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**Advanced Dungeons & Dragons**  
2nd Edition

2419



**Campaign**

**Reference**

The  
Complete  
**Gladiator's**  
Handbook



Advanced Dungeons & Dragons<sup>®</sup>  
2nd Edition



Player's Handbook

Rules Supplement

# The Complete Gladiator's Handbook

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2419

ISBN 1-56076-616-6

TSR, Inc.  
POB 756  
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# Table of Contents

Introduction .....	4	The Gladiatorial Coliseum of Nibenay .....	62
<b>Chapter 1: Character Creation</b> .....	6	The Natural Arena at Raam .....	64
Gladiator Kits .....	6	The Tyr Gladiatorial Stadium .....	66
Beast Trainer .....	6	Urik's Pit of Black Death .....	68
Blind Fighter .....	9	Arena Variations and Obstacles .....	70
Arena Champion .....	11	Life in the Stands .....	71
Convict .....	13	Dirty Tricks .....	76
Professional Gladiator .....	14	Fan Culture .....	77
Jazst .....	16	Gambling on the Games .....	80
Montare .....	18	In This Corner: Arena Opponents .....	81
Reaver .....	21	Arena Animals .....	87
Gladiatorial Slave .....	22	The Arena as Court .....	88
Arena Managers .....	25	<b>Chapter 5: The Gladiator Campaign</b> .....	90
Arena Necromancers .....	26	PCs as Gladiators .....	90
Renowned NPCs of the Arenas .....	26	Living Conditions .....	90
<b>Chapter 2: Gladiator Abilities</b> .....	28	Stables .....	91
Armor Optimization .....	28	Free Gladiators .....	92
Unarmed Combat .....	28	Training .....	93
New Proficiencies .....	28	Awards and Rewards .....	100
Weapon Proficiencies .....	31	Punishments .....	101
<b>Chapter 3: Combat</b> .....	32	Escape and Revolt! .....	102
New Weapons .....	32	Social Life .....	103
Armor .....	38	Keeping Score .....	104
Combat Possibilities .....	40	Fame and Infamy .....	106
Standard Attacks .....	41	Patrons .....	116
Special Attacks .....	41	Trading Gladiators .....	116
Unarmed Combat .....	44	Games Outside the Cities .....	118
Barehanded Maneuvers .....	45	Expenses .....	119
Tactics .....	45	<b>Chapter 6: Running Tournaments</b> .....	122
Martial Arts .....	47	Games .....	122
Bleeding Damage .....	50	Advanced Games .....	123
Hit Locations .....	52	Concluding the Game .....	124
The Upper Hand .....	55	Handicaps .....	125
<b>Chapter 4: Arenas of Tyr</b> .....	56	<b>Appendix</b> .....	126
The Criterion at Balic .....	56	Punching Table .....	126
The Palace of Gladiatorial Combat in Draj .....	58	Wrestling Table .....	126
The Forest Arena of Gulg .....	60	Martial Arts Table .....	127





# Introduction

The hot sun beats down upon the dusty arena floor. The shimmering heat begins to rise even at this early hour, before the gates to the auditorium open. Inside the huge stadium, slaves work hard to make it presentable enough for the demanding crowd outside. In less than an hour, the marble tiers are swept clean of debris and sand scattered through the city by last night's storm.

At long last, the half-giant guards haul open the doors to the arena. The crowd pours in like a sandwave over a cliff, rushing to find the best seats before they are snapped up. The nobles and templars enter more sedately, through their special doors. They do not have to scramble for seats; they are guaranteed the best seats in the house by their station.

After the majority of the crowd seats itself, the vendors go into action, selling their wares throughout the stadium. Some offer kank honey, others roast erdlu. And always, always there are the water-bearers. For a ceramic piece, each spectator can be refreshed with a ewer of relatively cool, mostly fresh water. The vendors, however, are not the sight which everyone has come to see. They are not here to see the templars, the nobles and their finery, nor even the sorcerer-king himself. These 15,000 spectators have come for the drama to be enacted on the dusty floor of the arena—the sight of people engaged in mortal combat for the enjoyment of the crowd.

Less than half an hour later, the games begin in earnest. They start with the warm-up act of the *jaszt*, dancing in the deceptively gay motions of mock-combat. The subdued clamor of the crowd begins to increase in intensity, increasing the rhythms of the *jaszts'* movements. The crowd's roar rises and falls with each strike and parry. When the crowd has gotten well into the spirit of things, the sweating *jaszt* leave the arena to other gladiators.

All through the long day, scores of these warriors enter the arena to fight for the entertainment and edification of the crowd. Though the sand on the arena floor absorbs most of the blood spilled onto it, the darkened patches begin to run together, and soon outnumber those areas

that are free of the blood's stain. *Kes'trekels* hover high overhead, hoping for some of the flesh scattered by every blow.

The spectators become an extension of the goings-on in the arena, chanting for their favorite gladiators, their blood lust running high. They eagerly watch the feints and parries, their tension rising with each strike and riposte. The crowd screams with every movement of the combatants.

When the final titanic battle has been fought, the crowd files quickly from the stadium. Templars stand ready to enforce discipline on any stragglers or any who look like they show even the slightest inclination toward carrying the violence back into the streets. Towering half-giant guards hulk menacingly behind them to drive home this point.

Inside the arena, slaves rake the sands clean and throw the bodies into the desert. The carrion birds feast well on dead heroes tonight.

## The Purpose of Gladiators

In a world with civilizations as harsh as those of Athas, only the most bloodthirsty sports can entertain the crowds enough to keep their attention from their miserable lot in life. The arenas provide such sport with the spilling of blood by mighty gladiators. The killing is a release for the crowd, symbolic of that which the citizens cannot perform themselves.

It is therefore no wonder that the best of the gladiators rise above the crowd, to become the popular heroes of the age. Their exploits are the stuff of legends. Children follow their progress avidly, some even going so far as to paint the walls of the cities with pictures of their favorites in defiance of the templars. Some gladiators achieve such a measure of fame that their reputation spreads far from their city-states, bringing citizens of outlying towns to the arenas to witness these masters at their craft.

Recognizing the value of the games to the people, they

# Introduction



often become a political issue, although they are formally held for the entertainment and edification of Athas's populace. The Senators and the other nobility use the games both to bolster their public standing and as a method of communication, fixing the games and slaying the gladiators of their rivals. This lets the offending Senator know that his recent actions, or perhaps his very existence, have offended someone of power, that his course of action could result in the same fate his gladiator suffered. Of course, the nobility play complicated games of subtlety and politics, and one can never be quite sure what or who is responsible for the death of one's prized gladiator. However, the guilty parties tend to understand hints of this sort very quickly. The duller ones among them do not survive for long.

The games are one of the few true uniting factors of any of the cities. Here in the arenas, the rich mingle with the poor (although not *too* closely) and the lesser templars mix with the ordinary citizens. Nearly all in the city are allowed to come and see the games, including the slaves. The games are popular enough that a revolt could be inspired by limiting the attendance to only the wealthy and powerful. All are united by their love of the suffering of others, of witnessing death, the fate they all eventually share.

The more oppressed the city, the more popular the games. For example, the arena of liberated Tyr now serves as a marketplace, while those of downtrodden cities still thrive on the blood of the gladiator. When the only outlet the people have for their emotions is the carnage of the arena, the ferocity and fervor of the crowd in the stadium is only barely rivaled by that upon the floor of the arena walls. The crowd, in effect, displaces all its unfulfilled rage and pent-up emotion in the persons of the gladiators, seeing the fighters as the embodiments of their unrealized fury. When their gladiator triumphs, their rage is released in a burst of exultation. When their champion loses, their disappointment and frustration mount until the next victorious champion frees it.

With all this in mind, it is little wonder the sorcerer-

kings revived the ancient practice of fighting as sport. Although they have the templars to keep law and order, they need a release for the citizens, something that allows their captive populace to vent its unhappiness. In the guise of magnanimously giving sport and entertainment, the tyrants are actually ensuring that their positions will not be usurped by the oppressed people. Yet sometimes, as was the case with Kalak of Tyr, even the best of offerings cannot save a bad king.

## The Handbook

Before you read any further, it is absolutely essential that you have the DARK SUN® Boxed Set and PHBR5, *The Complete Psionics Handbook*. These items are necessary for a complete understanding of this book, as they provide the core rules upon which this book is based.

*The Complete Gladiator's Handbook* has been designed to take your gladiator PCs to a new level of sophistication, to transport your imagination to the hot and dusty sands of the Athasian arenas. It is the gladiator's equivalent to PHBR1, *The Complete Fighter's Handbook*, and is designed to explore the myriad possibilities of playing an Athasian gladiator.

Included in the book are a number of new kits, rules designed explicitly for the gladiator, expansions of rules presented previously, and an in-depth exploration of all the arenas of Tyr. Also included are suggestions for running a gladiator-based campaign and the information necessary for running this sort of campaign. Each chapter offers insights into the life and times of a gladiator for your edification and better gaming.

One of the most important things about this work is that, like other supplemental material, it is entirely optional. If something in this book is useful to your campaign, by all means use it. If not, disregard it. The most important thing is the game. And now, on with the show! Or, in the words of the Roman gladiators: *Morituri te salutant* ("Those who are about to die salute you")!



# Chapter I: Character Creation

## Gladiator Kits

The special gladiators described in this chapter are in kits that have different characteristics. Each kit consists of the following elements:

- **Description:** A summary of who and what this gladiator is: appearance, manner, cultural background; how to use the character in a campaign.
- **Role:** A description of the gladiator's role in society and in a DARK SUN® campaign. There may be details about how the fighter is perceived by others.
- **Secondary Skills:** If you are using the Secondary Skills rules from the AD&D® 2nd Edition game, your kit may require your gladiator to take a specific skill; some skills may have changed and some may not be available to characters on Athas.
- **Weapon Proficiencies:** Most of the kits require your gladiator to take specific weapon proficiencies. A piscator wouldn't be a piscator without a trident and net, nor a convict be a gladiator without his chains. When required to take a specific weapon proficiency, the cost is subtracted from the number of slots the gladiator has available.
- **Nonweapon Proficiencies:** Many gladiator kits require your character to take specific nonweapon proficiencies. A number of these required nonweapon proficiencies, however, are bonuses—proficiencies given in addition to those that the character would normally use slots to acquire. Sometimes a bonus proficiency comes from a group other than the general or warrior groups, but, since it's a bonus, it requires no extra slots.  
Some proficiencies are recommended, not required. Recommended proficiencies are not automatically

given to the character, and slots must be spent to obtain them.

- **Equipment:** Certain types of gladiators gravitate toward certain kinds of equipment. Any special or required equipment will be listed in this section.
- **Special Benefits:** The advantages of the kit, the abilities wielded by this type of gladiator.
- **Special Hindrances:** Each gladiator kit has certain disadvantages, and these are described here.
- **Wealth Options:** Some gladiator kits have special rules regarding wealth. The various methods of payment (or lack of payment) are in this section.
- **Races:** Gladiatorial kits are written for all Athasian character races. This paragraph includes notes on recommended races for each of the kits.
- **Special Notes:** This section presents comments and hints about the kit. Notes may contain optional rules the DM might use.
- **Famous and Infamous:** This section catalogues the important nonplayer characters of Athas who may become involved with a specific character kit.

## Beast Trainer

Beast trainers work to tame or control wild creatures destined for gladiatorial games. These gladiators use brute strength, cunning, and their knowledge of the animals to accomplish their goal. Many trainers possess a wild talent that is especially helpful in taming or coercing creatures into becoming effective battle partners. The beast trainers also help to control the exceptional creatures brought by the reavers to fight gladiators in the arena. Great skill must

# Character Creation



be exercised to keep these wild beasts alive until it is time for the games.

Whether slave or free, beast trainers tend to be loners. They often feel a closer affinity with the beasts they tend than for mankind. In the arena, a beast trainer's animal is both his best friend and his weapon of choice. This makes beast trainers outcasts, even among fellow gladiators.

**Role:** A beast trainer's fame is directly linked to his creature's performance in the arena. If the beast delivers an exceptional battle, the trainer receives accolades and praise. If the creature performs poorly, or dies in the arena, the trainer's prestige plummets.

Beast trainers are occasionally hired or ordered by templars and nobles to train beasts as guards, either for personal safety, or to protect a particular place.

**Secondary Skills:** Hunter, Teamster (animal handling), or Trapper should be the secondary skill.

**Weapon Proficiencies:** Blunt instruments are preferred by beast trainers to subdue their charges. To keep hostile creatures at bay (and at a distance), polearms are favored. Beast trainers are free to use any weapons without penalty, but they may only specialize in blunt weapons and polearms.

**Nonweapon Proficiencies:** Beast trainers receive proficiencies in both Animal Handling and Animal Training as bonuses. *Recommended proficiencies:* (General) Riding (Airborne or Land Based), Animal Lore, Charioteering, Endurance, Running, Setting Snares, Survival, and Tracking.

**Equipment:** Beast trainers need to purchase at least one weapon in their specialization, and to spend at least 50% of their starting funds on materials to capture and subdue wild creatures. Otherwise, a beast trainer may spend her funds in any way she chooses.

**Special Benefits:** Beast trainers do enjoy some special advantages with this kit. First, they gain an automatic specialization in one of the following weapons: club, man catcher, scourge, whip, or a polearm of their choice. This is a bonus, and no slots are expended.

Secondly, since a great deal of wealth and materials are required to capture and maintain wild creatures, the beast trainer begins the game under the sponsorship of an important NPC. The sponsor may be a templar, landowner, senator, a lesser or greater noble, or even a trading house. Sponsorships are a kind of independent apprenticeship, and they grant certain benefits to the trainer-depender, of course, on the wealth of the sponsor. Advantages may include free room and board, special discounts when purchasing available goods, templar favors, or free travel along trading routes. Upon reaching 5th level, a beast trainer may choose to strike out on his own, if his master will permit him to do so.

Slave beast trainers are generally well kept by their masters. Possessing special abilities, they are much harder to replace than other gladiators. They can look forward to "special" rewards for a job particularly well done. Free trainers, under sponsorship, always have to pay or reimburse their sponsors a percentage of any monies they earn.

Finally, beast trainers have the ability to form personal attachments with their charges. This ability gives them an additional +2 to their die rolls when attempting to train creatures. The down side of this ability is that the bond of love and respect between trainer and beast requires an Intelligence check to be made if the beast is injured or killed. Failure means that the beast trainer is overcome with grief by the creature's injury or loss, and becomes obsessed with revenge against the attackers. The beast trainer can do little but plot against the killers, however, because the killers are usually gladiators and few of these plots ever come to fruition.

**Special Hindrances:** To every advantage there is a disadvantage. The same sponsorship that supports the beast



Character Creation





trainer can become a dangerous proposition. The failure of a beast trainer can be used to bring shame upon the sponsoring house, making it a convenient target for an inter-house challenge. Rivals may attempt to dishonor the beast trainer or the sponsoring individual or house. To ensure the failure of a trainer, an enemy may try to prevent the return of a wild creature, steal it before it gets to the city, or even poison a beast before an important match.

Repeated failures can cause a trainer to fall from favor with his sponsor. Frequently, low-level beast trainers do not have sufficient funds to capture, protect, or house their charges without sponsorship. Inexperienced freelancers are often destroyed by more wealthy and experienced rivals.

**Wealth Options:** Prices for captured beasts fluctuate with arena location and rarity of the species. To determine the price of a specific creature, divide the monster's experience points by 100. The result is the market value of that creature in Athasian silver.

**Races:** This kit is open to any character race indigenous to Athas. Dwarves, halflings, and humans, however, tend to make the best beast trainers.

**Special Notes:** Smart arena managers keep at least three beast trainers on staff. This allows for the replacement of any trainer injured or lost while preparing creatures for arena combat. Deadly rivalries may develop between trainers of the same house, and these disputes are settled in the arena. Such matches are usually the highlight of any games lineup.

Many trainers have favored beasts; one creature favored by beast trainers is the metallic, doglike creature known as the *rasclinn*. Rasclinn are quick to learn and they are very loyal, except when hungry. They are easily trained as young pups, but older animals respond well to positive encouragement.

## Famous and Infamous:

Sizzkus	Formerly of Tyr (deceased).
Beautiful Vanous	Veiled, beast trainer Mistress of Gulg.
Ular Lael	Beast trainer Mistress; Sojournist, House Omnir.
Tutoc	Hunchbacked, half-giant beast trainer of Balic.

## Blind Fighter

The blind fighters specialize in a unique form of gladiatorial combat—doing battle in complete darkness. Naturally blind gladiators may have been blind since birth, or handicapped in accidents. Of course, in some cases the “accident” may have been arranged. . . . Sighted gladiators who choose to fight as blind fighters use special, closed helmets.

These warriors have spent years in training to develop their fighting abilities and their skills of perception. This special training allows them to fight as well as many sighted fighters. Blind fighters may face other blind fighters or any other equal opponents in the arena. “Night and Day Matches,” where blind and sighted gladiators square off against each other, draw large crowds to the games.

**Role:** Originally, blind fighters were used as comic relief to amuse the crowds in the arena. Blind or blindfolded fighters would face off and strive to attack each another. Unable to tell friend from foe, they would mill around the arena, lashing out at anyone, or anything, that came near them. Some killed their own stablemates, while most killed themselves by wandering into other blind fighters who were flailing about randomly. Over the years, a group of survivors emerged with the special ability to *center* and



## Character Creation

to find their foes even over the roar of the crowd. These were the first, true blind gladiator fighters. Gladiators who teach this skill are highly sought after by arena trainers.

**Secondary Skills:** If the Secondary Skill rules from the AD&D® 2nd Edition are being used, the secondary skill is simply listed as "Blind Fighting," and is in lieu of the nonweapon proficiency.

**Weapon Proficiencies:** There are no weapon restrictions for blind fighters, except for missile weapons. They may specialize in melee weapons, but in order to use missile weapons they must have the *inner sight* that allows them to sense at a distance (see *Special Benefits*). Blind fighters may use any weapon that conforms to the range of their *sight* without nonproficiency penalties.

**Nonweapon Proficiencies:** Because blind fighters must have the nonweapon proficiency Blind Fighting and learn *inner sight* ranges (see below), they begin with no other nonweapon proficiencies.

**Equipment:** Blind fighters must purchase at least one weapon in the *sight* range they have learned. There are no restrictions on any other gear they may purchase.

**Special Benefits:** The benefit of being able to fight without restrictions, yet deprived of vision is obvious. Heightened senses are the key to this ability. Blind fighters start with the ability to detect noise (as rogues) at 50% and gain an additional 1% for each level they advance. Racial bonuses do not apply.

Blind fighters have learned to use other senses to compensate for their lack of eyesight. They *center* (or concentrate) to direct their *inner sight* to the target. This *sighting* allows a blind fighter to fight without attack penalties, in normal combat, within the learned range of perception. An Intelligence check must be made to activate this skill.

Blind fighters learn to center their sensory perceptions

on three different ranges: Close Range (0-6 feet), Medium Range (6-20 feet), or Long Range (20 feet and beyond). Gladiators who develop their *sight* in the close range band of perception should specialize in short melee weapons, such as knives, swords, and bludgeoning weapons. Medium range *sight* applies to polearms. Gladiators with long range skill may use missile weapons.

More than one range may be learned, but each must be purchased with proficiency slots. The cost of each *sight* range is two weapon proficiency slots and two nonweapon proficiency slots. Blind Fighters may not use the optional "called shot" rules.

**Special Hindrances:** The unique style of a blind fighter it is not without its disadvantages. When a sighted combatant is outside of a learned *sight* range, a blind fighter suffers a -4 attack penalty in combat.

**Wealth Options:** Blind fighters begin with the same starting money as other gladiators.

**Races:** The blind-fighting kit is open to all Athasian races except thri-kreen.

**Special Notes:** Blind-fighting styles and conditions vary in many of the Tablelands' arenas. In Gulg, crowds fall silent to give these gladiators the optimal advantage. Roars and cheers erupt from the crowd as each blow is struck; then they fall silent again. In the other major cities, the crowds try to help blind fighters by screaming the location of the opponents. This can be quite confusing since neither gladiator knows if the information being screamed by the masses is meant to aid him or his competitor.

### Famous and Infamous:

**Nightmare** Wears a great helm in the shape of the beast. Occasionally attacks with the horns. Gulg.

# Character Creation



- Golden Lady      Wears a full face mask of a screaming woman, golden garments, and body paint. Raam.
- Agu  
(the Sleeping Cat)      Fights in great cat pelt and uses the beast's head as the full helm. Nibenay.
- Song Felieu      Terrible bard, great gladiator. Always sings in the arena, much to the chagrin of his opponents. Tyr.

## Arena Champion

The arena champions are gladiators whose greatest desire is to practice their blood sport in arenas filled with thousands of screaming fans. They risk their lives for fame, wealth, and adoration. In rare instances, even slaves have risen to champion status.

**Role:** Societies have always demanded heroes. The sorcerer-kings live lives that are almost god like in most Athasian societies, and the populous cannot relate to the opulent lifestyles they lead. Great gladiators, however, can rise from the ranks of average and ordinary citizens, and so the popular arena champions serve a purpose. Even the most subjugated servant needs a role model, something to aspire to; the arena champion fills this very real need.

Some of the gladiators are local neighborhood heroes or visitors from nearby communities. They work in jobs or use their skills to earn a living and train for the arena in their spare time. Arena champions aspire to become famous and earn sponsorship, which would permit them to concentrate on training for the arena full time.

Other champions are slaves who see the arena as their one chance for freedom and a better life. The better they perform in the arena, the more money they make for their masters. Their masters in turn may provide better living





## Character Creation

quarters, weapons, and other advantages. There is always the possibility of buying one's freedom, if one performs well enough.

**Secondary Skills:** Arena champions may receive any secondary skill by whatever means the DM selects-by choice or random die roll. This imposed choice represents the lessons of life the character learned before he entered the arena.

**Weapon Proficiencies:** Arena champions gain a specialization in the melee weapon of their choice at no additional cost.

**Nonweapon Proficiencies:** *Bonus Proficiencies* (Warrior) Weapon Improvisation. *Recommended:* (General) Heat Protection.

**Equipment:** Any that the gladiator can afford. In the case of a slave, any that are given.

**Special Benefits:** Because of previous success, arena champions may train free of charge in their home city as long as the following conditions are met:

- 1) The gladiator is not being sought for crimes by the local templars;
- 2) There must be a gladiator, in training at the arena, two levels higher than the PC.

**Special Hindrances:** Arena champions are often held in esteem only in the local area or in the neighborhood they represent. When in different parts of the city, they may be assaulted or attacked by the fans of other champions. An attack may come as anything from rotten produce to heavy stones dropped from building tops. Other local champions may challenge them to "plaza" matches, or make them fight their way out of a neighborhood.

Slaves who rise to champion status may incur the wrath of other slaves who feel that they are being cheated out of

their fair share. A fellow slave may attempt to kill an arena champion in practice or during the night out of sheer envy and hatred. Professional jealousy often causes infighting between slave champions. In the slave pits, there can be only one "First Rasclinn" among arena champions. They seldom retain that title for long.

**Wealth Options** Free arena champions may earn from one to five silver pieces for an appearance in the arena. Local merchants may give their heroes food, drink, or lodging, free of charge, to celebrate a winning match. Wagers made separately could greatly increase the arena champion's earnings. Ten percent of all earnings must be spent on equipment (armor, weapons, etc.) for use in the arena.

A slave arena champion who performs well may receive better accommodations, better weapons, money, or even freedom. Cruel masters may not reward their slaves at all-a dangerous practice.

**Races:** Anyone may become an arena champion with a lot of hard work and a little luck.

**Special Notes:** Female arena champions usually receive special accolades from the fans.

### Famous and Infamous:

Ruach, Silvertrident	Half-elf male Master Piscator Gladiator. Nibenay.
Pauk, Spiderslayer	Male halfling gladiator. Gulg.
Llunet Blackdagger	Dangerous female with a love for poison. Tyr.
K'kivir of the Shining Sands	Thri-kreen gladiator. Raam.



## Convict

Whether convicted of a crime, or merely accused by a templar, the result is always the same—the accused is branded a criminal. The consequences are imprisonment and slavery. The unfortunate convict either spends the remainder of his life at hard labor, or battles for survival in the arena. For some, the arena is the better choice. Convicts have nothing to lose and only time to gain.

The convict is a hybrid of fighter and rogue. Convicts gain certain thieving abilities while in prison. They fight, earn experience points, and follow levels as a gladiator (Warrior). Saving throws are made according to the more favorable class (either Rogue or Warrior). A Strength of 15 and a Dexterity of 15 are required.

**Role:** Crimes or the whims of their enemies have forced these gladiators into the arena. Convicts are essentially slaves, sent to the arena for only one purpose—to provide as much entertainment as possible before they die. In some cases, arena combat is used to execute death sentences. Lenient templars may sentence a criminal to the arena for a period of years, or to a specific number of games.

**Secondary Skills:** Convicts may take any secondary skill. These are the skills they learned before imprisonment.

**Weapon Proficiencies:** Convicts begin with a specialization in a one-handed melee weapon of their choice. Their selection is, however, limited to daggers, blackjacks, and concealable weapons. This specialization is derived from skills they learned while trying to stay alive in captivity. The convicts' weapon proficiencies are those of rogues and are restricted by the rogue character class. They may not specialize in any other weapons.

**Nonweapon Proficiencies:** *Bonus Proficiencies:* (Rogue) Jumping (Warrior) Weapon Improvisation. *Recommended:* (General) Bargain, Heat Protection.

**Equipment:** If convicts begin the game while incarcerated, they may buy armor but not weapons. Convicts may also purchase any nonmagical items before play begins, at the discretion of the DUNGEON MASTER™ (DM™). After play begins, they pay *market price* (see *Special Notes*) for any new item until they are either placed in the games or they escape. If a convict begins the game outside of prison, equipment is purchased normally.

**Special Benefits:** Part warrior, part rogue, the convict gladiator is the best of both. The convict is a multiclass character. Convicts may learn any three of the Rogue Thieving Skills (found in the *Player's Handbook* and *Dragon Kings*). Once the three skills are chosen, they may never be changed. Racial and Dexterity adjustments apply. New skills may not be learned unless the kit is abandoned. Following their imprisonment, they go off into the world, taking the skills they learned. For every level of experience obtained, the convict gains an additional 10% in any one thieving skill used since earning the previous level.

**Special Hindrances:** Convicts are branded or tattooed before being placed in the arena; frequently their hair is dyed as well. Everyone in the stands knows the crime of the convict gladiator. Some cities even tattoo patterns on the convict's face, in bright colors that can be seen from a distance. Others brand a *crime token* on the face or upper body.

Since both are permanent, it is difficult for a released convict to find employment anywhere in the region. These marks make any escaped convicts easy to locate in a crowd. Unfortunately, freed convicts may be wrongfully rearrested if they chance to be in the same area where a crime has been committed.

**Wealth Options:** If the accused is wealthy enough, the guards or templars may be bribed for special favors. Not dyeing the hair or not tattooing the accused are possibili-



## Character Creation

ties. Bribes may also reduce the length of the sentence to the arena. Money may also be spent to gain more favorable accommodations. Special weapons training may also be purchased.

Convicts receive no money for arena combat victories, however, they may be able to bribe templars into betting on them. If the convict does well and gains the attention of a templar, there is always the possibility that the templar may buy the convict for a personal slave.

**Races:** Since anyone at any time may be accused by a templar of committing a crime, the Convict kit is suitable for all races.

**Special Notes:** Convicts may have any equipment that can be smuggled into the jails and pits in which they are held. They must find a slave, worker, templar, or family member willing to take the risk. Even then, the price can be high. The cost of a bribe to smuggle in an item is usually two to ten times the normal cost (based on availability and the DM). Poison, weapons, or other dangerous items could cost up to one hundred times the normal street value for someone to want to take the risk.

### Famous and Infamous:

Atrocla	Half-giant female veteran of more than 40 arena battles.
Xutan	Former Raam templar's servant, current Nibenay convict. Half-elf male.
Banoc the Worm	Escape artist. Current whereabouts unknown.
Gall the Obtuse	A favorite in Urik. Has been <i>raised</i> 3 times. Accidentally impaled self 4 times. Currently deceased. Male half-giant.

### Professional Gladiator

When the arena fills on *Blood Day*, it is the professional gladiators that the crowd has come to see. The appearance of these strong, capable warriors never fails to draw the crowd to its feet. Different gladiators appeal to different circles in the crowd. Some professionals are loved for their mastery and artful use of weapons, others for the brutality they employ to crush the life from their opponents.

The professional gladiator is at the pinnacle of her field. She has learned the gladiatorial arts and has spent considerable time and effort on becoming the best. The special ability score requirements are the same as the gladiator class. High Strength and Dexterity scores are preferred.

A professional gladiator on Athas is a free person who has trained and entered the arena with aspirations of glory, wealth, and fame. Those who wish to enter the gladiatorial arena must first gain the sponsorship of an important person or house within the city. The sponsor generates interest and betting on the new gladiatorial combatant. Sponsors put their reputations on the line when taking on a new gladiator—rumors and misinformation about new gladiators spread like quicksilver.

New blood generates additional interest and excitement in the upcoming games. Sponsors bribe city templars to get their newcomers into impending arena matches. The heftier the sponsorship, the higher in the combat hierarchy a professional may rise. If the new gladiator does not perform well in the arena, or is humiliated by his opponent, the sponsor can expect retribution from the templar.

**Role:** In Athasian culture, gladiators represent the dreams and difficulties of Athasian lives. The harshness of daily life is embodied in what the gladiators face each time they enter the arena. The ability to overcome adversity, and to win glory and riches, are things the people of Athas dream of always.

# Character Creation



**Secondary Skills:** Gladiators may receive any secondary skill by choice or random die roll. These are skills learned prior to becoming a gladiator.

**Weapon Proficiencies:** The professional gladiator gains an automatic proficiency in all weapons. This is the result of years of training. In addition, professionals tend to specialize in multiple weapons.

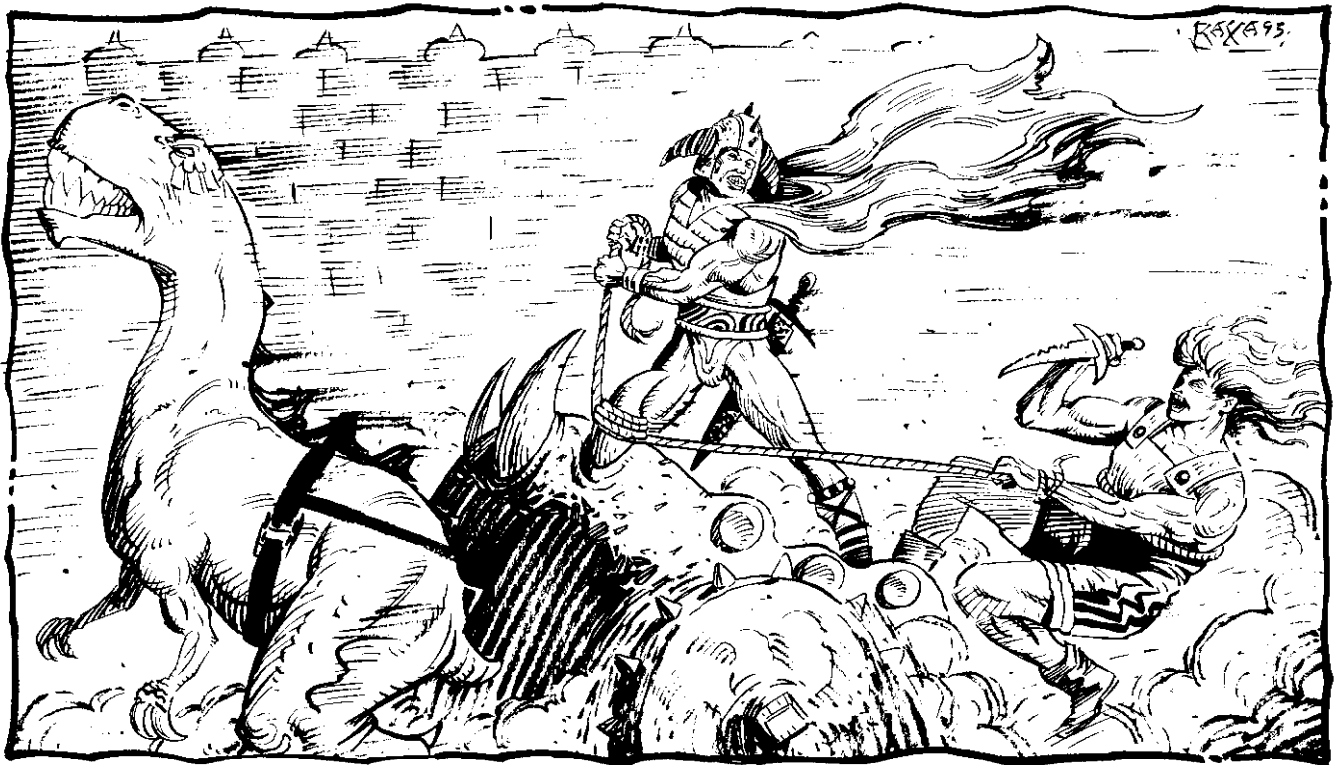
**Nonweapon Proficiencies:** *Bonus Proficiencies:* (Warrior) Armor Optimization (automatically gained at the 5th level), Endurance. A gladiator is free to choose any warrior nonweapon proficiency. The proficiency is attributed to early days, before turning professional.

