Hercules & Xena RPG
Ben's Rules

1. Introduction

The world of Xena and Hercules is a wonderful world of adventure and imagination. In many ways it is ideal for roleplaying, as it is full of fast paced action and you can mix almost anything imaginable into it, from historical influences to pure fantasy, in almost any style you wish. It is a world ready for use but with the possibility to make it entirely your own, an idea that will certainly appeal to many Game Masters.

The RPG by West End Games based on their d6-system suits this world very well. However, it would seem that the rules were made in too much of a hurry and contain many problems and mistakes. This document contains suggestions on how to make the rules work better. These include various house rules I use in my own games, as well as other possibilities.

2. Characters and Equipment

2.1 Body Points

Instead of adding the result of an *Endurance* roll to a base value of twenty I just have my players add their *Endurance* value directly. This seems more logical an fair to me.

2.2 Races

I only allow humans as player characters. The other races are very rare and would not be seen tramping around the world looking for adventure. Of course, if a game was set in their native environments it might be another matter. Even then you should carefully reconsider some of the special aspects of the races. (At least change the centaurs' blood-lust vulnerability so that they must make a willpower roll only once per battle, not for every single attack!)

2.3 Suggestions About Economy

How cash is handled is naturally up to each GM and their players. Here's one tip, however, to simplify financing in adventures: If it can be assumed that some time passes between adventures, you can assume that during this time the characters manage to earn enough dinars for basic lodgings and nutrition. Adventuring gear etc., however, should be purchased with money acquired during actual play. This makes life a lot easier, since you don't have to worry about the costs of every single bite... Make sure you are not too generous when it comes to handing out money. (Have you ever seen the heroes of the series take rewards for their deeds?)

2.4 Armour Restrictions

The rules state that arm and leg guards cannot be worn with body armour. This seems very illogical (and is even contradicted in Xena's description). You have a few alternative ways to go about this:

1. Use the rule as it is. You can always think of it as a way to balance characters by not allowing too much armour for any single character. This means that armour should be selected largely based on the feel of the character: arm and leg guards would give a *Protection* rating similar to leather body armour. The look, however, would be very different.

2. Allow armour to be combined freely. This would be more realistic. However, it also makes very high *Protection* ratings possible. Players should be discouraged from wearing too much armour. Maybe you could make up new restrictions for combined armour. For example: -1d penalty to *Reflexes* for every piece of armour beyond three.

3. Allow armour to be combined freely, but do not use the total value when determining damage. Instead, determine the location of the hit (either by using a random method or by narration) and use only the armour that is effective in that location.

3. Combat

3.1 Initiative

The method in the rules (rolling *Reflexes* and adding *Weapon Speed*) is not bad. If you wish to speed things up you could use a set initiative value (probably *Reflexes* plus *Weapon Speed*) instead of rolling each turn. Some Game Masters might like a more narrative approach and use common sense rather than a numerical comparison.

To ease things up use the speed of the weapon that each character is holding at the beginning of an exchange, even if the first action they do is ditch this weapon...

3.2 Actions

The way multiple actions are handled in the rules may cause some problems, especially with defensive actions. Here are several approaches to the issue:

1. Use the method in the rules: all actions suffer a penalty of -1d per each action beyond the first. If you use this method players should state how many actions they are going to use at the beginning of each combat exchange. On their own turn players may opt to leave one or more of these actions for later use (for defence, for example). An unused action may be used for defence at any point in the exchange.

2. Use the method used in *Star Wars* (and probably other d6 games as well), which treats defensive actions as *"Reaction Skills"*. The amount of normal actions is stated by each player at the beginning of their own turn, and penalties from multiple actions are applied as above. (These actions may also be used for defence just as above.) However, a defence reaction may also be an extra action. The additional penalty from this additional action comes to effect immediately and is effective for the rest of the exchange.

3. The simplest method: each character has one free action and a cumulative penalty of -1d is added to every additional action the character makes.

3.3 Defence

There are two basic defences in the rules: dodge and block. They both work in the same manner. Dodge, however, is valid for the rest of the exchange while block only affects one attack. This makes dodging much more efficient in large battles, as long as a character has a decent *Dodge* value. Here is one way to even this out a little: use dodge as it is in the rules: the result becomes the character's new *Total Defence* for the rest of the exchange. But treat blocking as a normal action with a difficulty equal to the attacker's roll. This makes succeeding in blocking slightly easier. (As the dodge roll becomes the *attack* roll's difficulty, a player must in fact roll one more than the attacker to succeed in a dodge.)

3.4 More Fun With Wounds

Don't use the random hit location table in the book. It's pretty awkward, especially with the game's dice-system. You might use a table from another game if you wish to.

It can be a lot of fun to make wounds more, er, *individual*, and actually roleplay receiving and healing them. Specific wounds should only be used when it suits the story. These types of wounds should only be received when a

hero takes a lot of damage from a single blow (for example, more than 6), or possibly if the attacker rolls a Thunderbolt of Zeus, or if a character reaches 0 body points etc. Example: "Ouch! The warlord strikes your arm with his huge sword leaving a mighty gash spewing blood! That's going to need stitching as soon as you finish the fight!" You get the idea...

3.5 Special Moves

Any player should be able to at least attempt most of the Special Moves, even if they haven't got them as specialties. (Remember that combat should be fun, fast and creative.) You can use the same difficulties, or, if you feel it necessary, add a little penalty. However, there are some moves that require training to use. (The Pinch would be one of these, and Missile Catch, maybe Blow Torch, and any moves that require superhuman power.) However, the Special Moves in the rule books are few, and not very good...

Don't depend on the Special Moves too much. You should encourage players to use their imagination when fighting. You may even give a bonus to imaginative moves that the characters don't have as specialties, and you certainly should take originality into account when awarding Character Points or Fate Points.