

THE STUFF HEROES ARE MADE OF

PRINT EDITION

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INTRODUCTION

Hi. My name is John Desmarais, and I am a Champions player. It's been 4 weeks since my last game and...

Ok, so much for my lame attempt at humor. Most of you folks here don't know me, although some of you may actually know of me (some consciously, some not), so I figured I should write up a brief introduction before just launching willy-nilly into "game stuff"...

I've been playing this game we all love so much for a dozen or so years now, and doing the GM thing not quite as long. I wrote a few articles for *Adventures Club Quarterly* back in it's hay-day, and am currently managing a few internet based "Hero things" (see Endnotes for details) that I hope at least someone finds useful.

Oddly enough, I first contemplated contacting this Haymaker to join about 5 years ago, but somehow just never quite got around to it (of course, at the time my life was pretty full; and I had lots of outlets for my creative gaming urges). Now, with the time I spend gaming down to a couple of times a month if I'm lucky, I find I have a need to interact with other folks who like the same games I do - so here I am.

My current gaming energy is focused primarily into my sporadically run Justice, Inc. (4th edition rules) campaign, although I did try to run an actual Champions campaign a few months back (didn't work well, the players just weren't into the whole superhero thing, so we went back to pulp). Oh yeah, and I play a little of "that other generic universal role playing system" when I'm not GMing something Hero related (the other GM in my current group prefers those rules).

So, here's my very first contribution to Haymaker. Admittedly it's kind of on the short side, but without having ever seen an issue I'm a little uncertain as to how much and what type of things people generally do for their sections of the APA (also, I ended up being kind of rushed for time - my fault, like a dummy I decided to go back to school).

John Desmarais

ARTICLES

Wildly divergent power levels in your Champions campaign

(How to have Green Arrow and Superman on the same team).

Ok, you've planned your campaign, drafted your players, and they provided their character concepts and possibly even first-draft character sheets from your players, and one of them has a way-cool concept that simply doesn't lend itself to the type of point limits you have in mind for the campaign - now what do you do? You know that if the character gets trimmed down to conform with your campaign limits the concept will be slaughtered, and you don't want to penalize the player by simply say "No!"

Well, here are two ideas; that work collectively, or independently of each other; for allowing the character to be built. (I recommend using both if the character will require a large number of additional points in order to work. If the character only needs a small number of addition points I would use just one of the two methods).

Method One

No disadvantage point limits - Preferred method if the character concept lends itself to more and/or larger disadvantages than is typical - also key to this is that the character's concept not require a large number of addition points (we don't want the character bogged down by too many disadvantages).

Many high power character concepts tend to lend themselves to big disadvantage lists as well, so don't set point caps on disadvantages. This is a simplification. What I really mean is don't set a hard limit, but have a limit in mind. Allow character to be built with as many points in disadvantages as the player can reasonably play. If a character is built with more points in disadvantages than your limit, force the player rapidly spend experience points to buy off enough of them to bring that character back under your disadvantage limit - at least half of all experience points spent on the character must go towards buying off enough disadvantages to get the character's disadvantage total under your disadvantage point limit. Furthermore (as should be the case for any disadvantage), the player must put forth an effort to work off these disadvantages "in-character" (i.e. hunteds and rivalries should resolved in game play, psychological and physical limitations overcome in character, etc., etc.).

If this method is used in conjunction with the below mentioned (experience point deficit) method, the experience deficit must be paid off first, than the player can start working off excess disadvantages.

Method Two

Experience Point Deficit - For when it's not feasible to come up with enough points in (valid) disadvantages to balance the character.

Assign the character an experience point deficit sufficient to balance the character (i.e., give the character an experience point

"advance"). Further, restrict the character's usage of experience points accumulated in game play to "paying back" this experience point advance - no experience point may be spent on character improvements until he is not longer in deficit. In addition, I recommend having the player build the character as best he can prior to being advanced additional points, the (you, the GM) can assign those points to the character's specific schtick. My rule of thumb for how many points to advance a character is no more than half the base value (for a "typical" super hero game with a 100 point base, this would be up to 50 points).

