White Wolf's *Wraith: The Oblivion* had some vital pieces of errata tucked into its GM screen.

In comparison, just 24 hours ago (from the time I type this), I sent forth via e23 a newer version of the popular *GURPS Martial Arts: Technical Grappling*, with a few minor errata tweaks. And, lo, previous purchasers of that fine supplement were able to log into their accounts and have the new version, as if by magic!

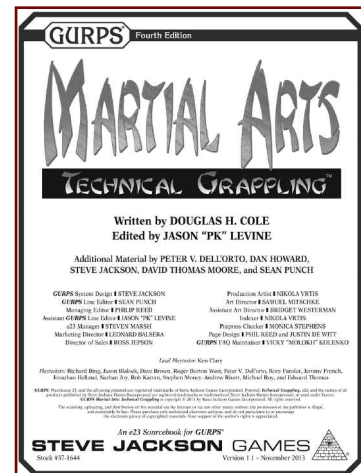
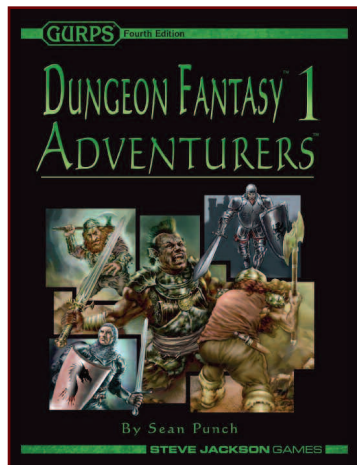
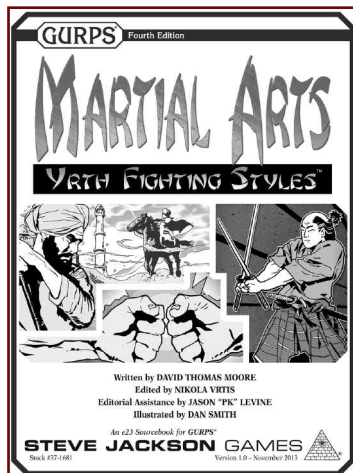
This issue of *Pyramid* is another (small) way we've used the magic of technology to make it even cooler. When we realized that we were going to have two *GURPS Martial Arts* supplements coming out pretty close to each other – *Technical Grappling* and *Yrth Fighting Styles* – we decided it'd be a cool time to do another martial-minded issue. So, many behind-the-scenes machinations later, we got together some cool stuff from

a few of the masterminds of *GURPS*dom. (And that doesn't even include the goodies we *didn't* have room for . . .) While this isn't the first time we've done this sort of thing – *Pyramid* #3/31: *Monster Hunters* involved similar secret scheming – it's perhaps the quickest and easiest an idea has come together.

Attentive readers may also have noticed that we have two Designer's Notes-type articles in this issue, and last month we had Sean Punch's notes at how the *GURPS Dungeon Fantasy* series came to be. They were long a staple of past *Pyramid* volumes (both the paper and HTML installments), but they've been absent for a bit. We're curious to know what you think of them. To wit . . .

WRITE HERE, WRITE NOW

We're constantly tweaking how we do things with our fine publication – and the easiest way for us to do that is by your feedback! Do you love seeing “secret” issues? Are you a huge fan of Designer's Notes and would love if we tracked down more? Or is there something else you'd like us to be doing (or not doing)? Let the Secret Masters of *Pyramid* know! Send us private feedback and thoughts to pyramid@sjgames.com, or join the public discussion online at forums.sjgames.com.



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BARBARIAN POWER-UPS

These gifts stem from being strong, angry, and from a harsh climate. The GM may permit them to non-barbarians who meet those conditions.

Barbarian Perks

These are Combat Perks (*Power-Ups*, pp. 11-12) that only barbarians can buy.

Mountain of Meat

You're just *that big*. Seriously. Where a "normal" barbarian can increase HP as high as 1.5×ST, *you* can buy HP up to 2×ST (as usual, with Size, -10%).

Sure-Footed†

You're familiar with fighting on a specific type of inhospitable terrain, which lets you ignore the -2 to attack and -1 to defend (*not* general DX or Move penalties) for a specific type of bad footing. Options include:

Sure-Footed (Icy): Frozen streams and lakes, windswept glaciers, etc.

Sure-Footed (Rocky): Loose rocks and pebble-strewn slopes.

Sure-Footed (Sandy): Soft-packed beach or desert that yields underfoot.

Sure-Footed (Snowy): Snow, however deep.

Sure-Footed (Soggy): Swamps, mud, and similarly boggy ground.