**Equipment:** A gladiator is free to use any and all weapons, except poison. Years of weapons training and physical combat create an unwritten code of honor

between professional gladiatorial combatants. These weapon masters believe that "strength and steel" should decide matches, not cheap tricks or deception. Poison is for cowards and bards (the same thing to a professional gladiator), not professionals.

**Special Benefits:** Professional gladiators may specialize in any number of weapons, provided they have enough slots available. A gladiator must spend two slots to specialize in any melee or missile weapon except the bow, which requires three slots. Professional gladiators transcend the rule that limits specialization to fighters. They are also expert in unarmed combat, gaining a 4 point modifier on punching and wrestling attacks (the plus or minus may be added or subtracted after the roll).

**Special Hindrances:** Professional gladiators are both revered and reviled on Athas. In the final days before a







## Character Creation

large arena tournament, professional gladiators are considered celebrities. Their prominence grows in direct proportion to the amount of money bet on the match. They are shown off at parties given in their honor, and it is not unusual to find childrens' drawings of their favorite gladiators on the city walls and in back alleys. The names of some are whispered with a reverence usually reserved for sorcerer-kings.

Fanatical followers may do anything, even kill, to see their idols in action. This time of glory is also the time when the professional gladiator must be on guard, lest he fall victim to pre-game tampering by a zealous templar or one of his agents. A gladiator cannot win if he does not make it to the arena.

**Wealth Options:** A gladiator may seek to make considerable sums in the arena. Professionals may make huge amounts of money in a single game, assuming their fame and ability is up to professional standards. Even more can be made if he and his sponsor bet correctly on the outcome. The only drawback is that he must survive in order to collect.

**Races:** Anyone may become a professional gladiator. Thri-kreen, because of their tremendous unarmed attacks, and muls, because of their physical strength and endurance, tend to be the dominant PC races of professional gladiators.

**Special Notes:** Professional gladiators have many different personality types. They may be cold, calculating killers, or oppressive bullies. Others are gentle, and may even have a sense of humor. They may be former military conscripts who know no other lifestyle, or they may have families and even grandchildren. But when the final sword stroke falls, they know that only one gladiator can walk out. This makes professional gladiators savage opponents in the arena, no matter what their personalities.

### Famous and Infamous:

Rogow the Ruthless	Never gives or asks for mercy. Human male. Weapon specialist, halberd. Draj.
Camla the Cunning	Believed to have killed her fighting partner after losing a match. Raam.
The Magnificent T'sor	Lifts impaled victims above his head following the end of the match. Half-giant male. Draj.

### Jazst

Jazst are widely traveled theatrical performers in the Athasian arenas. Jazst are always free, and the only gladiatorial combatants that travel freely between the arenas of major cities. Jazst are usually early warm-up acts that amuse the eager crowds.

As highly skilled arena performers, jazst depend on their theatrical ability, coordination, muscle tone, and balance, rather than brute force, to win in the arena. Jazst are allowed to choose their specialization at a very early age, and spend years perfecting their skill. In the early years of practice, areas of study may include dancing, juggling, acrobatics, tumbling, and other skills. A Strength of 14 and a Dexterity of 16 or better is required for this character kit.

**Role:** Jazst perform individually, in pairs, or in a troupe. Next to reigning local arena champions, jazst are the chief crowd pleasers in any arena. As the jazst move their graceful bodies about the arena, they call to the crowd for support and verbally attempt to excite them. Once a fever pitch is reached, they begin the more serious business of dispatching their victims with as much flair as possible. The more theatrical the kill, the better the performance.

# Character Creation



**Secondary Skills:** None of the traditional secondary skills directly apply to this kit, so one may be selected by any agreed method.

**Weapon Proficiencies:** To jazst, arena combat is an art form and they revel in the beauty of movement. Jazst prefer long, slim, razor like weapons, and they carry a lot of them, mounted on their legs and arms.

Jazst prefer steel but will settle for the brightly colored, flexible feather/scales of the Z'tal lizard. The individual scales deliver 1 point of razor damage per scale. Up to 10 can be safely mounted on each appendage of the Jazst's performing outfit. If a successful hit is made against a gladiatorial opponent, the PC rolls 1d10 to see how many razor feather scales came in contact with the intended victim. If a Jazst is forced to grapple with an opponent, she may be able to bring more than one set of razors to bear. Jazst may otherwise choose and specialize in other weapons as the gladiatorial class.

**Nonweapon Proficiencies:** *Bonus Proficiencies:* (General) Artistic Ability, (Rogue) Tumbling. *Recommended:* (Bard) Acting, (General) Dancing, Etiquette, Heat Protection, Running, Sign Language, Singing, (Warrior) Weapon Improvisation, Weaponsmithing.

Even though they are gladiators (Warrior Class), these performers may also choose the following rogue proficiencies: Blind Fighting, Disguise, Juggling, Jumping, Musical Instrument, Tightrope Walking, and Ventriloquism.

**Equipment:** Jazst must spend 50% of their starting funds on costumes and weapons. Most jazst are vain about their appearance and stop at nothing to acquire all the accessories for their arena costumes.

**Special Benefits:** When a jazst reaches full proficiency in an art form (dancing, tumbling, juggling, etc.), he is taught the *Principle of the Razor*. The small, slim blade of the razor cuts long and deep. Wounds made by the razor are

difficult to heal and very painful. This attack can be used over and over again, causing opponent to lose muscle coordination, without killing him outright. This enables the Jazst to continue his performance for a longer period of time, building the crowd to a frenzy before striking the death blow.

At 3rd level, jazst learn *The Dance of Whirling Blades*. This deadly dance is a special attack used only by jazst. The attack is executed with great skill, requiring a round of preparation, as the jazst runs as fast as she can move toward her target. The Jazst then leaps into the air spinning toward her intended victim. The maneuver doubles the jazst's normal attacks in that round. With each pass, the lithe dancer swirls, cutting the victim with her razor weapons. The whirling attack of the dancer makes mounting a defense almost impossible.

This devastating attack has its disadvantages, however. The dance lowers a jazst's AC by 2 points, during the round of the attack. The jazst must make successful Dexterity and Constitution checks immediately following *The Dance of Whirling Blades*. Failure of the Dexterity check means that he has become dizzy or off balance and falls (damaging nothing but his pride). He recovers at the end of the round, but may take no other action. A failed Constitution check means that the jazst is exhausted and may take no other actions while spending the remainder of the round recovering. A jazst must spend a full turn resting (not walking, or doing any other activity) before they can again attempt this tricky maneuver. The *Dance of Whirling Blades* is always a great crowd pleaser.

**Special Hindrances:** Jazst are hated by other gladiators, not only because their craft is so different from the traditional styles, but because most evil-aligned jazst are sinister and bloodthirsty. These evil jesters display the viciousness of the arena at its worst. Good jazst gladiators exist, but they are few.

Because they are entertainers more than fighters, the jazst gladiator may have a difficult time against a seasoned



## Character Creation

professional. Master jazst have been known to fight arena champions. These rare events are always on the main bill. Some of these battles have become legends.

**Wealth Options:** Jazst, unlike most performers, are paid by the arena crowd, as well as the arena master. Following a bout, the jazst circle the arena holding a small net or a circle of cloth. Members of the jazst troupe come together in the arena, singing, chanting rhymes, and dancing in celebration of the victory. The crowd throws coins, which are caught by the jazst with deft sweepings and snaps of the small net or cloth. The jazst also perform daring feats of acrobatics to keep the coins from touching the ground. Any coins that land on the arena floor are thrown back into the stands. This sets the crowd into a frenzy. When the coins stop falling, the jazst quickly exit the arena. Jazst also receive the standard wages of the warrior class.

**Races:** These harlequins are usually elf, half-elf, halfling, or, in rare instances, human.

**Special Notes:** Jazst accentuate their appearances with party-colored clothing and artistic body paints. Some jazst wear breech cloths and halters in combination with colorful flowing strands of silk and satin. These are attached to their sinewy forearms and muscular legs. The material is attached loosely, to break away in the grasp of an opponent. Other, barely clothed jazst prefer brightly pigmented body paints to entice or distract an opponent. This unorthodox approach can fragment an opponent's attention. Lulled into a false sense of security, the gladiator often attacks her seemingly vulnerable opponent—just the opening the jazst waits for!

### Famous and Infamous:

Sandsinger      Female elf jazst. Renowned dancer in and out of the arena. Leader of the Sandsinger Traveling Troupe.

Morningstar      Male dwarf tumbler. Wears spiked studded armor, hence his name. Limits travel between Draj and Raam.

Tangler      One of the few that uses small nets and rope tricks in the arena. Travels with The Last Kalidnay Performers.

### Montare

Montare are gladiators who fight in mounted combat. Montare may ride a single mount (montare), drive a chariot (char-montare), or ride in a mobile war machine. A montare small of stature may ride an erdlu. Otherwise, they use crodlus or kanks. Light chariots may be pulled by any of the above creatures. (*Note:* A single-person chariot may only be pulled by a single creature, a two-person chariot requires two creatures.)

Montare may only fight with one-handed weapons when mounted or driving; they need the other hand to control the beast. Larger chariots may carry up to four people (a driver and three warriors). Montare riding in vehicles are free to use any weapons.

**Role:** The popularity of mounted combat and chariot games is now on the rise in many cities of the Tablelands. Nowhere is this more so than in Tyr. Less bloody than regular gladiatorial games, they are even more exciting. New facilities have been constructed just outside the walled city of Tyr for chariot races.

**Secondary Skills:** A montare should have Teamster/Freighter (animal handling, chariot-repair) as a Secondary Skill.

**Weapon Proficiencies:** The montare gains an automatic specialization in the whip at no cost. The whip is used as a weapon, as well as an implement to encourage their mounts to travel faster.

# Character Creation



**Nonweapon Proficiencies:** *Bonus Proficiencies:* (General) Animal Handling, Riding-Land Based, or (Warrior) Charioteering. *Recommended:* (General) Animal Training, Leatherworking, (Warrior) Animal Lore.

**Equipment:** Montare begin the game with any harness and tack necessary. If the montare is a charioteer, he does not begin the game with a chariot, rather, he only owns the tack and harness. Chariots are very expensive and must be purchased, rented, borrowed, or stolen, if the PC wishes to use one.

Mounts may be purchased before the start of the first gaming session, providing the PCs have the funds to do so. The beasts are considered to have been trained by the rider over the previous few months. No roll for animal training is required. If the mounts are killed, new mounts must be trained in the normal fashion.

**Special Benefits:** Montare receive a bonus +1 to hit and damage when attacking from a mount.

**Special Hindrances:** The cost of feeding and watering a mount can be expensive. Montare may find that they have to spend almost as much on their mount's expenses as for their own. Carrying sufficient water for the beast during long trips is especially important.

**Wealth Options:** Since the sport is relatively new, there are not many opportunities for montare. However, some forward thinking stable owners and transport tycoons have taken to sponsoring montare in return for advertisements placed on the chariots and war vehicles used in the arena. Sponsorship includes fresh mounts if necessary, and the repair and supply of chariots and war vehicles. New designs and weapons are often tested in these exciting matches.

**Races:** Half-elves, halflings, humans, and muls may become montare. In general, dwarves are not fond of

mounted travel, preferring siege and war engines. Elves prefer to run rather than ride. Half-giants are too large to ride most mounts or chariots. Thri-kreen society was developed without the concept of riding another beast for travel. However, the possibility of specialized vehicles for these races may entice new participants to the sport of montare.

**Special Notes:** Montare use three basic fighting styles: impale, catch and drag, and move-by.

*Impale:* Any long polearm, spear, lance, or gouge can be used for impaling attacks. Single montare or char-montare require a special harness to use two-handed weapons. The harness is slung over one shoulder to carry and aim the weapon. The second part of the harness is an impact plate, mounted on the beast, attached either to the riding saddle or to the outside of the chariot. The butt of the weapon rests on the plate during the charge. The plate and momentum of the chariot/mount enable the montare to make an impaling attack.

To make an impaling attack, the montare and mount must successfully charge their opponent. If a successful attack roll is made, the victim suffers double damage from the attack. Strength bonuses do not apply in this attack. Following a successful attack, the montare rolls 1d6, consulting the table below. Unsuccessful attacks have no repercussions.

## Impaling Weapon Save Table

1d6 Roll	Result
1	Weapon breaks.
2 or 3	Weapon is stuck in victim. One round required to remove and recover.
4, 5, or 6	Weapon comes free and can be used next round.

*Catch and Drag:* In this type of attack the montare attempts to avoid a direct confrontation with his oppo-



# Character Creation





ment. The attack is known as C&D. The montare may use cahulaks, a lasso, or any hooked, flexible weapon. If a successful attack is made, the hook has grappled the victim. If the grappled target weighs less than the montare's mount, the victim is automatically off balance. If the target is the same size or larger than the montare's mount, the target must save vs. petrification or thrown be off balance. Targets more than twice the size of the mount cannot be pulled off balance. The montare's mount begins to drag the victim the following round (providing the mount is as strong as the victim). The victim takes 2 points of damage per round dragged, plus any damage from road obstacles (spikes, hot coals, etc.). Two successful strength rolls must be made by the victim in order to break free.

*Move-By:* The most popular attack form among montare. Using a sharp slashing or heavy bludgeoning weapon, the montare rides past her intended victim at a high rate of speed and strikes a blow. The montare then moves out of reach of the defender's weapon before the latter is able to attack. This type of attack adds 1 to the AC of the montare.

## Famous and Infamous:

Rayne	Human female char-montare with light chariot pulled by two erdlu. Fights CID. Nibenay.
Aso	Half-elf female montare erdlu rider. Fights move-by style. Renowned in Balic.
N'kadir	Dwarf male montare kank rider. Fights move-by. Urik.

## Reaver

Reavers travel the Athasian deserts in search of dangerous creatures for the arena. Reavers work together with beast trainers to capture creatures to be sent to the gladiatorial

arenas. Fierce, wild animals are important crowd pleasers, and an integral part of successful arena games. Monsters, creatures, and feral desert races fetch large sums of money if they can be transported to the arena alive. The more dangerous the creature, the more money a reaver can expect to make. Combat against a truly exceptional creature may lure the reaver to take part in the games.

The reaver is a quintessential big game hunter. Weeks or even months may be spent tracking prey. Reavers tend to be obsessive in their desire to capture (or in some cases kill) a trophy more powerful than the last one. This monomania is similar to a dwarven "focus." Many reavers die in the pursuit of Athas' most powerful animals. Eventually, some long-time reavers feel powerful enough to pursue the famed Athasian Dragons-many have tried, none succeeded.

**Role:** Since the gladiatorial games began, powerful, dangerous creatures have been sought for combat. The task of the reaver is to provide new and exciting creatures to please the fans and, more importantly, the sorcerer-kings. Reavers are also employed by those who seek the rare and unusual (i.e., veiled mages needing a particular rare spell component, or sages looking for a lost item). Reavers may also be used as bounty hunters to recapture important warrior slaves.

In a campaign, a number of quests could revolve around the capture of dangerous creatures. Whether in the wild, loose in a city, or roaming the undercity, an escaped monster can be a formidable foe.

**Secondary Skills:** A reaver should have Hunter or Trapper as a secondary skill, otherwise, he may choose any skill, with the DM's approval.

**Weapon Proficiencies:** Reavers use a mix of weapons depending on whether they intend to slay or enslave their foes. If given the choice, reavers always take the most powerful weapon. Reavers prefer two-handed weapons over single-handed.



## Character Creation

**Nonweapon Proficiencies:** *Bonus Proficiencies:* Animal Lore, Tracking, Survival. *Recommended:* (General) Animal Handling, Animal Training, Charioteering, Endurance, Riding (Airborne or Land Based), Running, Set Snares.

**Equipment:** The reaver must purchase at least two weapons (one distance and one melee) and spend 25% (or more) on materials to set traps to capture wild creatures.

**Special Benefits:** A reaver may elect to begin the game associated with a private group or be under the sponsorship of a city arena. This is similar to the beast trainer (see above). The material cost required to feed and house captured creatures is enormous. An affiliation gives the reaver certain leads on finding tasks for profit.

Reavers spend so much of their time in the Athasian outback that they receive a +2 to their starting non-weapon proficiency survival score. Terrain type must be chosen for each survival proficiency slot. Additional survival proficiencies also receive the +2 skill bonus.

**Special Hindrances:** Reavers who are caught stealing the prize of another reaver are punished in the arena. They are sent into combat unarmed, often against the creatures they stole in the first place. If the reaver survives, he may spend months in prison until a replacement for the stolen creature can be found.

**Wealth Options:** Prices for captured creatures vary with arena location and rarity of species. Use the rules for determining price in *Beast Trainer*, above.

**Races:** This kit is open to all character races indigenous to Athas. Level restrictions apply as per racial limitations in the warrior class.

**Special Notes:** Reavers always aided each other in the wild, as long as their own hunt is not endangered. There is

an unofficial brotherhood among beast reavers. They all share a common bond in the pursuit of the ultimate quarry. They gather and tell stories of conquest and failure. Tremendous sadness and joy can be heard in the telling of stories about reavers who have heard the *Dragon's Call*. These were the greatest of the reavers, for each felt powerful enough to face and defeat a Dragon. This is an unwritten challenge to every reaver, and the source of the proverb, "Better to die with the Dragon than here!"

### Famous and Infamous:

Nadia the Dark	In the employ of the Uric Arena.
Pasha of Forest Ridge	Independent halfling wanderer.
T'ra-nana of the Silt Sea	Missing. Current whereabouts unknown.
Volivuius the Wicked	Formerly of Raam (believed to be deceased).

### Gladiatorial Slave

Gladiatorial slaves tend to be some of the strongest, toughest, and most dangerous adversaries in the arena. Battling for survival has been the only constant in their violent lives. Some are bought and raised from childhood for a life in the arena. Others start later in life and must learn quickly in order to survive. They have little to lose or gain except their lives.

The duty of a gladiatorial slave is to enter the arena when his master orders him, and give his best effort-or his life. As bad as life can be in the slave pens, quarries, and fields, slaves may still live long lives. This is not always true in the arena. A slave who is forced to fight in the arena is still a gladiator, whether by choice or fate.







## Character Creation

**Role:** Through sheer numbers, unwilling slaves make up the majority of the combatants in the arena. If the entire party begins as gladiators, a common basis for experiences and goals is encouraged. Escape, freedom, and revenge for unjust imprisonment are but a few of the typical motivations for slave gladiators.

Since a gladiatorial slave has no personal freedom, it is possible for one PC to own an NPC in a campaign setting. The gladiator could be used as a bodyguard or as a member of an elite strike force. Problems of conflict between the player and the NPC must be carefully handled.

A DM should always represent slavery as a cruel and inhuman institution when addressing the social roles of gladiatorial slaves. Usually regarded with contempt, gladiatorial slaves are property to be bought and sold. Remember, being forced into gladiatorial combat might be an unwilling choice for a warrior, regardless of his or her fighting skills.

**Secondary Skills:** Anyone, despite class, race, or birthplace may wind up as a gladiatorial slave on Athas. Because of this, a slave's secondary skill may reflect life before slavery.

If the character was born into slavery and reared as a gladiator, then secondary skills would be limited to the following: Armorer, Bowyer, Gambler, Teamster (animal handling), Furrier (skinning), Weaponsmith, or none.

**Weapon Proficiencies:** Gladiatorial slaves have automatic proficiency in all weapons. If the character was born and raised to be a gladiator, he receives an automatic specialization in impaler (a weapon used in gladiatorial combat). This is in addition to any other weapon specializations.

**Nonweapon Proficiencies:** *Bonus Proficiencies:* (General) Heat Protection, (Warrior) Weapon Improvisation. *Recommended:* (Warrior) Gaming, Survival.

**Equipment:** Most slave gladiators choose their favorite or best weapon for arena combat. However, a slave gladiator has only the equipment granted by her master or trainer. Although most slave gladiators receive ample weapons and armor for arena combat, it is well within a master's or trainer's power to force a slave gladiator to enter the arena with weapons or armor they did not choose-or even with neither. A slave gladiator has little recourse but to accept his fate and survive.

**Special Benefits:** Gladiatorial slaves, raised from childhood to be gladiators, may specialize in two single melee weapons. This adds an additional +1 attack modifier and +2 damage modifier. However, the cost is 4 weapon proficiency slots for the second specialization. Double specialization does not increase the number of strikes per round.

A lifetime slave gladiator gains 1 ability point that may be spent on Strength, Constitution, or Dexterity, as the result of rigorous training. Likewise, the slave loses 1 point of Charisma and Intelligence. The number must be set following character creation.

**Special Hindrances:** To a slave, this is obvious. In every combat his life is on the line; no other reward is offered except her own survival. A gladiatorial slave can only bide for time and look for a means to escape and freedom. The outlands are filled with tribes of slaves who have made good their escapes and found new lives outside the gladiatorial arena.

If PC slave gladiators have had a few successful combats in the arena, they should be warned about popularity. Escaped gladiatorial slaves are easily recognizable. Thousands of spectators have seen them at each match. Some fans may wish to help them out of admiration. Others (possibly those who have bet against them) may turn them over to the nearest templar as soon as possible, hoping for a reward. Both groups fear templar reprisals, and this must be taken into consideration when escaped slaves seek shelter.

# Character Creation



**Wealth Options:** A generous owner or templar may give a slave incentives to fight. Incentives can vary from a few ceramic pieces to a new weapon, or the promise of his eventual freedom.

**Races:** Anyone can be forced into the arenas of Athas. The greater a slave's physical strength and endurance, the longer she will survive in the gladiatorial games.

**Special Notes:** Those who take this kit often hide any psionic wild talent from their masters, for it might be the edge they need to escape.

## Famous and Infamous:

Rikus            Escaped slave leader of the Tyr uprising.  
Male mul.

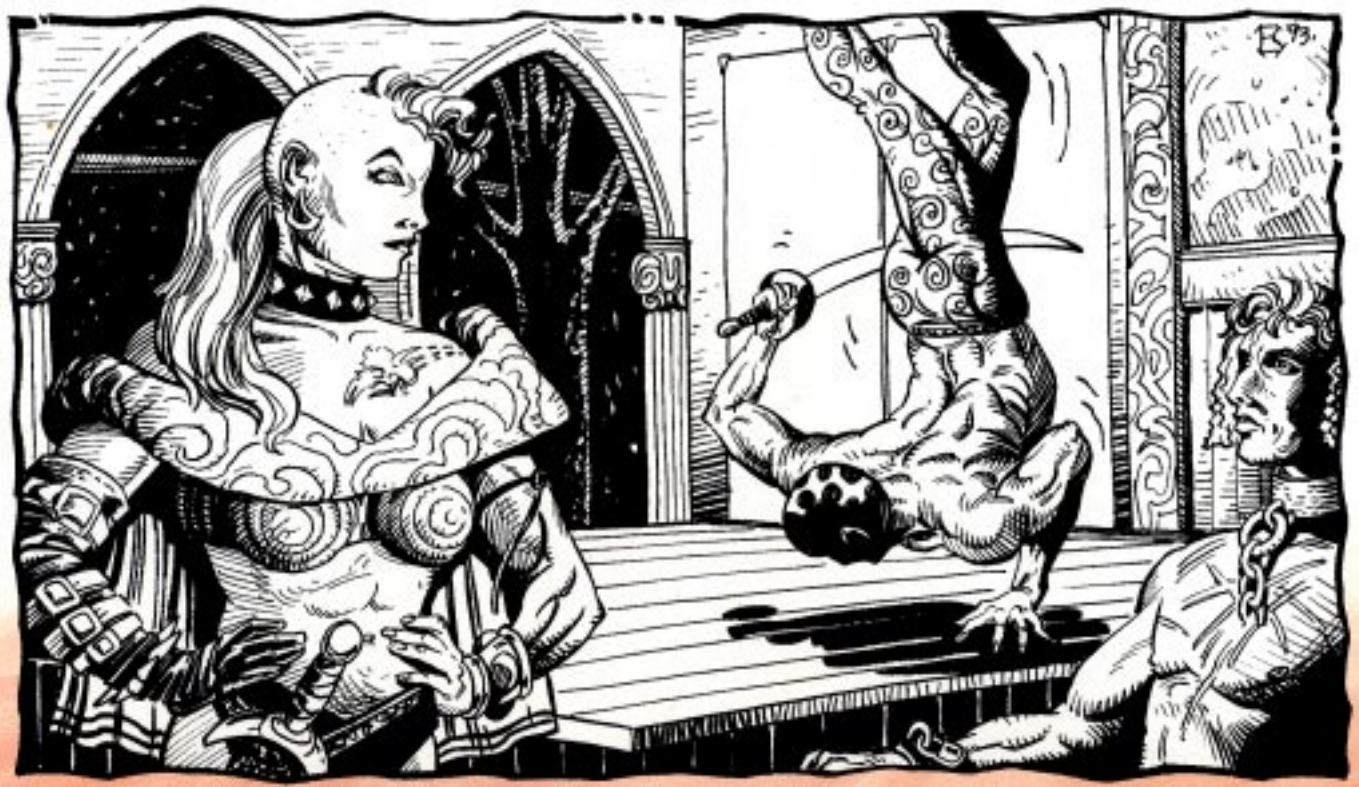
Neeva            Rikus's former fighting partner. Human female. Tyr.

Yarig             Dwarf fighter (deceased).

Gaanon          Half-giant axe weapon specialist (deceased).

## Arena Managers

Ambitious templars are assigned by the sorcerer-kings to oversee the city arenas. These templars are entrusted with the prestigious position of Arena Manager. Templars must work hard to find enough time to tend to this task and still continue all of their other interests elsewhere in the city. They are aware that any trouble in the arena reflects on them. The managers are watched closely by their superiors.





## Character Creation

The day-to-day job of an arena manager is very complex; he is responsible for:

- Overseeing the arena grounds and making sure they are ready for the practices and games.
- Maintaining security over the slave gladiators.
- Overseeing the maintenance of exotic beasts captured for the gladiatorial games.
- Coordinating free gladiators who apply for participation in the games.
- Creating the matches or the “cards” for the event.

The exception to this is Tyr, where the arena has been recently reopened following the death and overthrow of the former sorcerer-king Kalak. The Arena Manager of Tyr is chosen (nominated) by the senate and approved by now King Tithian.

### Famous and Infamous:

**Banther**                      Current arena manager of Tyr. Templar, hand-picked by King Tithian.

## Arena Necromancers

For all that is vile and purely evil, these defilers may be the single most hated class on Athas. Working for the sorcerer-king or a very powerful templar, the necromancer provides “special” games for the arena—animating the dead for gladiatorial matches. In the case of a convict sent to the arena for speaking out publicly against a sorcerer-king, a necromancer may animate the dead body so that it may be further abused by gladiators.

The Necromancer is a valuable asset to any arena. The amount of carnage that occurs at each gladiatorial game is staggering. It takes over a two dozen strong slaves to clean up after a game—or one necromancer. With a single spell, a necromancer can cause a recently slain giant to rise. Combatants can fight the hulking creature

or a second time and the arena gets two fights for the cost of one.

In society the necromancer is feared and despised. Shopkeepers close, rather than serve a necromancer. They are the lowest caste, even below “untouchable.” Necromancers always smell like the dead, since corpses are their prime magical spell components.

Necromancers are closely watched by their employers. No templar or sorcerer-king wants a defiler mage to become too powerful. When it appears that a necromancer has outlived her usefulness, an “accident” is arranged, and a less powerful necromancer takes her place.

Seldom do necromancers flee to the outlands. They are even more hated by the slave tribes than by the city dwellers. There is no place of safety or sanctuary for a defiler necromancer.

### Famous and Infamous:

**Dote Mal Payn**                      Minor necromancer to former Sorcerer-king Kalak of Tyr. Currently in hiding following Kalak’s death. Dark rumors abound that he is looking for Kalak’s body in order to revive it. These rumors have been discounted by reigning King Tithian.

## Renowned NPCs of the Arenas

This section details the statistics and background of two of the most renowned gladiators in Athas’s dark history. The Dungeon Master should feel free to use these nonplayer characters to add color to his or her campaign.

# Character Creation



## Balic

Varnag Deho

Weapons Master, House Jarko

Lawful evil

AC 2 Str 17

MV 12 Dex 19

Level 11 Con 14

Hit Points 107 Int 13

THAC0 9 Wis 17

No. Attacks 2/1 Cha 16

Damage/Attack: 1d8+6 (Bone long sword, -1 to attack roll)

Psionic Summary: PSP 47; Wild Talent—Double Pain (PS Con -3; Cost 7 +)

Varnag Deho is the weapons master at Balic's finest gladiatorial school, House Jarko. He is a cruel, vicious man, and takes delight in using slave gladiators as targets for young gladiatorial apprentices. Deho wears a leather mask that covers the left side of his face, excluding the eye. He removes the mask to frighten young gladiators and the sight is seldom forgotten by the horrified initiates. As a youth, Varnag was struck in the face by someone wielding a magical staff. The magic in the staff cursed the wound and it has remained unhealed. This event has caused Varnag to live a bitter life. The only place where he could exact vengeance on a regular basis was the gladiatorial arena. Reigning arena champion for four years, Varnag retired and was taken in by the House Jarko as a teacher. He quickly rose to Chief Trainer and Disciplinarian.

## Draj

Ular Lael

Sojourner, House Omnir

Human, beast trainer Mistress

Lawful Evil

AC 6 Str 17

MV 12

Dex 19

Level 11

Con 16

Hit Points 122

Int 17

THAC0 9

Wis 18

No. Attacks 2/1

Cha 17

Damage/Attack 1d6 (Iron short sword)

Psionic Summary: PSP 44; Wild Talent—Animal Affinity (PS Con -4; Cost 15 + 4/round. Affinity = Psi Cat)

Ular, an abandoned child, was left to die on an arena feed cart. It was beast master Encean that discovered the small child, dumped in with the meats to serve to the creatures of the arena. Rather than let her become a quick snack for some gruesome beast, Encean elected to keep her and replace the wife and son he had recently lost during a difficult birth. To Encean, a uniquely cold-hearted man, she became the son he never had. Careful never to show affection, he raised her with the back of his hand.

The only time Lael ever saw concern on Encean's face was watching him work the arena creatures under his care. Lael worked hard, helping her foster father in his duties as a way to gain acceptance. She found she had a great kinship for the feline creatures brought to the arena. Their independence inspired her own. Late one season two arena guards cornered her to have some sport. It was then she learned of her wild psionic talent. Unconsciously taking the form of a cat she admired, she slew them both before they had a chance to raise a cry. She pushed their bodies into a nearby beast cage and never spoke of the incident to anyone.

Ular inherited the position as beast master following a fatal accident to her adoptive father. She takes no greater pride than bringing back a dangerous rare specimen to the Draj arena. Unfortunately, she cares little for the investment of human life needed to bring such dangerous creatures back. She is always in need of mercenary soldiers to accompany her on her dangerous outings.

She is a lonely, catlike woman who prefers the company of her animals and lives in the straw of the cages.



## Chapter 2: Gladiator Abilities

Gladiators are the undisputed masters of weapons on Athas. Although they may not command the mighty magics of mages and priests, the huge armies of the nobles, or the awesome mental powers of psionicists, the gladiator's skill with weapons is far beyond what any of the others can achieve. Even the most powerful of the former is hard-pressed against a lowly gladiator when the only weapons available are powered by brawn and speed.

Because of their intensive training in weapons and knowledge of their opponents, gladiators have no time to devote to expanding other abilities. For this reason, they may never become multiclassed. PC gladiators who seem to have enough time to study something other than weapons might more likely play regular fighters, rather than gladiators.

What follows is a classification of abilities available to gladiators. Unless noted otherwise, these abilities are also available to other warriors or those who choose to study these disciplines. However, few other character types ever match the prowess of the gladiator in these disciplines.

### Armor Optimization

When a gladiator reaches 5th level, he gains an understanding of how his armor can better serve him. Most characters who wear armor simply allow it to bear the brunt of most blows, relying on the physical barrier to protect them from the dangers of battle. They do not know that their armor can protect them to an even greater degree.

