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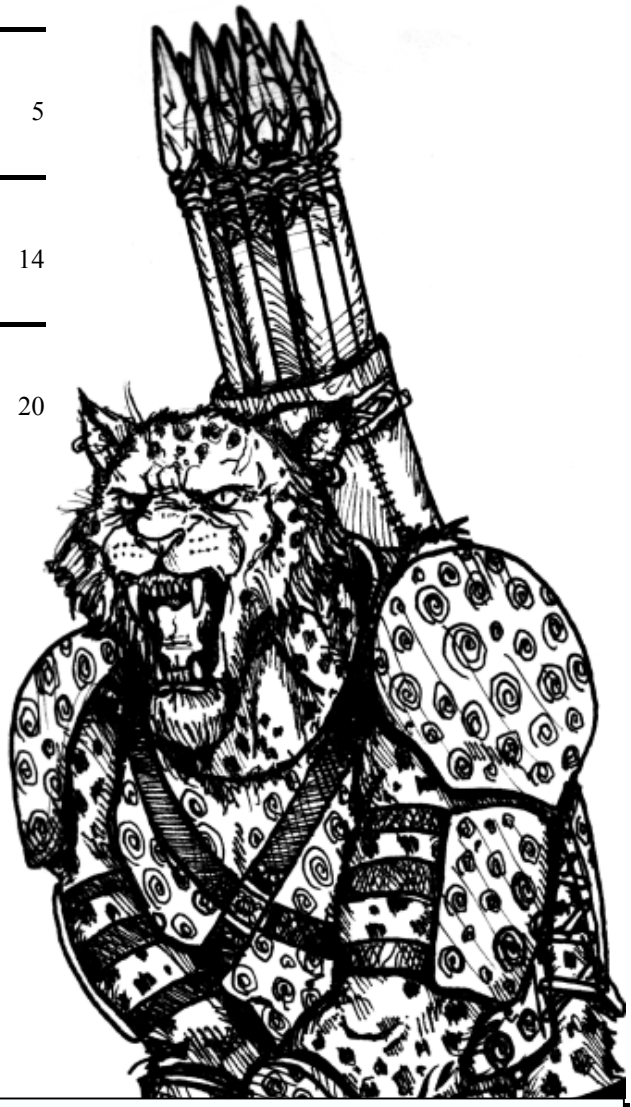

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The Grand Melee by Michael Surbrook

> O for a Muse of fire, that would ascend
> The brightest heaven of invention,
> A kingdom for a stage, princes to act
> And monarchs to behold the swelling scene!
>
> — *The Life of King Henry V*
> William Shakespeare

Running a Medieval Tournament in Your *Fantasy Hero* Campaign

In the Middle Ages there was little to no organized sport as we know it. Oh, there were sports and games aplenty, and any time traveler could go back and find the distant (or not so distant) ancestors of such modern games as field hockey, soccer, lawn bowling, and even baseball. But there were no real regulated sports – except one. The one exception was the tournament, a martial sport performed by the nobility, of the nobility, and for the nobility. They were often planned well in advance, featured a great deal of pomp and spectacle, and later period tournaments had carefully spelled out rules for what would be (and would not be) allowed. Best of all, a tournament might last for a week or more, and would bring a great influx of people and money to whatever town was lucky enough to have one held nearby. Thus, a medieval tourney makes for an excellent *Fantasy Hero* scenario, and can feature all the action and adventure the GM and his players may wish for – even if no one is actually fighting in the tournament itself!

This article will take a somewhat simplified look at the origins and history of the medieval tournament, and will give suggestions on how you can run different types of tournaments as part of your *Fantasy Hero* campaign. It will also have several tournament-related scenarios and briefly describe tournament-specific weapons and armor.

What is a Tournament?

> **Adhemar:** Your armor sir.
> **William:** What about it?
> **Adhemar:** How stylish of you to joust in an antique, you'll start a new fashion if you win. My grandfather will be able to wear his in public again, and a shield, how quaint. Some of these poor country knights, little better then peasants.
>
> — *A Knight's Tale*

No one knows exactly when or where the idea of the tournament first came about. In fact, no one is exactly sure of the origins of the word "tournament" in the first place. One 16th Century suggestion says it comes from the word *"par tour,"* referring to how knights would make their runs at the quintain (a practice target used to develop mounted combat skills) "by turn." It also might come from an attempt to describe how mounted knights and men-at-arms would circle around each other before beginning combat. As for the tournaments themselves, it is highly likely they were an offshoot of various military games practiced by many European cultures as a way of keeping one's battle skills sharpened. For example, the Romans held what they called *ludus Troiae,* or the "Troy Game," while various Germanic tribes were known to fight mock battles and the like.

Jousting came about in the 11th Century, after the establishment of the mounted cavalry man and the introduction of the massed charge with lances leveled. These tournaments were fairly primitive affairs (at least when compared to the jousts of the late 16th Century) and deaths were common, resulting in the Church speaking out against the sport and attempting to ban it (a scene that would be repeated time and time again over the next 600 years).

