

# CHAMPIONS

COMPLETE



DEREK HIEMFORTH

# CHAMPIONS COMPLETE

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# INTRODUCTION

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## PRETEND — THE UNIVERSAL GAME

You've already played the game you now hold in your hands.

So has every child on the planet. Probably every child who ever lived.

Maybe you didn't use exactly the rules and terminology presented here. Maybe you didn't use papers or dice. Maybe you didn't play it with superheroes. Maybe you didn't even play it with others, if there were no siblings or playmates around. But you played it just the same.

Because at its core, *Champions* is the oldest and most universal children's game: Pretend. Cops and Robbers. Cowboys and Indians. House. War. Probably all the way back to Cavemen and Predators.

Yes, even Superheroes and Supervillains. Every kid who ever played Pretend, tying a towel around his neck and jumping off the living room sofa shouting "Up, up, and away!" was – in a sense – playing *Champions*.

Unfortunately, there's another universal truth about Pretend: people *stop* playing it as they get older...

## FROM CHILD'S PLAY TO GROWN UP PASTIME

Why do they stop? Two main reasons: Competition and Conflict.

As we get older, other forms of fiction – watching or reading about fantastic adventures, instead of imagining and creating them yourself – compete more and more for our increasingly-limited entertainment time. Most comic book, novel, television, or movie adventures have many more characters than you and your young friends could think up and act out on your own, and the stories are usually more complex and interesting (because they aren't written by seven year olds).

The other issue is that Pretend lacks a good way of resolving things. "Ha-ha! I shot you!" "No you didn't! You missed me!" "Nuh-uh!" "Yuh-huh!" What began as fun turns into a squabble, because the players have no way to determine what happens (other than arguing about it). Eventually, we tire of bickering, and wander off to do something else (probably to sit down in front of the TV).

## THE BEST OF BOTH WORLDS

Essentially, a *Roleplaying Game* (RPG) aims to fix those two problems, and make playing Pretend fun again.

It addresses the problem of disjointed storylines with too few characters by placing one of the participants in the role of *Gamemaster* (GM). The GM is similar to the author of a book, or the screenwriter of a movie, but with one enormously important difference: he doesn't create the main characters, or determine their actions. The GM sets the stage (creating the backstory, the current plot of the antagonists, and the world around the characters), and controls the actions and responses of the supporting cast and adversaries (*Non-Player Characters* or *NPCs*).

The other participants (usually called "Players") take on the roles of the main characters (also called *Player Characters* or *PCs*). They define their characters' histories, abilities, and personalities (with guidance from the GM, like actors working with a director). And when the story unfolds (*i.e.*, when the game is played), the Players choose what the main characters say, how they say it, how they react to the things that happen to and around them, and so on. The Players are the actors and co-authors. The stories everyone creates together are known as *adventures*, and the entire fictional world and series of adventures is called a *campaign*.

An RPG addresses the issue of conflict by turning the pure roleplaying of Pretend into an actual *Game*, with dice and rules, so you *can* resolve what happens when the hero shoots at the villain (for example). "Ha-ha! I shot you!" (*rolling of dice*) "Missed me, super-fool!" "You diabolical fiend! I'll get you next time!"

In this aspect of the RPG experience, the Players make decisions for their characters, and the GM controls the actions of the other characters and the world as a whole. The GM also acts as the game facilitator, overseeing the action, settling any rules questions, making sure the rules are followed (or deciding when it would be more fun if they *weren't* followed just this once), and so on.

*Champions* is a tabletop RPG. This means the participants describe the actions of their characters, and verbally act out dialogue, but generally don't act things out physically. In that respect, it's more like radio drama than a TV show or a movie. But hey... if you want to tie that towel around your neck and jump off your sofa, we certainly won't stop you. "Up, up, and away!"