If this method is used in conjunction with the above mentioned (no disadvantage limit) method, the experience deficit must be paid off first, than the player can start working off excess disadvantages.

Game Play Results

In play, these ideas seem to work ok, unless your players lack the maturity to deal with the idea of one character starting out radically more powerful than another. Even this can usually be dealt with by explaining to the offended party that the very powerful character is not going to improve any for a long period of time whereas his character will (almost) immediately start getting more competent and well rounded do to the ability to spend experience in an unrestricted fashion.

These concepts work best if used sparingly. If most of your players are coming up with concepts that don't fit well in the point constraints you wish to use, you should probably consider simply increasing your point limits.

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Introducing Young People to Gaming

A few points to ponder when introducing children to the fine art of role-playing.

I got married recently, and in the process acquired a step-son - this isn't a bad thing, but it has had some impact on how I look things, including gaming. He's watched us play Champions and (and other games) and is really keen to play with us, which got me thinking out how one should go about helping kids start playing. This sounds a little silly to some, but many of us in the gaming world tend to forget that without a steady influx of new players the industry dies - and the best source of new players are the young.

Make sure they really are old enough to play the game. They should be old enough to both read, and comprehend the game rules (for all of his desire and excitement, my kid isn't really old enough yet as he still can't read well and his reading comprehension is still pretty low). The average child is ready somewhere around 5th grade I think (this is also the point at which they should understand the math involved in *Hero System* character creation).

Choose a game system and genre with the kid in mind. The system should be easy to understand and quick to learn. The genre (IMO) should be one that allows for an extremely clear-cut, black-and-white, differentiation between good and evil - most young children really aren't ready shade of gray and moral dilemmas yet. My suggestion is *Pendragon*. Fairly easy rules, little in the way of "magic" or similar potentially odd mechanics, and the game strongly encourages the PCs to be "gooder good guys". The

genre/setting describe in *Pendragon* is also very familiar due to the pervasive nature of the Arthurian legends and it's simple game system lends itself well to conversion to other system - for those who use *Hero System* exclusively (which, as a GM, I do). For *Hero System* though, I recommend simplified character sheets with every important number pre-derived and prominently displayed on the sheet.

Keep the plots simple and straight-forward at the beginning, increasing in complexity as the child becomes accustom to the concepts involved. As a side note to simple plots, make sure that villains can always be defeated without having to kill them (maybe rough them up a bit, but no death). Children really shouldn't be involved in someone's death, not even in fiction.

Remember that most children will have difficulty with the idea of in character vs. out of character. Just accept it and expect that, with encouragement, they will get better.

Find out if the child has friends his/her own age also interested in playing. A lone child playing with a bunch of adults can easily become overwhelmed, which will inhibit the child from actively participating. Playing with other children will, generally speaking, have the opposite effect. (On the flip side of this concept, if the game is geared heavily towards a child player, any adults involved may become bored and either quit or "cause problems"). This idea of having other children play is another reason I recommend *Pendragon* - there is very little in the game that a parent who knows nothing about rpgs would object to. (Remember, with your child's friends come the uninformed biases of his parents).

If you are going to have a child play with a

group of adults, look through your characters (and players) for one that is well-suited to become responsible for an inexperienced character and is willing to act as a mentor to them. The player should be someone that the youngster likes and who is willing to work with the child to help teach them.

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Zeppelins (or dirigibles to some)

The dream of flight is perhaps as old as man himself, and there can be few who have never dreamed of flight in one way or another, taking to the air like a soaring bird or a floating cloud.

- - Author unknown, probably Christopher Chant

In honor of the topic of Bob's supplement for this issue I've pulled together some (and in a few cases finished half completed) vehicles that I've written up for my Justice, Inc. game. Unfortunately, having thought of it at the very last minute I didn't take the time to contact him to actually get it into said supplement or even to make sure it wasn't redundant with something written by someone else (if it is, I apologize ahead of time).

Ever since I was a child, I've been fascinated by Zeppelins. For 35 years, they represented (to my mind at least) they represented the epitome of stylish air travel - until 1937, when the burning of the LZ129 Hindenburg signaled the end of their era.

