

Melee Manual

Rule 0: Leg them and leave them.

Rule 1: We fight as a team, not a bunch of individuals.

Rule 2: Definition of a hero: someone that gets other people killed...make sure you are getting the opposition killed, not your team.

Rule 3: The unit moving forward will tend to win.

Rule 4: No plan lasts beyond first contact with the opposition.

Rule 5: If you are getting angry for any reason it must be time to take a break.

Part I

What the heck am I supposed to do?

Note: I use the term 'opposition' for a reason. We are not fighting enemies in Dagorhir; we are having a contest against friends.

This is intended to be a basic guide to what is happening out on the battle field. It is by no means comprehensive and is intended as a starting point...as we gain experience we will add to it.

Combat in Dagorhir can seem confusing since, unlike other sports, we are trying to attack and eliminate the other team. There may be other goals set by the people running the event but 'killing' your opponent is usually the way to achieve them. Here is how I came to understand things.

If you are familiar with the game 'rock-paper-scissors' this is an easy device for deciding what to do...in review. Rock (fist) beats scissors. Paper (open hand) beats rock. Scissors (pointing finger) beats paper. O.k., in melee;

- 1) Rock = a defensive unit, usually blue and shields.
- 2) Paper = a loose mobile unit, mostly red, yellow and green weapons.
- 3) Scissors = one unit charging another unit.

All things being equal a shield wall can repel a charge, a loose unit can wrap around a shield wall (flank it) and defeat it, and charging into a loose unit will tear it apart.

All things are rarely equal. Three inequalities that will cause grief to any plan are...

- 1) Experience: one fighter or the whole unit can have a lot of experience under their belts and be able to change the whole dynamic of the encounter.
- 2) Numbers: simply put the larger force will tend to win.
- 3) Change: in this game a unit can switch from being rock to paper to scissors quickly.

Once the units have engaged all planning goes to hell. What do you do now! Each fighter has three jobs to do (the unit as a whole may have a specific mission but that is a different thing). The individuals three main jobs are...

- 1) Be attacking someone. Seems simple but it is easy to end up standing around looking for opportunities. Red weapons and spears are best at this but can perform job 2 as well. If there are no targets you still have two other jobs.
- 2) Be assisting, to make it easier for a team mate to attack. Striking weapons, fouling shields and shoving people can make the opening your team mate needs to reduce the opposition by one. Shield men are best at this, if you find yourself behind the lines kill them...remember to announce what you are hitting them with, (red, blue, green, double green).

3) Be looking for opportunities to do jobs 1 or 2. Actually, looking to do job 2 may be the first thing to do; this will cause you to look for a team mate if you are suddenly separated from your unit.

Now you are in the press with the noble opposition, you just smack the guy in front of you, right? Well, not quite...

I looked at the game of chess one day and it dawned on me how much can be applied to our sport. Obviously the fine tuning of strategic thinking is its primary benefit but it also applies to individual weapons styles as well.

1) Pawns. They march forward like good soldiers but attack the opponent next to the guy in front of them, as should we. These are the shield men.

2) Rooks and bishops. They have long range and work best as a team. They attack through gaps that may be overlooked. These are the pole arms, spears and archers.

3) Knights. They move over the intervening pieces. In our case these are the fighters that wait in the backfield and when contact comes they pop out and hit from the flank. If your unit is flanked they can intercept the opponent. Great swords, restless shield men and dualists are good at this.

4) None of the pieces in a game of chess have any hope of removing an opponent's piece with out support from another piece.

What this means is that each weapon has its own best attack and the guy in front of you is not usually the best target. *In large battles each small unit can be thought of as a single playing piece with a job based on its primary weapons.*

Part II

Different Weapons

Each type of weapon is a tool for a job.

Blue and Shield: (Swords, Flails and Maces) Get in front with your other shield men and don't get hit! Keep each other from getting hit, only attack at targets of opportunity. Your primary job is to protect, secondary is to snipe arms and legs. The other weapons in your unit are relying on you to give them the opportunity to do their job. The shield wall is probably the most complicated duty on the field.

Red: (Great Swords and Pole arms) Shield breakers and slayers. Your weapons negate their armour and shields so call 'RED' good and loud to let them know what you are hitting them with.

Green and Double Green: (Spears, Pole arms and other stabbies) Stab them early and often! The more attacks you make the more often you will kill and maim the opposition.

Yellow and White: (Javelins, Rocks and Archers) Guess what...you can hit the opposition in the head with these! Work together to keep a steady stream of missiles flowing at your target. You do not have to be the best archer in the world, but you do need to shoot! Have a back up plan for when you run out of missiles.

Dual wielders and other restless sorts: This is a catch all for the fighters that just won't stay with the unit. Your job is to either waste the opposition's time or surprise them. Do not flank too early. If you go early they will send two or three to kill you, just waste their time and lead them on a merry chase, maybe back to your main unit to be crushed.

If you wait until the main forces engage then your flanking move will come as a surprise and you can cause all sorts of mayhem. They may send a force to focus on you... again waste their time. If one person can tie up two or three, the main unit has the numerical advantage.

Part III Formations

There are hundreds of ways to array your forces. The main objective is to gain...get ready for jargon... **local numerical superiority**. What the heck does that mean!?

It simply means that we want to reduce how many of the opponent's fighters can attack us while we get more weapons on them. Attacking straight in as a battle line is very dramatic but it simply gives the fight to the more experienced team. Here are some things that can reduce the amount of pressure on our team while increasing the pressure on theirs.

- 1) **Attack their corner:** This is not the same as a flank. The unit advances and then pushes hard toward one end or the other of the opponents. At this point their opposite corner will have to try and wrap around but our team is continuing around forcing the corner back. Our end that is not immediately engaged can then flank around and hit them...this becomes the 'Tidy Bowl of Death'. See rule three for the key to making this work.
- 2) **Reduce our Front:** Don't spread out, use columns of two or three. We still attack the corner. If all goes well, we get at least one or two more weapons on them at the start and reduce their numbers by one or two. Their forces will wheel into us but we should have more numbers by then. At that point both sides' fronts usually make contact so we need to use our...local numerical superiority...to take out more of them.
- 3) **Denial:** If the opposition pushes us hard that means they are trying to gain the ...local numerical superiority...that we want. To try and counter this we must deny them targets while still fighting. We achieve this (we hope) by half of our unit backing up while fighting a defense as the other half pushes forward assaulting their team. Lay two pencils on the table parallel to each other. One will represent our team's front; the other is the opposition's. As the enemy pencil advances the eraser end of our pencil will move more slowly, maybe even back up. The point of our pencil advances, (this can be done the other way around of course, and we just deny on the side that is facing their slower fighters).

These are very basic concepts and the more advanced stuff will mix and match these ideas. Also realize that our opposition will not be cooperating in their own defeat, sections one and two are going to do more for us than a book full of formations and contingency plans.