

Comments on Issue #407**Myles Corcoran**

One of my pet gaming peeves (as a player or GM) is when players ask for an advantage they know will or should be declined just on the off chance the GM will actually say yes. Two players in my current group do that and I want to smack them every time. I would never use player-defined traits with them, again. My first bad experience with player-defined traits and this group was with Truth & Justice.

Michael Cule

In *Torchwood: Children of Earth*, I wondered why the aliens just didn't pick up the kids on their own. My theory is that the 456 wanted to make a point and to make the humans subservient. Their unwillingness to compromise was part of this. It's a much greater show of power to have the humans hand over their children than to simply take them away. This makes the 456 more evil. And I liked it.

But what I don't get is when the 456 revealed the reason *why* they wanted the children, that the UNIT official didn't suggest, "Oh, it's the *chemicals* you want? Well, we can get you those." It should have also been clear to the humans at this point that the 456 were not going to be satisfied and would return, like addicts to their supplier. Of course, why the 456 couldn't make their own chemicals is lost on me. This makes the 456 more stupid. And I didn't like it.

Robert A Dushay

A word of warning: many people who read Savage Worlds find it uninspiring. The phrase "it plays better than it reads" is often seen on RPG.net and the PEG forums. Newbies are strongly recommended to play it first before attempting to make any house rules, since they usually end up trying to fix something that isn't broken.

I'm still trying to understand what makes a game pop or fizzle, as my own gaming perspectives often run contrary to the mainstream. In the case of SW, it clicked for me after reading it, even though I had played it couple of times before then. Because one can use subjective character creation to make Fudge very OTE-like, I don't understand why Lisa likes OTE but not Fudge. When I played SotC, I saw Aspects being used for overacting and overreaching rather than constructive roleplaying and story-telling. So, I'm just picking your brain and not trying to refute your opinions.

With 4dF, a +1 difference in ability represents a +20% additional chance of success, which is nothing to sneeze at. If you're Mediocre (-1) and other

guy is Good (+1) and you're both trying to get a Great (+2) result, he has a 38% chance of success compared to your 6%. In d20 terms, that's like having a BAB of +1 compared to his +7, both trying to hit AC 21. I don't know how you don't feel "significantly worse."¹ Sure, Fudge doesn't have the Stunts and Aspects of FATE, but it does have player-defined Gifts & Faults. Did these not come into play in your Fudge experience?

In SW, traits are ranked from d4 to d12 (plus Unskilled). This is about the same range as used in Fudge, so you may assume that it lacks "broad character ability differentiation." In SW, Edges are the key to providing differentiation.

How do you feel about CoC character definition? Is there enough differentiation build into the system? I've never heard any complaints along this line, yet CoC lacks character dis/ads, etc.

Lee Gold

In UA, Flight, Fight, or Freeze are general descriptions of what the character does. The details are left to the GM. For example, "sudden inexplicable magic or psi" could be Flight if it teleported the character away or Fight if it manifested as pyrokinesis. Hallucinations, religious ecstasy, and gibbering could all be considered a form of Freeze.

My parents moved across town to The Villages², a gated, seniors, golfing community. It is where my dad takes his physical therapy for Parkinson's; plus they have long-time friends who live there. I used to live 5 minutes away; now, it's 30.

Joshua Kronengold

I see niche protection as a social contract between players. Why should I have to pay points to stop another player from being inconsiderate? Besides, Superman punches villains all the time. The thing that pisses me off about Superman is that his super-speed is depicted as rivaling the Flash's, which is clearly a case of niche encroachment. Why doesn't Superman use a bow? Because he doesn't have to. But I if he were to be stuck on a primitive planet under a red sun, he would definitely use a bow (and probably be really good at it).

Lisa Padol

What we think of as "rounds" and "initiative" in rpgs is mostly an artificial game mechanic that doesn't reflect the fluid, frantic nature of combat. However, I think if you are attempting to do 2 or more things in quick succession, there should be a

1 Which pretty much describes my current D&D character's situation when it comes to combat.

2 www.thevillagesgcc.com

penalty on the first action because you are trying to do it more quickly than normal while setting up for your second move. A classic mistake of football receivers, for example, is failing to catch the ball because they were concentrating on where they were going to run after they catch it. And sometimes they still get hit hard, failing both attempted actions.