Presented here are Hero System statistics for eight Zeppelin built airships spanning the 35 year period that Zeppelins were being built. From the first functional prototype (the LZ1) to the ill-fated LZ129 Hindenburg.

It's just a shame that our society is so fixated

on "getting there yesterday" that these sky titans will never again be economically practical.

I don't know how useful most of you will find these, but I hope that they will at least be interesting.

You may notice that these vehicle write-ups have no listed disadvantages. I apologize for this, but I really couldn't think of any truly meaningful ones - they really were well throughout, practical vehicles – and I didn't want to just add disads for the sake of saving a few points.

Construction of the first von Zeppelin designed airship (LZ1) began June 17th, 1898. The rigid framework was completed in November of the following year, with the gas cells installed a few days later. The launch, though, was postponed due to damage sustained by the launch/recovery platform in a storm.

LZ1 (The Prototype)	
First Flight: 2 July 1900	Range: 280km
Complement: 5	
Cost	Vehicle Characteristics
-56	STR -46/34
-21	DEX 3
0	BODY 10/26
7	SPD 2
80	Size Increase-16: 812.70001 hexes (34,979 sq ft), 406.35001 inside, 813 passengers, 64" long x 12.7" wide, 6,400,000 kg, KB \16, DCV -9 (Mod -10)
0	DEF 2; Coverage: Complete, -0; Protects: Top and Bottom, -0
12	Flight (5", NC: 20", 15mph); Non-Combat Multiplier: x4, +5; Limited Maneuverability : -1/4; Stall: None, -0
22	Vehicle Cost (Cost: 22/5 = 4)

In 1910, after building 8 airships (and cycling through 6 different iterations of the design) the Deutsch Luftschiffahrts-Aktiengesellschaft (German Airship Travel Corporation, DELAG for short) made the decision to replace the alphanumeric naming system with actual names (although the alphanumeric designators were still regularly used during construction). Considerably larger than it's predecessors, the LZ7 also holds the distinction of being the first "named" Zeppelin: christened the Deutschland.

LZ7 Deutschland	
First Flight: 19 June 1910	Range: 1600km
Complement: 8 + 20 Passengers	
Cost	Vehicle Characteristics
-64	STR -54/41
-21	DEX 3
0	BODY 10/29
7	SPD 2
95	Size Increase-19: 3250.8999 hexes (139,919 sq ft), 1625.44995 inside, 3251 passengers, 74" long x 43.9" wide, 50,000,000 kg, KB -19, DCV -11 (Mod -12)
0	DEF 2; Coverage: Complete, -0; Protects: Top and Bottom, -0
18	Flight (6", NC: 48", 36mph); Non-Combat Multiplier: x8, +10; Limited Maneuverability : -1/4; Stall: None, -0
35	Vehicle Cost (Cost: 35/5 = 7)

Larger than it's predecessors, the Viktoria Luise (LZ11) also featured a different powerplant than the earlier models (Maybech engine as opposed to a Daimler ones previously used). The LZ11 increased the passenger space to a new all-time high: 25 passengers (plus 8 crew)

LZ11 Viktoria Luise	
First Flight: 14 February 1912	Range: 1100km
Complement: 8 + 25 Passengers	
Cost	Vehicle Characteristics
-64	STR -54/41
-21	DEX 3
0	BODY 10/29
7	SPD 2
95	Size Increase-19: 3250.8999 hexes (139,919 sq ft), 1625.44995 inside, 3251 passengers, 70" long x 46.4" wide, 50,000,000 kg, KB -19, DCV -11 (Mod -12)
0	DEF 2; Coverage: Complete, -0; Protects: Top and Bottom, -0
21	Flight (8", NC: 64", 48mph); Non-Combat Multiplier: x8, +10; Limited Maneuverability : -1/4; Stall: None, -0
38	Vehicle Cost (Cost: 38/5 = 8)

The LZ59 holds no particular distinction, but is typical of the airships being built for military usage at the time.