As time passed, tournaments became more and more involved and complex in size and style. New types of tournaments were developed, such as the *pas d'armes,* which might incorporate both combat on foot and horse, while the joust became so refined it eventually evolved into almost a form of public spectacle rather than any true test of skill. The next section of this article will look at some of these tournament forms, and how you can present them in a *HERO System* fantasy campaign.

STYLES OF TOURNAMENT

Once you've decided to incorporate a tournament into your campaign, you next need to decide exactly what kind of tournament it will be. This section will describe several variations, along with suggestions on how to set them up. The terms used to describe the different tournaments are for convenience, only loosely based on historical naming conventions.

The Mass Mêlée: The mass mêlée is the earliest and simplest form of tournament. It is held in a large region of open countryside with no real boundaries, although certain areas are usually declared refuges, where knights can rest and rearm as needed. The tournament itself is fought between groups of armored men on horseback using standard weapons of war. There are little to no rules to such a tournament, aside from the idea that a participant is supposed to capture his foe, not kill him.

TOURNAMENT OR JOUST?

In this article, the term "tourney" or "tournament" will refer to any organized event of hand-to-hand combat, either on horse or on foot, between either a group or a single set of participants. The word "joust" refers to mounted combat with lances between two opponents. For those wishing a more period term to describe such an event, you can use the term *"hastiludia"* (or *hastiludium,* or "hastilude"), meaning "spear play."

The Enemy of My Enemy by Jason Walters

> "Me against my brother, my brother and I against my cousin, and my brother my cousin and I against the world."
> – ancient Arab proverb

> "[The Enemy of My Enemy is] a very fun scenario and great way to kick off a campaign…."
> – Allen Thomas, author of *Alien Wars*

Introduction

GM's Introduction

The Enemy of My Enemy is a six-player adventure for the HERO System's Star Hero genre. It takes place in the *Alien Wars* setting on the world of Sigma Caeruleus III, a backwater colony planet with some rather unique social problems. It can be used either as a solo adventure suitable for convention play or as the beginning point for a "Life Will Never Be the Same Again" campaign (see *Alien Wars* page 177). To play this scenario the GM needs the following books: *Alien Wars*, *Hero System Bestiary*, *HERO System 5th Edition*, and *The Ultimate Vehicle*.

It is strongly recommended the players use the six PCs included with this adventure instead of ones they create themselves as these characters represent a careful balance of the various feuding factions which inhabit Sigma Caeruleus III. This could change once the players have grown familiar with the basic themes behind the scenario. For example, if the GM wishes to use this adventure as a beginning point for an *Alien Wars* campaign, the creation of additional PCs may become appropriate due to attrition, plot twists, and so forth. While none of these PCs are technically military personnel, they're all hardened combatants of a violent civil war with useful abilities, skills, and equipment that should enable them to successfully fight their Xenovore adversaries. Each of the provided PCs is built as a 150-point or more standard heroic character type.

The Enemy of My Enemy is a "character driven" adventure which attempts to combine serious roleplaying with fast-paced action. Each of the provided PCs either hates, distrusts, dislikes, or otherwise has some sort of problem with many of the others, sometimes even those within their own group. Yet they must overcome their history of violence and distrust if they are to band together to fight the Xenovores, a terrible alien race literally bent on consuming humanity. If the PCs are successful in doing so, they will have taken those first hesitant steps that lead to the formation of the Resistance Alliance of Sigma Caeruleus III (see *Alien Wars*, page 47), an organization that in later, more enlightened times will be regarded as one of first real examples of human/alien unity. The GM should feel free to guide these fractious personalities into agreement by judiciously inserting hostile Xenovore forces as the plot demands.

Some of the information below is general knowledge available to all the PCs, while other information is available only to the members of each group. This is due to the fact that each group has held the other two in contempt for generations. Correspondingly each has failed to learn everything that is possible about the other two. The only exception to this rule is Doctor Yezmond Maronesy as she was educated on Kinzareth before launching her idealistic crusade to unite her kinfolk with their alien antagonists. As a result she has acquired a great deal of knowledge about the Zarr. Each PC has an individual introduction which details his character's actions in the hours previous to the Xenovore invasion. This, along with a set of goals unique to that character, is to be made known only to that character's player. Please ask each player to carefully and privately review their characters before the game starts.

Player's Introduction

The year is 2332. Unopposed by any force more determined than itself, Mankind has burst forth from it home solar system to colonize hundreds of worlds across a 10,000 light year swath of the Milky Way Galaxy in age of unprecedented exploration and expansion. Energetic and arrogant, Man now commands an interstellar domain which could scarcely have been imagined by even his 21st Century ancestors. Yet not all is well in this seemingly golden age. Long-standing political tensions between the newly wealthy worlds of the Spinward Union and the slowly decaying central government of United Earth has recently erupted into open warfare. In the ensuing confusion system after system has either declared its political autonomy or pledged hollow loyalty to the UE's fractured Senate. Thinking himself safely enfolded in a comfortingly empty void surrounded only by easily subdued primitive peoples, mankind turns upon itself in an orgy of fraternal squabbling. More fearful of one another than any outside threats, ambitious men whose ends are best served by weakness and divisiveness rather than unity of strength allow the United Earth's federated military to deteriorate into a shadow of its former self.

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