# A World of Your Own

## Evolving your own style of play in T&T

### by Ken St Andre

Of all the gaming articles I have ever written or ever will write this is probably the most important.

If I was the kind of person who could easily adapt to someone else's rules, *T&T* would have never been written. I would have struggled through and learned to play *D&D* no matter how poorly those original rules were phrased. If I can't adjust to the rules of Messrs Gygax and Arneson, why should I expect you to adjust to mine?

Unlike Mr Gygax, who seems to feel that if you aren't playing by the letter of the law in *AD&D*, then you really aren't playing *AD&D*, I feel that *T&T* is your game and you can make it into whatever you want. In section 1.1 of the 5th edition *T&T* rules, I said, '*T&T* will require that you actively use your imagination, not slavishly follow a set of rules around a world not of your own making . . . the cardinal rules remain: adjust the system as you see fit to suit your own style of play'.

Over the past five years I've received quite a few letters from people who wrote to say how much they enjoyed *T&T* (and a couple who wrote to tell me what a complete asshole I am). Most of the people liked it because of its simplicity and open-endedness. I have met teachers who like the game because it is easy to teach (and doesn't cost much), and they could use it in the classroom. Others have told me that they like the combat system because (a) it doesn't take very long to get through and (b) you know when you can't win which means you have to think and role-play your way out of sticky situations instead of fighting your way out.

Once you start playing *T&T* you are going to discover that the rules don't have the kind of complexity that will require you to read and reread them. It's going to get simple and easy and perhaps boring, unless you put something of yourself into it.

One way to handle that is to start the construction and evolution of your own world. In Phoenix I have had the help of a particularly good bunch of people in Bear Peters, Liz Danforth, Steve McAllister, Mike Stackpole, Paul O'Connor and others. Our world is called Rhalph (actually that's just one continent) and we have built it into quite a thing with all the solitaire adventures set within it, not to mention GM adventures and references to it in the rules. But the catch is, dear readers, that unless you're here in Phoenix, Arizona, playing with me and my friends, or unless you're using one of the *T&T* game products directly, you can't play in Rhalph with all its known complexity and history. You must play in a world, continent, or location of your own design.

And since you are designing a world anyway, why not use that opportunity to change the rules a bit. Let's use combat as an example. A recurring problem for some players is the idea that both sides should be able to suffer damage in combat, no matter how mismatched they are. That giant bear may tear you to pieces, but at least you might hit it in the nose once or poke an eye out. Let's further assume that you know about and like the system of percentage-based combat used in *Rune-Quest*. There is absolutely nothing to stop you from using that as your combat system. Each character or monster would then have a percentage chance to hit with its weapon. Percentage dice would be rolled. If the chance-to-hit roll was made, then the damage dice would be rolled. Combat is still simultaneous (we didn't borrow the concept of strike rank for this example) and fast, but now everyone has some chance, no matter how outnumbered. How long would it take you to teach that system to a new player? About two minutes, right. Let me make up an imaginary example of how that kind of combat would work. Glum, a dwarf, is armed with an axe (5 dice + 3 adds in damage). He has 10 combat adds of his own and a 50% chance to hit anything he swings at. Flamegusher, a dragon, has a Monster Rating of 200. (That means he gets 21 dice + 100 adds in combat every turn. Clearly, Glum doesn't stand a chance against him in single combat). Flamegusher has a 65% chance to hit whatever he is fighting. The fight starts. With a howl of 'Barroo Khazad!' Glum rushes to close quarters swinging his axe. Flamegusher rears up and pours forth fire in the general direction of the dwarf. Percentage dice are rolled. Glum gets a 38, within his percentage number to hit, and does his damage which comes to a total of 33 points. Flamegusher rolls 82 and misses the dwarf. His estimated 170 hits go nowhere and do nothing, and he takes 33 hits, reducing his Monster Rating to 167 (17 dice and 84 adds). The second combat round begins. This time Glum rolls a 49 on the d100 and Flamegusher rolls 02. Both have hit. Glum does an additional 35 points of damage (rolling just slightly better than last time) while the dragon applies 135 hits to the dwarf. That is the end of Glum. He is now toasted dwarf, but at least the fight was interesting while it lasted and Flamegusher has been substantially weakened should another dwarf come along.

All of the above has been by way of an example. I could come up with a dozen different combat systems, all more or less based on *T&T* combat, and surely you can do the same. If you don't mind slowing the game down a little to account for a more complex combat system then go ahead and do it.

Another common complaint I hear is that *T&T* spell names are silly. I have various rejoinders for that, including a legend concocted by Mike Stackpole to explain exactly why the spell names are what they are. (It seems it is part of a plot by the wizards of Rhalph to disguise their true power by making it seem laughable to the common people). Since you are creating your own *T&T* world, and you don't like my spell names, why not change them to suit yourself. Why not take a couple of hours, rewrite the spell book and give all your players the revised spellbook for your world. Since this is a game we are playing, we have to break things down into nice little packages that we can manipulate. For example: let's say Thimble the wizard has been asked to heal the wounds of Maladroit the warrior. Do you actually believe that Thimble is going to stand there making arcane gestures and yelling 'Poor baby, poor baby, poor baby!' at the top of his lungs. Not bloody likely! Probably, Thimble will lay hands on Maladroit and silently transfer the healing magical energy without saying a word, concentrating instead on what is supposed to happen. In terms of game mechanics Thimble's player says 'I do a *poor baby* spell on Maladroit to heal 8 points of his wounds'. What could be simpler? Yet, if I were writing the scene as a fantasy story, I'd do it without ever mentioning the name or mechanics of the spell.

Let me give just one more example of what I mean by 'evolving a style of play'. Paul O'Connor is one of the most imaginative people I know. Lately Paul has created his own *T&T* variant world where he gets back to basics. Among the rules he has established for his world of *Iron Bell* is one that states that all characters must start out at first level in his world and develop solely within it. Another is that no character may have an attribute in excess of 50. In going with such a low power world he has tamed down his monsters considerably — a very tough orc might have a Monster Rating of 35. There are no incredible tunnel complexes littering the landscape at the will of semi-omnipotent wizards as there are in Rhalph. 'Dungeon-delving' is an unheard-of profession. Doubtless, there are many other differences that I haven't discovered yet — I've only played in *Iron Bell* once. This is the sort of thing I am advocating. Use the *T&T* rules to construct a world for fantasy role-playing that you are happy with. If you do it well enough, you can turn it into an article for publication, or possibly a playing-aid for others.

—Best!