LZ59 (navy L20)	
First Flight: 21 December 1915	Range: 4300km
Complement: 16	
Cost	Vehicle Characteristics
-48	STR -38/47
-21	DEX 3
0	BODY 10/27
7	SPD 2
85	Size Increase-17: 1290.09998 hexes (55,526 sq ft), 645.04999 inside, 1290 passengers, 89" long x 14.5" wide, 12,500,000 kg, KB -17, DCV -10 (Mod -11)
3	DEF 3; Coverage: Complete, -0; Protects: Top and Bottom, -0
21	Flight (8", NC: 64", 48mph); Non-Combat Multiplier: x8, +10; Limited Maneuverability : -1/4; Stall: None, -0
47	Vehicle Cost (Cost: 47/5 = 9)

The LZ100, a 'v' class Zeppelin, was another model designed and built strictly for navy usage. It could travel further than anything built before it (this was not due to any type of clever design improvement, they simply

increased the fuel capacity), and get their faster than anything except the 'u' class. The 'v' class Zeppelin used the same engines as the last several models, but it (and the 'u' class) had more of them onboard. *Although not written up for this article, the 'u' class included the LZ95 through LZ96. The only appreciable difference is that the 'u' class had a lower fuel capacity, which made it slightly lighter (and faster) but gave it a shorter range.*

LZ100 (navy L53)	
First Flight: 8 July 1917	Range: 13500km
Complement: 19	
Cost	Vehicle Characteristics
-47	STR -37/53
-21	DEX 3
0	BODY 10/28
7	SPD 2
90	Size Increase-18: 2048 hexes (88,146 sq ft), 1024 inside, 2048 passengers, 98" long x 20.9" wide, 25,000,000 kg, KB -18, DCV \10 (Mod -11)
3	DEF 3; Coverage: Complete, -0; Protects: Top and Bottom, -0
21	Flight (8", NC: 64", 48mph); Non-Combat Multiplier: x8, +10; Limited Maneuverability : -1/4; Stall: None, -0
53	Vehicle Cost (Cost: 53/5 = 11)

Monstrously overpowered, the LZ112 (another navy airship) had the largest crew compliment to date, and travelled at speeds previously unseen in a lighter-than-air craft. LZ 112 was the first of the X class to be completed. On the morning of 5th August 1918, the airship, captained by von Lossnitzer, and with Strasser on board, left for a raid on England on what was her first operational flight. At about 10.20PM, the airship was attacked by a DH4 with Major Cadbury at the controls, and Captain Leckie as gunner. A burst of Brock-Pomeroy-Buckingham bullets hit the underneath of the airship, which caught fire and fell into the sea

off the east coast of England.

LZ112 (navy L70)	
First Flight: 1 July 1918	Range: 16000km
Complement: 30	
Cost	Vehicle Characteristics
-46	STR -36/54
-21	DEX 3
0	BODY 10/28
7	SPD 2
90	Size Increase-18: 2048 hexes (88,146 sq ft), 1024 inside, 2048 passengers, 105" long x 19.5" wide, 25,000,000 kg, KB -18, DCV \10 (Mod -11)
3	DEF 3; Coverage: Complete, -0; Protects: Top and Bottom, -0
26	Flight (11", NC: 88", 65mph); Non-Combat Multiplier: x8, +10; Limited Maneuverability : -1/4; Stall: None, -0
59	Vehicle Cost (Cost: 59/5 = 12)

Built by the Zeppelin Company in 1922-23 for the U.S. Navy. The Los Angeles was America's premiere big airship and at the time, the largest ever built. She was also the only U.S. airship to survive until her decommissioning, in 1932. It featured a wide array of design changes specifically made to increase the safety of the vessel.