## CHAMPIONS AND THE HERO SYSTEM

*Champions* is an RPG for playing out the sorts of adventure stories featured in comic books, from astonishing superheroes with powers and abilities far beyond those of mortal men, to grim urban vigilantes determined to clean up the streets. It was first published by Hero Games in 1981, with scores of peripheral products published since then, including several revisions of the rules engine (most recently in 2009). The current rules set represents the Sixth Edition of the game.

The rules engine at the heart of *Champions* is called the *HERO System*, and products intended for use with the *HERO System* also work with *Champions*. From a game system perspective, "*Champions*" and "*HERO System*" mean the same thing.

Since comic book stories can encompass virtually any kind of story element – from magic to super-science; wizards to gunslingers – the rules also have to accommodate anything. They can't work for only *some* stories; they have to work with *any* story.



Therefore, *Champions/the HERO System* is a “universal RPG.” You can use the rules to guide the action of tales from any fictional genre. See *Playing Other Genres* (page 221), or other books published for use with *Champions/the HERO System*, for some suggestions.

## OTHER PRODUCTS AND RESOURCES

Rather than giving you a list of specific products (that would be outdated almost as soon as it was published), your central resource for All Things *Champions* is the Hero Games web site at <http://www.herogames.com>. It features:

- An Online Store where you can purchase other books compatible with *Champions*, such as expansion books, campaign settings, genre guides, equipment compendiums, and so forth
- A Free Stuff section with supplemental materials you can download
- The *Hero Designer* software, which turns character creation into a matter of a few keystrokes and mouse clicks (available in the Online Store)
- The Hero Games Message Board: one of the friendliest, most enthusiastic fan communities in gaming

## AUTHOR'S INTRODUCTION TO CHAMPIONS COMPLETE

Bernard of Chartres was reportedly the first to say, “...we are like dwarfs upon the shoulders of giants...” Bernard, I know exactly what you mean. If it's a lucky man who finds a hobby he loves, then it's a lucky man indeed who gets the opportunity to make an impact upon such a hobby.

I came to *Champions* as a player during the era of the Third Edition (1987 to be exact), and fell in love with the game. Though I was avid RPG player for many years prior, *Champions* soon became my go-to system of choice, and the rules engine powering all my campaigns as a GM.

Gaming led to game writing, and I was fortunate enough to see my work published in books for my favorite RPG, including the *Champions* supplements *Champions Battlegrounds* in 2003, and *Vibora Bay* in 2004. During the development of the Fifth (Revised) and Sixth Editions of the rules, I was honored to participate by consulting in a small way, as one of the “5ER Five” and the “Sixth Edition Technical Advisory Committee (SETAC).”

Despite my history with the game, however, I must admit to starting this project with a certain feeling of “Who exactly do I think I am, to follow the likes of George MacDonald, Steve Peterson, Rob Bell, and (especially) Aaron Allston and Steven S. Long?” Those men have some of the most impressive RPG resumes in the history of the hobby, and are definitely the giants upon whose shoulders this dwarf now stands. But though I may not have their resumes, I think I *can* match their love for *Champions* and the *HERO System*, and their desire to see it thrive.

The *Champions Complete* project began with a clear game plan: to boil down the Sixth Edition *HERO System* rules engine into a condensed, lean format that retains all the flexibility and power it's known for, and then slide that engine into the best vehicle around for superhero roleplaying. I think the plan succeeded; now it's time for the rubber to meet the road.

Fire her up. Kick the tires. Take her for a spin around the block. Then let's hit the highway and really see what she can do. Atomic batteries to power! Turbines to speed!

Be A Hero!  
Derek Hiemforth  
July 2012

# EVERYTHING YOU NEED, IN ONE BOOK

The ultimate superhero roleplaying game returns to reclaim its crown in **Champions Complete!** All the legendary flexibility and power of the renowned **HERO System** rules plus all the superhero goodness that has made **Champions** famous in one pulse-pounding, senses-shattering, heroic handbook of superpowered action.

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