Revising the Defense System

There are two changes that I’m proposing here, one thematic/conceptual and one mechanical. Neither requires drastic changes to our system though.

First, the conceptual change: At the moment we have Physical, Ranged, and Mental Defense as our nomenclature for players. We then have Oppose, Subvert, and Evade as our three traits for more passive or abstract challenges. This is mostly only problematic when it comes to creating powers and talking about what players can or should target.

Since these sets of three are mutually exclusive at the moment, I propose that we merge our terminology. Physical/Ranged/Mental defense don’t see appropriate for abstract scenes though, so I suggest that perhaps characters should have Oppose, Subvert, and Evade ratings. Oppose would be like Physical Defense and be based on Might or Agility, Subvert would be like Mental Defense and be based on Intuition or Presence, and Evade would be like Ranged Defense and be based on Agility or Wits.

One potential issue with the above is that it makes Agility a “super stat” that affects two out of three defenses. With five attributes and three defenses though, it’s unfortunately unavoidable that at least one stat will be better than another. Consequently we should reexamine how many skills and derived attributes are associated with each skill.

Now for the second mechanical change: We currently rely on a “better of two” mechanic for determining defenses. This creates a range of defenses from about 7 to 11. Consequently, there is great incentive to have very divergent attributes, since only high attributes matter. This doesn’t bother me except that it means an “average” or well-rounded character will likely have defenses of 7 or 8 while a specialized character can have most of their defenses closer to 10 or 11.

For Asylum’s d10 mechanics this range creates a probability difference of 50% between two player characters, which *might* be troubling. In our best-worst case scenario, an attack that hits the average player 90% of the time might only hit the better character 50% of the time, which means the average player is taking dramatically more damage. With a less accurate attack the character with worse defenses could be hit 5x more often than the optimized character.

(Counter-intuitively, because we have interdependence on damage and hit-rates, this it would mean less than 5 times more damage. That mechanic is presenting more and more advantages.)

Another consequence of this system is that defense values of 7 or 8 are going to be quite rare. A character only needs two of the five attributes to be powerful to get all three defenses to be 8 or higher.

If we take the higher attributes:

Might 1, Agility 5, Wits 2, Intuition 2, Presence 5

Yields: Physical Defense 10, Ranged Defense 10, Mental Defense 10 (30)

Might 4, Agility 4, Wits 2, Intuition 3, Presence 2

Yields: Physical Defense 9, Ranged Defense 9, Mental Defense 8 (26)

Might 2, Agility 2, Wits 4, Intuition 4, Presence 4

Yields: Physical Defense 7 Ranged Defense 9, Mental Defense 9 (25)

And Might 3, Agility 3, Wits 3, Intuition 3, Presence 3

Yields: Physical Defense 8, Ranged Defense 8, Mental Defense 8 (24)

If we take the lower attributes:

Might 1, Agility 5, Wits 2, Intuition 2, Presence 5

Yields: Physical Defense 6, Ranged Defense 7, Mental Defense 7 (20)

Might 4, Agility 4, Wits 2, Intuition 3, Presence 2

Yields: Physical Defense 9, Ranged Defense 7, Mental Defense 7 (23)

Might 2, Agility 2, Wits 4, Intuition 4, Presence 4

Yields: Physical Defense 7 Ranged Defense 7, Mental Defense 9 (23)

And Might 3, Agility 3, Wits 3, Intuition 3, Presence 3

Yields: Physical Defense 8, Ranged Defense 8, Mental Defense 8 (24)

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This range of accuracy hasn’t become a problem yet in our playtests, so I’m not sure yet if it even requires remediation. I’m just trying to consider how the system behaves in the most extreme scenarios and what the likelihood really is for those scenarios. As a result, I’m already considering reasonable alternatives.

So, one possible alternative is to do the reverse for calculating most defenses and take the **lower** of the dependent attributes. In such a case, defenses of 10 or 11 would be almost unheard of and this brings the possible spread of defenses to about 6 through 9. More importantly, the With such a setup, an enemy with +0 to hit will have success frequency of 50% to 30% instead. The consequences of this reversal are that, like 7th Sea, dump stats have a dramatic (but not crippling) effect on a character so players will be incentivized to take more balanced attribute allocations.