

ACE Game Club Newsletter

Minutes of the Meeting of June 3, 2001

Scot Alsop opened the meeting, telling the members that Jim asked him to run the meeting.

Frank Duval gave the calendar review. Monday the Mage Knight League and Inquisitor are meeting. Tuesday is First Edition D&D. Wednesday the Mage Knight League and Dave Saunder's Third Edition D&D meet. Thursday night is Rich's Third Edition D&D. Friday is Chai Gallahun's Whurld's End RPG. Saturday is Warhammer 40,000 12:00-6:00pm, White Wolf RPG 11:00-6:00pm, Pokemon League 3:00-5:00pm, and Art Raasio's First Edition D&D 8:00-midnight. Sunday is the Mage Knight Scenario Club 1:00-6:00pm, BattleTech League 12:00-6:00pm, Pokemon League 1:00-3:00pm, and Anton's Third Edition D&D 12:00-6:00pm. Note that the Mighty Empires campaign faded out during the last month, giving way to pickup games of Warhammer Fantasy. The last Mage Knight Scenario Club game will be played after the club meeting. June 17 will be the first meeting of Jimbo's Mage Knight campaign using Scrye's campaign rules. The next all-nighter will be June 9. The current meeting is the deadline for purchasing advanced tickets for the Game Club's outing to the opening night of Tomb Raider. Anton made a pitch for the Tomb Raider movie, starring Angelina Jolie.



Warhammer Fantasy models rage across the battlefield during the June 9 all-nighter.

Scot suggested that the Game Club plan a Monty Python movie marathon. The program might include all six movies plus Flying Circus episodes.

Jim Thorpe offered modest corrections to the newsletter. (*Editor's note: the Newsletter was corrected and re-printed the following day.*)

Jim Destromp reviewed several items with the members. He suggested that too many people are joining the Game Club of the wrong reason (getting a store discount) and too few people are joining the Game Club for the right reason (actively participating in and supporting Club events). He said that the Club should vote on raising the annual membership fee to \$15, and establish the annual fee for renewing members at a discounted rate of \$10. However, members that renew late will have to pay the higher \$15 rate. We are looking for increased participation, or at least to spend less time chasing members to renew. Apathy is on the rise, and we are having trouble getting people to call expired members each month.

Jim said that the Club will not go to the Tomb Raider movie unless at least 30 people have signed up and pre-paid. Today is the deadline for signing up. If enough people sign up, we will meet for the 9:30 showing on Friday June 15.

Jim reported that the Club has been receiving pre-release product samples from game publisher Kenzer and Company (Knights of the Dinner Table, D&D Modules, Fairy Meat, Kalamar). We are sending the monthly club newsletter to all the U.S. game distributors and some of the game publishers. We need to push up our rate of participation as we receive growing support from game publishers.

We currently see about 30 people at meetings out of our 140-200 membership. We need participation, and we need people who are willing to game master some new events.

Jim turned to the subject of the all-nighter. June 9 will be the first all-nighter not held on a three-day weekend. Everyone needs to appreciate the pound of flesh that it costs to put on these events. Jim said that it is really hard for him and Masako to keep the store open all night Saturday, and then to keep it running all the way to Sunday night. If the June 9 all-nighter is going to happen, it needs to have organized events with all players pre-registered. Also note that after 9:00pm when the store closes, nobody will be allowed to be in the front of the store. Everyone is to remain in the game room or at the other gaming tables. Jim said that he is tired of problems; he busted three shop-lifters during the past week. The last one was the best because he got a \$700 bike from the fleeing thief and managed to locate the bike's real owner through a local school. Anyway, 25 people signed up to participate in events at the all-nighter. They were reminded to bring food, and not to bring their non-member friends (no exceptions). Those who did not sign up should not plan on hanging around that night.

Jim showed everyone some pictures of the forth-coming Star Legions "Collectible Miniatures Game" (CMG). It is a Sci-Fi game using collectible miniatures with a similar marketing strategy to Wizkid's Mage Knight. Star Legions is a more complicated game than Mage Knight, making heavy use of all types of polyhedral dice.



Mage Knight players fought in a bewildering maze of terrain during the all-nighter.

The Club voted 21 to 9 in favor of having the June 9 all-nighter. Sign-up's for the following events were created on the white board: Mage Knight by Charlie Brown, Gamma World by Anton, the regularly scheduled D&D campaign, Warhammer 40,000, Warhammer Fantasy, and Axis and Allies by Tracy. In order to participate each person must bring some food to share with everyone. Last time there was too much pizza. The time before that there was too much chicken. Try not to go too cheap on us.