Gladiators must rely on armor to protect them far more than the average person. They have to be much more aware of the armor's capabilities. A 5th-level gladiator learns to position armor so it absorbs blows better than it would normally, forcing the heavier parts of the armor to take the main impact of the blow. A shield can be positioned so that the weapon skitters off harmlessly rather than slamming directly into the shield.

Of course, as the gladiator progresses in experience, he

continues to understand armor better and better. Every five levels, the gladiator gains a +1 bonus to Armor Class. Thus, at 5th level, the gladiator gains a +1 bonus. At 10th level, this becomes a +2 bonus, and so forth for every level divisible by five.

If the gladiator is not wearing armor or using a shield, this bonus does not apply. Also, armor spells or *rings of protection* do not gain such bonuses. This armor optimization bonus *does* apply to more substantial magical items such as *bracers*, *cloaks*, and so forth, for gladiators can interpose these items between their bodies and the blows. This bonus is also cumulative with the Armor Optimization nonweapon proficiency.

### Unarmed Combat

Because of their extensive barehanded training, gladiators receive a 4 point chart bonus on the unarmed combat table. This is added after the gladiator player's attack roll, or in the manner described in the optional rules in Chapter 3: Combat.

Furthermore, because they are so well-trained, an unarmed gladiator does not allow opponents the full +4 attack and damage bonuses usually allowed against an unarmed opponent. The bonus against gladiators is reduced to +2 to attacks and damage. However, the opponent is still allowed a chance to strike first, regardless of the gladiator's initiative roll.

### New Proficiencies

Like proficiency checks in the standard AD&D® game, DARK SUN® game characters check a d20 roll against their proficiency. Although the DARK SUN characters have higher ability scores, a roll of 20 always indicates failure, regardless of the character's ability score.

Gladiators, unlike most warriors, can take the Rogue proficiency Tumbling for the cost of only one slot. Because they spend a large part of their time rolling about

# Gladiator Abilities



the sands and dodging missiles and sword blows, they gain this option.

Recommended proficiencies for gladiators include Blind-Fighting, Endurance, Land-Based Riding, Rope Use, Tumbling, Charioteering, and Running. All of these enhance the PC's abilities in the arena. Intimidation and Observation (found in *The Complete Thief's Handbook*) are also useful, although they are more advantageous outside the ring than inside.

More esoteric proficiencies for the gladiator include Mountaineering, Tightrope Walking, Juggling, and Animal Lore. Although they may seem to have no immediate use in the arena, consider that the advanced games of most cities call upon knowledge that most gladiators could not be expected to have. By taking physical proficiencies that may seem out of the ordinary, the gladiator can try to prepare himself for any twists the host of the Games may implement.

## Nonweapon Proficiencies Table

Proficiency	Slots	Ability	Modifier
Arena Acting	1	Charisma	- 1
Dirty Tricks	1	Wisdom	- 2
Massage	1	Dexterity	0
Tactics	1	Intelligence	- 1
Taunting	1	Wisdom	0
Weakness Identification	2	Wisdom	- 2

## Descriptions of New Proficiencies

**Arena Acting:** The Acting proficiency allows the gladiator to feign a weakness in the arena to trick his opponent. If the check is successful, he has shown a weakness he does not really possess. For example, he could convince an enemy that his left side is overexposed, or that his weapons are unfamiliar in his hands. More often than not, these tricks succeed. If the enemy attack against the gladiator's

assumed weakness, the PC attacks his foe with a +3 bonus to attack and damage rolls. These reflect the surprise the target feels upon realizing he has been duped.

Arena Acting can work only once against any given opponent. Thereafter, the enemy is far more cautious in his attacks.

**Dirty Tricks:** The Dirty Tricks proficiency allows any fighter character (not just a gladiator) to learn how to fight dirty against an opponent. Although the exact methods may vary from character to character, the proficiency allows the PC to distract an opponent just long enough to get away with something otherwise not possible.

The method of trickery must necessarily vary depending on terrain, the opponent, and numerous other factors. Even weather can have a serious effect on the tricks a gladiator can play. The Dirty Tricks proficiency gives a +1 bonus to one of several actions the PC can take in the combat round, provided the PC makes a successful proficiency check. A foe may make a Wisdom check at -2 to detect the trick. A successful Wisdom check negates the Dirty Trick for that round.

The Dirty Tricks bonus may be applied to the user's attack, initiative, or damage results. The Dirty Trickster may also choose to apply the bonus as a penalty (-1) to an opponent's attack, initiative, or damage. The desired bonus must be announced before the proficiency is checked. A failed check indicates that the enemy is alert to such tricks, and will not fall prey to them later in the combat.

Dirty Tricks generally work only once or twice against any given opponent, no matter what forms are used. They remember those who engage in such tricks against them, usually with negative overtones. Only those with Average or lower Intelligence will succumb to a Dirty Trick played twice unless it is exceptionally clever. Players are encouraged to think of the tricks themselves, rather than simply rolling the dice.

Each Dirty Trick played by the PC against the same enemy gives the enemy a +2 on his Wisdom check, mak-



## Gladiator Abilities

ing the check for a second Trick at a 0 modifier, the third at a +2, and so on. Unless it can be reasonably expected that the foe would not remember the PC (DM's discretion), this bonus should always be kept in mind. A bonus also applies if the PC has a reputation for Dirty Tricks, when facing someone who would know of this reputation.

Sample Dirty Tricks include throwing sand in a foe's eyes, playing dead to lure an enemy into striking distance, clouting him in sensitive areas, forcing him to spring arena-laid traps, and so forth.

**Massage:** The Massage proficiency can allow a gladiator to help partners maintain their form longer during matches. By applying this therapy between matches, the gladiator ensures that the muscles of the subject remain loose and relaxed, essential for good combat. Any gladiator who receives a Massage in between bouts gains +2 to Endurance checks during the next bout. Massage can be practiced only on others; the proficient gladiator cannot massage herself and receive the bonus.

**Tactics:** The gladiator who takes the Tactics proficiency gains a +1 bonus on attack or initiative rolls (player's choice) in any given combat by taking a round to study his opponent's movements. A successful proficiency roll indicates that the gladiator has some idea of what his opponent plans in combat. When one of the combatants is eliminated, the gladiator must again step back a round to analyze the situation and make a new proficiency check if he is to keep the bonus he has gained. He may parry attacks in this round, but may not initiate any himself. This includes uses of his psionic wild talent, no matter what it may be. Nearly all his attention is focused on divining the intent of his enemies.

Furthermore, if the gladiator wishes to devote another slot to this proficiency, he may choose to study one particular race in order to better understand its tendencies. In this case, the gladiator gains a +2 bonus to attack or initiative rolls when using this proficiency. Alterna-

tively, the gladiator may choose to split the bonus, and take +1 on attacks and +1 to initiative. The gladiator may specialize in as many races as he likes, but can gain only a maximum bonus of +2 to any particular races' tendencies.

This proficiency does not apply to groups of four or more opponents, unless the opponents' race is one the gladiator has studied extensively. In this case, the proficiency can apply to as many as five opponents, but never more than that. This proficiency does not apply to the gladiator's partners. The gladiator specializes in tactics, not in strategy.

**Taunting:** This proficiency enables the gladiator to taunt, goad, and in all ways be annoying and offensive to the enemy. If the gladiator makes the proficiency check and the opponent fails a saving throw vs. paralyzation, the foe becomes enraged. An enraged foe receives a -2 attack penalty, but +1 to damage. In addition, enemies are generally so blinded by rage that they fail to notice the small details essential to good combat, and therefore suffer a -1 to AC.

NPCs with Wisdom of 14 or greater are immune to this effect, as are those 5 or more levels higher than the gladiator. They recognize the taunt for what it is, and may choose to disregard its effects if they wish. PCs are also immune, though they should play out their natural reactions to such acts. The DM should always take the personality of the taunted character, whether PC or NPC, into account.

**Weakness Identification:** This proficiency, like Tactics, allows the gladiator to assess an opponent for signs of weakness. A successful proficiency check means that the gladiator has located the foe's weakness, whether it lies in fighting style or a fault in the opponent's armor. If the gladiator wants to take the usual penalties for a called shot (+1 to initiative, -4 to attack), he can cause double damage to the opponent for one round only. After such a wound, intelligent opponents adjust their fighting style so that the weakness is not as exposed. Creatures with low

# Gladiator Abilities



Intelligence or less simply try to minimize the danger by presenting a different side to the attacker. Thus, if two or more gladiators attack a weakened creature, there is a good chance they can continue exploiting its weakness throughout the battle as it shifts the damaged area from one side to another.

The bonus conferred by this proficiency can be communicated to one's allies. However, if the creature under attack understands the language used to effect this communication, anyone attacking the creature does so with a -2 penalty.

When used against a gladiator with the Arena Acting proficiency, the two sides involved must have a proficiency contest. Each character must make their respective Proficiency checks. The degree of success in this is measured by the difference between the target number and the actual die roll. The winner is the character with the higher degree of success. If the winner is using Weakness Identification, he spots the acting through some small flaw in the performance. Likewise, if the Arena Actor has the greater number, the one with Weakness Identification falls for it.

*Example: Bythal has an Arena Acting proficiency of 14. His opponent Haarna has a Weakness Identification proficiency of 13. Bythal's roll is a 7, while Haarna's is a 3. Since Haarna's difference is greater at 10 (13-3=10) than Bythal's 7 (14-7=7), Haarna can easily see that Bythal is acting. He is not drawn in, and Bythal's bonus is negated.*

The interchange here can be complicated. Some gladiators take both Arena Acting and Weakness Identification. Arena Acting should be checked first, so that the enemy may be fooled from the first instant he spies his opponent. After the gladiator assumes his weakness, he can begin checking his enemy for the same thing. Both these rolls should be rolled where only the DM can see them, so that the player does not know if he was successful in his various attempts.

## Weapon Proficiencies

The gladiator need never worry about having to swing an unfamiliar weapon in a pinch; for a gladiator, there is no such thing as an unfamiliar weapon. If nothing designed specifically as a weapon is available, he can make one from his surroundings.

Gladiators never suffer a nonproficiency penalty when picking up a weapon. Even when the gladiator has never seen a weapon of its like, he can easily fathom its purpose and the way it is used—just in time to eliminate his foes. Unlike most others, the gladiator is trained extensively in the understanding of weapons and awareness of his body's capabilities.

Indeed, the gladiator's ability with weapons is such that he can specialize in more than one weapon at 1st level. Gladiators may specialize in as many weapons as their available weapon proficiencies allow. Whenever the gladiator gains enough proficiencies to qualify for another weapon specialization, he may take it. When trying to gain new weapon specialization, the gladiator must pay the full cost for his weapon specialization; that is, he must pay both the initial slot for proficiency in that weapon, as well as the additional slots required to specialize.



# Chapter 3: Combat

## New Weapons

A gladiator is required to be the master of all weapons; without the ability to improvise new weapons at a moment's notice, a disarmed gladiator often finds herself at the dubious mercy of her opponent.

Literally dozens of new weapons have been created by gladiators looking for a last ditch defense against certain death. Some of these improvised weapons have caught on and have been added to the list of weapons available to the gladiator.

Nearly anything can serve as a weapon. From ropes to grappling hooks, plant fibers and giant's-hair; anything that can conceivably be used to harm someone has been used as a weapon in the arenas of Athas. Indeed, the sheer variety of these weapons is so stunning and so well received by the crowds that weaponsmiths have trouble keeping up with the constant demand for newer and more deadly weapons.

Some of these weapons came from the crowded city streets. They tend to be small, easily concealed, and are generally thrusting or stabbing weapons. Others origi-

nated in the wastes outside of civilization, designed to fight the horrors of the desert. Their size and sheer damage potential attests to their origin. Details of these weapons are presented below.

**Weapon Material:** The DARK SUN® *Rules Book*, page 51, states that weapons made of materials other than steel cause less damage, are less likely to hit, and more likely to break. The prices, weights, and damage given here assume that the weapon is made of steel. Note, however, that certain weapons can be made without metal and can be used without impairing hit probability and damage—regardless of the material used in construction. If nonmetallic, a weapon can cost as little as 1% of the original price.

**Proficient and Specialized Use:** These weapons become far more useful in the hands of someone trained to use them. Those who go further and actually specialize gain additional attack and damage bonuses. Furthermore, those who specialize gain the additional attack described on page 52 of the *Player's Handbook*.

## New Weapon Table

Weapon Name	Cost (gp)*	Weight	Size	Type	Speed	Damage**
Alhulak	9	9	M	B	5	1d6/1d6
Carrikal	8	6	M	S	5	1d6+1/1d8
Dejada	6	8	M	P/B	8	1d8/1d6
Double-Bladed Spear	2	6	M	P	6	1d8/1d8
Forearm Axe	1	4	S	S/P	3	1d6/1d6
Lotulis	15	10	L	P/S/B	8	1d10/1d12
Puchik	6	1	S	P/S	2	1d4+1/1d4+1
Singing Stick	5 sp	1	S	B	2	1d6/1d4
Talid	4	1	S	P/S/B	2	1d6/1d6-1
Trikal	12	8	L	S/B	8	1d10/1d10

\* The cost for these weapons is based on prices for metal (excepting singing stick). If made with alternative materials, they receive the modifiers described in the DARK SUN *Rules Book*

\*\* The damage here is based on metal weapons. Nonmetal versions of these weapons must adjust their damage (with the exception of the singing stick and carrikal).



## Alhulak

*Cost:* 9 gp

*Weight:* 9

*Size:* M

*Type:* P/B

*Speed Factor:* 5

*Damage S-M/L:* 1d6/1d6

The alhulak is primarily a rope with a four-bladed grappling hook on one end. The other end of the 5-foot rope is secured to a 2-foot long handle, which can also be used to block attack from other weapons.

The four-bladed head of the alhulak is commonly carved from mekillot ribs (the price given here is for a steel set of blades). The haft securing it to the rope is usually of wood or bone.

**Proficient Use:** A proficient user of the alhulak can use it in combat without fear of snaring himself or his companions. Furthermore, he can use another medium sized weapon in his other hand with only a -2 penalty. Small weapons can be used along with the alhulak with no penalty.

**Specialized Use:** The specialized warrior can use the alhulak to ensnare her target as though she were grappling. A successful attack means the foe suffers 1d3 points of damage and is automatically grappled. Once grappled, the wielder can try to keep her enemy off-balance by making a successful Strength check against those of her own size who fail a save vs. petrification. Smaller foes are automatically off balance. Large enemies cannot be unbalanced by the alhulak.

## Carikkal

*Cost:* 8 sp

*Weight:* 6

*Size:* M

*Type:* S

*Speed Factor:* 5

*Damage S-M/L:* 1d6+1/1d8

The carikkal is made by lashing a length of mekillot bone to the jawbone of a jozhal. The sharp ridges of teeth run down half the length of the bone handle, while the hinges of the jaw are sharpened to a keen edge. This makes the carikkal resemble a battle axe with both heads pointing in the same direction. A leather thong protrudes from a hole drilled in the bottom of the bone shaft, so that the user may retain his grip in even the bloodiest of battles.

**Proficient Use:** There is no additional bonus for proficient use of the carikkal; its damage and striking power are enough for most users of the weapon.

**Specialized Use:** A specialized user of the carikkal can use the sharp teeth on the haft of the carikkal to damage opponents during his extra attack.

As an example, a 3rd-level specialist in carikkal has 3 attacks every 2 rounds. On the third attack, the teeth come into play. In addition to the damage of the blades of the carikkal, the teeth cause an additional 1d3 points of damage. The wielder does not need to roll to hit for this damage to happen; his expertise with the weapon is such that it happens automatically. However, the extra damage does not receive a Strength bonus, although magical damage applies normally.

## Dejada

*Cost:* 6 gp

*Weight:* 8

*Size:* M

*Type:* P/B

*Speed Factor:* 8

*Damage:* S-M/L: 1d8/1d6

*ROF:* 1/1

*Range:* S/M/L/: 1/2/3



# Combat





The dejada consists of a long, scooped basket (cestum) worn on the arm and used to propel projectiles (pelota) at a very high rate of speed. The cestum can be made by taking the slender rib bones from an erdlu and weaving a long, slender, curved basket between them. The wielder inserts her hand into the open bottom end where a glove like handle is placed. The cestum for human use is 2 feet long and 6 inches wide. Cestum size varies with the race of the wielder. Cesti can only be used on one hand, since the other is required to load the pelota.

Pelota are spherical objects approximately 2 inches in diameter. Stone, spiked balls, and balls of brambleweed qualify as pelota. Ceramic balls filled with gas, oil, poison, or other substances may also be used. There is some debate on whether this weapon originated in the Ringing Mountains or in the Crescent Forest. It has been documented that mountain halflings use cesti to hurl agony beetles at the backs of powerful foes. Metal cesti are extremely rare, while metal pelota are much more common.

**Proficient Use:** The wielder uses the dejada by loading a pelota into the cestum, then propelling the projectile with a long throwing motion of the arm. The projectile reaches great speeds due to the velocity and whip action of the throw. The thrown projectile may reach speeds of 200 miles per hour or more, but only for a short distance. Strength bonus is added for each attack. A proficient character can throw one pelota each round.

**Specialized Use:** A gladiator specialized in dejada may attempt to catch a pelota thrown at him by another gladiator. If the gladiator's enemy makes a successful attack, the defending gladiator may make a saving throw vs. petrification to catch the pelota thrown at him.

A dejada gladiator is allowed an immediate return throw if he or she has any subsequent attacks in that round. Otherwise all other actions for the character that round are ended.

## Double-Bladed Spear

*Cost:* 2 gp

*Weight:* 6

*Size:* M

*Type:* P

*Speed Factor:* 6

*Damage S-M/L:* 1d8/1d8

The double-bladed spear is nearly identical to the normal spear, however, it carries an additional spearhead on the butt end.

**Proficient Use:** The proficient wielder of the double-bladed spear can use both ends of the spear in combat against a single opponent by twirling the blades. This maneuver often confuses intelligent opponents who have never seen it before; these foes suffer a -1 penalty to attacks and damage for 2 rounds.

**Specialized Use:** Anyone who specializes in the double-bladed spear may use it to attack two different opponents at the same time with a -1 penalty to damage. This is in addition to the added attacks usually conferred for specialization, so a specialized user may attack 3 or more separate targets in a single round, provided the targets are no more than a pace away from each other.

## Forearm Axe

*Cost:* 1 gp

*Weight:* 4

*Size:* S

*Type:* P/S

*Speed Factor:* 3

*Damage S-M/L:* 1d6/1d6

The forearm axe consists of the head of a large, double-bladed battle axe with a spike at the center, on the outside,



## Combat

and worn like a buckler on the forearm. However, unlike most bucklers, it can cause serious damage to an unwary opponent. It is a favored weapon of martial artists. The forearm axe allows the attacker to strike as though his arm were a weapon, delivering 1d6 points of damage. It can also be used in close quarters where other weapons may not be effective.

**Proficient Use:** The proficient user of a forearm axe can use it as a buckler to deflect 1 attack per round, and still use it to attack. In game terms, this means that the user gains a +1 AC against a specified attack, taking no penalty to riposte. However, when it is used as a buckler, there is the possibility of shattering; any roll of a 19 or 20 against it means the PC must again roll a d20. A roll of 1 means the forearm axe has shattered from the force of the blow.

**Specialized Use:** The spike in the center can be used by specialized wielders to inflict an additional 1d2 points of damage. Though this is not an incredible amount of damage, the spike takes poison coating well, and can be hollowed to hold up to three doses of poison.

### Lotulis

*Cost:* 15 gp

*Weight:* 10

*Size:* L

*Type:* P/S/B

*Speed Factor:* 8

*Damage S-M/L:* 1d10/1d12

The lotulis is a long shaft with a recurved crescent blade at either end. It resembles two outwardly curved crescent moons mounted on a long metal shaft. The edged crescents also have small barbed spikes near the points. In the hands of a warrior trained in its use, it is a truly dangerous weapon. Though the lotulis is ponderous, its damage potential is something to make even a half-giant wary.

**Proficient Use:** The proficient user can spin the lotulis through a variety of offensive and defensive maneuvers. The shaft can be used to parry attacks or bludgeon foes like a quarterstaff, protecting the user. The blades can be used to slash on front or back strokes, keeping enemies at bay. The blades can also be used to catch weapons, pin foes, or impale targets with the barbs. The lotulis grants a +1 to any attempt using called shots because of its specific design. It should be noted that the lotulis cannot be set against a charging foe.

**Specialized Use:** Anyone who specializes in the lotulis may make two slashing attacks in a round on two different opponents with the two ends. Though the double slash uses the attacks normally conferred by specialization, it allows the wielder to take on two separate opponents at one time. If the wielder so desires, he can take the extra opponent in lieu of one of the free attacks.

### Puchik

*Cost:* 6 gp

*Weight:* 1

*Size:* S

*Type:* P/S

*Speed Factor:* 2

*Damage S-M/L:* 1d4+1/1d4+1

The puchik is a punching and parrying weapon designed for close fighting. It is a dagger, 2 feet long, with handguards jutting from the hilt at a 45 degree angle to protect the wielder's hands. The grip of the puchik is perpendicular to the length of the blade and held in place by the two prongs extending down from the handguards. Holed leather strips wrap around the hilt keep the grip from slipping in sweaty hands.

**Proficient Use:** The puchik confers no attack bonus on a proficient user, but it can be used to trap an opponent's



weapon. If the wielder rolls a successful parry and then a successful Pin attack (-4 to hit) against his opponent, he can hold his opponent's weapon until the foe can win a Strength contest with the wielder of the puchik.

**Specialized Use:** A specialized puchik wielder earns at least two attacks per round with his weapon, instead of the typical 3/2 for low eve specialists. The number of attacks increases at the same rate as the specialists' attacks. Although one of the puchik's attacks must always be used to parry incoming blows, the others can be used to deliver ripostes of startling speed.

## Singing Sticks

*Cost:* 5 sp

*Weight:* 1

*Size:* S

*Type:* B

*Speed Factor:* 2

*Damage S-M/L:* 1d6/1d4

These weapons are one inch in diameter and about 2 ½ feet long. Singing sticks rely more on agility and ability than on simple brute force. They are almost always used in pairs, rather than singly. Made of springy, straight wood such as the cachava plant, they are nearly impossible to break, even when swung with great force.

Singing sticks are extremely light, carved so that the diameter of the ends is slightly larger than that of the center. This unusual shape, combined with the type of wood, is what gives the sticks their name, for they whistle and moan as they are whirled through the air. Adhesive oil is normally applied before battle so that the sticks do not slip from the user's grasp even during high speed maneuvers.

Although they are light and generally favored for sparring practice, singing stick can be used with deadly precision in the arena. Many a gladiator has misjudged an

opponent because the foe was wielding only these sticks, and has gone to her doom lamenting her mistake.

**Proficient Use:** Those proficient in the singing stick can use them in two hands without the usual penalty for attacking with two weapons.

**Specialized Use:** Specialized users of the singing sticks can not only attack with one in each hand, but can also whirl the sticks through an amazing array of defensive and offensive maneuvers, performing one of each without the usual penalty for taking different actions.

## Talid

*Cost:* 4 gp

*Weight:* 1

*Size:* S

*Type:* P/S/B

*Speed Factor:* 2

*Damage S-M/L:* 1d6/1d6-1

The talid, also known as a gladiator's gauntlet, is an improved version of the cestus. The talid is made of stiff leather with metal, chitin, or bone plating on the hand cover and all along the forearm. Spikes protrude from each of the knuckles and along the back of the hand. A sharp blade runs along the thumb for cramped fighting styles, and there is a 6 inch spike on the elbow.

The talid relies far more on strength and brute power than subtlety, though some gladiators have shown that it can be used very effectively when combined with other, quicker attack.

**Proficient Use:** Anyone who can fight barehanded is proficient in the talid. Therefore, there is no bonus for taking this weapon proficiency.

**Specialized Use:** There is no bonus for specialization in the talid.



## Combat

### Trikal

*Cost:* 12 gp

*Weight:* 8

*Size:* L

*Type:* S/B

*Speed Factor:* 8

*Damage S-M/L:* 1d10/1d10

The trikal is a small pole arm, roughly 6 feet long, 5 feet of length is a stout wooden shaft. The final foot is a metal head with three blades projecting from the central shaft. Below these are a series of serrations, each as sharp as the blades above them. The butt end of the shaft is slightly weighted to ensure that the momentum

of the swing gains an extra push for maximum damage potential.

**Proficient Use:** Those proficient with the trikal can use the head of the weapon to knock foes off balance with a series of short, sharp jabs. If the attacker makes a successful attack roll at -2, the defender must make a Dexterity check at -3 or fall over backwards.

**Specialized Use:** Specialized users of the trikal can use it to hook an opponent's feet from beneath him in a pull/trip maneuver. The trikal's heads make it harder for an opponent to recover from such a maneuver; an unmoving enemy makes his Dexterity check at only +3, while an unaware opponent makes the check at -5.

### Armor

Gladiators can seldom afford to have their entire bodies encumbered by bulky suits of armor. To best preserve mobility and agility, they usually prefer piecemeal armor. Rules for piecemeal armor are covered on page 72 of the DARK SUN® *Rules Book*, but are reprinted here for your convenience. Most gladiators cover their legs with metal armor if they can find it, covering chests with hide and arms with leather or studded leather.

### Piecemeal Armor Table

#### Bonus to AC Per Type of Piece

Armor Type	Full Suit	Breast Plate	Two Arms	One Arm	Two Legs	One Leg
Banded Mail	6	3	2	1	1	0
Brigandine	4	2	1	0	1	0
Bronze Plate	6	3	2	1	1	0
Chain Mail	5	2	2	1	1	0
Field Plate	8	4	2	1	2	1
Full Plate	7	4	3	1	2	1
Hide Armor	4	2	1	0	1	0
Leather Armor	2	1	1	0	0	0
Padded Armor	2	1	1	0	0	0
Plate Mail	7	3	2	1	2	1
Ring Mail	3	1	1	0	1	0
Scale Mail	4	2	1	0	1	0
Splint Mail	6	3	2	1	1	0
Studded Leather	3	1	1	0	1	0







# Combat

## Combat Possibilities

The course of combat in the arena typically happens as outlined in the following steps.

1. Announce special attacks, such as called shots.
2. Roll initiative.
3. Add weapon speed or casting time.
4. Roll attacks in order of initiative.
5. Roll damage.
6. Roll secondary attacks.

Two combat possibilities (standard and special attacks), available to anyone who can heft a trikal or swing a fist, are outlined below. The following is an abbreviated list, designed for easy reference. The second listings go into more detail for those curious about the true workings of these maneuvers.

**Standard Attacks:** These are the typical attacks a gladiator is likely to use.

- **Melee Attack:** Standard attack, with Strength, specialization, and magical bonuses.
- **Missile Attack:** Standard attack, with Dexterity, specialization, and magical bonuses.
- **Parry #1:** Add 1/2 character's current level to AC (ignore fractions); 1/2 level +1 to AC for warriors. This functions against all attacks in a round.
- **Withdraw:** Disengage from combat, back away at 1/3 maximum Movement.
- **Flee:** Turn tail and run. Enemies whose melee weapons can reach the fleeing character may take a free shot at +4 to hit, if they so desire.
- **Charge:** Move at 1½ maximum move, gain a +2 to attack rolls (opponents get -2 initiative bonus, attacker loses all Dexterity bonuses and suffers a -1 AC penalty).
- **Set for Charge:** Can cause extra damage to a charging enemy. Works only with polearms.
- **Hold Action:** Allows the character to delay action

until any later point in the round.

- **Unarmed Combat:** An armed defender gets a free attack in the first round when attacked by an unarmed foe, gaining a +4 bonus to both attack and damage rolls. After that point, only weapons of size S can be used, as the two are assumed to have grappled.
- **Punch/Martial Arts:** No proficiency need be taken with Punching, although one must be spent to learn Martial Arts.
- **Wrestle:** Any "Hold" result grapples an opponent, and this hold can be broken only by certain maneuvers.
- **Overbear:** Opponent (or weakest member of overbearing party) rolls an attack. There is a penalty of +/-4 for size difference (determined by creature size), -2 for number of target's legs (each leg beyond two), and +1 for each extra attacker. A successful attack knocks the target prone; a subsequent attack pins (see Wrestling).

**Special Attacks:** Most of these are taken at a +1 initiative and a -4 attack penalty, unless specifically noted. Such attacks are typically used less often than are standard attacks.

- **Disarm:** Gets rid of an enemy's weapon, knocks a shield out of line, or partially disarms a two-handed weapon (reduces it to one hand).
- **Expert Disarm:** Requires +1 to initiative and -4 to hit. Places a disarmed weapon where the attacker wants it within 12 inches.
- **Grab:** If successful, an item can be grabbed. If grabbing a person, there must be a Strength check. There is a -3 Strength penalty for a one-armed Grab.
- **Parry #2:** Roll to hit against attacker's AC (add +2 for any shield); this parries the first attack from that attacker. Optionally, the defender can risk the first attack and "save" the parry for another attack from the same opponent.
- **Pin:** No initiative penalty, -4 attack penalty. Successful attack pins opponent's weapon. Enemy gets a free Strength check to try to break the pin each round.



- **Pull/Trip:** Announce at attack. If it hits, victim gets a Dex check. If this is unsuccessful, the victim falls down. The victim gains a +6 to the Dex check if not moving, or -3 penalty if moving and unaware of the attack. No modifier if victim is moving and aware of attack.
- **Sap:** +1 initiative bonus, -8 attack penalty. An attack to knock the enemy unconscious. The attacker rolls damage, and gets a 5% chance of knockout per point to a maximum of 40%. Weapons' magical bonuses do not count toward this attack. An immobile character is automatically hit, and the chance of knockout increases to 10% per point of damage, up to 80%.
- **Shield-Punch:** Hitting someone with the shield. The shield's magical bonuses do not count in determining THAC0.
- **Shield-Rush:** A slam into someone with the shield to knock them down, forcing a Dex check. There are multiple modifiers to determine if the character hits and if the target remains standing.

## Standard Attacks

These are attacks that anyone can make without fear of undue penalties or modifiers to their attack.

**Melee Attack:** This is a normal attack.

**Missile Attack:** A typical stand-and-fire attack.

**Parry #1:** The PC adds 1/2 his current level (1/2 level +1 for warriors) to AC for a better chance to avoid a blow. Thus, a 7th-level warrior with AC 6 gains a +4 bonus to AC, for a total AC of 2.

**Withdraw:** The PC can disengage from combat without fear of retaliation by retreating at 1/3 maximum Movement. This means the PC retreats in orderly fashion, keeping defenses toward the opponent. Withdrawing PCs can parry attacks, but may not launch any attack. The disadvantage to the Withdrawal is that enemies can easily keep up with the PC unless there is a large enough crowd or other distraction through which the PC can withdraw.

**Flee:** This is a far less orderly retreat than the Withdrawal. By turning tail and running, the PC tries to avoid any further damage. This option is made less attractive by the fact that any enemies near the character get a free melee attack (regardless of whether they have attacked this round or not).

**Charge:** By gaining more speed (1½ times maximum Movement), the character gains a +2 bonus to hit opponents because of the sheer momentum involved. Also, certain weapons inflict double damage on a successful charge. However, the opponent gains a +2 bonus to the initiative roll; the charging character loses all AC bonuses from Dexterity and takes an additional -1 AC penalty.

**Set for Charge:** This is an effective defense usable only with pole weapons. Certain weapons gain a bonus when set to receive a charge (*Player's Handbook*, Chapter 6). If the defender braces the weapon against a firm support, the charging enemy can suffer serious damage.

**Hold Action:** This allows a character to forfeit initiative to determine the probable course of combat in the round. Although this action means the character automatically loses initiative, he also does not have to declare actions until the initiative reaches him. The character can choose any later initiative segments ("after Thykryl has attacked but before Sampson attacks") in the round for *both* his initial and secondary attacks (modified for weapon speed).

## Special Attacks

These are attack that require some degree of skill or luck, as well as some degree of confidence in one's abilities, since most of them demand at least a +1 initiative bonus and a -4 attack penalty.

**Disarm:** A successful Disarm roll knocks the opponent's weapon 2d6 feet. However, this applies only to one-handed weapons. Against two-handed weapons, a successful Disarm causes the wielder to automatically lose initiative the following round while he regains his grip



## Combat

with one hand on his weapon. Two successful Disarms in a single round disarm a two-handed weapon. A Disarm against a shield causes the shield to be knocked out of line, negating the shield's bonus for the round.

Thrown weapons and missiles can also disarm targets, though daggers and other small weapons suffer an additional penalty because of their light weight. Arrows, quarrels, and slingstones do not suffer a penalty.