You're Next!

A steroidal, barbarian-specific version of Follow-Through (*Power-Ups*, p. 11): At the end of any turn on which you *knock down* or *kill* enemies, you may attempt Intimidation against the same number of remaining opponents as a *free action*. Use *Taunt and Bluster (Dungeons*, p. 12). You roll once; multiple rivals resist separately. This an ideal follow-up to Cleaving Strike – scaring away everyone makes being defenseless less of a risk!

Greater Cleaving Strike

20 points/skill

Prerequisites: Any Melee Weapon skill capable of swinging attacks and ST 18+.

As Cleaving Strike (*Power-Ups*, p. 10), with one major difference: You can just keep going! For as long as you continue to meet all the criteria for proceeding with a Cleaving Strike, you can hew through *any number* of foes, provided that they're in front of you, adjacent to each other, attackable given your weapon's current Reach, and unobstructed (by cover or figures you *can't* attack). Consulting the diagram on p. B388, a greatsword (Reach 1, 2) would let you hack up to eight targets in your three front hexes and the five marked "2," while a halberd held at Reach 3 could mow through up to seven victims in the hexes marked "3." You must still attack from left to right, turning in place.

There's no need for Cleaving Strike if you have Greater Cleaving Strike – but as with all power-ups that offer improved versions, the GM may require a gradual progression.

Perks: Unique Technique (Greater Cleaving Strike) [1].

Techniques: Greater Cleaving Strike (H) Skill+0 [19].

Under the Hood: Cleaving Strike

Under the *GURPS Martial Arts* technique-design rules, Cleaving Strike (*Power-Ups*, p. 10) is an All-Out Attack (Strong) with these modifications:

Benefit: *Sheer power*. The enemy has -1 to DX and HT rolls to stay standing. -1.

Drawback: *All you can do*. Forbids all other activity; e.g., no Dual-Weapon Attack, and not even a free action like Fast-Draw. +1.

Drawback: *Limited target selection*. The only option is swings, in a fixed order (L-R or R-L), against frontal foes. +1.

Drawback: *Reduced movement*. All-Out Attack usually allows up to half Move forward – but here, not even a step is permitted, only the mandatory rotation to face foes. +1.

Drawback: *Successive attacks contingent on previous ones*. The warrior suffers the built-in Rapid Strike penalty even if he never gets the extra attacks – earlier blows must miss, be avoided by a dodge or a retreat, dismember, or put the target down. A weak hit or an enemy block or parry ends the fun. +1.

Rapid Strike. Attacking up to three enemies adds two strikes to the basic one allowed by All-Out Attack (Strong). While normally -12, Trained by a Master or Weapon Master makes this -6.

That makes the default skill-3. Losing defenses and gaining bonus damage come with All-Out Attack (Strong), and don't alter this. Letting ST 18+ work like Trained by a Master or Weapon Master merely substitutes an equally steep and fitting prerequisite, and isn't a real benefit.

This technique is Hard because it involves multiple strikes, and limited to full skill because it defaults to less than full skill.

Greater Cleaving Strike

Though this variant technically gives "unlimited" attacks, the *practical* limit is around eight (every frontal foe at Reach 1, 2). Five more than Cleaving Strike adds -15 to the Rapid Strike penalty, for skill-18.

Naked Rage

35 points

Prerequisites: Berserk, Gigantism, and High Pain Threshold.

When your Berserk goes off, it isn't just pain you don't feel – injury genuinely affects you less! While berserk *and* clad in at most ordinary DR 0 skivvies (loincloth, leopard-skin bikini, etc.), subtract any non-armor DR (Armor spells, other barbarian power-ups, etc.) from damage, apply wounding modifiers, and *halve* the final HP loss. Round down, but penetrating damage always inflicts at least 1 HP.

As with Great Rage (*Power-Ups*, p. 19), the GM may allow barbarians seeking this trait to exchange other disadvantages for Berserk. Unlike that power-up, this one *does* require the user to flip out!

GRAPPLING SEQUENCES

“Grappling sequences” show which maneuvers, techniques, attacks, and options can be strung together to accomplish certain common goals. They aid players through sensible choices of **GURPS** mechanics and cut through potential option overload.

Each move has a description that includes the move’s purpose and a list of the sequence of attacks, techniques, and movement that best describes the action, using the higher-resolution options presented in **Technical Grappling**. Recommendations are made about how to turn the sequence into Combinations (**Martial Arts**, p. 80) – efficient ways to represent practicing and drilling the set of actions until they’ve become second nature.