Jim conducted the locker review. Randy and Justin were present to renew. Most everyone else was not.

Jim mentioned some scheduled events. There will be a Mage Knight tourney in Denbigh on June 2. Mage Knight tournaments will be held in Hampton on June 23 and 24. More events will be scheduled for July. Check <http://www.atomic-comics.com> for the latest tournament listings. Remember, our Mage Knight events are sanctioned by Wizkids and prizes are provided by the game publisher.

Jim reminded the members that they should all buy Game Club shirts. These shirts are purchased from the Game Club, not the store, and all proceeds go back into the Club's treasury. You want to be seen wearing a shirt from the largest game club on the east coast, don't you? Of course you do! Remember, you get no discount unless you are wearing your Game Club shirt, and are packing a current valid Club membership card.

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Jim reported that the coming week will be the first of six weeks in which Wizkids re-issues four BattleTech mech miniatures. This is being done on a strictly one-time basis. Expect to see prices of approximately \$9.95 retail.

Beth Dayag, our Club President, had her baby last week. We have a cake to celebrate with her and Calvin when they arrive. In the meantime, we need to vote for a Vice President to keep things going without Beth. Scot Alsop was nominated and voted in.

Anton told the members that his RPG group on Saturdays and Sundays would love to have more players. Right now there are only four regulars, so there is plenty of room for new-comers. Dave Peterson said that he plans to run Inquisitor on Monday June 11. Chai reported that he had purchased a boom-box to use with his RPG sessions.

Scot declared the meeting over and done and adjourned. Members began organizing for the Mage Knight Scenario Club.

Mage Knight Tournament Results by Randy Dilday

The Mage Knight Battle of Roa Katien story line tournament was held on June 23. Jim Thorpe won the tournament and the First Place trophy with an undefeated record. Jim's army consisted of a Wraith, 3 red Amotep Gunners, and 2 yellow Demi-Magi. Ben Shrader was the Good Conduct award winner.

A Mage Knight Single-Faction tournament was held on June 24. Jim Thorpe won the tournament and the First Place trophy with an undefeated record. Jim's army consisted of 2 red Amotep Gunners, 1 yellow Demi-Magus, 1 red Utem Guardsmen, and 1 red Scorpem Gunner. Tom Tatterfield won the Second Place trophy.

Forging Darkness, 47 pages plus 16 pages of maps and illustrations, adventure module, \$12.99, by Eric Raasio

Forging Darkness, by Andy Miller, is the second of a three-part campaign set in Kenzer and Company's world of Kalamar. The over-all plot arc features a conflict with an evil nemesis over a powerful magical artifact. This is an adventure for third- to fourth-level characters. If I had to use one word to describe the new Dungeons and Dragons Kingdom of Kalamar module, Forging Darkness, it would be "impossible." That is, impossible to put down and impossible to stop playing. But, if you're looking for a hack and slash adventure, this one may not be for you.



This gripping adventure requires a good amount of thinking on the part of the players. They must use diplomacy rather than brute strength to make their way through the story line. But, don't think this module doesn't have its share of melee. There are quite a few big fights that will keep your hackmasters more than happy. As for running time, the module itself could be run in a day, if you cut out the travel time, or could be run over the course of a few sessions. Each session could easily cover a section of the module. I think this module will easily provide everything for everyone, so grab your dice and let the fun roll.

When Last We Met by Chai Gallahun

The party discovered that Na'Raatil infiltrated the party with changelings, first as the princess and then Na'Vortl. The changeling of the Princess stabbed Bebe, and this led to an unusual melee inside of Na'Vortla's humble mushroom cottage which included large trees tearing through the abode, taking Nate and Glaucothane for slalom ride while Jinsian assassins attacked.

The battle ended with an accidental mixing of Na'Vortla's potions resulting in a huge explosion! Bebe jumped away in time, but Nate was not so lucky. Having cast protection from fire (during the fight with the behir), he was sent flying into the air. By the stars he managed to grab hold of tree branches... and then the tree fell, and somehow he safely landed near the astonished Bebe, who'd seen many odd things in his life (especially in the last several days) but nothing quite like this display of luck... or the crazed design of a truly insane deity...

Back in the dead behira's cavern, Gandrel befriended the minotaurs via luck and his ability to generate trust. He was "summoned" by a very polite Na'Raatil, who looked much younger than when last the party encountered him. Gandrel found himself seated at an ornately provisioned banquet table. Na'Raatil offered him

riches, power, women, and control over the very powers of the elemental plane of Air Itself. Still... Gandrel declined. He learned that Shysa'Taza, his former surrogate mother, mentor and would-be assassin had been Na'Raatil's first choice for the job of "right-hand," but Gandrel had killed her mercilessly, thus earning the right to be in her place. He also revealed that Gandrel had somehow formed a loose "bond" with the Nature Stone (the "Egg"). Offering the equivalent of KINGDOMS and the servitude of the PRINCESS (or as many Jinsian princesses as he might desire) to Gandrel, Na'Raatil failed yet again to turn him. For some unknown reason, Na'Raatil returned Gandrel to the behir cavern... Why he did not kill Gandrel remains a mystery...