Any weapons and shields knocked out of line can be realigned if the victim has one attack left.

**Expert Disarm:** This maneuver allows the Disarming character to choose where the flying weapon lands, within 12 feet of his opponent. This allows the character to take an enemy's weapon, rearm a nearby ally, or place the weapon out of the opponent's reach.

This works only against single-handed weapons.

**Grab:** The character attempting this move must have at

least one hand free, and it works better with two hands. If the attack is successful, the character has grabbed whatever he was trying to hit, whether the enemy's shirtfront or his weapon. However, if someone else is holding that item, the attacking character cannot just wrest it away. There must first be a contest of Strength to determine who gains a better hold on the item, and who keeps control. In this case, both opponents must roll 1d20 and compare the number to their Strength ability scores. Whoever rolls better compared to their Strength score gets the item.

*Example: A half-giant with 24 Strength vies for control of an impaler against a mul with 19 Strength. The half-giant rolls a 19, while the mul rolls a 15. Since the difference between 19 and 24 is greater than the difference between 15 and 19, the half-giant wins the contest of strength and, therefore, control of the impaler.*





Ties in such a contest re-roll after all others have performed their first actions in that round. The Grab counts as only one attack; after the contest is over, the character may still make his second and third attacks if applicable.

If Grabbing a person one-handed to restrain the individual against his will, the usual penalties apply. Also, the attacker's Strength is considered to be -3 for purposes of the Strength contest. For 18 percentile Strengths (18/00, 18/72, etc.), subtract 3 percentile places; that is, 18/00 becomes 18/70, while 18/73 becomes 18/43. An 18/01 becomes 16. If the character wishes to Grab with 2 hands, he or she may elect to perform a Wrestling maneuver rather than taking the initiative and THAC0 penalty. If the person being grabbed has any attacks left in the round, he may use them against the person grabbing by Punching, Wrestling, or stabbing them with a short weapon. He can also use his attack to try breaking the Grab by forcing another Strength contest.

**Parry #2:** To perform this maneuver, the character announces two things: his intention to Parry in the round, and how many attacks the character is devoting to Parries in the round. The character can announce which attack(s) he wishes to Parry. When the attacker swings, even if it is before the character's initiative, the character has a chance to block it. He rolls to hit his attacker (including all modifiers for AC) with either his weapon (at its normal chance to hit) or his shield (at a +2 bonus, as well as any magical bonuses). If the character hits, that one attack from his opponent is parried, whether or not it was successful. Thrown weapons can be parried; missile weapons cannot.

A character with a polearm can defend himself or other characters against the attacks of other polearms, as long as the polearm is within range of either the target or the attacker.

There may come a time when the character has to defend against melee attacks by using a solid missile weapon (such as a bow or staff sling, but not a regular sling). If successful, the missile weapon is ruined, but the character has at least saved himself from damage. Option-

ally, the DM might wish to allow the missile weapon a save vs. crushing blow.

Characters can use Parry #1 or #2 interchangeably. The difference is that #1 parries all attacks, while #2 focuses on one particular attack. Characters may use either as they see fit, although not in the same round.

**Pin:** The Pin maneuver, if performed correctly, traps the enemy's weapon against his body, a wall, or some other sort of obstruction, making it impossible for him to attack. If the Pin is successfully applied, the victim gets a chance to break free with a contest of Strength. If he fails, he remains pinned for the rest of the round. If he succeeds, he pulls his weapon free, and can use any attacks he has left in the round against the character attempting to pin him. In the next rounds, the victim can attempt to break free once per round, and these attempts do not count as attacks. If the victim wishes to try again, the attempt *does* count against his remaining attacks in the round.

**Pull/Trip:** As the name suggests, the Pull/Trip knocks the enemy sprawling if correctly executed. The attacker calls the attempt just prior to his attack roll, rather than before initiative, describing the maneuver so that the DM may rule on its feasibility. The attacker then rolls to hit. If successful, the target makes a Dex check. Failure indicates a fall. If the target was not moving, he gains a +6 on his roll. If he was moving and unaware of the attack, there is a -3 penalty to the Dex check. If target was moving and aware of attack, there is no modifier.

Polearms can extend the range of the Trip to the maximum length of the weapon. Pull/Trip attacks on animals are possible, but are at -6 to hit for creatures size L or larger.

**Sap:** When a PC wants to capture an enemy alive, he may try a Sap (knocking the enemy over the head) to knock the enemy unconscious. The attacker must announce intentions before initiative, taking a +1 initiative penalty, and suffering an additional -4 attack penalty, making the total -8. If the attack hits, the character rolls ordinary damage. Each point of damage is worth 5%



## Combat

chance of knockout, up to a maximum of a 40% chance of knockout. Only 25% of the damage inflicted is actual damage; the other 75% wears off in an hour or two.

Magic bonuses from magical weapons are not considered when such a weapon is used to Sap someone. Specialists *do not* gain the bonuses normally associated with their attacks. They are not using their weapons with the special skills they have learned. Any potential talent or magic they or the weapons might possess cannot be brought to bear in this situation.

The Sap can be performed only with melee weapons; a PC cannot knock someone out with a well-placed arrow. Also, a sap does not function against creatures larger than size M.

**Shield-Punch:** (+0 initiative, -0 attack) This maneuver is precisely what it sounds like: punching someone with a shield. There are no penalties to attacking with a shield; there are no bonuses. Since the PC is using the shield for an offensive (rather than defensive) purpose, no magical bonuses apply. A Shield-Punch does 1-3 points of damage plus the PC's Strength bonus.

The disadvantage to this trick is that the PC loses the shield's AC bonus until the next round, or when he gets another attack, whichever comes first. It can be used only with a buckler, small, or medium shield.

**Shield-Rush:** (+0 initiative, -0 attack) The Shield-Rush is a combination of Trip and Shield-Punch. By rushing at full speed into an opponent, the PC hopes to knock the opponent from his feet. The move requires at least 10 feet of clear space for the attacker to gain some speed.

The attacker gains no bonuses from the shield to hit or to AC. Damage inflicted from a successful hit is 1-3 plus Strength bonuses. The target must make a Dex check to keep his feet, with the following modifiers:

- + 3 Target was moving toward the attacker
- + 3 Target was not moving
- 3 Target was hit from behind
- 3 Target was unaware of the attack

If the attacker misses his attack roll, he bounces off the target and must make a Dex check at a -6 penalty to avoid falling at his target's feet. Even if the attack roll succeeds, the PC has a chance of falling. If he fails a Dex check (no penalties), he joins the target on the ground.

### Unarmed Combat

This includes martial arts, punching, and wrestling, using the tables presented in the *Player's Handbook* and *The Complete Fighter's Handbook*. For more realistic combat, use the Martial Arts section later in the chapter.

Under the first, easier system, unarmed attackers facing armed defenders are at a special disadvantage. The defender gets a +4 attack and damage bonus when attacked by an unarmed foe, reflecting the importance of weapons (as opposed to body parts) in parrying. As well, any armor the character is wearing can detract significantly from attack rolls.

There are no additional modifiers in these particular styles, although the PC might wish to specialize in one or the other (attacking unarmed or damage unarmed). If this is the case, each additional slot spent on proficiency allows the PC to gain an additional +1 to hit *and* damage, as well as one point of latitude either way on the punching/wrestling/martial arts charts.

**Punch/Martial Arts:** This is fairly straightforward combat using hands and feet. There are no significant modifiers for using these styles, although Strength and Dexterity bonuses apply. A specialist in Martial Arts gains an additional attack per combat round, assuming his or her hands are free.

**Wrestle:** Wrestlers have a chance to grapple their opponents any time they score a hold on the Wrestling Chart. If they manage to grapple their opponents, they continue to increase the damage by 1 point each round the hold is maintained. The hold can be broken only by a throw, a gouge, the assistance of another person, or successfully hitting the holder with a weapon.



**Overbear:** When the only advantage the attackers have is numbers, the most effective tactic is often to simply swarm the defender, to bring it down and pin it where it is at the mercy of the attackers. The modifiers are as follows: Size difference is +/-4 if the defender is smaller or larger, respectively. There is a -2 penalty for each leg the defender has beyond 2. Finally, each extra attacker gives a bonus of +1 to the attack roll. The attack roll uses the THAC0 of the weakest member; a successful attack means the character has been overborne. Further successful overbearing attacks each round pin the creature. The pin lasts until the attackers fail to make a successful Overbearing attack, or when the attacker breaks free of the pin (see "Pin" above).

## Barehanded Maneuvers

**Called Shots:** Punching, Martial Arts, and Wrestling are all called shots and are described in the "Martial Arts" section later in the chapter.

**Disarm:** The Barehanded Disarm gives the unarmed gladiator even more disadvantages. First, his AC decreases by two places (for example, from 8 to 10) because he has to expose himself to reach for his enemy's weapon, and his attack roll is at an additional -4 (for a total of -8) to hit. If successful, he wrenches the weapon from his foe's grasp.

**Grab:** The Grab is a naturally a barehanded move, so suffers no additional penalty for an emptyhanded attacker.

**Hold Attack:** There is no penalty for a barehanded fighter to hold his attack.

**Parry:** The Barehanded Parry, like the Barehanded Disarm, penalizes the character with a -2 AC modifier, which lasts until the character's next attack. When carrying out the Parry, the fighter suffers an additional -2 attack penalty, because he must get close enough to get his hand in front of his enemy's weapon hand.

**Pin:** The Barehanded Pin against another barehanded character is more properly a Wrestling maneuver. When

trying to pin a weapon, the character suffers the same penalties as under the Barehanded penalty (-2 AC until his next attack, and an additional -2 attack penalty).

**Pull/Trip:** A barehanded character cannot Pull/Trip any size Large or larger creature, but can try against other creatures with no penalty to his attack.

**Sap:** The Barehanded Sap follows exactly the same rules as the weapon-in-hand Sap, with the same chance for a knockout (5% per point of damage).

**Shield Maneuvers:** Because a barehanded character has by definition empty hands, he cannot perform these maneuvers.

## Tactics

A good gladiator always has strategies in mind when attacking a foe. Trained gladiators almost never go into combat simply to bash away at the opponent until one or the other drops dead. The best gladiators plan in advance, using the first few moments of combat to draw the opponent out and appraise him for weaknesses. When the gladiator has judged his opponent well enough, he formulates a strategy to force his antagonist to make a mistake. And when his opponent slips up, the gladiator is always there to take advantage of it.

If, after the assessment, the gladiator determines his foe to be weaker, he has no problem wading in to finish off his opponent. However, few gladiators take this option, as more experienced gladiators have been known to feign weakness or inexperience to draw in the bold and brash. This, in turn, has caused the newer gladiators to fear those who seem to be weak, and they therefore do not attack the weak-seeming ones outright. This serves the dual purpose of teaching new gladiators to assess a foe, and luring the less intelligent to their deaths. The mind games in the arenas can be nearly as subtle as those the templars use on one another, and often as entertaining as the sheer brutality of the sport.

Despite their great size and physical prowess, it is only





the fool who mistakes all gladiators as lumbering, stupid behemoths capable only of swinging a trikal. Many gladiators, although they do not have the trained minds of nobles, are as cunning and devious as a bard intent on poisoning his host. Those with formal educations seem intent on confusing ignorance with stupidity, forgetting that lack of knowledge of facts does not necessarily make the mind of the gladiator inferior to the mind of a noble. It is only the difference in formal training that makes some nobles more intelligent than some gladiators.

A well-trained and experienced gladiator can predict what his opponent will do with some accuracy, sometimes up to half the time. Nonetheless, an opponent, even one who has been faced before, should always be faced with caution. Gladiators are always learning new tricks, and nonplayer characters are no exception to this rule. The DM should play them to be every bit as tricky as the PCs, sometimes even more so.

One way gladiators measure their foes is to goad them. A fairly unintelligent opponent is likely to take goads poorly, rushing in to fight immediately. If the goads work instantly, a well-trained gladiator knows that he can keep his foe angry and thus off-balance by continuing to irritate him until the enemy makes a fatal mistake.

If the goads don't work immediately, or if the enemy pauses to collect himself, the gladiator might predict that the enemy is aware that the gladiator is trying to goad him into making a mistake. Thinking himself far more clever than the gladiator, the foe advances more cautiously, trying to leave few openings. Unfortunately, few realize that this, too, has been anticipated, and that there is a new set of truths dealing with opponents like these; feigning a weakness to lure in the overconfident enemy, stumbling just a bit, and seeming distracted for just a moment are all classic ways to lure an enemy closer for the fatal strike.

Once again, every gladiator, PC, or NPC, is aware of tactics to provoke and goad his opponent. Most of the time in the arena, these taunts are part of a well-rehearsed routine. Few gladiators allow the goads to affect them,

though they may act differently to lure the opponent to a position of vulnerability. The acting penetrates many levels in the arena, and many in both the stands and the arena are hard-pressed to pierce the many layers of illusion. With all the subtlety surrounding the attacks, sometimes the most subtle way to attack is directly. It is a complicated game, to be sure.

Of course, all these tactics may well prove to be useless against a similarly trained foe. The two are reduced to initial feints and counterfeints, seeing how far they can draw the enemy out of line. It is for precisely this reason that many gladiatorial combats include at least a minute of tense preparation for the battle while the two combatants circle one another warily, despite the catcalls of the crowd. However, since this also serves to heighten the tension in the arena, and thus to excite the crowd further, the fans come to expect the facing-off of the gladiators, so that the crowd can build itself to a fever-pitch of excitement.

## Martial Arts

Martial arts is defined here as any fighting style that makes attacks with the bare hand, or with weapons designed for close fighting, such as the dagger or cestus. By this definition, it also includes the Punching and Wrestling skills, at which the gladiator excels. *The Complete Fighter's Handbook* includes a system of Oriental-style martial arts, which is studied and taught by a select few on Athas. This means that the DM may allow or disallow this style. In addition, if the DM so allows, the gladiator may also use the gladiator's ability to add +4 to attacking unarmed combatants as a modifier for Martial Arts.

The arts of Punching, Wrestling, and Martial Arts are not the exclusive province of gladiators. However, the specializations that follow are exclusive. Just as gladiators are more accomplished with weaponry than the average adventurer, so are they more accomplished with the fighting styles presented in this book. Only gladiator PCs may use the options presented hereafter unless the DM permits other-





## Combat

wise. A word of caution to the DM: Do not give this option to every PC who wants it. Make them pay for it. Make them explain plausibly how they came by this knowledge. All other classes have their benefits; the gladiator devotes himself to fighting, and it pays off in this respect.

The most important aspect of fighting with martial arts is that the gladiator no longer need make a random roll when determining what sort of bare-handed attack he has made against his opponent. The element of randomness exists only in general attacks; if the gladiator wants to make a specific shot, or if he is fighting another bare-handed gladiator, he may make his attacks at various penalties. The table on page I 27 shows the various attacks and defenses allowable, and the modifiers given for the combinations.

### Using the Tables

A normal low-level gladiator attacking with martial arts has two attacks per round. One, both, or none of these can be defensive moves, declared before initiative is rolled. The loser of initiative can convert one of his attacks to a defense if he so desires, but no more than one. The declaration of defenses does not mean that the PCs have to reveal their attacks and defenses before the combat; they simply must state how many of their attacks are being converted to defenses. It is best for both sides if they write down what maneuvers they wish to attempt before the combat round actually begins.

*Example:* Naryas and Friyan are fighting in the arena. Naryas's player wants him to make two attacks, while Friyan's wants one attack and one defense. Friyan wins the initiative, and Naryas decides he'll need at least one defense against the dangerous Friyan.

Next, the combatants must decide the specific attack they are going to attempt with which limb. Note that in martial arts fighting, the two combatants do not face each

other directly (toe to toe); they fight alongside each other so that both their right arms (or left arms) would brush each other if each took a step forward.

If the attacker uses the same limb to attack as the defender uses to protect himself, then the column consulted should be SS for Same Side. If one uses the right side and the other uses the left, it is an OS, or Other Side attack/defense, which is generally far more effective. After consulting the proper row and column, the attacker uses the given modifier to make his attack roll. There are other modifiers for the roll and number of attacks listed in this section.

Specializing in Martial Arts is not as easy as specializing in Punching and Wrestling. Everyone has some idea how to Punch and Wrestle, but Martial Arts is another matter entirely. It, like every other potent weapon, requires an initial slot just to become proficient. After the initial slot is bought, the gladiator may spend another to become specialized. A player may not spend more than 2 slots on Martial Arts when creating a 3rd- to 5th-level gladiator, nor may he take more than 1 available slot of continuing Martial Arts at any level thereafter.

Higher-level and specialized gladiators gain more attacks, as shown on the table below. If a PC gladiator is both high-level and specialized in the attack, he can have as many as 5 attack per round with his martial arts ability. Of course, this means he would have to devote most of his available slots to earning the additional martial arts specializations; while he would be a true barehanded fighting master, he might not be good with weapons.

### Level and Specialization Modifiers Table

Level	No./AT	Slots	Additional
		Devoted	No./AT
1-6	2/1	2	0
7-12	5/2	3-4	1/2
13-18	3/1	5	1
17+	7/2	6	3/2



Many martial artists attack with weapons in hand, to maximize the effect of their attacks. However, not all weapons are appropriate for martial arts attacks. Though most weapons can be held while the martial artist attacks with his feet or off-hand, few of them can actually play a part in the martial arts. Most of these weapons are size Small, though there are a few notable exceptions.

Permitted martial arts weapons include the forearm axe, talid, puchik, and singing sticks. There are, of course, many more that might fit the bill, but the DM must determine if these fit the unique flavor of the campaign. As a general rule, only weapons that carry the natural motion of the body (such as the talid or puchik, which use a natural punching motion) or those that are well balanced and easily maneuvered (such as singing sticks) should be allowed as martial arts weapons.

When used offensively, the weapons take the place of hand maneuvers. However, because of the extra weight in

the hand, all bonuses to hit on the Martial Arts/Punching/Wrestling tables are reduced by 2. This cannot carry the modifier below zero; a maneuver with +1 to hit becomes 0, not -1. On the other hand, this penalty *does* apply to modifiers that are already negative; for example, a modifier of -1 would become a penalty of -3 to hit.

Any time the gladiator fights an opponent unfamiliar with these styles, the gladiator's attack roll receives a +2 bonus. His opponent is assumed to have the "None" defense if the defender holds a weapon. If he is unarmed himself, the opponent attacks the gladiator using the usual martial arts tables, not those listed here.

Unless the gladiator specifically wishes to knock his opponent out with martial arts, the only time knockout occurs is when the opponent reaches 0 hit points or less. The gladiator may, however, attempt to knock out his opponent using the Sap rules described earlier.

All damage taken from martial arts is temporary unless



## Combat

that damage was caused by a martial arts weapon. Only  $\frac{1}{4}$  of it is real; the other three-quarters wear off in a few hours.

A gladiator who specializes in any of the martial arts can gain a bonus of +1 to hit and damage for each slot devoted to that type of martial arts. This bonus applies only when using the tables below, not when using the tables in the *Player's Handbook*. The PC can specialize in as many slots as he wishes.

An important note about these fighting styles: Martial arts are effective only against Small, Medium, or Large size humanoids. They are never effective against creatures or humanoids larger than this, with certain exceptions. The gladiator may spend a Weapon Proficiency slot for each type of nonhumanoid creature he wishes to affect with his Martial Arts ability.

For example, Martial Arts are ordinarily ineffective against a gaj, but a character could devote a slot to the gaj. In this case, he would know its sensitive points and where to strike. Although he might not be exceptionally effective, he would certainly be more effective than someone who has no knowledge of these things. Likewise, a gladiator who takes Martial Arts devoted to giants can use his abilities against full giants as well as the normal class of creatures.

There is a limit to how far Martial Arts can go. These skills are largely ineffective against creatures with natural AC of -2 or better and any creatures greater than Huge in size. Martial Arts are effective against size Huge creatures *only* when the PC has taken the time and effort to devote a slot to attacking that specific creature type.

Against armor, Martial Arts is less effective than against an unarmored foe. If the defender is wearing armor, the player must determine where the armor covers the PC's body by consulting the Piecemeal Armor Table. For example, leather armor usually covers the chest and two arms, while plate mail covers the chest, both arms, and both legs. If the attacker strikes one of the areas where his opponent is armored, he takes a penalty commensurate with the bonus the armor confers to AC. For example, a chest attack on a defender who is wearing a plate armor

breastplate is made with a -4 penalty to the attack. This is to reflect the protection the armor offers.

## Bleeding Damage

Some hits cause far more damage than others. Obviously, some weapons are far bloodier than others; singing sticks do not inflict the same sort of messy damage that a talid or trikal would. Some weapons, most notably those of the Slashing variety, are designed for the express purpose of spraying gore as much and as far as possible.

The following system has been created to reflect this, to add realism to arena fighting. Please be advised that, like everything else in this book, the system is optional. The DM may choose to use it or not. Additionally, the DM might wish to use this system only in the arena, keeping combat outside the arena at the level it has always been. This system has been designed expressly for the arena; it may not be appropriate for other types of combat.

Players may complain that this system victimizes characters who have fewer hit points; consider that this option teaches characters to be far more careful about their strategies and tactics in approaching better-armed opponents. They must learn to look before they leap, or suffer the consequences of their actions. If they cannot control themselves, only they are responsible for their demise. Unless they are fabulously lucky, gladiators do not gain fame for rushing an opponent who is covered in blades; they enter the annals of gladiator history as the bad examples.

Slashing, Piercing, and Bludgeoning weapons all harm the body differently. Although some weapons can fall into all three categories, most perform only one of these functions. When dealing with a weapon that can do all three, the attacker must declare which type of damage his weapon will inflict. Since some creatures are not affected by Slashing weapons and others ignore Piercing or Bludgeoning weapons, this is absolutely essential.

Each table below describes the effects of the weapon



types. The following categories explain the result of a particular attack.

**Damage Incurred:** This is the damage inflicted in a *single* attack, not in a round. For example, if four gith attacked Traldis, inflicting 4 points of damage each, he would suffer no additional bleeding damage. Though he has taken 16 points of damage, none of the single attacks were large enough to assume more than minor wounds, none of which would be large enough to warrant bleeding damage.

On the other hand, if a half-giant hit Traldis for 16 points of damage in a single shot, Traldis would suffer bleeding damage. The wound would be large enough to cause Traldis to suffer further pain.

**No. of Bleeding Rounds:** This is the number of rounds the wounded character continues to bleed, assuming he does not withdraw from combat to bind his wounds. If the character does withdraw from combat to do so, he takes no further damage from that wound. It is possible that a character may have received other wounds that

require his attention. One round is required to bind each injury, so the character probably wants to deal with the most serious injuries first. If the character chooses to wait a wound to stop bleeding naturally, he suffers the indicated damage until the bleeding stops.

**Additional Damage:** This reflects both the severity of the wound and the amount of blood the character loses from the injury. Each round that the wound is not attended to, the character takes the indicated amount of damage until the character dies, the wound is bound, or the bleeding stops on its own.

## Damage from Slashing Weapons

Slashing weapons are the worst (or the best, depending on one's point of view) for bleeding damage, and are therefore a favorite among many gladiators. They always draw appreciative roars from the crowd, helping to both sate and intensify the audience's appetite for gore. They also





## Combat

help build a gladiator's reputation; the mob in the stands cherishes any gladiator who panders to their love of carnage in the arena.

<b>Damage Incurred</b>	<b>No. of Bleeding Rounds</b>	<b>Additional Damage</b>
1-5 hp	0	Nil
6-10 hp	3	1/round
11-20 hp	5	3/round
21-40 hp	7	5/round
41+ hp	3	7/round

### Damage from Piercing Weapons

In the arenas of Athas, piercing weapons are also a huge favorite. Although they do not spill nearly the amount of blood of slashing weapons, they require finesse, and are therefore well loved by the Athasian crowds.

Piercing weapons do not have the ripping power that many slashing weapons exert; instead, they burrow through even the best armor to find the enemy's vitals. When they strike, they strike deep and telling blows.

The more discerning enthusiasts in the arena prefer their gladiators to wield piercing weapons. They are not so much interested in the amount of blood spilled as the manner in which it is spilled. They prefer to see adeptness with the weapon, not brute hacking and slashing. The more skilled gladiators also prefer Piercing weapons, because they can demonstrate their deftness in slipping past the opponent's defenses.

<b>Damage Incurred</b>	<b>No. of Bleeding Rounds</b>	<b>Additional Damage</b>
1-10	0	Nil
11-20	2	1/round
21-35	4	2/round
36+	6	4/round

### Damage from Bludgeoning Weapons

Bludgeoning weapons do not usually cause bleeding damage. They are designed to crush bones and vitals, not open them up to the air. Therefore, there is no table for bleeding damage incurred Bludgeoning weapons. Even though bludgeoning weapons can be among the worst for sheer damage potential, they are not usually favored by gladiators, because they are not nearly showy enough for a proper performance. They lack the ability to demonstrate properly the gladiator's skills; they are not as bloody as either the slashing or piercing weapons, nor do they require the finesse of the others. They are commonly seen as primitive weapons, used only by those who have no ability to wield any other kind of weapon or who have been forced to use them by the dictates of the games.

### Hit Locations

The best gladiators can strike an enemy numerous times, maiming him badly but not killing him. For sheer perverse pleasure, show, or both, many gladiators keep their antagonists alive by destroying limbs until all that is left is an opponent who begs for death or mercy. The crowd, naturally, loves this display of power and contempt for the fallen gladiator, and the gladiator who can achieve this is well loved by the fans at the arenas.

There are also gladiators who do not like to kill their opponents, reasoning that damaging the enemy is preferable to killing him. By striking him across the arms and legs or by performing a Sap maneuver, the character ensures that his foe cannot retaliate, and thus need not be killed. Of course, some sorcerer-kings enjoy sullyng the record of these "pure gladiators" (as the nonkilling gladiators are called in derision). Nonetheless, the attempt can at least be made to save an opponent's life.

For some, striking at a foe's limbs and crippling him is a way either to avenge fallen comrades or to make sure that the enemy never fights in the arena again. This can be a gesture of friendship ("I wish that you need never fight for the



entertainment of others again”), or of enmity (“I want the rest of your life to be pain. I want you never to serve a useful purpose again, so that your master discards you when this match ehds”). Often, those who fight in friendship injure their comrades less; these can eventually recover from their wounds. Those who suffer crippling from enmity usually cannot heal without the aid of magic, and are eventually tossed aside like a rancid slab of meat, to fight for survival on the fringes of society among their fellow outcasts.

When a gladiator wishes to damage an opponent in a certain way, or to preserve parts of his opponent’s body, the DM can use the Hit Location Table. Also, if the DM does not mind consulting an extra table in the heat of combat, the Hit Location Table adds an extra dimension of realism. This is a purely optional table, and should not be used if the DM finds it objectionable. Both the DM and the players must do some extra math in figuring the number of hit points in any particular location.

When characters are not trying to hit a specific loca-

tion, they roll attacks normally. The hits are assumed to the torso, but the effects (as listed on the table and described below) are not granted.

## Hit Location Table

Target	Penalty to Hit	Effect	% Total Hit Points
Head	- 8	D for Dz	20 %
Face	- 8	Sc, Bl	
Neck	- 8	Sever*	50 %
Torso			40 %
Ribs	- 4	Crck	
Vitals	- 6	×2 Dam	
Arm	- 4	Usls	10% each
Hand	- 6	Usls	
Leg			10% each
Knee	- 6	Crp	
Ankle/foot	-8	Crp	
Thigh	- 4	Usls	





## Combat

\* The Sever result can be obtained only if the attacker is using a weapon capable of severing; Bludgeoning or Piercing weapons do not have that capability. Also, 50% of hit points as indicated is not a true indication of how many hit points a neck might have. It is an arbitrary number picked to maintain game balance; since decapitation is usually an instant killer, it is unfair to allow this without a herculean effort.

**% Total Hit Points:** This is the number of hit points of damage needed on a single hit to produce the desired effect. Each body part has a number of hit points assigned to it, which must be exceeded before the attacker can achieve the effects described below. That is, before an arm can be rendered useless, the attacker must hit it with a single called shot for more than 10% of the defender's hit points. Once the % Hit Points is exceeded by a single blow, any continued blows to the area automatically apply the effect until the effect wears off or is healed.

This is far easier said than done against many opponents; likewise, it is extremely easy for high-powered characters to incapacitate low-level characters. The defender regains use of the injured members only after healing, magical or otherwise, is applied to them. Even long-term rest can help.

### Descriptions of Effects

**Bl—Blinded:** The character is temporarily blinded from the pain of being hit so hard across the face. For 2d6 rounds, the character suffers a -4 penalty to attack rolls unless he has the Blind-Fighting proficiency, in which case he suffers only a -2 penalty. Any missile attack at the character is at +4 to hit, because the character has no idea that the attack is being leveled at him.

**Crck-Cracked:** The character's ribs are cracked from the force of the blow. His movement is halved until

such time as the ribs are healed by magical or long-term rest; in addition, he takes a -2 penalty to attack rolls from the pain.

**Crp-Crippled:** The limb is crippled. The character's movement is reduced to 1/4 of its original speed until the leg heals. Side and back shots on the character are made at +4 to hit, because the character cannot turn fast enough to defend himself.

**Df-Deafened:** The affected character is deafened for 1d10 rounds by a mighty blow to the head. During this time, the character takes a -2 penalty to AC and to attack rolls because equilibrium is affected.

**Dz-Dazed:** The character is dizzy and confused for 1d12 rounds. Any Dexterity checks are made at -4; the character loses Dexterity bonuses to AC; any hits causing more than 5 points of damage force the character to check against Dexterity or fall over. Attacks against a prone character are at +2.

**Sc—Scarred:** The defender is given a permanent scar as a memento of the fight. This lowers Charisma by two points until some method can be found to eradicate the scar. Makeup, magic, and various medical practices can disguise the scar, although most cannot remove it utterly.

**UsIs—Useless:** The limb is rendered useless until it can be healed. Arm: Any weapons in the hand drop to the ground; the arm hangs limply at the character's side. Leg: The leg collapses under the character's weight and he must make a Dexterity check to remain standing. Movement is reduced to 1/4 original speed. Whenever he is hit for more than 5 points of damage, he must make another Dexterity check to remain upright. All side and back attacks are made at +4 to hit.