In my experience, the Multi-Action Penalty (MAP) from *Savage Worlds* works quite well. Attempting two actions (including running) incurs a -2 penalty on both actions; 3 actions incurs a -4 penalty on all 3. In my *Monster Hunters* campaign, a common use of multiple actions is to cast *Smite* (which increases the damage of a weapon) or *Armor* and attack in the same round. The MAP is high enough to make it too risky for novices, but not so high as to discourage multiple actions by skilled characters. The math doesn't get in the way of the action. For multi-action rules I can't stand, I refer you to *Wild Talents*: take lowest pool, subtract one, and then roll multiple matches. In other words, don't even bother trying.

In power outages, it is not uncommon to have the landline phone still work, which avoids the problem of cell phone dead zones. In fact, there are products designed to use the power from the phone jack. Not all of these are intended for emergencies.

Character creation also drives plot in "non-Indie" games like *Hero* and *GURPS*. These allow you to build in enemies, dependents, addictions, and other complications. These can be subplots or inspire entire campaigns.

Screen time is not a silver bullet to solve issues of power balance, especially if you're frustrated by the incompetence of your character (which sometimes just happens because of bad luck). Spending additional screen time facing hardships and feeling angst can be bad, but it might be exactly what the player wants. I do think that most people want to feel useful; niche protection helps here, as does thoughtful scenario creation.

Yes, much of my 4D Martial Artist vs. 4D Ninja issue (which I'm happy to see has developed some discussion beyond me) has to do with negotiation and navigating the mismatched assumptions that players and GMs bring to the table. If no one catches the potential conflict early, it can bring a gaming session to a grinding halt as they argue over what is or isn't covered by "Ninja" or what kind of advantage (if any) a 4D Martial Artist has over a 4D Ninja in a heads-up fight.

Adding the attack's Margin of Success (MoS) to the damage roll doesn't work for *SSΩ* because *Fighting* and *Claws* (for example) cost the same. If *Ninja-Man* with *Fighting* +4 & *Claws* +0 is up against *Badger-Man* with *Fighting* +0 & *Claws* +4, the former has the clear advantage. On average,

the +4 fighting advantage rolls over and adds to the *Claws* damage, effectively giving *Ninja-Man* $F+4/C+4$. Plus, *Ninja-Man* hits more often.

I can mitigate this some by halving the MoS, but the math still favors *Ninja-Man*. I can fix this by making *Fighting* more expensive. For example, if *Fighting* cost twice as much, then we'd have $F+2/C+0$ vs. $F+0/C+4$, which might be closer fight. But eliminating the MoS advantage is easier to design and quicker to play. In standard *Fudge* (or *FATE*), adding MoS favors fighting prowess over weapon power. This is great for pulp, where most weapons are fists or guns and bruisers often lose to wily opponents. For *SSΩ*, I wanted bruisers (low *Fighting*, high damage) to be on equal footing with martial artists (high *Fighting*, low damage).

Jim Gordon had a son in *Batman: Year One*? Damn you, Frank Miller!

Lord Trevor Gails resolved his financial problems by leasing out his lands to those involved in the blackpowder plot. But the PCs never found this out.

The group did manage to find *The Red Swan*. Actually, they recruited their rivals, the *Monster Killers*, to help. The *Monster Hunters* were being distracted by bounty hunters after one of the PCs. A local rat-god cult cum thieves' guild had kidnapped the *Red Swan* to get him out of the way as they pursued their bounty. The *Monster Killers* found *The Red Swan* while the *Monster Hunters* killed the cult leader (effectively, a wererat).

In the introduction to the campaign, I wrote, "The campaign structure will follow a 'monster of the week' format with clear objectives, but freedom and flexibility regarding which jobs to undertake and how you accomplish your goals." So they are not under any obligation to pick up plot threads. They don't leave a plot dangling because they think, "someone else will do it" but because "we're not interested." So far, they haven't been bitten in the ass by a plot they ignored, but that may not be true in the future. And they weren't at all bothered by the notoriety that the *Monster Killers* got for dealing with the plot they had left behind. Damn it.

Brian Rogers

One could speculate that Mayor Wilkins' post-transformation plans were disrupted when *Buffy* played upon his very human emotions and lured him into a trap. Who knows what subtle, demonic powers he might have had at his disposal if he hadn't been too pissed off to use them.

Marco Subias

LOL at "You get used to it after awhile." But why does the school need a biometric scanner for a time card? Aren't you salaried employees? Are they that mistrusting of people clocking in/out for each other?