Avalar failed a test of bravery and trust; he declined an invitation to be a part of the warrior cast of the minotaur clan. Samil "suggested" that Avalar would have to endure a test of extreme pain (hoisting into the air by ropes attached to spikes pinned through his chest muscles, followed by "healing" via red-hot poker to prevent infection and bleeding). However, in truth, Avalar was only to be the person to hoist a minotaur initiate into the air. Unknowing of the deception, Glaucothane stepped forward for the test; this impressed Samil, and he welcomed Glaucothane into the minotaur warrior cast... and then revealed the true nature of the test. The minotaurs share a common bond with Glaucothane... they are all strong in the ways of the Flow (the Source). While the minotaurs still like Avalar, they realize that he might truly be more of a poet than a fighter, although they may have had hopes for some unknown reason...

During the night, the second of the two changelings attempted to assassinate someone in the party. It was defeated, and Avalar was the one to slay the creature, even after it manifested itself into the form of his mother. The party rested and healed. They meditated and repaired. They prepared for the battle to come during the nearing eclipse. Sometime during the night, Bebe heard the princess call to him... Glaucothane led a contingent of minotaur scouts to the perimeter of the glade surrounding the Tower of Na'Raatil, which stretched high into the sky like a blackened, crooked finger, pointing it seemed, to some distant, horrific destination in the darkest of night skies. Other scouts informed Samil and Glaucothane that a mounted army was approaching through the southern forest, most likely Jinsian. Two, huge, monstrous stone constructs (marching siege towers) marched around the southern perimeter while the third stood watch on the northern side, perhaps the result of Nate's bluff (which occurred during a supposed psychic conversation with Princess Elyssa Vanguard, prisoner of the diabolical Na'Raatil). The time of the eclipse neared as the rest of the group infiltrated into the caverns beneath the tower. Na'Vortl, once inside of the subterranean tower complex, was to create a magic circle of chalk to transport the heroes into the highest rooms of the tower during the eclipse. Gandrel finally summoned forth an air elemental... Only to have it dismissed by a greater elemental that he had summoned the day before! ---It chose to remain hidden until it could learn more of Gandrel and the strange beings associated with the warlock. To prevent the accidental killing of his friends, it requested that they breathe a "part" of it into their bodies.

It stated that it did not need to enter Na'Vortl in this manner. Na'Vortl smirked and winked... Bebe scouted ahead, discovering a crypt of sorts and undead in the chamber above them. He returned and reported this to his companions... --Not a safe way to proceed for someTHING was walking around up there, something that caused his hairs to stand on end. More minotaur scouts arrived from the southern forest to report to Samil and Glaucothane. They harbored terrible news....

Editor's Note: Chai has informed me that the current Whurld's End campaign has been postponed indefinitely. He will be going TDY during the coming months and will not be able to sustain the continuity required for a campaign. However, he hopes that this fall might trumpet the beginning of another Whurld's End campaign.

Notes from the Proprietor by Jim Destromp

Fifty-two members of the Game Club attended the Tomb Raider movie on June 15. A good time was had by all. At the next club meeting we will vote on when to do the next movie opening. Some possible candidates are Final Fantasy, Jurassic Park 3, and Planet of the Apes.

The Mage Knight Battle for the Mage Prince tournament was held on June 17. D.J. Mickle was the winner.

A Mage Knight Free for All tournament was held on June 20 at ACE II in Denbigh. D.J. Mickle was the winner.

Check out the Atomic Comics web site, <http://www.atomic-comics.com> for an up-to-date list of tournaments and regular games at ACE. We are currently

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running specials on the web site on Matrix figures, DragonBall Z figures, and BattleTech products.

Only 30,000 of the new Mage Knight Great Fire Dragons were produced by Wizkids. The entire production run sold out six weeks before delivery! ACE will receive its second wave of these dragons in July.

We are now taking advance orders for the new Mage Knight Black Powder Chariot. This will be another large model, including the vehicle, a beast, and a driver. There will be room in the chariot to transport other figures, enabling them to move and shoot in the same turn. The chariot will be \$24.95. Remember, wear your ACE Game Club T-shirt when you pre-pay and you will get 15% off.