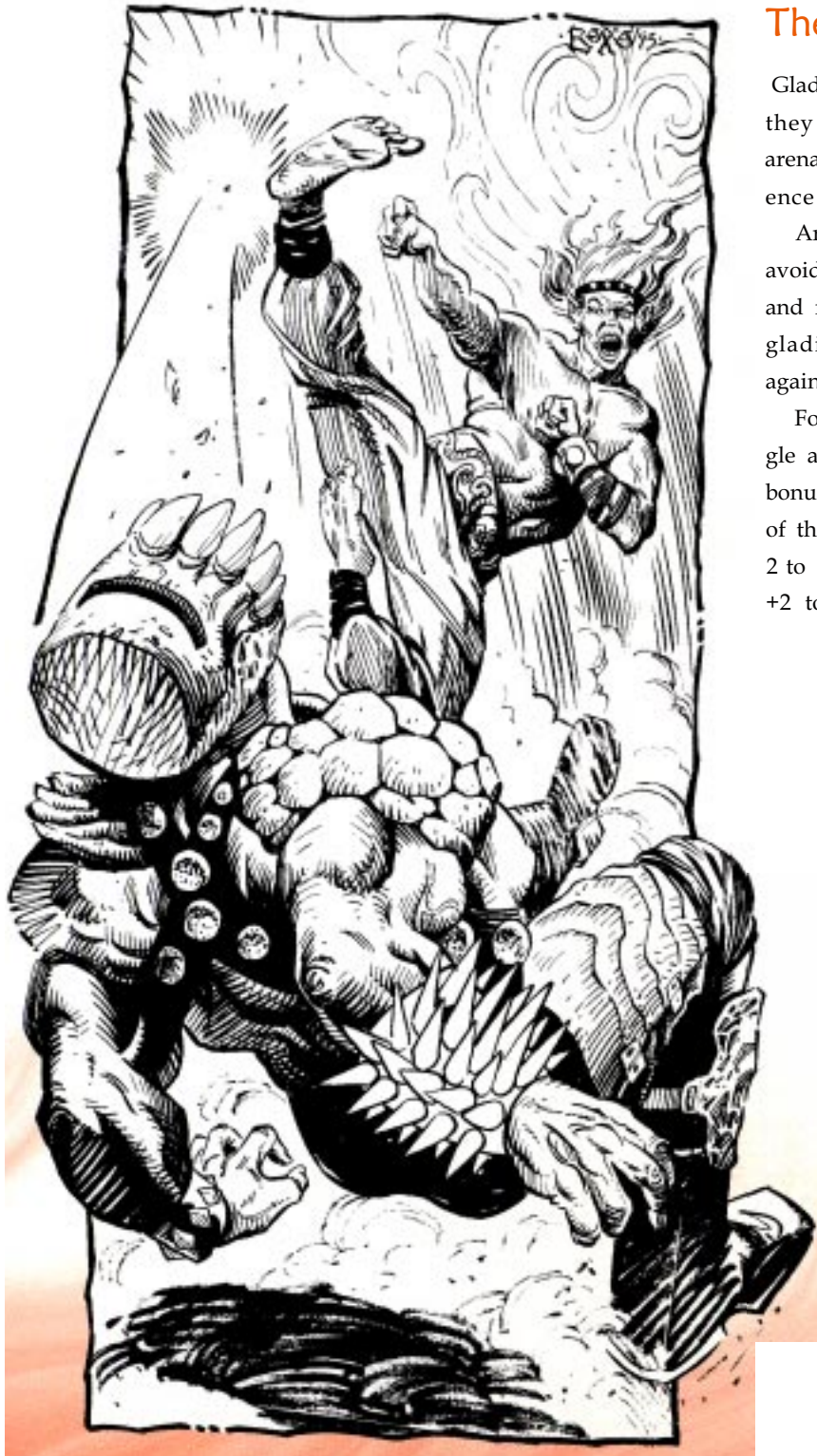


## The Upper Hand

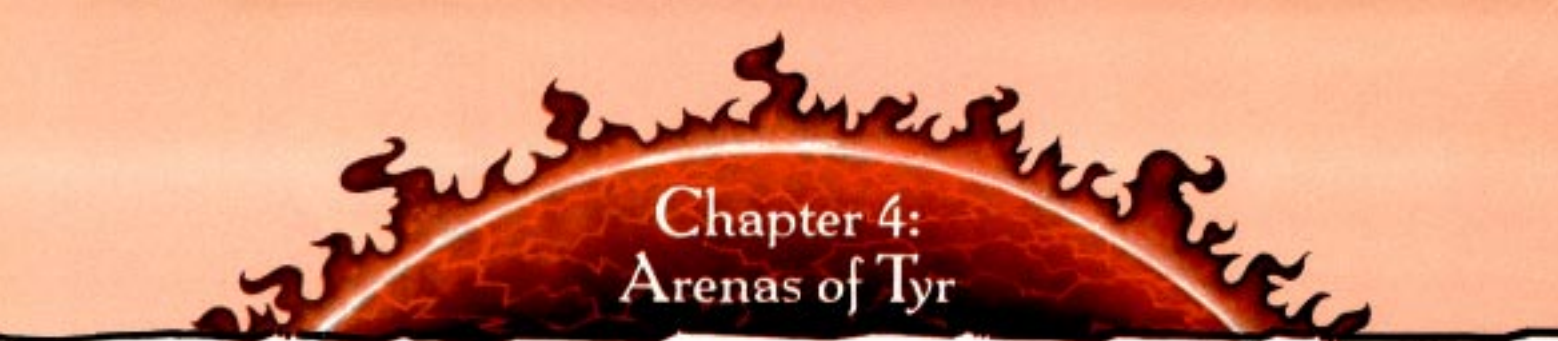
Gladiators not only gain experience during battles, but they learn the advantages and disadvantages of the arena. The minor lessons learned may mean the difference between winning and losing.

Arenas vary widely as to the best places to stand to avoid the sun, solid or slippery areas of the combat floor, and response of different obstacles in the arena. Veteran gladiators gain a morale bonus of +2 when fighting against a creature or newer gladiator.

For every season of successful arena matches (in a single arena), a veteran gladiator receives an additional +1 bonus to morale. If the arena crowd is fanatically in favor of the gladiator (fans outnumber foes' fans by more than 2 to 1), then the popular gladiator receives an additional +2 to morale.







## Chapter 4: Arenas of Tyr

### The Criterion at Balic

The Criterion at Balic is situated beneath the stony, fortified bluff that is the palace home of the dictator Andropinis, the powerful sorcerer-king. The criterion is made of pure white marble and is one of the most beautiful of the known arenas. In truth, The Criterion is the name bestowed upon the structure and the surrounding area of the arena. The name means “place of judgment.”

Located at the edge of the nobles’ quarters, The Criterion is known for its stunning architecture. Great architectural sails rise 120 feet from the arena walls toward the reddish green Athasian sky. From anywhere in the city, the great sails can be seen. It is said the designer based the concept of the architecture on ancient drawings discovered near the Sea of Silt, but the true object of inspiration remains unknown to this day.

A slate plaza surrounds The Criterion for one city block in all directions. The plaza grants an unobstructed view of the structure to all arena visitors.

Just outside The Criterion, a short stair leads to the only entrance. As visitors enter, they stand beneath the enormous vaulted arena seating. The air here is cooler early in the day as the seats shade this lower area from the sun. Some fans linger here before trying to find a seat in the hot sun. Visitors enter the vast arena via vaulted arches that lead to the front of the stands. From there, they climb the many rows of steps to find the best seat possible.

The Criterion and enclosed arena are rectangular in shape, in contrast to the more common circular arenas. The playing area of the arena is 120 feet by 160 feet. The floor is composed of hexagonal marble slabs that are 10 feet across. This unique arena floor is always uneven, since no two adjoining slabs are the same height. The slabs pitch like the Athasian desert and, at times, there can be as much as 10 feet height difference between adjoining slabs. A rule of construct for the arena floor mandates that every slab must have at least one adjoining

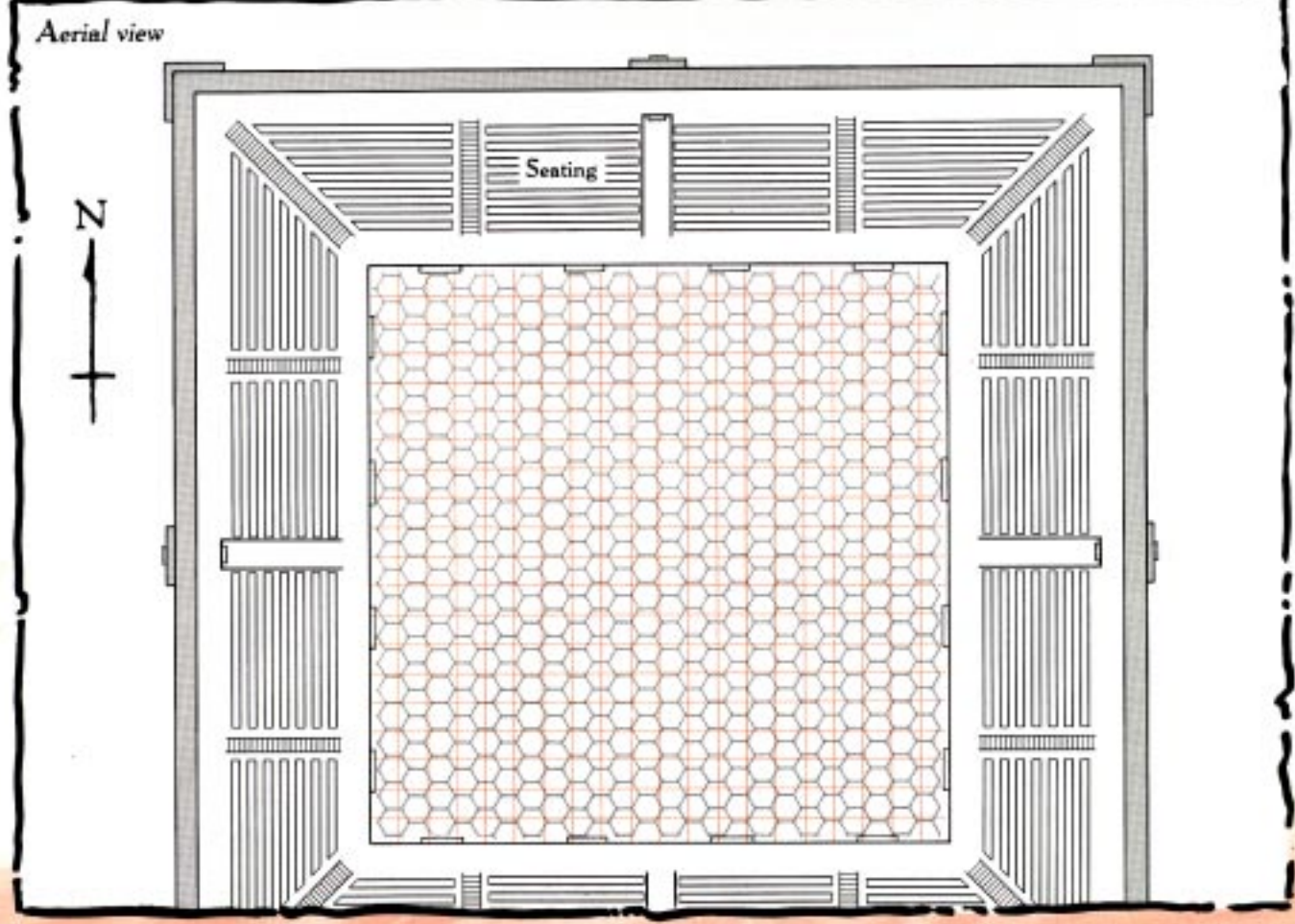
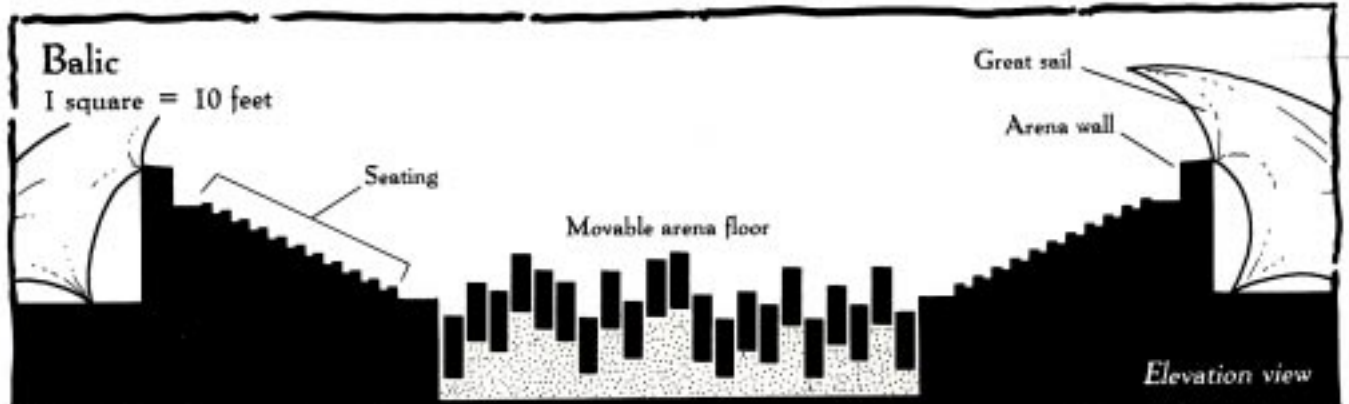
slab with no more than a 1-foot height differential. This creates ramps, pyramids, and other strikingly unusual arena formations.

The columns that make up the floor are 10 feet wide and 30 feet tall, and they stand on a deep sand foundation. The columns are shifted periodically to give the rise and fall of the floor a new configuration. As a result, this arena tends to favor smaller, quicker opponents rather than larger brutish ones. On very rare occasions, when a truly prized monster is procured for the arena, the slabs may be more gently sloped or even perfectly flat if this configuration grants the creature more advantage in the arena.

In the back of the arena, near the bluff, is a great outbuilding: the slave and creature quarters for the arena at Balic. The building is specially constructed from the same type of stone as the bluff. The design of the building and the materials used were chosen so that the building would blend in with the rock of the bluff, so as not to detract from the beauty of the great marble Criterion.

One of the area’s finest gladiator schools is also located here. The House Jarko of Balic is known for the training of gladiatorial slaves. It is said that they receive excellent training and pampered treatment. Most do very well in the arena.

# Arenas of Tyr





## Arenas of Tyr

### The Palace of Gladiatorial Combat in Draj

When he conquered the city of Draj, the great warrior Tectuktitlay was amazed at the absence of a gladiatorial arena into which he could send the captured troops to fight. Tectuktitlay ordered the creation of a combat arena so magnificent that its sheer beauty would rival any structure known to the tablelands. Armed with a quill rather than a sword, he designed an arena that would one day be known far and wide as the "Palace." The new ruler, now known as "The Mighty and Omnipotent Tectuktitlay," quickly began construction of the fighting arena and a lavish surrounding palace. He pledged the arena would be built before the first years of his reign in Draj passed, regardless of how many slaves died.

The Palace of Gladiatorial Combat in Draj is not an arena, but rather a modified amphitheater. The arena floor is round, with spectator stands rising around two-thirds of the circle. Across from the spectator seating stands the great observation hall of the king. This opulent building rises eight stories and dwarfs the surrounding spectator grandstands. The structure is covered in bas-relief depicting The Mighty and Omnipotent Tectuktitlay standing victorious on different fields of battle, always flanked by two mighty jaguars. The king, his templars, and nobles in good favor watch combat from the great hall. Directly behind the hall stands the renowned Great Pyramid of the King.

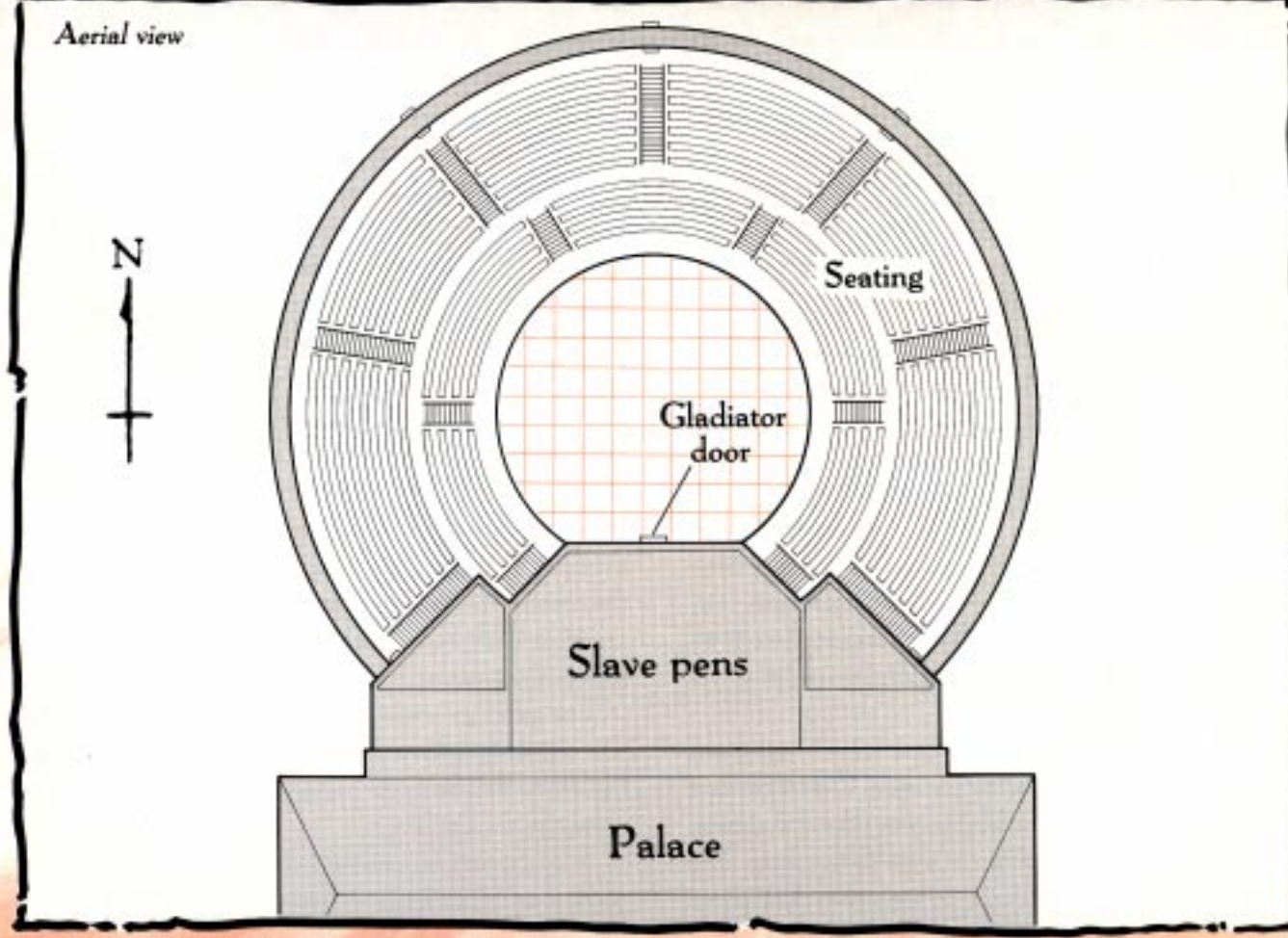
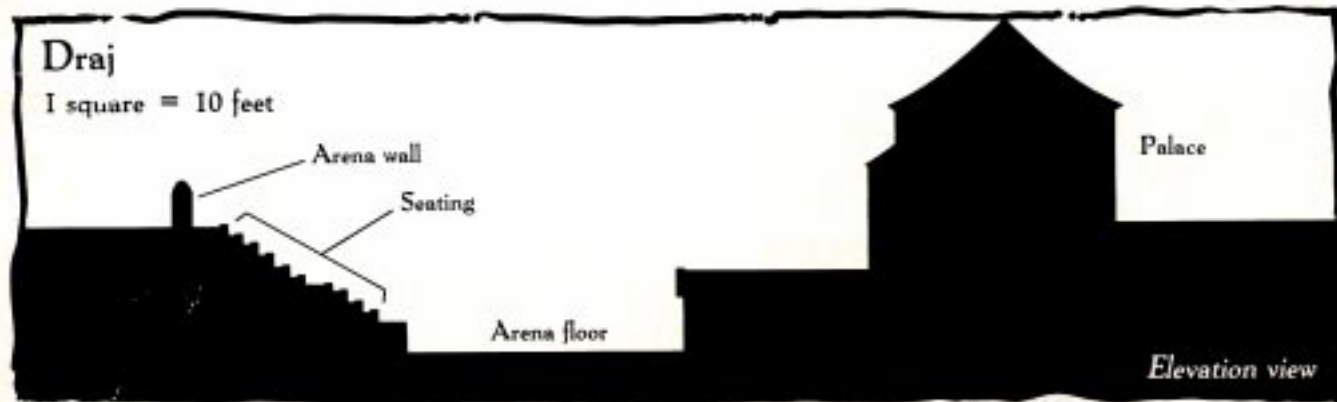
An expansive red brick esplanade runs from the Golden Moon Gate to the Palace of Gladiatorial Combat and the Great Pyramid of the King. On gladiatorial days, any captured slaves destined for the arena are displayed in small wooden pens along the esplanade. This is not only to allow the populace to humiliate the captured, but also to allow them to view any "worthy" fighters before betting in the arena.

King Tectuktitlay personally enjoys cruelty and vio-

lence; hence, the entire culture is based on warfare and conflict. He uses his slave soldiers and gladiators to raid nearby regions in order to obtain more slaves for his arena games. It is said that the gladiatorial slaves of Draj are feared in the arena because they are like their master-ruthless. The cruelty and aggressiveness of the gladiatorial fighters attract a few gladiatorial arena champions from elsewhere, hoping to prove themselves against the "Jaguar Warriors."

The citizens of Draj disdain dance and drama, therefore, very few jazst troupes ever travel to the city. Combat is the preferred form of entertainment.

# Arenas of Tyr





## Arenas of Tyr

### The Forest Arena of Gulg

Located deep within the Crescent Forest, the arena at Gulg is breathtaking to first-time spectators. Since Athasian forests are so rare, the living, growing arenas are beyond the imagination of most outsiders. To get to the arena, one must travel for almost an hour deep into the forest. The structure seems to rise from the forest floor of its own volition. The arena structure is intertwined with trees and vines which give it the appearance of harmony with its surroundings.

On gladiatorial days, visitors arrive at the arena via “Lalali-Puy’s Opulent Ascension.” The immaculate grassy byway has been cut painstakingly through the forest, and links the city to the forest arena. The walkway is trimmed and accentuated with the most rare and exotic flora and fauna to be found anywhere in the Crescent Forest. The soft grass path leads to a great natural archway. The archway is the only opening in the extensively cultivated brambleweed fence that surrounds the arena.

The archway opens into the arena, which is partially inset in the ground and surrounded by viewing stands rising into the sky. Great deciduous trees and hardy vines intertangle and interweave to support the structure. It is truly a forest masterpiece.

Along the sides of the arena, four entrances are visible amid the trees and vines. The doorways are framed by massive wooden planks. Beyond the doors is a large corridor 20 feet high and 20 feet wide, extending almost completely around the building. Spectators are free to sit anywhere in the arena, save the templar and sorcerer queen’s viewing space.

The Forest Arena of Gulg is unique. It is a long, narrow, grassy oval 300 feet long and 80 feet wide. Over 40 rows of wooden benches parallel the long, narrow sides of the arena.

The stadium floor itself lies in a pit 20 feet deep. The arena’s grassy floor is studded with large trees throughout the playing field. The random placement of the trees allows gladiators to improvise when stalking opponents. No tree or tree limb, however, is within 20 feet of the wall,

leaving no opportunity for a gladiator to escape from the physical arena.

Vines and mosses grow throughout the trees, enabling combatants to climb the trees, swing from tree to tree, or use the natural materials to their advantage. Not all of the trees are “friendly” – one is an ancient bramble tree covered in myriad sharp thorns. In one legendary combat, an incredibly strong arena champion actually removed a limb of the tree and used it to his advantage in combat.

Some of the trees in the arena bear red leaves year round. Legend says the blood of the slain gladiators waters the trees in arena, yielding the red leaves.

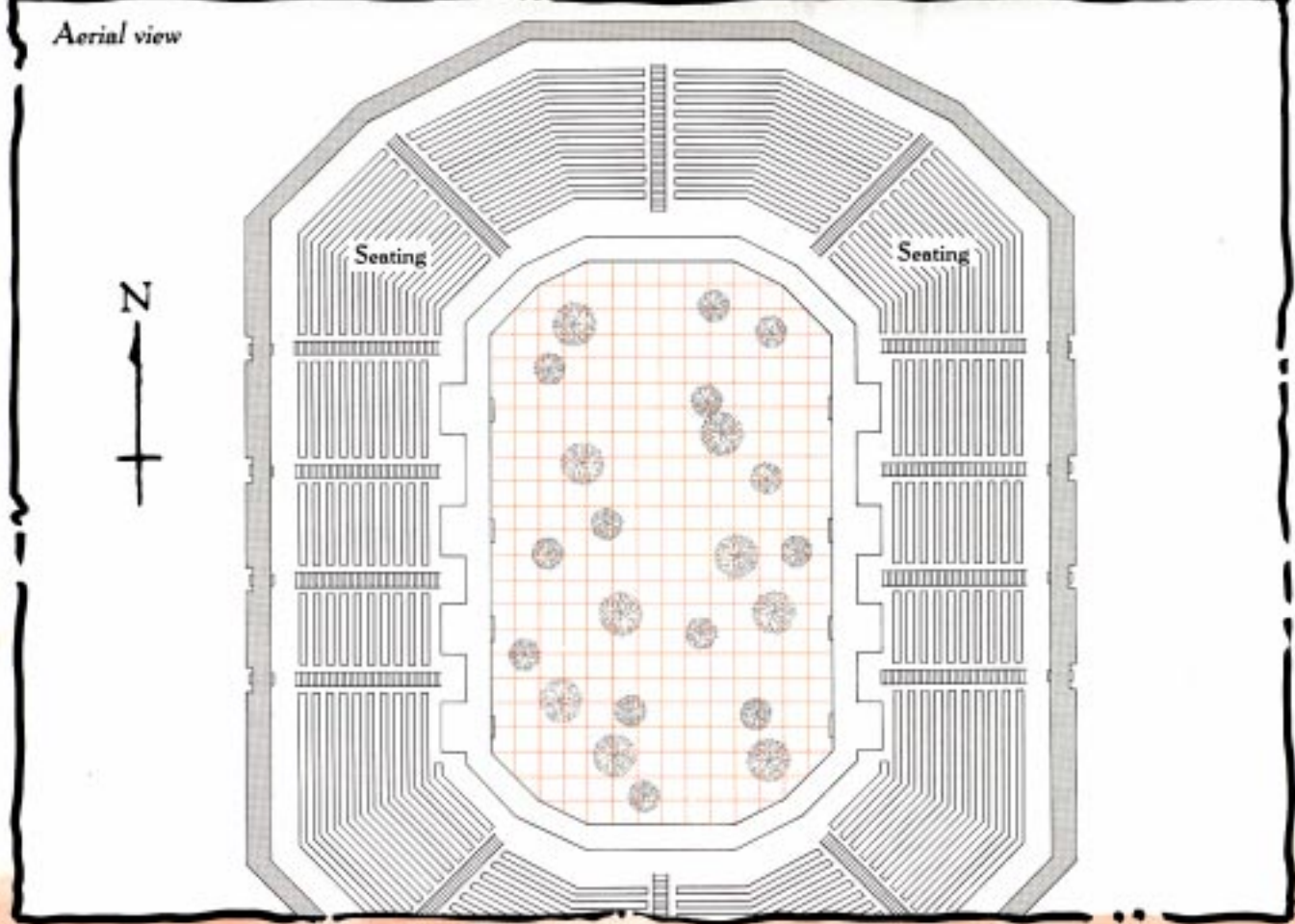
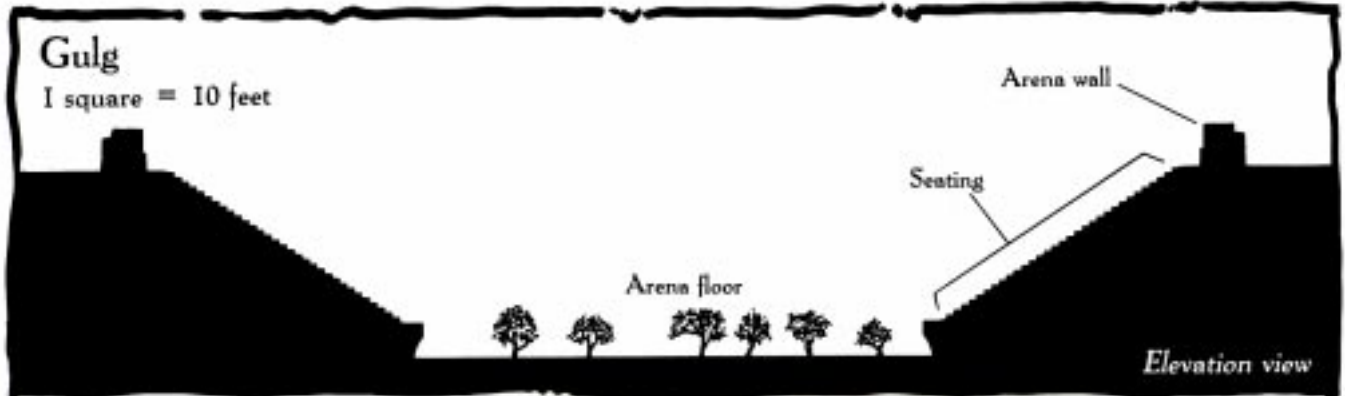
Malicious destruction of the grass or trees through physical combat or defiler magic draws immediate boos and hisses from the crowd. If a gladiator who uses such tactics survives, he is beaten or tortured before being allowed to return to the arena. On a subsequent trip to the arena, such offenders are a most certainly pitted against a superior opponent. This is punishment for the purposeful destruction of the arena during previous gladiatorial combat.

Arena combat begins when two gladiators or gladiatorial teams enter from opposite ends of the arena. Some gladiators or teams quickly rush their opponents, while others take a defensive posture in the rich foliage. Wilier combatants prefer a hide-and-peek approach, using the terrain to advantage. They involve the crowd by taunting the opponent or a show of bravado, lest the crowd think the combatants are cowards and turn against them. The crowd in Gulg hates cowardly gladiators who attempt to hide in the greenery of the arena.

The arena grounds are maintained by over 50 slaves who toil daily to keep the arena ready for the next games. Failure to do one’s best is rewarded by appointment as quarry for the Red Hunt.

Alush, green place that thousands may visit is a very rare occurrence on the world of Athas. The people of Gulg love things that grow, and the Sorcerer-queen tacitly endorses it. The more that people work to help the forest around Gulg grow, the greater her base for raw power becomes.

# Arenas of Tyr





## Arenas of Tyr

### The Gladiatorial Coliseum of Nibenay

This ancient structure predates all visible buildings within the city. The coliseum remains as the last surviving structure from the original city.

Located in a rundown part of town, the exterior edges of the coliseum dwarf the small ramshackle homes and huts of the transients who live there. Born of an ancient time, the intricate construction in no way resembles the current architecture of the city. Ornate drawings and illustrations are etched into every facet of the coliseum's stonework. Colorful gilded mosaics, worn and tired from time, are found alongside rugged weathered carvings.

The coliseum itself is of monstrous proportions. Seated on four city blocks, the coliseum surely dominated its surroundings when all of the structure was visible. No one, save the Shadow King, is sure when the coliseum was constructed or by whom.

The coliseum was originally designed to ascend from ground level to a stunning height, towering above the surrounding area. Hundreds and hundreds of years later, the constant wear of blown sand, coupled with generation after generation of buildings erected atop the ruined foundations of their predecessors has given the coliseum its sunken appearance.

Traveling from the city, visitors walk the Great Way on their trip to the arena. The Great Way is a huge pedestrian mall, 80 feet wide and 4,000 yards long. Its edges are lit by ever-burning lights. Vendors and barkers line its expanse, offering cool dips of water or exotic refreshments to those traveling to or from the arena. The Great Way is guarded by the Shadow King's templars. It is the only (relatively) safe place to walk at any time, day or night, in the city.

From a distance, the coliseum is a sight to behold. Only up close, however, can its true size be realized. Viewed from close to any corner, the building appears to run on infinitely. Although the building stands only

six stories high from the exterior ground level, it still commands a feeling of greatness and veneration. Its true enormity cannot be grasped until one enters the structure.

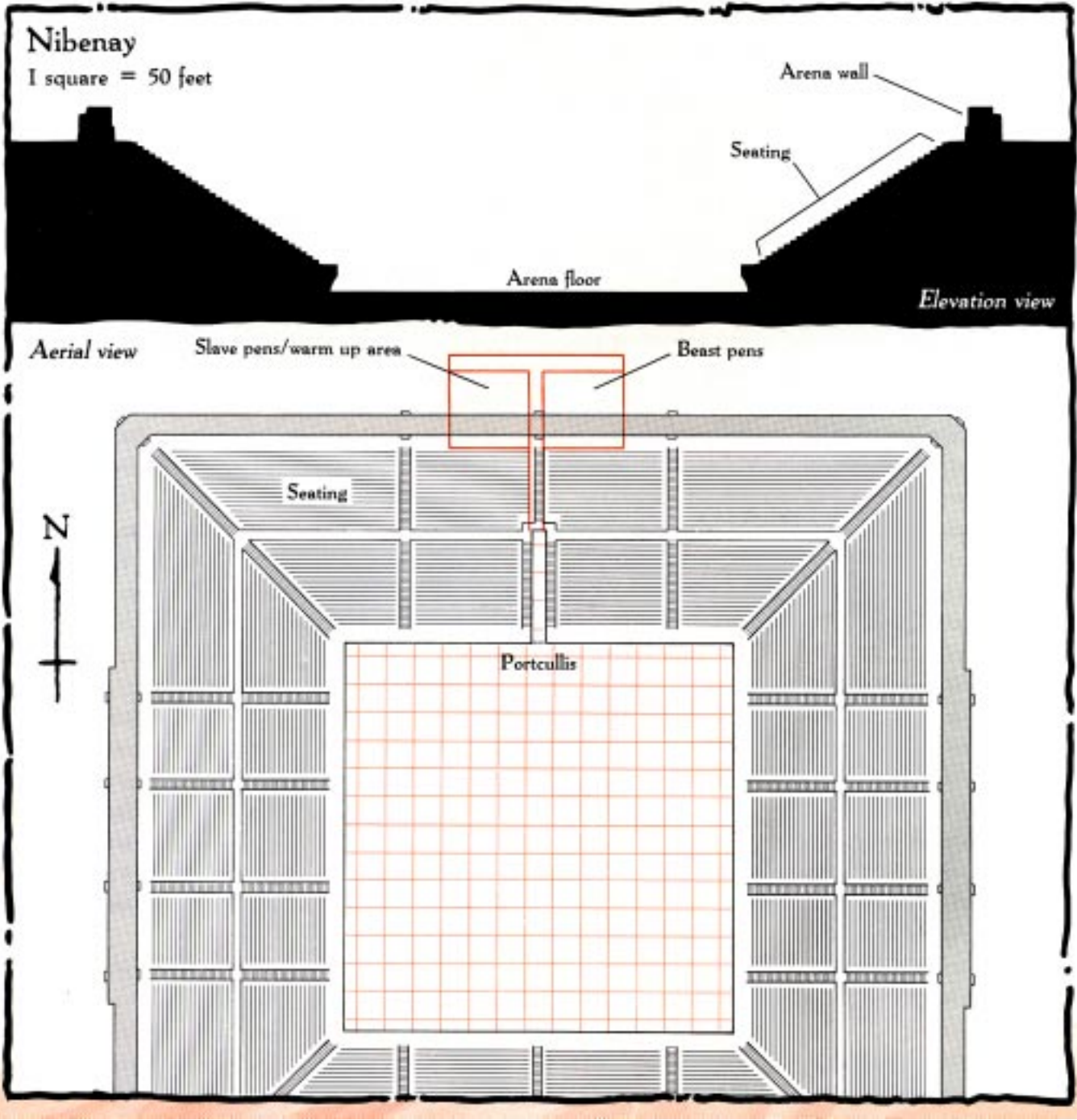
New spectators entering from the current ground level of the city draw an involuntary breath, for the coliseum is the largest known structure in the Tablelands. Almost a quarter of a mile across, the stadium is an inverted ziggurat. Seven separate levels rise above the playing field. Many of the arenas of the Tablelands could be placed within the gladiatorial playing field.