Many of these sequences work fine using only the **Basic Set** or **Martial Arts**, as there are clear substitutions for the more precise moves in **Technical Grappling**. The lack of spendable Control Points may well be offset by the relatively large DX penalty that is the staple of a standard rules-as-written grapple: that -4 is the equivalent (more or less) of an 8 CP grapple, which on the average requires Trained ST 23 to achieve in one attack!

BASIC MOVES

These basic grappling sequences can be used to achieve an advantaged position while taking your foe to the ground. Grapplers using this strategy had best ensure they have a superior ground game than their foe, either by dint of raw skill, buying off posture penalties, or both.

Clinch to Takedown

There are several ways to facilitate the grounding of a standing foe, and all are easier with a significant Control Point advantage. A fighter can proceed to the mechanics for a takedown (*Force Posture Change* in **Technical Grappling**) directly, or leverage a Sweep or offensive Judo Throw. Combining this with a grapple of the legs or a *Destabilizing Strike* (p. 18) with an All-Out Attack (Double) or Rapid Strike will help get your foe on the ground.

If you used Sumo Wrestling or Wrestling to destabilize the foe, it may seem like a good idea to retain some Control Points beyond the end of your own turn, but since your foe can increase control himself without suffering penalties for hit location (grapples are mutual in **Technical Grappling**!) this is just asking to have the same trick pulled on you – and if you All-Out Attacked, you can’t do much about it.

A fighter may also utilize Beats (**Technical Grappling**, p. 21) and Feints to stack up penalties for the next turn; some combination of Beats and Feints are likely what is being employed as two stylists do several seconds of standing grappling, each trying to gain an advantage before a big takedown.

Note that in any case, you will suffer the usual penalties to Force Posture Change for how far you’re trying to lower your

foe’s posture, and how many levels of your own posture change you make as well.

Sequence

The sequence starts from a standing grapple.

- Feint or Beat (Quick Contest, Feint or Beat).
- Kick out the leg (Attack to grapple, destabilize, or injure with appropriate skill).
- Execute a Force Posture Change, Throw, or Sweep, spending all CP from the previous step.

Combinations

The Destabilizing Strike or grapple and Force Posture Change must be paired together to be effective; they make a natural combination.

While technically the sequence ends with the posture change, another common combination is to immediately attack to improve control. In fact, many useful combinations can start with the Force Posture Change.

Extra Attacks Make for Awesome Grappling

The combinations in this section are presented as if they were the most natural thing in the world to do. In fact, as per the usual rules, a two-move combination is a Rapid Strike at -6 to each one, while a three-move combination forces the aggressor to deal with -12! Improving such combinations can be very expensive if you want to know several.

Very rapidly, a more effective strategy will be to purchase Extra Attack, possibly with Limitation: Grappling Only, -10%. You may also use the Single Skill limitation at -20% (**Martial Arts**, p. 44) if you are willing to restrict yourself to one option. Note that in order to use a two-handed grapple more than once in a turn, you *must* also purchase Multi-Strike (**Martial Arts**, p. 44). This makes Extra Attack (Grappling Only, -10%; Multi-Strike, +20%) [27.5/level] the most appropriate build for cinematic grapplers.

Altered Time Rate at 100 points is, of course, even better and more versatile, as is the “fully featured” Extra Attack with Multi-Strike (30 points). Anything that lets you make extra attacks per turn will either speed up the rate at which you increment Control Points, allow more actions in combination, or permit increasing CP and then immediately spending them on things like applying pain or injury.

Grapple, Take the Back, Takedown, Mount

This sequence is often done from the clinch, as it benefits (in real life) from the grapple of one of your foe’s arms. The goal is to slide around your opponent, gain firm control from the rear arc, destabilize one leg, and use your own body weight to take him down, falling sideways. Immediately on impact, the aggressor attempts to obtain mount position, executing a two-legged grapple of the torso to add to the two-handed existing grapple.

Optional Traits

Advantages: Combat Reflexes; Danger Sense; Enhanced Block; Enhanced Parry (Saber).

Disadvantages: Overconfidence.

Skills: Acrobatics; Fast-Draw (Sword); Jumping; Knife; Parry Missile Weapons; Shortsword.

Cinematic Skills: Power Blow.

Perks: Weapon Bond.