Mage Knight Rebellion figures are now out of print! The production run ended in June. Get them while you can! Remember, only the first series, Rebellion, is out of production. The Lancers series is still being manufactured. Look for the new Mage Knight Dungeon game to be released late in the summer!

The Hacklopedia of Beasts Volume I is now in stock. See me, Jim D, for details about the Hackmaster campaign that I will be running soon! And watch out for the Black Hands!

Hacklopedia of Beasts - Volume I, 112 pages, softcover rulebook, \$19.95, by David Peterson

The Hacklopedia of Beasts - Volume I is the first volume of Kenzer and Company's Hackmaster rules to be released. As such, I would like to look at it both as indicative of what is to come from Hackmaster, as well as in its own right. For those of you not in the loop, Hackmaster is the game played by the characters of the Knights of the Dinner Table comic book, written by game designing legend and Hard Eight Enterprises CEO Gary Jackson (recently deceased). Not to put too fine a point on it, Hackmaster is a fictitious game, written by a fictitious designer, and played by fictitious characters. Like the Necronomicon of H.P. Lovecraft, it is a prop in the comic with which to satyryze the hack-and-slash excesses and the byzantine rules that make for not-so-exemplary role-playing. By writing and publishing Hackmaster, Kenzer and Company may extend the joke to extraordinary lengths and in the process open up new opportunities to lovingly parody role-playing and role-players (not to mention game publishers).



In the Hackmaster series the Hacklopedia serves as a parody of the First Edition Advanced Dungeons and Dragons Monster Manual. (The HackMaster rules will be a "house rules" version of the First Edition D&D rules, not a d20 product.) Like the Monster Manual it includes statistics such as Frequency, Climate, Size, No. Appearing, Hit Dice, and No. of Attacks. Added are a few statistics specific to Hackmaster: among others, HackFactor and Yield. A monster's HackFactor (TM) is a measure of how much damage it can take and dish out, ranging from 1 up past 400. Yield lists the spell components and treasures which the enterprising adventurer can cull from the dismembered and dissected corpse of the monster. As for the Hit Dice statistic: all monsters get +20 hit points over their rated Hit Dice.

Volume I (of eight) of the Hacklopedia lists the monsters and denizens of Garweeze Wurld from Aarakians to Cats, Great. In between are such nasties as the Argos (Blob of Death), Dire Armadillo, Incessant Babblers, Giant Bandy Tailed Fighting Cock, more than a dozen species of Beholders and Beholderkin, Bulette (Land Shark), Great Red Marauding Beaver, Bovinians, Wild Carrion Camels, and Carnivorous Coral. The subtle humor of Hackmaster flows quietly through the whole collection. Some creatures appear to be occupying space in the alphabet, like the Dire Armadillo, and not much more. (Will the dreaded and fearsome Gazebo be listed in a later volume?) Others represent the efforts of the Game Master to simply plague or bamboozle the players. Still others are brought in from books or movies. The Anthraxian appears as a cute, but very deadly bunny rabbit, reminiscent of a certain scene in Monty Python and the Holy Grail. The Guardian Angel appears to be intended for use as a method of bailing out players who are up to their necks in HackFactor.

D&D veterans will appreciate another aspect of the Hacklopedia's parody of the Monster Manual. You may recall that the original Monster Manual was illustrated by Dave Trampier and Dave Sutherland. Both contributed black and white line art to the book, but the former's style was a little more stylized while the latter's was more realistic. The Hacklopedia illustrators have achieved a very

similar alteration between the same two artistic styles. (The Hacklopedia, by the way, has illustrations for every creature, a level the original Monster Manual never even came close to.)

As you read through the Hacklopedia, you cannot help but try to guess what the rest of the as yet unpublished Hackmaster system will be like. Most of the creatures give the impression that they are to serve as a steady diet of hackable and slayable victims for the players. Others are intended to be frustrating look-alikes designed to torment know-it-all players. If you have read Knights of the Dinner Table you will have a pretty good idea of the "hack now, ask questions later" approach to gaming taken by Hackmaster players.

Fans of all varieties of fantasy role-playing will enjoy the Hacklopedia and, no doubt, the rest of Hackmaster. As they are going to an enormous amount of effort to bring out Hackmaster, Kenzer and Company would also be pleased to have an accidental hit on their hands. I predict that this will be the case. However, don't get too impatient waiting for the Player's Handbook and Game Master's Guide to be released. ACE has contacted Kenzer and Company about play-testing the new books, and was told that much of the manuscripts are still on loose sheets of paper, backs of napkins, and random computer files. These books are still a long way off.

More Pictures from the June 9 All-Nighter