Although the stadium is built of an excellent hard stone that has endured the weathering of many generations, the seats themselves are carved from a softer sandstone. Every individual seat of the arena is carved with a small oval depression for comfort. Each seat is etched in exquisite detail. No known structure rivals this arena for its beauty and meticulous stonework. Not even a square foot of stone is without some sort of decoration.

Many of the entrances and exits of the coliseum that extend below the level of the city are filled with rubble and debris. A few of the areas in the lower part of the arena have been reclaimed. These areas include animal pens, barracks, and gladiator training facilities. A peculiar set of rooms connects to the gladiatorial rooms. These contain myriad basins and troughs. It is believed these rooms were once part of an ancient set of baths, but this is merely speculation by some local scholars.

The current dilemma facing the arena is that with the depth of the combat field, it is difficult to introduce creatures into the arena. Captured beasts must be brought in and lowered down ramps to the coliseum floor. More than one creature and several handlers have died during this dangerous transport. Slave gladiators are known to call the Coliseum "the thousand steps to death," for it takes a thousand steps to descend from ground level to the gladiatorial floor. The majority of those who make the trip never walk out.

# Arenas of Tyr







## Arenas of Tyr

### The Natural Arena at Raam

The climb is hard up the narrow pathways that lead to the arena at Raam. Cresting the final hillock, the natural amphitheater lies wedged between the vertical rust-colored rocks below. Spectators to the gladiatorial games descend to the seating area below.

The arena of Raam is a natural amphitheater, carved by time from the sandstone and bedrock of the hillside. The spectator portion of the arena rises in a gradual slope from the arena floor. The fierce winds of the Raam region have carved layers in the hillside forming natural seating areas. The sides of the spectator section have overhanging outcroppings where the templar guards stand, watching the crowd. At the bottom of the natural amphitheater is the oval-shaped arena known for its reddish sandy floor.

A great natural fissure called "The Maw of Raam" separates the seating area from the arena. This ravine acts as a natural barrier, protecting the spectators from the combatants (and vice versa). The Maw is several hundred feet long, 37 feet across, and 173 feet deep. Woe to any combatant who is pushed into the yawning abyss of the Maw, for it is filled with jagged rocks and wild brambleweed that act as thousands of rapier-tipped teeth, ripping the skin of the falling gladiators. Their screams echo through the arena as they fall. No one is known to have ever reached the bottom alive. Reports persist that the Maw is also haunted by dwarven banshees, cursed to remain there for all time due to the unfulfillment of their focus.

The natural curvature of the amphitheater amplifies the acoustics so the screams, grunts, and groans of the combatants can be clearly heard, even in the last row of seats. This is a real crowd pleaser and inflames the blood-thirsty throngs.

At the back of the arena, a granite wall rises, curving to 100 feet in height. This natural granite wall, carved by the same forces that created the arena, extends back for a distance of 400 feet, gradually descending to the desert floor. The granite encircles the back of the arena and is shot

through with semi-precious stones, amethyst, and garnet. Attempting to remove any rough gems from the arena is punishable by death.

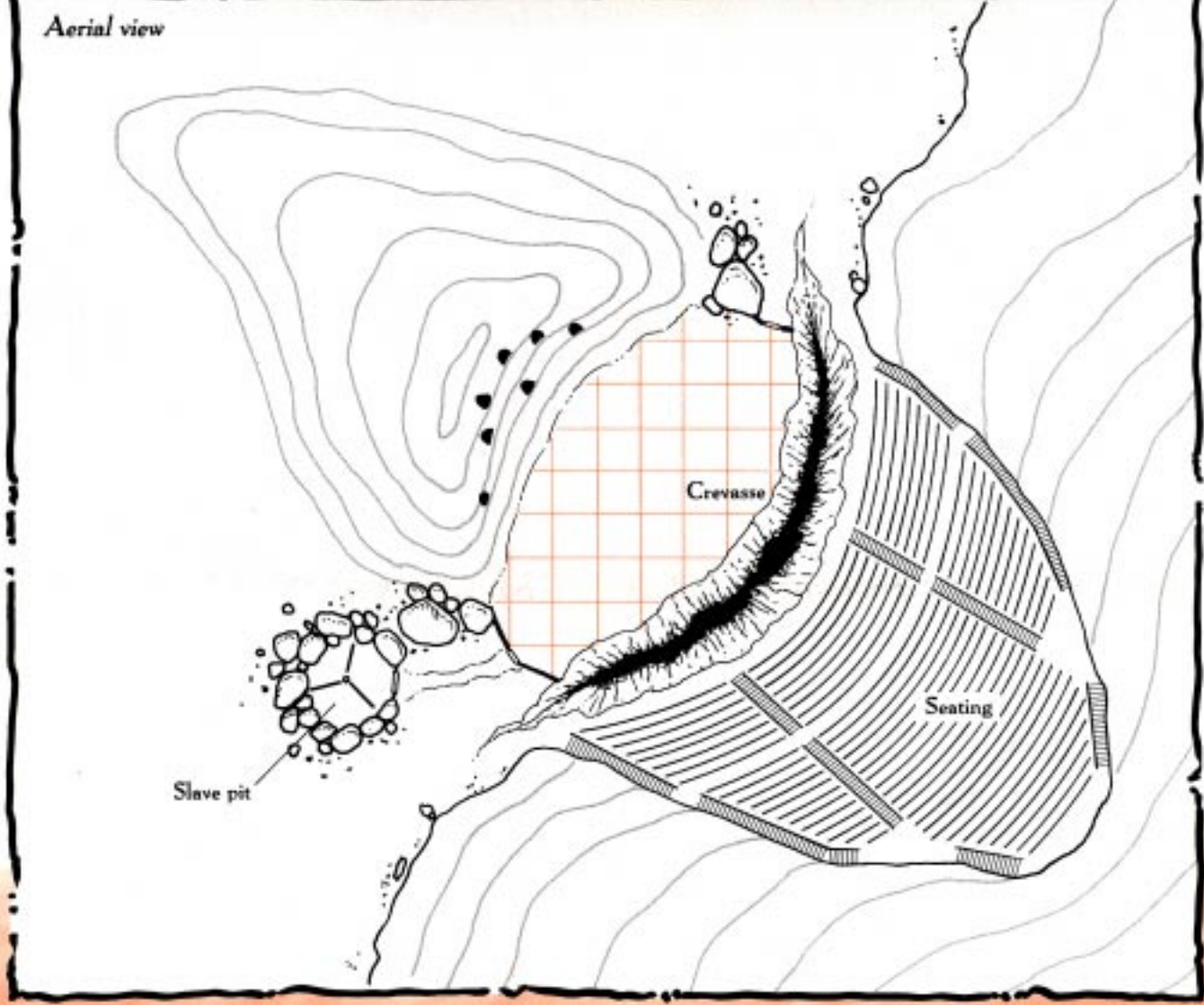
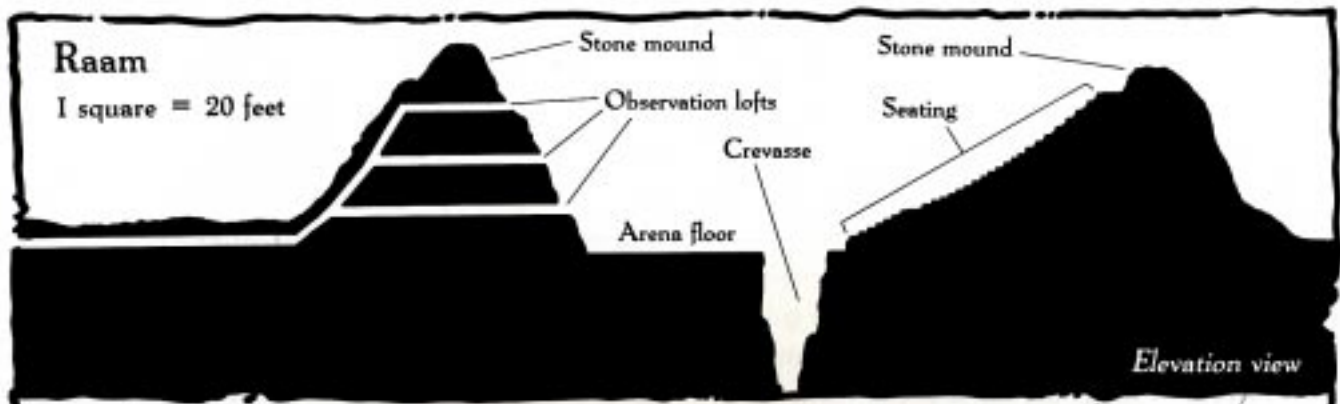
The back wall of the arena is riddled with myriad tunnels and secret passages. The passages lead to hundreds of small observation slits cut into the rock. Each narrow fenestration is covered with a thin piece of black gauzy fabric.

Due to the paranoia rampant in the city-state of Raam, it is from these areas that the sorcerer-queen Abalach-Re and her templars view the gladiatorial games. So great is their fear of regicide and reprisal that they hide away deep within the rock. The gauze prevents anyone from seeing who is behind a viewing station at any given time. It is said that the templars shift to different viewing areas during each tournament, lest someone discover their individual hiding places. The queen has her own special set of catacombs that allegedly connect her temple to the rock viewing areas, although this has never been proven. Because the queen and her templars stay hidden for the entire day's match, no appeals of mercy are heard in the gladiatorial arena of Raam, as there is no one in the hierarchy who will step forward to save a mere gladiator's life. All matches are fought to the death.

Because the erosion process that built this natural amphitheater is ongoing, the arena caretakers fight a daily battle to keep sand from filling the arena and the amphitheater. Twenty slaves spend the day in the hot Athasian sun brushing and shoveling sand from the arena. It is thought that at one time, the Maw of Raam was several hundred feet deep, but over time, has filled with sand and brambleweed.

The gladiatorial games of Raam offer an interesting dilemma for its fighters. Not only must they pay attention to the attacks of their foes, but they must constantly be aware of their physical proximity to the Maw of Raam. Untrained gladiatorial slaves will occasionally choose the depth of the crevasse over the blade of an onrushing gladiator. Many a gladiator has fallen to his death when pushed or driven to the edge.

# Arenas of Tyr





## Arenas of Tyr

### The Tyr Gladiatorial Stadium

Before the construction of Kalak's ziggurat, the gladiatorial stadium was the single largest structure within the walled city of Tyr. At one end of the stadium is the golden tower and high bureaus. This walled city within the walled city houses the king's templars, private gardens, and the king's personal residence, the golden tower. A special viewing box for the templars and the king connects the high bureaus to one of the anterior ends of the stadium.

The far side of the arena stands at the foot of the exquisite and immense multi-colored tiled ziggurat of Kalak. The enormous ziggurat dwarfs the stadium as it rises hundreds of feet into the air above the city. A stair rises from the gladiatorial floor to the very top of the ziggurat. Areas to each side of the stair are adorned with beautiful mosaics depicting Kalak as a great warrior god. It is impossible for gladiators to ascend the stair, as it is protected by magical spells.

The stadium was built with a rectangular combat field, 300 feet long and 80 feet wide. To distance spectators from combatants, there is a 15-foot tall barrier that rises from the floor of the arena to the first level of stadium seating.

The floor of the arena itself is hard-packed sand. The color of the sand holds an auburn, almost reddish hue. It is said that the color is a result of the blood of thousands who have fallen there.

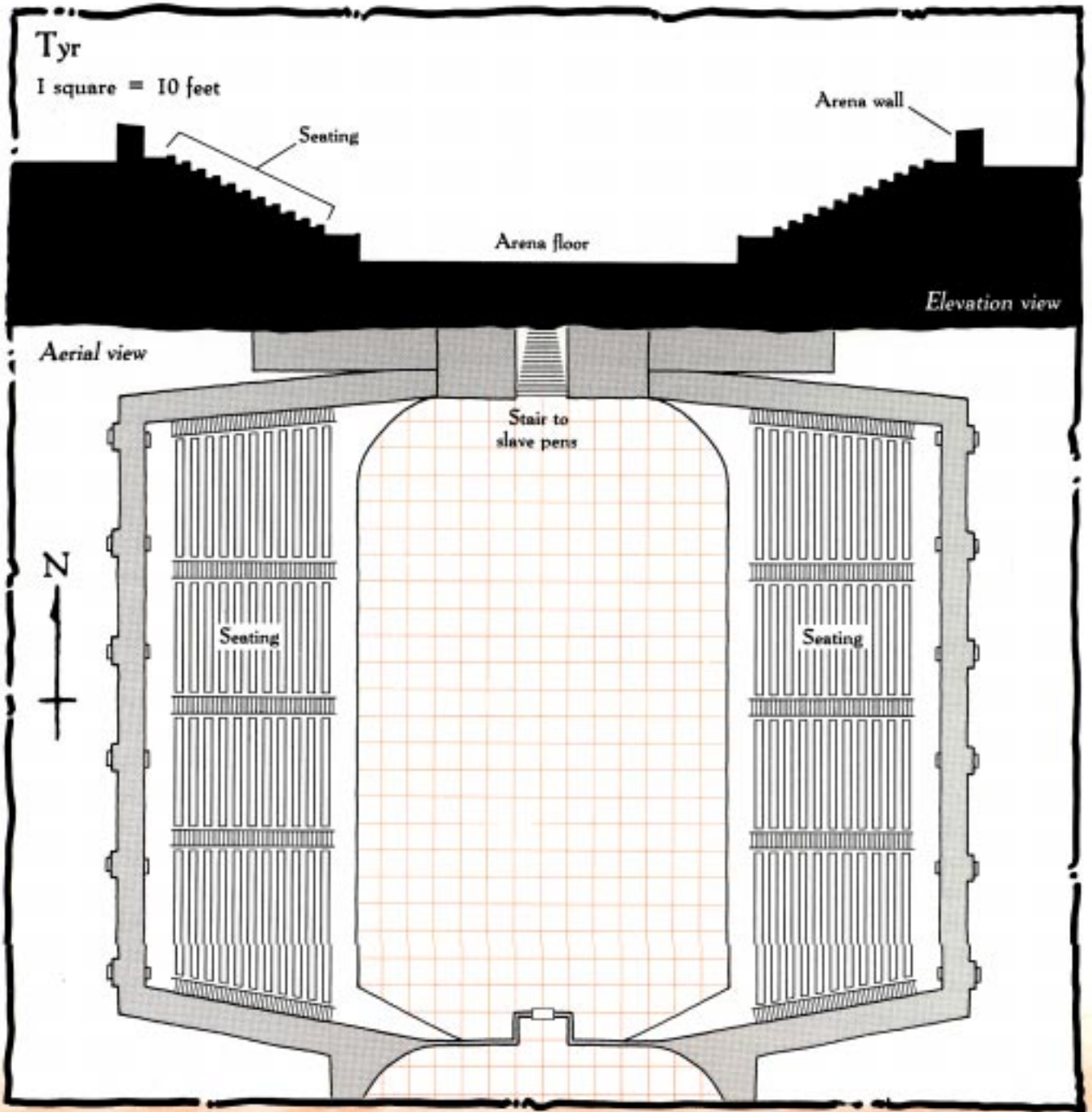
The stadium has the only multilevel seating configuration in the Tablelands. On the two long opposing sides of the stadium, there is an upper and lower seating section. The sections themselves are 300 feet long, with stairs that rise to the back every 50 feet. Long stone benches supported by squat ionic columns allow respite for attendees to the gladiatorial matches. They are seldom used, as the crowd at Tyr generally remains on its feet during the entire match.

The stadium is configured with four identical sec-

tions, two upper and two lower. The upper sections, identical in size to the lower, are supported by doric columns. Traditionally, nobles, senators, and members of powerful trading houses sit in the lower sections. This is because the upper sections grant shade to the lower, protecting patrons from the blistering Athasian sun. The king and templars have a reserved section at the end of the arena.

The two upper sections of the stadium are called "the sun seats." The sun seats are open to the general populace of the city. This section generally attracts rowdy rabble rousers and slaves who have been allowed (and can afford) to attend the games. On more than one occasion following an argument or disagreement, these rowdy (and occasionally inebriated) fans have picked up an opposing gladiatorial fan and thrown him down to the arena floor (for more information, see the "Life in the Stands" section, later in this chapter).

# Arenas of Tyr





## Arenas of Tyr

### Urik's Pit of Black Death

Urik is home to the Pit of Black Death, the great obsidian arena. Formerly the city's first obsidian mine, it was abandoned when higher grade obsidian was found not far from the burgeoning town. The excavation was soon turned into the gladiatorial arena of Urik, and given the name "Pit of Black Death."

The pit is the only irregularly-shaped combat field in the Tablelands. The pit remains in the same distorted oval shape as when it was abandoned from quarrying. Stepped excavation has added viewing tiers along the outside of the pit. Wooden rails have been placed near the edge of these tiers for standing spectators. Stairways are located only on the corners, which makes getting to the preferred viewing areas of the arena difficult.

The upper standing platforms are larger than usual to accommodate half-giants who attend the games. There is no seating at the arena. Urik is unique in this type of arrangement.

The arena itself is almost as deadly as the gladiators. The black obsidian heats in the midday sun, causing temperatures in the pit to rise to over 170 degrees.

Gladiators loathe fighting in Urik's arena for still another reason. The bright Athasian sun can reflect off the mirrorlike obsidian surface and temporarily blind a fighter, giving the opposing combatant the chance to strike a killing blow.

To make matters worse, the walls are covered with thousands of razor-sharp ridges. The fractured obsidian sticks out from the pit's walls, each point a potential instrument of death. Scattered indiscriminately throughout the arena are the "Staves of Hamanu." The staves are, in reality, large black pillars with thousands and thousands of sharp obsidian points chipped from the stone, named for the sorcerer-king of Urik. The staves are moved periodically to new positions within the arena. They are removed if damaged, or, in some cases, to be sharpened.

The number of staves varies on each gladiatorial combat day. Some days, there may be twenty or thirty smaller rock outcroppings that create a dangerous gauntlet in which the gladiators fight. Other times, one or two huge monoliths of sharpened ebony stone dominate the arena. It is said that the number and placement of the staves is at the whim of the king. Others say it is the work of the templars, creating a favorable fighting environment for their gladiators to battle.

Because of the intense temperature in the pit during the midday sun, games begin at dawn. Fans make their way under cover of darkness to the stadium. The stadium and aisles are lit by torches and vessels of burning oil. As the first light heralds the dawn of a new day, the first match begins. As the sun rises, so does the heat in the arena. Match games and executions are held early, before the arena heats to its maximum intensity.

Special matches called "Dragon Matches" are held at the very end of the gladiatorial card. The dragon matches are often held at high noon, when the arena is at peak temperature. This not only taxes the combatants' fighting ability, but the endurance and stamina of the crowd as well. Fighting under these conditions, a combatant loses twice as much water than normal in combat. In addition, the obsidian walls are so hot that when a combatant's bare skin brushes up against the walls, he suffers 1d4 points of burn damage.

Urik is one of the few stadiums that once held night games in the cool of the evening. Great oil burning lamps, 12 feet in height, were brought in and mounted on pedestals at the upper portions of the arena. Great magical glass lenses were placed in front of the lamps to make the light brighter. The pit was always packed for the night games. They were known as "rogue" games, because the stands were thick with thieves, out to filch purses in the dark of the night.

# Arenas of Tyr



Urik

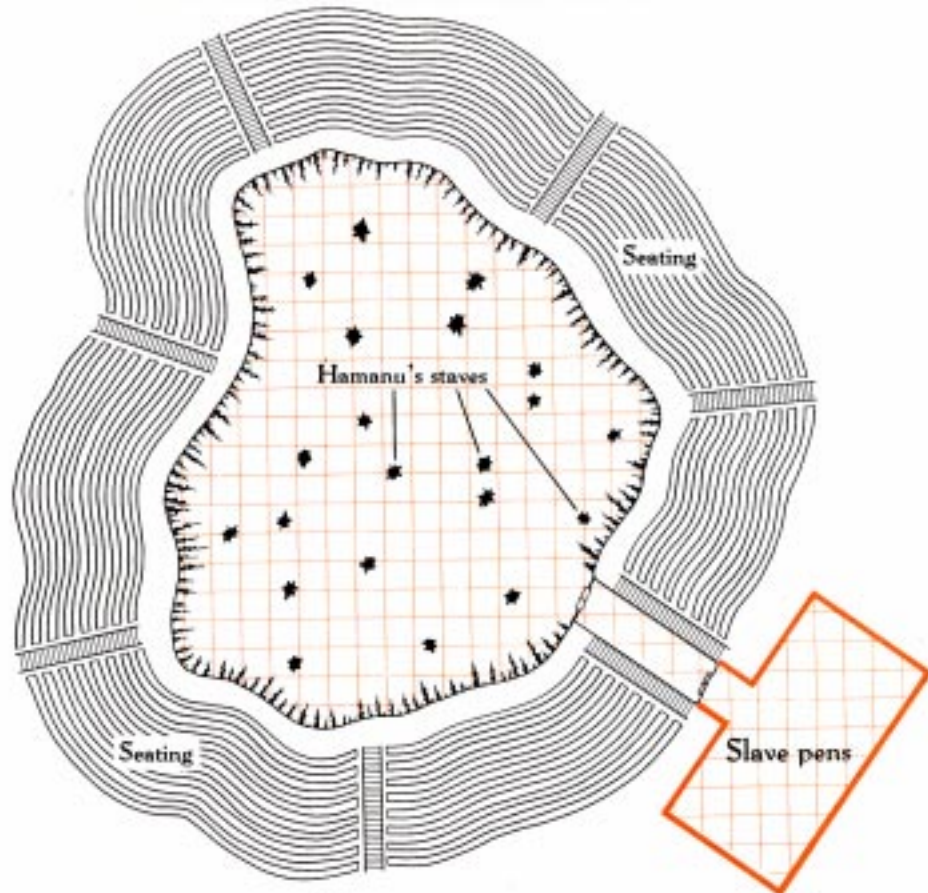
1 square = 10 feet

Hamanu's staves

Arena floor

*Elevation view*

*Aerial view*





## Arenas of Tyr

### Arena Variations and Obstacles

Arena Managers may place ramps, pits, traps, or other obstacles in the arena to add excitement to gladiatorial games. These obstacles may take many different forms and may be used in combination. Great publicity and promotion surrounds the scheduling of these “special” arena events. Some of the obstacles are created and used for specific games.

The only exception to the use of pits and obstacles is the Criterion at Balic. The floor of this arena is altered more than any other. Instead of adding obstacles, Balic uses the flexible configuration of the arena floor to accomplish these goals.

### Montare Loop

The Montare Loop is an enormous set of ramps and roadways constructed in a double loop (figure-8). The roads and ramps are steeply banked on the opposite ends of the loops. The center, where the roadway crosses, is at ground level. This is where beasts, riders, and gladiators enter the loop. Different games are played using variations of this configuration.

The two most popular are “Cross-Loop” and “Loop-Race.” In Cross-Loop, the combatants circle the loop in opposite directions. The first gladiator to make two complete circles of the loop in his specific direction wins. A gladiator may also win by slaying all opponents along the way.

Loop-Race is a contest to see who can be first to make a complete circuit of the loop a pre-determined number of times. Gladiators use a variety of different tactics to win this type of combat. Some stand and await the foe; others (especially elves and montare) attempt to win the bout by circling the loops and fighting the opponents only when they must.

### Queen’s or King’s Pyramid

Although slightly different in each arena, the concept is the same. A large, pyramidal object is placed in the center of the arena. The last gladiator(s) standing on top is the winner.

The pyramid might be greased with a slippery substance to make the ascent more difficult. Razor sharp blades may be attached, making the pyramid as deadly as the other gladiators. The structure might be trapped, or pressure plates on the pyramid’s sides may release poison gas, flames, darts, or other dangerous devices. Beasts or creatures may be placed atop the structure to make the game more difficult for the gladiators.

### Queen’s or King’s Puzzle

The Queen’s Puzzle is different in size and shape in each of the different arenas, but the concept remains the same. A series of interlocking vertical and horizontal bars or platforms create a huge scaffolding that gladiators may climb over, around, and through. The huge, three-dimensional labyrinth is usually constructed of bones or brambletrees tied together to create the framework. Gaps are left in the twisting structure to allow the gladiators to enter and exit. Because of the open construction, combatants are always visible.

### Dritan

In dritan landscaping, large quantities of sand and dirt are transported into the arena to modify the existing arena floor. Ditches, hillocks, pits, and defensive battlements are landscaped about the arena. This produces new battlefield configurations for gladiatorial conflict. New designs are limited only to the arena manager’s fertile imagination.



## Mist Matches

In these rare matches, the arena is filled with a magical mist. When the mist is created, it covers the arena floor to a depth no greater than 3 feet. The magical mist obscures horizontal visibility past 10 feet. Hence, the spectators in the stands can clearly see the combatants, because they are looking down through the mist. Combatants more than 10 feet apart must hunt for one another through the mist. Creatures greater than 20 feet in height are not hampered by the mist, as they are tall enough to see over the obscurement.

## The Pillory

Slaves who perform poorly or refuse to take orders are locked into the pillory. The pillory is a set of stocks that trap the victim's head and hands between two solid blocks of wood. Half circles are carved into the wood to accommodate the victim's neck and hands. One large block is placed over the other and locked together. The victim is then forced to kneel in the blazing Athasian sun all day. Trainers may stop and drink water in front of the pillory to torment the victims and aggravate their thirst. An individual may spend days locked in the pillory. Some die there as examples to others who might disobey.

## Life in the Stands

### Status Seating

As with the rest of life on Athas, seating in the stadium is determined by power and social status. Most arenas in the Tyr region parallel the sun's path across the reddish green Athasian sky. In this configuration, one side of the stadium receives significantly more sun than the other.

Since one side of some arenas faces away from the sun, the stadium itself provides a bit of shade for spectators. The shady areas of the spectator seating is known as the

"Shade of Nobility." In such sections, local nobles, landowners, and senators are seated. The central part of this shaded area is always reserved for the king or queen and royal bodyguards. Arranged nearby are the most affluent templars. Further out, to the left and right, sit the lesser templars. Senators and minor nobility pay handsome bribes in order to sit as close to this section as possible. Although landholders/ senators are thought to have power in the cities, when it comes to the arena, they have none.

The side of the stadium that receives the harsh, direct sun is sometimes known as "Ral's Eye." Spectators seated on this side of the stadium often bring mats woven of elf or giant hair to sit upon, since the stones they sit on warm considerably with the midday heat. Extreme temperatures cause tempers to flare, and frequently, hostilities erupt in this section of the stadium.

The two ends of the stadium often are the worst places to sit, since they are above the gateways to the animal pens and gladiatorial barracks. The stench in this area in the midday sun is almost unbearable.

Although the walls of the arena are steep in order to contain the monsters and gladiators within, it is ill-advised to take seats near the railing of the arena. It is rare that a day of combat goes by that an innocent spectator is not killed by an errant spear or tentacle. For this reason, many nobles seat their staff directly in front of them in the lower tiers. The slaves create a blameless human shield, innocently protecting their owners from harm.

## Arena Fashion

The garb worn to the games is as different as the people attending the games. In short:

### Slaves & Indentured Servants

Clothing: Drab, earth-brown garb. Short tunics, shorts, halters, and loincloths. Possibly some sort of tie or gather at the waist. Net tunics are very





## Arenas of Tyr

popular. Easy and cheap to produce, they absorb sweat, keep it close to the skin to aid in evaporation, and allow breezes through.

**Headgear:** Usually nothing. If lucky, a bandanna or other cloth to tie over the head to protect against the midday sun.

**Footgear:** Bare feet or sandals.

### Shop & Minor Land Owners

**Clothing:** White linen and spun cloth. White is reflective and cool, difficult to keep clean, and more expensive due to its manufacture. Sometimes the garment will be decorated with small bands of color as a sign of stature (colored cloth being very expensive in some regions).

**Headgear:** White bandanna or straw brimmed hat. Sometimes merchant women tie a strip of white cloth over their heads to protect against the midday sun.

**Footgear:** Sandals, thongs, shoes.

### Merchant Traders/Nobles

**Clothing:** Multicolored fabrics and silks. The more expensive, the better (in some regions). Brightly colored scarves and ribbons are worn as accessories. Some women wear bright jewelry (the pieces look exquisite, but only cost a fraction of what they appear to). Upper nobles may bring their hurrum beetles to the games. (Hurrum: A flightless, brightly opalescent beetle that produces soothing humming noises and an ever-so-slight breeze.)

**Headgear:** White or colored turbans. A slave may hold a sun shade or fan over a noble's head.

**Footgear:** Sandals, thongs, shoes.

## Concessions

Refreshments are also limited according to class. In no aspect of life on Athas is one free from social status-not even when one seeks only to slake one's thirst or soothe a gnawing stomach.

### Slaves C Indentured Servants

**Beverage:** Water.

**Food:** Red cactus grubs, sun dried kip, renks.

### Land Owners C Nobles

**Beverage:** Broy, water, or wine.

**Food:** Sun dried kip or jankx meat.

**Renk:** Palatable slugs that contain, on the average, four ounces of water. They are a source of food and water to the masses. An average man would need to eat 16 raw renks a day to replace fluids lost at a day at the arena.

**Red Cactus Grubs:** Red cactus is a round succulent plant known for its red spiny thorns. Grubs make their homes in these cacti. When one is cut open, 1 to 3 dozen thumb-sized, brown headed, white, scaly grubs can be found. Some people pop the heads off, others eat the tasty grubs whole.

No concessions are sold in the arena at Raam. The sorcerer-queen, in her hysterical paranoia, fears poisoning of her templars and loyal servants. The fine for being caught selling food or water in arena stands is a one-way trip to the arena floor. It is permissible, however, to bring one's own meager goods to the arena for personal consumption.

Different arenas have different methods of providing water to the nobles during gladiatorial games. Probably the most interesting is the arena of Tyr.

In Tyr, water is carried through the lower Noble Stands in large ceramic containers. Such containers are shaped like a cistern fiend (some have never seen the creature and believe it to be only a myth, like the dragon. Others know



the horrible truth). For a few ceramic pieces, patrons in the shaded stands may take a drink from the mouth of the ceramic creature to quench their thirst. The water bearers are all agent/slaves of arena templars. They are sometimes allowed to keep a few ceramic pieces if they hear information their owners/employers deem useful.

One Tyr water bearer named Cytrine is, in truth, a double agent assassin. The ceramic cistern fiend water holder that Cytrine carries is equipped with two retractable metal spikes located in the ceramic creature's eyes. If Cytrine is ordered by his templar to kill an individual in the stands, Cytrine merely offers a free drink of water. While the victim drinks, Cytrine presses a button on the device and a pair of needle-fine, foot-long spikes extend from the ceramic creature's eyes. The small, dart-like spikes pierce the victim's brain, striking directly through the eyes. The poison works instantly and the victim is dead before he can swallow a second mouthful of water.