DEFENCE BOXING

4 points

The knights of Caithness's western border have fought the orcish hordes throughout the young nation's history. Fighting on horseback, with a lance or longsword, a knight is more than a match for an orc on foot. But once a knight is unhorsed and disarmed, the orcs' strength and ferocity usually carry the fight. Most dangerous are the rare orcs disciplined enough to master Smasha (*Martial Arts*, p. 210). Knights learn grappling and striking as part of their weapons training, but nothing like the clinical brutality of the orcish martial art. Starting in the late 1920s, young knights in Caithness began adopting some of the techniques they saw being used against them. They developed more pragmatic tactics, and gradually founded a system of combat called Defence Boxing.

Know your enemy is an ancient saying, and there's truth in this, but perhaps some danger with it: you risk becoming what you have sworn to fight. Defence Boxers throw themselves into their training, frequently maiming and crippling each other in their efforts to outdo the orcs in violence. The image of the one-eyed, nine-fingered Defence Boxer is a common figure in Caithnesser plays and songs. A very few even emulate the enemies' culture, wearing orcish tattoos and taking trophies from their kills, although this is a certain path to social estrangement. The majority of knights frown on the style, calling it unchivalrous and savage, but a few knights in every generation are drawn to it.

Inspired by the grappling techniques in Longsword Fighting (*Martial Arts*, p. 180), Defence Boxing employs more locks and throws than Smasha. The aim is to get the opponent on the floor and within reach of the attacker's boots. Emphasis is placed on fighting in armor, using the hardened surfaces (in full plate – essentially all-over brass knuckles – *all* of a knight's unarmed strikes are at +1 damage). Some practitioners even sharpen the edges of their bracers and greaves to do more damage (elbow and knee strikes inflict *cutting* instead of crushing damage, but without the +1). Defence Boxers fight aggressively, choosing the Attack or Committed Attack options and preferring the Aggressive Parry in defense.

Boxing teaches precise, effective punches. Brawling extends the knight's repertoire to kicks, head butts, and slams, while Judo gives grapples, locks, and throws. The style teaches a number of punishing techniques, and knights train to toughen their bodies and harden their fists. In spite of traditional knights' disapproval of the style, legends of Boxers' abilities abound, including great feats of strength and crippling strikes that can fell a great orc in one blow.

Defence Boxing is taught among knights in western Caithness, and in the Academy of Defence in Carrick. The Academy of Defence in Durham refuses to offer training in the style; it is

rumored Lord Peredur forbade the teaching of the style in his city, and the restriction is maintained in his memory.

Skills: Boxing; Brawling; Judo.

Techniques: Aggressive Parry (Brawling); Choke Hold; Counterattack (Boxing); Disarming (Judo); Elbow Strike; Eye-Rake; Head Butt; Knee Strike; Neck Snap; Stamp Kick; Sweep; Targeted Attack (Brawling Stamp Kick/Neck); Trip; Two-Handed Punch; Wrench (Limb).

Cinematic Skills: Immovable Stance; Mental Strength; Power Blow; Pressure Points; Pressure Secrets.

Cinematic Techniques: Backbreaker; Pressure-Point Strike; Roll with Blow.

Perks: Armor Familiarity (Judo); Chi Resistance (Kiai); Clinch (Boxing or Brawling); Iron Hands; Neck Control (Boxing or Brawling); Special Exercises (DR 1 with Tough Skin); Special Exercises (Striking ST 1); Sure-Footed (Uneven); Technical Adaptation (Aggressive Parry).

Optional Traits

Advantages: Combat Reflexes; Enhanced Dodge; Fit or Very Fit; High Pain Threshold.

Disadvantages: Bloodlust; Bully; Callous; Overconfidence.

Skills: Acrobatics; Jumping; Karate; Knife; Stealth; Wrestling.

Techniques: Dual-Weapon Attack (Knife); Ground Fighting (Knife).

*The few surviving samurai
survey the battlefield.*

*Count the arms, the legs, and
heads, and then divide by five.*

*– They Might Be Giants,
“Certain People”*

GOBLIN SWORDPLAY

4 points

In spite of their origins on different worlds, the goblins and halflings of Yrth have a great deal in common. Smaller than humans and more agile, both peoples are wholly integrated into human faiths and lifestyles and live in human communities. Goblins are more organized and less peaceful than halflings, but still on occasion have to defend against oppressors who are larger and better armed than they are. In these situations, the skills and tactics taught in Harmony (*Yrth Fighting Styles*, p. 17) come in useful. There are no reports of the mysterious blue-cloaked master himself coming to goblin communities, but his students sometimes pass on the knowledge to their green-skinned neighbors, and this in turn has influenced goblin sword-fighting techniques.

ABOUT *GURPS*

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Errata. Everyone makes mistakes, including us – but we do our best to fix our errors. Up-to-date errata pages for all *GURPS* releases are available on our website – see above.

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