LZ126 USS Los Angeles	
First Flight: 27 August 1924	Range: 12500km
Compliment: 28 + 20 passengers	
Cost	Vehicle Characteristics
-53	STR -43/52
-21	DEX 3
0	BODY 10/29
7	SPD 2
95	Size Increase-19: 3250.8999 hexes (139,919 sq ft), 1625.44995 inside, 3251 passengers, 100" long x 32.5" wide, 50,000,000 kg, KB -19, DCV -11 (Mod -12)
3	DEF 3; Coverage: Complete, -0; Protects: Top and Bottom, -0
27	Flight (12", NC: 96", 71mph); Non-Combat Multiplier: x8, +10; Limited Maneuverability : -1/4; Stall: None, -0
58	Vehicle Cost (Cost: 59/5 = 12)

The final airship listed here is undoubtedly the most famous one of all. First launched in April of 1936, the Hindenburg was the largest airship ever built. Originally sporting a crew of 40 with room for 50 passengers, it was later refitted to carry 72 passengers. After just under a year of service the Hindenburg suffered a tragic mishap coming into Lakehurst, New Jersey. A small fire on the upper part of the hull just forward of the upper fin's leading edge grew with amazing speed into a large virtually explosive fire. In only 32 seconds the airship collapsed onto the ground in a heap that continued to burn for 3 hours. 61 people escaped, 36 didn't. After an exhaustive inquiry into the cause of the disaster, the two most likely causes were thought to be lightning or sabotage. No conclusive cause was discovered.

LZ129 Hindenburg	
First Flight: 4 April 1936	Range: 16500km
Compliment: 40 + 72 passengers	
Cost	Vehicle Characteristics
-50	STR -40/60
-21	DEX 3
0	BODY 10/30
7	SPD 2
100	Size Increase-20: 5160.6001 hexes (222,112 sq ft), 2580.30005 inside, 5161 passengers, 122" long x 42.3" wide, 100,000,000 kg, KB -20, DCV -12 (Mod -13)
3	DEF 3; Coverage: Complete, -0; Protects: Top and Bottom, -0
23	Flight (7", NC: 112", 83mph); Non-Combat Multiplier: x16, +15; Limited Maneuverability : -1/4; Stall: None, -0
62	Vehicle Cost (Cost: 62/5 = 12)

That's all the airships I have.

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ENDNOTES

Well, this is the end of my first (but hopefully not last) issue of Haymaker. Hopefully I didn't bore you to much. Next time there will be a lot less "personal rambling", I promise. Heck, there may even be a theme to everything (ideally, of course, following the theme of the issue - but no promises).

Internet based projects:

Web Sites

Many moons ago I built my first website related to Champions/Hero. It was called *John's Eclectic Hero Stuff* (I know, pretty bad). There was very little on it, and I'm not very proud of it. A couple of months later I redesigned the entire site, added html-ized versions of some articles I'd written for AQC (some published, some not), as well as other stuff I had done for various games I've played and/or run. When I was done I renamed it to *The Stuff Heroes Are Made Of* (a name now shared by this APA section). It's slowly grown over the years, and moved to a different host (away from Geocities), and I'm pretty proud of it. If you're interested it's at:

<http://www.sysabend.org/champions>

In addition, due mostly to a conversation with some of the folks involved in the Circle of Heroes webring about the status of *The Great Net Book of Real Heroes*, I tracked down Tim Larson and conversed with him about the project and the site he was hosting it on. Tim hadn't actually done any updates for a couple of years now, and didn't foresee his life schedule really permitting any anytime soon so, with his blessings, I've taken over this

project and am happy to say that it is once again an active web-project with new contributions coming in all the time. If you'd like to take a peek, it's at

<http://www.sysabend.org/champions/gnborh>

Mailing List

A couple of years back, Geoff Speare (he who ran the Champions / Hero System Mailing List for much time) decided to change jobs. Unfortunately, the listserver that fed the list was being run on his office computer, which meant he was going to have to give up running it (this was before egroups and similar services). After sending out a request for assistance to the members of the list I did a quick check with the guy who owns the system I host my web site on to see if I could make use of the listserver software installed on and then worked with Geoff to transition the list over to the sysabend server. Many, many months have passed since then. Hardware has been updated, and the listserver software has been replaced (was using majordomo, now using mailman) and the list is still going strong with traffic and membership higher than ever. Subscription information (for those interested) can be found at:

<http://www.sysabend.org/champions/champ-l>

TTFN