Cytrine is also a member of the Veiled Alliance. He makes weekly reports on all events in the arena and the templar's home to a secret contact. If ordered to kill a member or sympathizer of the alliance, Cytrine will make the assassination attempt seem real. Cytrine will pre-arrange (with the help of alliance contacts) the accident and set up a getaway. The alliance will then shuttle the individual away to a safehouse and arrange for transportation out of Tyr.

## Arena Banners

At any gladiatorial game, bright banners of solid or motley colors can be seen hanging in the stands. These banners often bear symbols, since it is illegal for the populace to know how to read and/or write. (It is rumored that the Veiled Alliance, outlawed in all city-states of Tyr, may use these arena banners as a form of communication regarding projects, movements, and meetings. Only other members of the Veiled Alliance would recognize and understand the messages.)

The banners are symbols of support brought to the arena by fans to encourage their favorite professional gladiator or arena champion. The emblems of the great trading houses may also hang in the arena. These serve multiple purposes.

First, they show that a trading house is currently sponsoring a gladiator performing at the games.

Second, in the case of a traveling trading house, the banner is to show that the trading company is currently in the city and is ready to conduct business. Families of convicts or accused individuals who are fighting for their lives in the arena may bring a banner to show support for their loved one. Likewise, victims of crime may attend with banners of their own in order to encourage the demise of the convicted or accused.

It is the ultimate honor for a gladiatorial champion to ask a fan or support group for their banner. Some combatants may exchange a broken weapon, a small bit of armor, or a piece of their clothing for the banner. Several murders have been attributed to fans fighting over gladiatorial memorabilia. A broken bone weapon from a famous gladiator may fetch as much money as a steel sword. Knowingly selling counterfeit gladiatorial memorabilia earns the swindler a personal visit to the arena floor of death.

## Chants and Cheers

Although the words are different at each arena, fans know a series of chants and/or cheers that they use to encourage gladiatorial combatants. While some arenas may reward a gladiator with applause after a stunning blow, other arenas may cheer. Still other arenas may greet a cowardly move with a hiss in unison, while others acknowledge the move with loud, resounding boos.

The most common chants are the names of the gladiators. The arena comes alive and walls shake when the reigning champion enters the pit. The cry of his name is heard over and over again and the fans will shout until they are hoarse, or until the match begins, whichever



## Arenas of Tyr

comes first. There are even champions the crowd loves to hate. These champions would not feel at home in the arena without boos, hisses, catcalls, and jeers raining down on them from all sides. These antiheroes are, in actuality, as popular as heroes. These anti-champions survive more than their fair share of gladiatorial combats. They are almost always given reprieve or mercy at the end of the match. Smart arena managers use these individuals to focus the crowd's anger and resentment by giving these people someone to hate. High-paying grudge matches can be developed to exploit this fever.

The most popular chant, of course, is the simple word "die." In any language, or in any tongue, the meaning of this simple chant is obvious. When an undeserving, fallen gladiator hears the arena pick up this chant, he knows his time has come. Some arenas wave deep red strips of cloth, others scream for blood, but all will repeat this chant before the end of the gladiatorial day. Strangely enough, there is no chant of mercy that is recognizable in all the arenas.

In the arena of Tyr, the crowds raise their hands, palm open, fingers extended, in order to show their support for a fallen warrior. The open palm is generally understood as a symbol for mercy (or more simply, "I have no weapon, I yield"). In the forest arena of Gulg, green strips of cloth are waved to show support for a venerated warrior. In Balic, fans rise to their feet from their usual seated positions to show their support (many are already on their feet if it has been an extraordinary match). In the Pit of Black Death at Urik, the fans begging for mercy wave strips of black cloth. There is no mercy at Raam.

### The Sun Seats

The Sun Seats are the notoriously dangerous upper seating sections of the Tyr stadium. Angry or bored fans will sometimes play a game called "razorwing." These rowdy and occasionally inebriated fans pick up an opposing gladiatorial fan, pass the individual overhead, hand to

hand, and toss him down to the arena floor. Although the action can be construed as murder, it is difficult to place blame when there are so many fans. The king issued an edict concerning this behavior, stating that there will be no retribution or recourse against the perpetrators as long as the "accident" does not disrupt the gladiatorial games.

### Mercy

Because life is so harsh on Athas, mercy is as rare as rain. Almost all arena combat is fought to the death, for anything less would not fulfill the expectation of the crowd. There are, however, instances when a gladiator's life is spared. These come by hook, crook, or courage.

In the midst of combat, if a gladiator loses all weapons and is cornered by an armed opponent and is sure to die, the gladiator may ask for mercy. This is done by raising a fist to the sky. This action poses the silent question, "Am I not a worthy opponent? May I not regain my weapons so that I may fight to the best of my ability?" This question is first answered by the opposing gladiator. If the gladiator deems the other individual a worthy opponent and wishes to continue the fight (thinking, of course, that he will win) with the other gladiator armed, the gladiator will extend his weapon hand high above his head. As both gladiators stand fist and/or weapon raised, they look toward the sorcerer/king or queen's stadium box. A raised arm means both opponents regain all weapons and they begin the battle anew at the center of the arena. If no raised arm is returned, the armed gladiator must dispatch the unarmed gladiator as skillfully as possible. It is, of course, the unarmed gladiator's desire to stay alive at all costs.

If a gladiator is injured and wishes mercy, he raises an open hand to the opposing gladiator rather than a clenched fist. This signals that he is "too grievously injured" to continue the battle, but is petitioning for a chance to heal and return to fight at a later date.

Often, two very popular opponents face each other in the arena. Due to their combat skills, both are great draws



and crowd-pleasers. If one of the combatants gains a strong upper hand over the other, and is at the point of dealing a fatal blow, the gladiator who possesses the upper hand may call for an answer from the crowd. This is the best part of attending the gladiatorial arena. Shouts of “no” and “yes” will ring out until one downs the other out. The majority of the crowd will chant for the victim’s life to be taken or spared. When the chanting hits a fever pitch, all eyes will turn toward the sorcerer king or queen, and as the chant rises, the crowd will await a ruling.

The sorcerer king will eventually rise to his feet (providing, of course, he is in attendance; otherwise this duty falls to the sorcerer king’s chief templar), extend his fist, and rule on the gladiator’s life. The king’s thumb pointed upward means the defenseless gladiator is spared and may return to do battle another day. If the thumb points downward, the victor then administers a creative killing stroke, accompanied by the excited roar of the crowd.

If a gladiator’s life is spared in the arena, it is often due to the direct action of a templar. Templars are known to fix combats for personal gain. A prime example is a champion who is heavily favored against an unknown. The templar may bet on the unknown, then bribe the champion by promising him rich spoils after the combat for “taking a dive.” The champion, with all of his combat and battle experience, will then go forth into the arena and put on a good fight. He may pretend to be overly aggressive or fight a wholly defensive battle, seemingly amazed at his foe’s blows. Often uninjured, the gladiator will then pick a moment to stumble or fall, placing himself at the mercy of the newcomer. Having been a successful champion, and having fought a good battle, his life will almost assuredly be spared. There are exceptions, when the templar feels it necessary to fool an excellent gladiator into allowing his own death. For this reason, most champions rarely give themselves over totally to the mercy of the opponent; there is always the chance of a double-cross.

This is not to say that every arena combat is predetermined. There are, however, many templars and slave-own-

ers using whatever pressure, force, or influence they may have to arrange of the outcome of the match in their favor.

The exception to all of the above is Raam. Due to the rampant paranoia and the hidden location of the sorcerer-queen’s viewing box, no question is ever raised. All fights in Raam are to the death.

## Mob Rules

Two facts are indisputable in the arenas of Athas. First, all intelligent life has some type of psionic talent (wild or otherwise). Second, a gladiator fighting for his life will use whatever means are at his disposal to survive a match.

The problem arises when 40,000 or more spectators, all with some form of psionic talent, are watching and betting on the gladiatorial games. Psionic wars could easily erupt in the stands if fans psionically interceded on behalf of a gladiator. To prevent this, laws have been passed in every arena forbidding psionic intervention from spectators during matches. This rule includes Templars, but not the sorcerer kings and queens, who make and change laws on a whim.

Punishment awaits anyone who aids a gladiator via psionic powers before a match. Like most things on Athas, this happens frequently. However, since psionic intervention is difficult to prove, few are actually punished.

## Magic

Within the city-states of the Tyr region, the only persons allowed to use or possess magic are the sorcerer-kings and queens, their templars, and royally appointed (minor) defiler mages. Elemental priests are tolerated in the city-states as long as they do not attempt to set up religious shrines or hold religious gatherings. Druids occasionally pass through the city-states, but seldom stay for any length of time. Druids hate defilers and the sorcerer-kings and queens in particular because of the destruction they have wrought. (Remember, the sorcerer-kings and queens fancy



## Arenas of Tyr

themselves as godlike beings, and they have little tolerance for priests and druids in their city.)

Magic use in the arena is not tolerated unless it is used by an ambassador of the sorcerer-king or queen. Druids forced into gladiatorial games often freely use their magic to defend themselves. Usually, more and more opponents are sent against the druid until the druid is dead. Priests and mages who find themselves in the arena frequently attempt to conceal their spell casting abilities through the use of the nonweapon proficiency somatic concealment.

The majority of the city (this includes gladiators) know that hated defilers and Templars are spellcasters. Therefore, most residents feel that any spellcaster must be an evil defiler under the scrutiny of the sorcerer-king or queen. Gladiators know and fear their power, so spellcasters are the first targets during combat.

### Dirty Tricks

**Poison:** Poison is not illegal in the Tyr region. There are, however, conditional restrictions for gladiatorial matches. Poison may be smuggled into matches, although it is not considered a legal substance for the arena. Possession of poison in the arena is no different than the use of wild psionic talents. There is, however, a stiff penalty for those caught attempting to smuggle it to their gladiators.

**Jankx Spurs:** Bards, jazst, and disreputable gladiators will use jankx spur poison in the arena. Jankx are dangerous, small furry creatures that inhabit the Athasian desert. Jankx have spurs connected to poison sacs located on the underside of each limb near the paw. When injected, the poison causes a limb (arm or leg) to wither. Only the region in which the poison was injected will be affected; the thick poison does not travel through the entire body. The affected area will shrivel and become useless at a rate of 1" per round. If the poison is injected into the torso, the nearest limb is affected (or roll randomly). If the poison is injected into the head, the victim

suffers blindness in 1d4 rounds, deafness in 1d4 rounds, and falls unconscious in 1d6 rounds. An immediate saving throw versus poison is required; failure means death in 1d8 rounds. Naturally, even if a victim survives the poison, he may be slain while unconscious.

**Agony Beetles:** A favorite halfling trick is to smuggle one of these vicious little insects into a match. The halfling will then look for an opportune moment to try to plant the beetle on the back of an opposing gladiator during combat (normally in team competition). The agony beetle uses a bile-coated tendril to attach itself to its victim's spinal column. The victim is suddenly racked with excruciating pain and can do nothing but writhe and scream in agony. The beetle cannot be removed by the victim; only another creature may free the individual of the beetle's deadly attachment.

**Kip Pheromone Globes:** Resourceful dwarven gladiators may smuggle in small glass globes containing kip pheromone extract. Pheromones produce a certain type of emotional response in a victim. When the globes break, they release an 8'x8'x8' invisible cloud of pheromones. Gladiators caught within the gas cloud must save versus poison or suffer apathy (successful save indicates no effect). Dwarves save at +4 due to high resistance to poison and ability to focus.

A failed save means the victim ceases to care about anything, including fighting, for 1d8 rounds. The victim still defends himself, but does not bother to attack opponents.

**Powders and Blow Pipes:** Another dirty trick used in the arena involves the use of pungent irritants and fiery powdered peppers. Strong spices can be mixed in combination to induce nausea or inflame eyes and breathing passages. The spice mix is carefully placed in a small sealed bag or a reed blow pipe. A gladiator will use the spices to blind or distract an opponent. Hot kuzza pep-



pers, dried stinkweed, and slitflower pollen are perennial favorites.

## The Royal Containment Field

Spectators attending arena games are often unaware that some portions of the field are protected by magical containment fields. The royal viewing area and certain entrances and exits are often protected in this manner. The shape and location of these containment fields are as different as the stadiums themselves. *Wall of force* is the most commonly used spell for this purpose. Invisible to the naked eye, a *wall of force* stops magic and physical objects from passing through, but has no effect on psionics.

If viewed via magical means, the *wall of force* containment field appears as a shimmering, translucent bubble protecting a given area (i.e., the royal viewing box). Arenas frequently have more than one containment field to provide additional protection for the sorcerer kings and queens.

In Gulg, Balic, and Tyr, these containment fields are used for the personal protection of the sorcerer-kings and queens. The fans in these arenas must defend themselves against errant missiles (arrows, sling stones, etc.) and combatants thrown into the stands. A protective wall is placed on the spectator's side of the great maw in Raam. Due to rampant paranoia, the exact size and shape is varied each gladiatorial game.

Draj uses protective walls more extensively than any other arena. The configuration of the arena floor in relation to the spectator stands and the "palace" require that protective walls surround the shallow gladiatorial pit (except for a narrow opening where the gladiators enter and exit the arena). Draj may be the best arena for viewing gladiatorial games if being close to the gore is the prerequisite for a good time.

Sorcerer-kings and queens may use powerful *dragon magic* spells to protect themselves (provided they are not

involved in other magical processes that require their full magical powers—as was Kalak when he was killed). Also, they are constantly protected from psionic harm (though anyone who would dare a sorcerer-king's mind is a brave fool indeed).

Templars work in conjunction with psionics, other defiler mages, and the city-state's elite guard to keep order in the stadiums during games. Fans are often tempted to use their wild psionic talents to help their favorite gladiator in the arena. Psionics in the employ of the ruling sorcerer king or queen deal swiftly and harshly with such transgressors.

## Fan Culture

The lowest classes, or "stand scum," show up hours before the games to drink and carouse outside the arena. This behavior is not dangerous as long as the templars are either bribed or out of sight. Hardcore arena fanatics may cut their hair in odd fashions or paint their faces with tints made from beets, roots, and cactus.

Vendors can make a killing (no pun intended) selling likenesses and mementos of the crowd's favorite warriors. Aficionados purchase symbols in support of favorite gladiators. The manufacture of miniature replicas of popular gladiators' chosen weapons is a lucrative business all over Athas.

It is common for spectators of all stations to yell and scream obscenities at losing gladiators in addition to cheering their favorites. This does more to vent the frustrations and hostilities of the crowd than it does to distract or help the gladiators. Chants, however, are another story.

When the crowd begins an organized chant, they can actually affect the outcome of a match. If used in a gladiator's favor, chants can build a fighter's morale or allow the warrior to focus on the opponent and strike with increased accuracy (+1 attack bonus in game terms). When the crowd chants against a contestant, the effects can be devastating. Victims of negative chants suffer feelings of rejec-





tion and despair, causing a -1 penalty to attacks and damage.

In the arenas of Athas, the crowd is worked into a frenzy by both the mayhem and fellow spectators. Something approaching a mass hypnotic trance occurs at these games, and it builds toward full-blown crowd hysteria as a battle wears on.

The arena is one of the few places where anything remotely resembling egalitarianism is practiced. Fans are free to shriek and carry on to their hearts' content within the limits imposed by the templars. In most areas, those limits are frighteningly lax.

Folktales abound about unlucky fans who met their doom supporting unfavored gladiators. It is a regular occurrence for crowd members to grow weak and faint as the heat becomes unbearable. Overcome fans are often trampled by the frenzied crowd, or passed hand over hand to be thrown over the arena walls. Many swig cactus liquor out of leather casks or skins to try to beat the heat (or their sobriety), only to pass out as the day becomes hotter. Shaded seats are at a premium, and fans often gather the night before to obtain the best (coolest) seats.

The arenas are an interesting cross-section of the class structure of Athas. There is always shoving and pushing as the heavy doors of the arena are opened. As the stockyard rush begins, guards use spears to control the surging masses.

Upper class fans gather just before the combat and eat sumptuous feasts their slaves have prepared. These are the folk who can afford to buy special reserved areas set apart from the rabble. Though their seats are not as good as those of the nobles, they are a far cry from the dirty, filth-strewn areas of the commoners.

Nobles, of course, need not push and shove for a cherished seat, nor do they have to buy or bribe their accommodations. Nobles are carried into the arena on sedan chairs which are lowered gently to the sandy ground by grunting, sweating slaves. Other slaves fan them with large leather fans as the sun beats down and the arena heats up.

In their shaded seats, the nobility are even offered the rare gift of cool water. Many even have dancing slaves to entertain them before the bloodletting begins.

As the time for the match nears, fans begin screaming for their favorite gladiators, and the arena echoes as the voices of thousands are raised in anticipation. Of course, the match does not begin until the sorcerer-king arrives. Because of this, many sorcerer-kings and queens make a habit of being "fashionably late," being purposely tardy to hold up the match and whip the rabble into a frenzy. Some feel there is a fine line in the mob dynamic between ultimate battle-lust and sheer mob violence, and they sadistically work this fact.

Eventually, the sorcerer-king enters and the lower classes try to shout each other so that the roving guards can clearly see their allegiance—and their frustration. The upper classes rise and bow their heads toward the sorcerer-king as a sign of respect. The sorcerer-king signals, and the match is underway.

During the match, vendors wind their way through the crowd selling meat pies, dried fruit, or pieces of roasted meat. Fans toss ceramic coins at the vendor without ever taking their eyes from the match. Hopefully, change returns with the purchase, but oftentimes the rabble are too excited to notice that they have been cheated. In the end, it doesn't matter as long as the crowd sees blood and death.

If the match is boring, the arena resounds with boos. If the fans are dissatisfied with the match, they throw malodorous pieces of rotting meat and garbage into the ring, smuggled into the arena for just this purpose. Some in the crowd wait for these times, and vie with each other to deliver the most stinging insults to the gladiators. These ne'er-do-wells gather near the gladiators' entrances, the better to harass the warriors before and after battle. Some have even gone so far as to prance around, shouting and gesturing, taunting the haggard warriors into attacking them and other innocent spectators. It is a particular badge of honor among this type if they are attacked and live to tell about it.





## Arenas of Tyr

If the match is close and exciting, the crowd becomes excited at the sight of first blood. Fans in the front rows have been crushed under the weight of blood-thirsty crowds surging forward in a “kill frenzy.” This is a dangerous state for the crowd to be in, and the templars and nobles know it. Successful gladiator rebellions have been staged under just these circumstances. If the warriors are gifted enough and angry enough, they can turn the mob against their own rulers. For this reason, the templars go on high alert when they sense the crowd growing too agitated. No matter what their station in life, the games’ spectators spend the time after combat in a similar way. They stagger home from the day’s events, reciting exaggerated stories of their favorite gladiator’s victory, and eagerly await the next opportunity to forget their troubles by watching the blood-soaked Athasian gladiatorial games.

### Gambling on the Games

The distinction between legal and illegal gambling on Athas is simple. If the templars get a cut of the profits, it is legal. If they do not, it is illegal. Most of the time, the templars look the other way while spectators gamble on the matches in the stands.

The spectators have a simple code of honor regarding wagering: if anyone places a bet he cannot cover, he is either ejected from the stadium (preferably over the back wall, to a the is distance to the street outside) or thrown into the arena.

All legal gambling at the games is coordinated through templar representatives called *pelfre* (singular, *pelf*). All *pelfre* are required to be “Followers of the Way.” Each *pelf* negotiates odds for each gladiatorial event based on the amount of money he and the other *pelfre* have collected. They use their psionic abilities to remain in contact with one another mentally while they collect money and coordinate odds for the matches. *Pelfre* are skilled in many languages and know current rates of exchange of currencies.

Ten percent of each bet wagered is retained by the *pelf*.

Of that money, 30% goes to fund the arena and the king’s coffers. The remaining 10% is a fee for the *pelf*’s services.

It is not unusual or immoral for a templar to command a *pelf* to lie about an event. The lies may be about fighting prowess, physical ability, current injuries, or psychological impairment of a gladiator. A *pelf*, however, will never lie about the odds or amount of money wagered on a bet. This creates a real dilemma for *pelfre*; if they are caught cheating or lying to an important figure, they could face death; but to disobey a templar may mean death, or worse, slavery. This puts the *pelf* in a tenuous position.

A *pelf* found guilty of cheating or defrauding a bettor is sentenced to armed combat against a champion gladiator. Since most *pelfre* are unskilled in the art of combat, it is a match usually held early in the day.

Landowners seldom hesitate to bet on their gladiators’ lives. Often as not, they will risk part of their estates, vineyards, or slave population against an adjoining landowner. It is not unusual for small parcels of family land to pass back and forth many times during the course of a year. Slaves, always a valuable commodity, are freely traded.

One very popular form of betting with templars is called *cention* or *cempa-emptor*. *Cention* is the “phantom purchase” of gladiators participating in upcoming matches. At the beginning of each match day, a list of gladiatorial champions is posted. Rival templars will group and place “phantom” bids on the gladiators of their choice. The high bid on each gladiator “purchases” them for that day’s match. All of the money from the phantom bids, whether successful or not, goes into a single purse. The templars who bid successfully on the winning gladiators collect their share of the purse following the match. The higher the gladiator advances in the tournament rounds, the more the templar wins from the purse.

Occasionally, a bidder who has been shut out by a higher bid will bribe a an owner to order his gladiator to throw a match. This must be done clandestinely, lest the high bidder on that particular gladiator discover the plot and initiate retribution. An intelligent landowner may



be able to keep himself from being caught in the crossfire of the templar's betting wars, but most are caught in the middle.

When a lot of money is at stake, it is common practice for a templar to bribe his gladiator's opponent into taking a "dive" during the match. The bribe may take several forms—the promise of a steel weapon, gold, or even the purchase of his freedom. The templar will assure the gladiator to be bribed that his life will be spared at the end of the match. Often as not, the templar then visits his gladiator. The templar will inform his champion of the falsely offered bribe, then order the gladiator to kill the bribed opponent in the ring. In doing so, the templar accomplishes his goals; he doesn't pay the bribe, silences the opposing gladiator, and advances his champion.

More bets take place in back alleys, bars, and markets than are ever placed in the arena. Granted, such wagers are meager, a few ceramics here, a silver there, but in sheer volume, the amount bet on any given match is tremendous. Small gladiatorial wager booking establishments exist throughout all of the cities in the Tyr region—these individuals are called "squints," "w'diares," or "quick-legs." Finding one is the hard part. Some work on street corners—just a lone elf, propped up in a shady spot, for example. A password or hand sign must be proffered before the elf will allow a bet to be made. Disreputable w'diares will simply take the money and move on to a new location in the city or another town. Successful ones are sometimes wanted by local templars, hence the nickname "quick-legs." Some even more disreputable bet takers are actually spies for certain templars. If the betting is very heavy for a particular match, the templar may arrest the "squint" and confiscate the money for himself. After a month in prison, the individual is released (and clandestinely given a little something for his trouble), then returns to the streets to tell of his ordeal.

Shops that have secret wagering are generally more dependable than "street squints"—the inn, shop, or market stall may have a reputation to uphold. Betting in these

establishments takes on many forms. An individual who wishes to bet on a gladiator may enter a shop or merchant stall known to accept wagers. The individual wishing to place the bet may begin to haggle over the price of some meaningless item. In the midst of the negotiation, the bettor works the gladiator he wishes to bet on into the conversation. Instead of speaking in first person both parties speak in third person using that gladiator's name.

*Example:* Bettor may solicit a bet by saying "Thonkin (a well-known gladiator) would never pay that much for those items!" to a market vendor suspected of taking bets. If the merchant is indeed involved in betting, he might respond with, "Thonkin in was here last week, and paid more than you're offering!" Then the haggling of the bet verses pay-off odd begins. When the wager is resolved, the bettor gives the merchant the funds wagered. The merchant in return gives the bettor some small token or "marker" that must be presented in order to claim any monies won from the match.

## In This Corner: Arena Opponents

Knowing about a partner or opponent is important to anyone undertaking arena combat. The arena is deadly, and every bit of knowledge is helpful in staying alive. The indigenous races of Athas all have particular weapons and styles. This may vary from combatant to combatant.

In this section, each character race is described concerning general tendencies in arena combat. The information consists of the following elements:

- **Strengths:** The inherent advantages the race possesses for arena combat. This includes any unique elements of the class and how to take advantage of them.
- **As Partners:** How does this race function in tandem with others in the arena? That question and other cautionary notes are addressed.



## Arenas of Tyr

- **Weaknesses:** The only way to defeat a superior foe is to know his weaknesses (and even that doesn't help sometimes!).
- **Weapon Choice:** Some races prefer and perform better with certain weapons. This list suggests the weapons a PC or NPC may choose if considering (or forced into) gladiatorial combat.
- **Armor Choice:** Some races are better suited for some types of armor than others. Armor is by no means required in the arena.
- **Tactics:** Half-giants and elves use totally different strategies in the arena. This is a primer in racial tactics designed to take advantage of the natural strengths of the race.

### Dwarves

**Strengths:** Weighing in around 200 pounds on a compact, muscular 4- to 5-foot frame, the dwarf makes a great arena fighter. A dwarf is at his best when he is a willing fighter or the dwarf's focus is targeted toward gladiatorial combat. Nothing pleases a dwarf more than a good fight (if for a worthy cause (such as money or the dwarfs life). Dwarves have two beneficial racial traits-high resistance to magic and poison.

**As Partners:** Dwarves generally make good fighting partners because of their loyalty and tenacity. If the partners' goals are in line with the dwarf's focus, a lifelong bond may develop. If the goals are in conflict, a bitter rivalry could erupt. Caution must be taken when the dwarf's focus is on winning or possessing a particular match or prize. A dwarf will seldom let friendship or anything else stand between him and the completion of his focus.

**Weaknesses:** The dwarf's greatest disadvantage is linked to his greatest advantage. The dwarf's powerful, compact frame is not well suited for speedy movement. Although possessing tremendous stamina, dwarves are slow of foot

and may have difficulty against long-legged or mounted opponents.

**Weapon Choice:** Dwarves seldom use polearms or staff weapons unless they are specifically crafted for dwarven use. Two-handed bludgeoning weapons are used less than bladed weapons. Dwarves typically fight Thracian style with short, curved knives or short swords. When missile weapons are allowed, stout, powerful crossbows are their distance weapon of preference. Crossbows are very accurate and are able to fire from one side of an arena to the other, maintaining enough force to penetrate light armor.

**Armor Choice:** Dwarves will wear piecemeal armor even when fighting in the hot midday sun. A single piece of armor to protect a leg, the head, or a sword arm could mean the difference in a match. Small round shields or bucklers are preferred over larger shields, which can be cumbersome and awkward to the shorter dwarf.

**Favored Tactics:** "The quickest route is the best route," an old dwarven saying goes, and it applies here. Although long in stamina, dwarves tend to be short in patience with regard to combat. Dwarves do not waste energy on fancy footwork or elaborate feigns. It is not unusual for opposing dwarven gladiators to walk straight up to one another and strike blows until one gladiator falls.

Accidents occasionally occur when dwarven focus is involved. If the focus is to kill an individual (possibly for crime or atrocities committed) or win a particular game, and an opposing foe begs mercy, the dwarf will often kill the downed combatant before anyone can intercede on his behalf.

### Elves

**Strengths:** The tall, lean elf is a study in stamina and agility. Running where ever they go, the elf is the quickest



of the gladiatorial foes. Their long arms and legs provide a welcome reach advantage against those of the shorter races.

**As Partners:** Elves make excellent partners if the partners are members of the same original tribe. Otherwise, until a bond is developed, an elven partner is as dangerous as a foe. Nomadic elves especially hate confinement in the arena. That fact, coupled with their general lack of trust, makes elves extremely dangerous.

**Weaknesses:** Elves lack the brute strength of the other races. If allowed to run in the arena, they are dangerous foes. When cornered, they are at great disadvantage and more easily slain.

**Weapon Choice:** The long bow and long sword are the weapons of choice. Elves take pride in their thin, sharp sword blades. The measure of quality for an elven bow is its length and the strength required to pull the string to full extension. Elven staff-masters are especially good draws at arena games.

**Armor Choice:** None. Elves disdain anything that will slow them down or hinder them in any way. On rare occasions, leather armor is worn, but never heavier armor. (Note: Some arena managers take great glee in dressing two opposing elven combatants in full armor. This is done more for comic relief than anything else.)

**Favored Tactics:** Move and strike, move and strike; a single but effective tactic. As long as elves are free to strike and retreat, they are terrible foes. If missile weapons are allowed, an elf will attempt to distance himself from a foe and use his bow. The bow is used to weaken the opponent at range before closing for the kill. The elf can quickly change weapons and continue the offensive if the opponent shows signs of being hurt or if the opponent moves into melee range.



## Half-Elves

**Strengths:** Sturdier than an elf and quicker than most human counterparts, the half-elf is a good arena combatant. Societal loners, they are better prepared psychologically for death in the arena (whether death is to the foe, partner, or their own life).

**As Partners:** Paradoxical. On one hand, some half-elves consider themselves totally self-reliant, and resent being paired with another individual. On the other, some welcome the opportunity to gain acceptance and develop friendship with another individual. A gladiator should always know his half-elf partner's motives before entering the ring.

**Weaknesses:** The half-elf's weakness is its lack of a particularly strong racial ability. A half-giant can count on



## Arenas of Tyr

brute force, a elf on quickness, but a half-elf has no one strength.

**Weapon Choice:** Unlimited. Weapon of choice varies as much as their moods. Bladed weapons are generally preferred over bludgeoning ones. Spears are popular, due to their versatility. Half-elves make excellent piscatorial gladiators, fighting with trident, net, and dagger.

**Armor Choice:** Half-elves are known to use shields and nets for protection, but rarely wear armor. When they do, it is usually a single piece to protect the sword arm. A detachable buckler (small shield) is sometimes worn on the sword arm as an extra measure of protection.

**Favored Tactics:** *Cautious* best describes their fighting style. Half-elves tend to circle and watch their opponents, hoping to learn as much about their fighting style as possible. The half-elf may wait and counter the opponent's first attack before committing to the battle.

### Half-Giants

**Strengths:** Raw power coupled with incredible endurance makes the half-giant a powerful combatant. Half-giants are quick to learn and seldom repeat previous arena mistakes. Their size gives them the greatest reach and range of any of the Athasian races.

**As Partners:** A half-giant may become a life-long friend and partner, but their sometimes drastic mood swings must be addressed every morning. A half-giant whose alignment swings back and forth from "good" to "evil" is more predictable than one whose swings from "lawful" to "chaotic." Either way, fighting style must be adjusted to take advantage of the half-giant's size and strength.

**Weaknesses:** Two: First, alignment shift must be considered. If a particular strategy has been planned and the

alignment conflicts with team work, it will create problems. Second, half-giants are not known for innovative thinking or quick wits. A moment of indecision in the arena could mean the difference between life and death.

**Weapon Choice:** Because of their size, not all weapons are available to half-giants. Single handed bludgeoning weapons (club, hammer, mace) are preferred. A half-giant swinging a giant-sized polearm is as deadly as things get in the arena.

**Armor Choice:** In the arena, half-giants always wear protective piecemeal armor on their legs. Since most of the creatures they fight are shorter than they are, these areas are most vulnerable. Caution must be taken in not wearing too much armor, due to sweating and dehydration. Half-giants need a tremendous amount of water and will dehydrate quickly if wearing armor in the hot arena.

**Favored Tactics:** Waiting and cornering. Half-giants take advantage of their long reach. Conserving energy, they will let the opposing combatant close, then strike as soon as the opposition is in range. Another favorite tactic is to force the opponent into the corner of the arena. This lowers the opponent's mobility and makes him an easier target. Half-giants are like b'rohng in one aspect. Both may strike an extra blow to a fallen opponent just to make sure they are dead. For this reason, is not advisable to "play dead" when fighting a half-giant.

### Halflings

**Strengths:** Amazing quickness and dexterity are the hallmark of the halfling. A strong resistance to poisons and magic are a definite plus in the arena. Their lack of stature often works to their advantage by creating overconfidence in their foes.



**As Partners:** Once you have convinced a halfling that you have no interest in eating him and that you should not be eaten by him or his friends, a halfling is an adequate fighting partner. Advantage should be taken of the halfling special abilities with slings and thrown objects.

**Weaknesses:** Lack of size and physical strength are the halfling's two greatest weaknesses. If they are recently captured or unfamiliar with the arena, their lack of knowledge of procedure and rules could also hinder their performance.

**Weapon Choice:** Halflings are seldom without a sling, since they can be fashioned from almost any supple material. Spears and daggers are first choice, followed closely by short bladed weapons. Halflings are unable to use polearms because of their size.

**Armor Choice:** Greaves and leather are the armor worn most often by halflings. If a shield is desired, a spiked buckler is first choice. Their lack of strength and endurance prohibits them from most armor.

**Favored Tactics:** Halflings fight a protracted battle. They prefer to strike, move away, then strike again. They always use slings first, unless there is no way to move out of range of the foe's melee weapon. When forced into melee (especially against a taller opponent) they will strike the legs of the opponent, hoping to reduce the foe's movement. If they succeed, they can move out of range of the combatant's melee weapon and resume fire with the sling.

Halflings always refuse to fight other halflings in the arena. Smart arena managers keep them together and use halflings in groups.

## Humans

**Strengths:** Intelligence combined with strength and speed are a human's greatest gifts. Their bloodthirsty

rages and flagrant disregard for the well being of others is also a benefit in the arena.

**As Partners:** Humans can be good or bad partners. Humans possess an overwhelming desire for personal gain regardless of its cost to others. Humans lack a compunction to lying, cheating, stealing, or killing one another. If those things can be overcome, then and only then do humans make good partners.

**Weaknesses:** Humans are probably most susceptible of all the races to take a bribe or throw a match as for personal profit or capital gain.

**Weapon Choice:** Any. Most weapons were designed to be used by humans, so a choice must be made regarding the style of fighting preferred by the individual.

**Armor Choice:** Any. Again, since most of the armor available was designed for human warriors, the individual must decide the extent of the protection needed versus the possibility of heat stroke and/or dehydration the armor will cause.

**Favored Tactics:** Humans use a varied and wide range of strategies in the arena. Combat against humans is as unpredictable as the race itself. More humans ask for mercy at the end of a gladiatorial fight than any other race.

## Muls

**Strengths:** Muls fight harder and with more purpose than any other race. Born of dwarven and human parents, the mul has received the best traits from each race. Muls are stronger and stockier than humans and are bigger than their dwarven counterparts. Their ability to work or fight for many days is renowned.



## Arenas of Tyr

**As Partners:** Muls make great fighting partners. Strong and dependable, they are the quintessential warriors.

**Weaknesses:** If muls have any weakness, it would be a lack of patience and a desire to act before thinking through the options of a given situation.

**Weapon Choice:** Muls use weapons that take advantage of their greater-than-human strength. Large swords or clubs are popular. Bladed pole arms and axes are also used with great frequency. Muls often fight with two weapons.

**Armor Choice:** Some muls prefer to fight without the restrictions that armor (or clothes, for that matter) cause in the heat. But because of their tremendous endurance, some muls wear piecemeal or full nonmetal armor. They are the only race that can fight all afternoon without collapsing from exhaustion.

**Favored Tactics:** Mul tactics vary as much as human tactics. Many muls were born into slavery and raised in the arena all their lives. They can be cunning tacticians, developing elaborate feigns and memorizing hundreds of fighting styles. Or, they can be simple brutes who attack first and quibble over strategy later.

### Thri-Kreen

**Strengths:** The thri-kreen is a natural hunter, associating all things with the “hunting pack.” They have a litany of natural gifts that make them great hunters. Thri-kreen can leap incredible distances. They have four claw attacks and one bite attack per round. Older thri-kreen have venomous (paralyzation) saliva and have a chance to dodge incoming missile fire. They are formidable opponents—even unarmed.

**As Partners:** If accepted as a hunting “pack” member, a thri-kreen makes a great partner. Since they do not require sleep, they are able to protect other (nonthri-kreen) members of the “pack” while asleep—with the exception of elves. Thri-kreen are known to possess a fondness for elf flesh, and a thri-kreen could be expected to keep his desire in check for only so long if locked in a slave pen with an elf.

**Weaknesses:** Due to their pack hunting background, thri-kreen usually prefer an organized attack rather than free-for-all battles. When fighting alone or with strangers, thri-kreen fight as well as humans, but not up to their ultimate organized potential.

**Weapon Choice:** Thri-kreen prefer the weapons of their race: the gythka and the chatkcha. They are masters with the large double-bladed pole arm. At higher levels, the chatkcha throwing wedge can be made to return to the thrower if the target is missed.

**Armor Choice:** Thri-kreen do not wear armor. Their hard chitinous shell provides a natural armor class of 5.

**Favored Tactics:** Coming from a hunting background, thri-kreen would rather stalk their prey than face it in a fight on the arena floor. Methods remain the same, circling, watching, probing for weaknesses. If fighting in tandem, they encircle the victim(s) and make a multi-point attack. Thri-kreen are masters of the feint and respond. With the ability to make multiple attacks (they *our* arms), they are a match for any race in one-to-one combat.



## Arena Animals

More exhilarating than watching two robust warriors in combat is watching a much-anticipated match between a bizarre captured creature and a team of champion gladiators. Pronounced excitement surrounds a Reaver hunting group return—especially when one of the Athas's feared desert creatures has been captured. Such events generate immense excitement among die-hard fans.

The desert world of Athas is ever changing. New creature races, some previously unseen by even the sorcerer kings and queens, have been brought to the arenas. This creates an additional stir as the kings and queens themselves look forward to upcoming events. Great care and preparation are taken in housing these creatures, especially before the match, lest some harm befall them and the spectators be disappointed. If possible, the champions will attempt to spar with the reluctant creature before the actual day of the event. This is only to allow the champions a chance to learn more of their adversary before they face it in the ring. It is not unheard of for trained or untrained slaves to be pitted in training against a creature so that the champions may observe what tactics succeed or fail. Under no circumstances will a good arena manager allow a creature be maimed or killed.

Some of the crowd-pleasing fighting beasts of Athas are listed below. Information pertaining to their fighting style, ability, and preferred methods of combat are also listed. There are certain very powerful creatures not listed, as these would be far too dangerous to be brought into a crowded city arena.

### Braxat

These stony-skinned creatures of the desert are seldom seen in the arena. Not only are they dangerous adversaries in the wild, but because of their immunity to all weapons other than steel or those with magical enchant-

ment, they are tough to capture in the first place. In the arena, braxat circle their opponents, looking for a weak spot in the opponent's defenses. They then use psionic attacks (inflict pain or invincible foes) before charging, capitalizing on their superior strength. Braxat always wait until very close combat before releasing a cone of acid in the face of the opponent.

### B'Rohg

Crowds love the b'rohgs. These four-limbed creatures are the best in primal combat. Because of the complexity of their attack abilities, only the thri-kreen are a match against them in one-on-one combat. Unfortunately, b'rohgs are not known for the subtlety of their attacks and can be fooled by a feigned attack.

### Tagster (Psionic Cat)

Unpredictable and cunning, the tagster makes an excellent arena opponent, with possibly the best combination of speed, raw power, and psionic abilities. These natural killers make excellent arena sport.

### Gaj

This desert horror is a formidable opponent against even a half-dozen trained gladiators. The gaj fights using its barbed mandibles, sharp claws, and pain-inflicting antennae in deadly combination. If pressed, the gaj will use a fighting retreat in order to protect its eye stalks and delicate underbelly. Few creatures enjoy the painful death of an opponent as much as the gaj.

### Pterran

The bizarre appearance of a pterran gladiator walking into an arena brings the crowd to its feet. Although not known for their brute force, they are clever and cunning





## Arenas of Tyr

fighters. Care should be taken when battling a pterran, as the creature will drop its weapons and feign mercy, waiting for the gladiator to turn his head to see if the pterran's life is to be spared. A schooled pterran warrior will take the opportunity to plant his jaws on the throat of the opposing gladiator and chew through to the spine, while raking his claws and talons against the gladiator's body.

### Sloth, Athasian

Incredible speed and a powerful bite make the Athasian sloth a special crowd favorite against unarmed combatants. Because of their love/hatred of halflings, there is excellent entertainment in pitting a single sloth against a meagerly armed halfling family. The winner, of course, eats the spoils.

### So-Ut

A battle with a so-ut is strange indeed. Since the creatures are enraged by the sight of a building, a so-ut will basically ignore a gladiator and instead attempt to attack the arena. If a gladiator with a metal weapon or metal armor gets in its way once too often, the so-ut will attack the gladiator. A so-ut will barely notice a gladiator who carries no metal.

If a so-ut is reduced to less than half its hit points, it will turn its full attention on any competitor (whether possessing metal objects or not). This can come as quite a surprise to a gladiator who is able to hack at the so-ut fully ignored, then have the creature turn on the unsuspecting gladiator.

### Tohr-Kreen

The tohr-kreen is an anomaly. Although more cultured than their thri-kreen cousins, they are far more savage in the arena. Their multilimbed attacks, coupled with

their sheer cunning, make them the most formidable, intelligent opponent a gladiator can face (next to a templar).

## The Arena as Court

When subversion, poison, back-stabbing, and double dealing cannot eliminate a rival templar and/or when their feud becomes public, templars have been known to go to the arena to settle their differences. This type of combat justice may take place in many forms. The form of combat is always pre-discussed and chosen by the templar who is challenged. The templar's options are to face one another in a fight to the death, or choose champions to fight in their stead. In a few notable situations, displeased rulers have ordered the templars to face one another in the arena. Combat is almost always a combination of defiler magic and battle skills. A small but powerful spell group is awarded to each combatant by the sorcerer-king or -queen. Use of "the Way" is neither forbidden nor encouraged, but usually gives a combatant an upper hand.

One of the most famous cases of courtyard combat was between Sephinea the Red and Nortora of Sagia in the arena at Raam. The sorcerer-queen's two favorite templars accused one another of heresies and plots to overthrow the queen. The sorcerer-queen Abalach-Re concluded that personal combat between the templars was the best way to publicly decide guilt and innocence for such heinous accusations. This combat drew the largest crowd ever known to attend any fight in Raam.

The battle was short and vicious. Although an accomplished spellcaster, Sephinea had no resistance to Nortora's extremely powerful wild psionic talents. Sephinea was dead before the two (undisintegrated) halves of her body hit the ground.

Following the glorious combat, the sorcerer-queen called Nortora, the victor, over in front of the royal viewing stands. In one of the few personal appearances the

## Arenas of Tyr



sorcerer-queen ever made to the arena, she gazed down upon the winner with fire in her eyes. As the crowd yelled and screamed the victor's name, the sorcerer-queen pointed a single finger in her templar's direction and exploded the winning combatant's body into a thousand pieces across the arena. The stunned crowd fell silent. The great sorcerer-queen raised her inhuman voice and stated, in matter-of-fact tones, that she tolerated no rumors of the overthrow of her kingdom or anarchy therein. With that, she turned and faded away. The crowds fled the exit, fearing the next action of their sorcerer-queen. None was to come. Abalach-Re had achieved all she desired for the moment. She had put an end to a rivalry, stopped a malicious rumor, and regained the fear of her people.





## Chapter 5: The Gladiator Campaign

Although any campaign can support gladiators, a campaign devoted to gladiators will have a markedly different flavor. Not only must the DM prepare new and exciting arena games, but must also be prepared to deal with the constant intrigues. Though not as subtle as those in a templar's life, the intrigues involved in playing gladiators are nearly as pervasive.

### PCs as Gladiators

One of the most important factors players must take into consideration when creating a gladiator PC is the PC's status. Is he a slave or was he once a slave? Is she a noble, a peasant, or somewhere in between? The range of distinctions can prove to be the difference between success and failure for a gladiator.

Naturally, each of these has benefits and drawbacks. A slave, for example, automatically receives a patron, and usually gains the benefit of free training and weapons. However, a slave is still a slave, and therefore must serve the whim of his or her master. A freeman, on the other hand, has to rely on his or her own ingenuity and connections to find these. At the same time, a freeman need not abide by the will of others (although the sorcerer-king and the templars might see things somewhat differently).

Likewise, nobles bow to no one but the few individuals who are their social superiors. Their ability to hire trainers and buy weapons is usually far greater than any other class. Their resources may be nearly unlimited in comparison. However, a noble, no matter his or her calling, is very unused to exertion and pain. Even those nobles who have trained in the harshest of environments are used to having things fall their way, and take defeat terribly. Also, their foes (for a noble has many) will take every opportunity to attempt to eliminate gladiator nobles, both in the ruling councils and in the arena. Additionally, nobles must usually take pains to hide their identities, for known nobles are naturally the first targets for many of the enslaved gladiators.

The majority of PC gladiators are going to be free, but not noble-born, either having been born free or recently freed from slavery. One might wonder why there are such large numbers of gladiators running around free when so many of them started their careers as slaves. There are quite a few possible explanations for this.

For example, perhaps they escaped from their masters in a brutal slave uprising, slaying their masters and fleeing into the desert. Perhaps they come from a militant slave tribe in the desert which has devoted itself to combat and weaponry skills, in order that they might never be dragged into slavery again. Or they might be simple villagers who have a natural aptitude for weapons, and who cannot resist the lure of the arena. In order to survive, they have been forced to sell their natural skills to the arena for the enjoyment of others.

Whatever the explanation, the player must furnish the DM with a reason why the gladiator PC is free, instead of a slave. Of course, the player can always take the option that the PC is currently a slave, and role-play the slavery situation for as much as it is worth. When the PC tires of slavery, the gladiator may always attempt to escape his or her bonds.

### Living Conditions

To define gladiators further, there are two major varieties of enslaved gladiators: those owned by the city/sorcerer-king, and those owned privately, by nobles, templars, or merchant houses. Of course, there are always the slaves of unimportant, poorer men, some of whom are pressed into service as gladiators. Few of these slaves survive their first combat; those that do typically bring huge amounts of wealth to their owner, who is then able to afford the high expenses for his or her prize gladiator.

# The Gladiator Campaign



## Stables

Any group of enslaved gladiators is defined as a *stable*. Some stables are quite large, while others boast only two or three gladiators. The majority of stables, however, are owned by nobles or merchant houses, who use them to increase their already-vast stores of wealth. Owning a stable is not all profit, though it might seem that way. After all, the owners must feed and house their slaves, not to mention making sure they are fit for the arena.

Each stable has a champion (though the wealthier houses can have several), the gladiator or gladiators who can best most or all the others of the stable. The champions vary in ability from 5th to 20th level, depending on the stable. Typically, the more powerful the house, the more powerful the stable, and thus the more powerful the champion. There are exceptions to this rule, but they are few and far between. For example, a minor slaveowner might have only two gladiators, but one could be of exceptional prowess. Likewise, a huge stable might not have made provisions for the necessary training, and so its gladiators suffer from inexperience.

Occasionally, rivalries between gladiators in the same stable develop, but these are never encouraged. The owner never arranges public matches between two combative gladiators, for they are both assets. If the rivalry grows too intense, the owner may opt to have the two fight a nonlethal combat in the privacy of his personal grounds. With guards standing at the ready all around, few of these matches ever get too out of hand, and only rarely do they prove deadly. The house's healer stands ready to prevent serious and permanent injury to either side.

Aside from these personal matches to vent their frustrations (and for the amusement of the owner), the two rivals are unlikely to be able to get their hands on each other. However, if one of the rivals is traded to another owner, chances are that they will meet in the arena someday. If this happens, the crowd is truly in for one of the best fights on Athas; the two gladiators do not have to whip

themselves into a killing hatred, for the sparks are already there. Even a nonlethal match will result in one of the gladiators being carried from the arena on a stretcher, for the two rivals will pummel each other mercilessly.

## Private Stables

For the majority of enslaved gladiators, the food and housing is better than that of the average slave. However, they remain slaves, and are therefore dependent on their master's will. No matter how pleasant the rest of their lives, the one immutable fact of their existence is that their happiness is dependent on their master's pleasure.

For the most part, their lives are pleasurable; at least, they are pleasurable compared to the conditions under which most citizens, whether free or slave, must survive. Not only are their food and lodging provided for, these necessities are better than average. After all, if a gladia-





## The Gladiator Campaign

tor is malnourished and exhausted, his performance suffers.

Most gladiators, while they are not by nature complainers, are anxious to improve their lot by whatever means possible, and claim that the fare they receive is not good enough, that their beds are unfit for true sleep. Their owners, eager to keep the gladiators happy, provide these as long as the gladiators prove themselves useful. The better and more profitable the gladiator, the better the living conditions in which he finds himself.

However, when the gladiators become careless or fail to bring profit to the owner, he invariably returns them to the spartan conditions in which they lived previously. If they have brought disaster, financial or otherwise, to his house, he often has them killed outright or traded to one of his rivals, in the hope that a similar fate will befall his rival.

In addition to food and lodging, all slave gladiators also receive free training. This accounts, in large part, for the gladiator's proficiency with all weapons. They have nothing to do all day but train, eat, train, eat, train, eat, and sleep. Many gladiators actively look forward to a Game Day, if only to break this monotonous routine. When a slave gladiator is able to advance a level, he always has training available to him. For more on this subject, refer to the "Training" section later in this chapter.

If a gladiator suffers injury in the brutal training, the owner nearly always has healers available to deal with the injuries. It profits the owner nothing if the gladiator is not well enough to fight and win. Skilled healers hover constantly near the training arenas of private owners.

Finally, in addition to healing, privately-owned gladiators often have masseuses to tend to their aching muscles and bruised bodies. With a skilled pair of hands working the knots and sore muscles to easy relaxation at the end of each day, these gladiators can train longer and harder than most others. Some owners provide slaves who can perform this service, while others require stablemates with the Massage nonweapon proficiency to perform this beneficial task.

### The City's Stables

Gladiators owned by the city, on the other hand, generally suffer less-than-perfect handling by their overseers. The city cares nothing for their comfort; the warriors exist only to provide entertainment for the masses. Skilled gladiators receive marginally better treatment than new or inept ones. Poor and complaining gladiators can always be replaced by new recruits fresh-picked from the streets of the city.

The food for these gladiators is nutritious, if not enjoyable; the bedding in the dormitories can be slept on, though it is no featherbed by any stretch of the imagination. Still, though these two amenities are not perfect, they are seen as far better than starving and sleeping on rocks. Nonetheless, one nagging fact remains in the back of every city gladiator's mind: freedom is better than slavery.

Most city-owned gladiators are not lucky enough to have healers. If they are wounded in training, they are expected to recuperate in time for the big battles. If they prove to be a liability in this regard, they are either turned out on the streets, sold to a new owner, or simply disposed of. Unless a city-owned gladiator is fortunate enough to have someone keeping a special eye on him, he must do his best to stay hale and healthy on his own.

After the games, of course, the city is obligated to either heal their gladiators or eliminate them entirely. Those who fought well (even though they might not have won) earn their healing; those who did not are either sold or killed. They are never set free, despite rumors to the contrary.

### Free Gladiators

Free gladiators have as good a living condition as their fame, ability, and area will allow them. A poor gladiator will usually live in a poor neighborhood, unable to afford the amusements in which his wealthier and more skilled brethren engage. His training will be substandard unless

# The Gladiator Campaign



he can somehow cajole a trainer into accepting him. His home will be even worse than his training unless he is independently wealthy. However, the impoverished gladiator has one significant advantage over his brethren: he is free.

He does not need to fight for the pleasure of someone else. He fights for his own dignity and his own survival, not the whim of a barely-known master. He fights for his very life, both in and outside the ring, and that makes him far more desperate and therefore more dangerous than a slave gladiator. Although his training might not be as advanced as that of his compatriots, his fervor, intensity and enthusiasm can often make up for the lack of formalized teaching.

The free gladiator must pay for all expenses he incurs, whether it is for healing or for training. Unless he can find someone who will perform these services for free, chances are his winnings will at least partially evaporate into the pockets of the healers and trainers of the city-state.

## Training

Gladiators are not simply born with their skills, although they are usually more inclined towards physical exertion. Races such as the mul are often expressly bred for qualities that may provide entertainment in the arena. Yet their potential must be honed, their reflexes sharpened, so that they might become the most perfect single combatants of Athas. The training schools and the private trainers of the city-states fill this need.

When would-be gladiators enter the schools, whether they are nobles or slaves, they must swear an oath. This vow requires them to endure through everything, whether they are bound, beaten, burned, or slain. In a land where honor has no meaning, this oath takes on a special significance, for it binds the gladiators' lives with their word; their success and ability in the arena becomes a measure of how well they keep that vow.

The schools only offer a certain amount of training,

which is not on a par with that offered by most private trainers. The main reason anyone attends them at all is that the city requires it. Most cities will not allow a gladiator in the ring if he has not completed the course at the city's school. The course is very basic gladiator training, including the following courses in no particular order. This series of activities is common to all cities, though it is based on Tyr's course, widely acknowledged to be the best. It consists of Tightrope Walking, Beast Fighting, Sparring Practice, Dodging Practice, Balance Training, and Obstacle Courses.

Most of the weapons used are made of wood, which, while essentially harmless, pack a painful punch. The damage inflicted by these weapons is that of their metal counterparts, but only one-quarter of that damage is real. The other three-quarters of it returns 12 hours after the initial combat. For the purposes of training with these weapons, the characters' hit points become "Training





## The Gladiator Campaign

Points.” When they enter into combat with other students bearing these weapons, they take damage only to their Training Points. If any gladiator takes more than his Training Points in damage, he falls unconscious, and must pay a visit to the medics to regain his points. Training Points heal far more quickly than ordinary hit points, and the PC can be back in action half a day after being knocked out.

If the damage inflicted takes the gladiator below -10 Training Points, he is killed by the force of the blow. Unruly gladiators are often dealt with in this fashion; the “accidental” deaths can neither be traced nor blamed on any one person. The death can be written off as an excess of enthusiasm in training.

The advantage of this system is that the PCs can gain a sense of accomplishment when they deliver a blow that knocks their opponent unconscious. They know that their prowess is such that they can kill their enemies, without actually shedding blood.

Training Points are applicable only to the wooden weapons. All other forms of damage the PCs receive in this course is real damage. The fire burns them as it would ordinarily, the spike are just as sharp. It is essential that the players know this, so they do not take foolish and unnecessary risks because they assume their characters are invulnerable for the duration of the course.

The exercises of the two-week course are as follows:

- **Basic Weapon Training:** Each morning before dawn, every student is awakened by the trainers, who issue the gladiators weapons and assign them to partners for the early morning drills. For four hours, the gladiators are made to spar with a variety of weapons, after which they are fed their breakfast. After breakfast, they must spar for an additional three hours, using different weapons than the ones they used earlier.

There are heavy posts and wooden dummies upon which the students practice their skills without the element of an opponent. The benefit of these is that the student has a chance to strike and hone his technique

without having to worry about being struck in return.

A more advanced version, called the gauntlet, consists of a dummy set upon a rotating post. When the pupil strikes one part of the mannequin, it spins around, swinging its weapon at the student. This teaches the student the basics of movement combined with attacking, and the possible consequences of not being fast enough to evade the enemy’s weapon.

- **Basic Calisthenics:** After the intensive weapons workout, the gladiators spend two hours with a calisthenic exercise of their choice: running, weight-lifting, some sort of sport, or other exercises to build heart strength and increase endurance. Whatever they choose, they can be sure none of the other activities provide less of a workout. After the calisthenic period is over, the gladiators eat a heavy lunch, and then proceed to the areas described hereafter. They work on only one of these all through the afternoon, proceeding to one of the others only after they have demonstrated ability in that exercise.

- **Tightrope Walking:** Initially, to teach them to improve their balance, the gladiators are taught to walk a tightrope suspended 2 feet above the ground. They can do this by making a successful check against Dex -1. After they learn the basics, the rope is raised to 15 feet above the ground, high enough to cause 1d6 points of damage when the PC falls from it. To successfully walk the higher rope, they must check at Dex -2.

After they succeed in this endeavor, they must master the truly hard walk. The rope remains 15 feet above the ground, but the landing is not nearly as pleasant. Instead of hard, stony ground, the landing is now a pit of fire, whose tendrils reach anxiously toward those who brave the tough rope above it. To avoid falling into the smoldering pit, the character must make three Ability checks. The first is a Con -2, to see if the PC can advance into the choking smoke rising from the pit. The second is a Wis -2, to see if the PC can maintain enough concentration to ignore the distraction of the flames crackling beneath him. The third is a check against Dex -4, to see if the PC

# The Gladiator Campaign



can cross the rope despite its bouncing and weaving in the heat-induced breeze.

Those who fail in any of these checks fall into the flame pit, though they can try to grab the rope to avoid damage. This requires a check against Dex -2. In addition to the 1d6 points of damage for the fall, they take another 3d6 for flame damage. Each round spent in the fire pit causes another 2d6 points.

PCs with the Tightrope Walking proficiency may use their ability in place of the Dex checks. They have trained long enough that such distractions are no longer a problem for them, and are in fact rather easy to ignore.

- **Beast-Fighting:** In this exercise, the trainees are lowered singly into a 15-foot-deep pit to fight against a creature of the trainer's choice. The trainer makes this decision based on what he has observed of the PC's ability. He will not force a gladiator into the pit if the creature will obviously kill him, but neither will he choose a creature that is ridiculously easy for the PC to defeat. Both the gladiator and the creature are hampered by the giant-hair ropes that are tied to them to pull one away from the other. Attack rolls are made at -1 because of these ropes.

The PC is issued only a wooden practice blade, to ensure that he does not slaughter the creature. No lethal weapons are permitted; after all, it is quite difficult procuring creatures from the desert, and no new gladiator is worth enough effort to capture a separate creature for each of them. When one or the other is on the verge of defeat, the handlers at the edge of the pit pull the two apart.

- **Sparring Training:** Sparring practice takes three forms. The first and most simple kind of sparring takes place inside a chalk circle drawn on the ground. The object of the exercise is to drive one's opponent, who is usually another gladiator from the same class, from the circle without allowing one's own feet to leave the area. Any tactic for doing so is allowed, from trickery to brute force, from momentum to mass. The DM should make the PCs role-play this encounter, judging for himself whether the various tactics work.

The second form of sparring takes place on raised platforms surrounded by large stone spikes. Again, the two on the platforms are students from the same class. The object is to knock the opponent from his platform onto the spikes waiting below, or to spar for 5 minutes with neither opponent falling. The exercise purportedly develops balance and positioning skills, as well as the ability to dodge without moving far from the intended target; after a few falls onto the spikes, most warriors are anxious to develop the skills necessary to avoid such a fate.

For this exercise, each attacker has a -1 penalty to hit, because neither can maneuver as is necessary for true fighting. When one of the attackers is struck, he must immediately check at Dex -3 or lose his balance and fall into the spikes. The fall inflicts 1d6 points, and the spikes inflict another 2d6. They leave permanent scars, unless they are tended to immediately and magically.

The third sparring practice takes place in the Fire Pit. The two opponents, once again from the same class, ascend 10 feet onto the open platform, which consists merely of a stage surrounded by ditches filled with flammable material which has been set ablaze. The heat in the Pit is nearly intolerable. The two students fight with their wooden weapons here until one of them is knocked senseless or into the flaming ditch. The true winner manages both. This exercise develops endurance, teaching the gladiator to endure and win despite adverse physical surroundings.

Any gladiator who falls into the ditch takes an initial 3d6 points of damage, with an additional 2d6 for each round thereafter. Those who are knocked unconscious into the ditch lie there for at least two rounds before the guards and trainers can pull them from the flames.

- **Dodging Practice:** This is one of the most brutal of the practices of the entire course, for one simple reason: the PCs have a chance of avoiding the pain in the other exercises. Dodging practice offers only a slim chance of that.

The PC stands in front of a soft clay wall, while 20 feet





# The Gladiator Campaign



# The Gladiator Campaign



away, an archer lets 6 arrows fly at him. These are not practice arrows, and though the archer is not actively trying to kill the PC, the arrows can still be deadly. The 3rd-level archer must roll to hit the unarmored PC. If the archer's attack roll succeeds, the PC must make a Dex -5 roll in order to avoid the arrows. The person who makes their roll with the greater difference determines the outcome.

*Example:* Nylorac the gladiator stands in the archery range. Larech the archer fires an arrow at her. Since Nylorac has a Dex of 17, she has an AC of 7. Larech needs an 11 to hit her, and rolls a 16. Nylorac needs a 12 or less to avoid the arrow, and rolls a 6. Since the difference between 12 and 6 is 6, while the difference between 16 and 11 is 5, Nylorac avoids the arrow.

The more easily the PC avoids the arrows, the more arrows are fired at him. Up to three archers can fire at the PC at a time. Each archer decreases the chance of avoidance by an additional -2 each, to a minimum of Dex -3. Please note that this practice does not carry over into the ordinary combat life of the PC, unless he faces only archers, with no melee prospects. Even then, the DM should use discretion as to how well this skill translates to the world beyond the training course. When the PC goes down, he is immediately tended to by healers.

- **Balance Training:** Like the final Tightrope exercise, this drill is held over a fire pit. Stones scattered about the pit make up the course, the object of which is to cross from one side to the other, jumping from stone to stone without falling into the flame. It sounds easy, but there is a catch: some of the stones fall over into the pit when stepped upon. The arrangement of the stones varies from day to day, as does the number of those that fall into the flame. This exercise is designed to teach quick action and judgment in unfamiliar and hostile territory.

Before beginning this exercise, the DM should make a quick sketch of the pit, and roll 2d20 for the number of stones in the 40' × 40' course. After this, roll 3d6 to deter-

mine how many of these are breakaway stones that will spill the character into the flame. There will always be a minimum of 20 stones, and a minimum of 6 breaking stones. After placing the stones in the arena, the course is ready for the gladiator to cross it. The DM should draw a map of the placement of stones, keeping the knowledge of the breakaways secret, so that the player can announce to which stones his PC leaps.

The PC starts on one edge of the course, and must jump from one scalding rock to another across the flaming pit amid the billowing smoke. Each round on the stones causes 1d4 points of damage simply for being in the searing heat. The PC can advance 10 feet a round, or an average of 5 stones a round, though this figure may vary depending on the placement of the stones.

As with the Tightrope Walking, the PC must make several Ability checks. The first is a Con -2 to pass into the boiling smoke. The second is a Wis -1, to gain the necessary courage to enter into the flames. The third check every time the PC leaps to a stone. This check, Dex -2, is to determine if the PC maintains his footing on the sooty rocks.

If the PC lands on a breaking stone, he must check vs. Dex at -6 to avoid falling into the flames before he can leap to another rock. If the PC makes his roll by less than 5, the next jump from that rock is made at Dex -4; this assumes that the PC is still off-balance from the sudden leap from the falling stone. If the PC makes his roll by more than 5, he is assumed to have maintained his balance even as he leapt to the next island of safety.

If a gladiator falls into the flames, he suffers 3d6 points of damage, and 2d6 each round thereafter in which he remains directly in the flames. He may climb back onto a nearby stone, suffering 1d6 points of damage in the process, or he may attempt to slog his way out the fire pit. A character may move 10 feet per round through the burning material, suffering 2d6 points of damage per round of this movement. The best course is generally to climb back onto the stones. Unless the edge of the firepit



## The Gladiator Campaign

is less than 10 feet away, the character will most likely suffer far more by wading through the burning material.

- **Obstacle Courses:** Though these vary from course to course, they all have the same aim: develop the endurance and agility necessary to survive in the arena. They combine aspects of the other exercises, testing how well the PCs have learned their lessons.

Most of these rely, in large part, on the endurance of the gladiator. Since he must *sprint* through the entire course, this is a true test of the gladiator's mental reserves.

The course is generally over one mile in total length, containing numerous switchbacks in the trail. Along the way are numerous boobytraps, pitfalls, and of course obstacles and barricades. Some of these are annoying, some are painful, and some are deadly.

For example, a course might contain 10-foot-deep pits lined with spikes over which the gladiator must jump or swing over by means of a frayed rope. Later, there might be a 15-foot-high wall which the gladiator must climb while carrying his practice weapon. He will have to jump over mounds studded with short, sharp spikes; some of these mounds will have concealed pits just after them into which the unaware will fall.

The PC will have to avoid the arrows fired at him in a certain section, dodging for cover until he can retaliate against the archer. He will have to run through a tunnel where vines studded with obsidian shards hang from the ceiling. He will have to avoid the tripwires which will bring the whole structure crashing down upon his head.

These are but samples of the barriers to completing an obstacle course. The gladiator must be alert at all times or suffer drastic consequences. The obstacle course is one of the most unforgiving of the exercises, for the trainers actively seek to damage and hurt those who pass into its confines.

Some of the gladiators who run the course never emerge, either because of a personal bias on the part of the trainer, or on the orders of a templar or similarly-placed potentate. There are few better places for a gladia-

tor to have an "accident," for none can produce evidence of murder or intentional maiming, though their suspicions may run rampant. Best of all, the obstacle course is a requirement to leave the environs of the gladiatorial school.

The DM is encouraged to be creative with the obstacle courses. Any traps that will grievously harm the character are permitted, as are those that kill if improperly dealt with. However, the DM should not use the obstacle course as a certain-death device to get rid of characters he finds offensive. The PC must make his own mistakes to die here. He should at least be allowed a chance to survive the course.

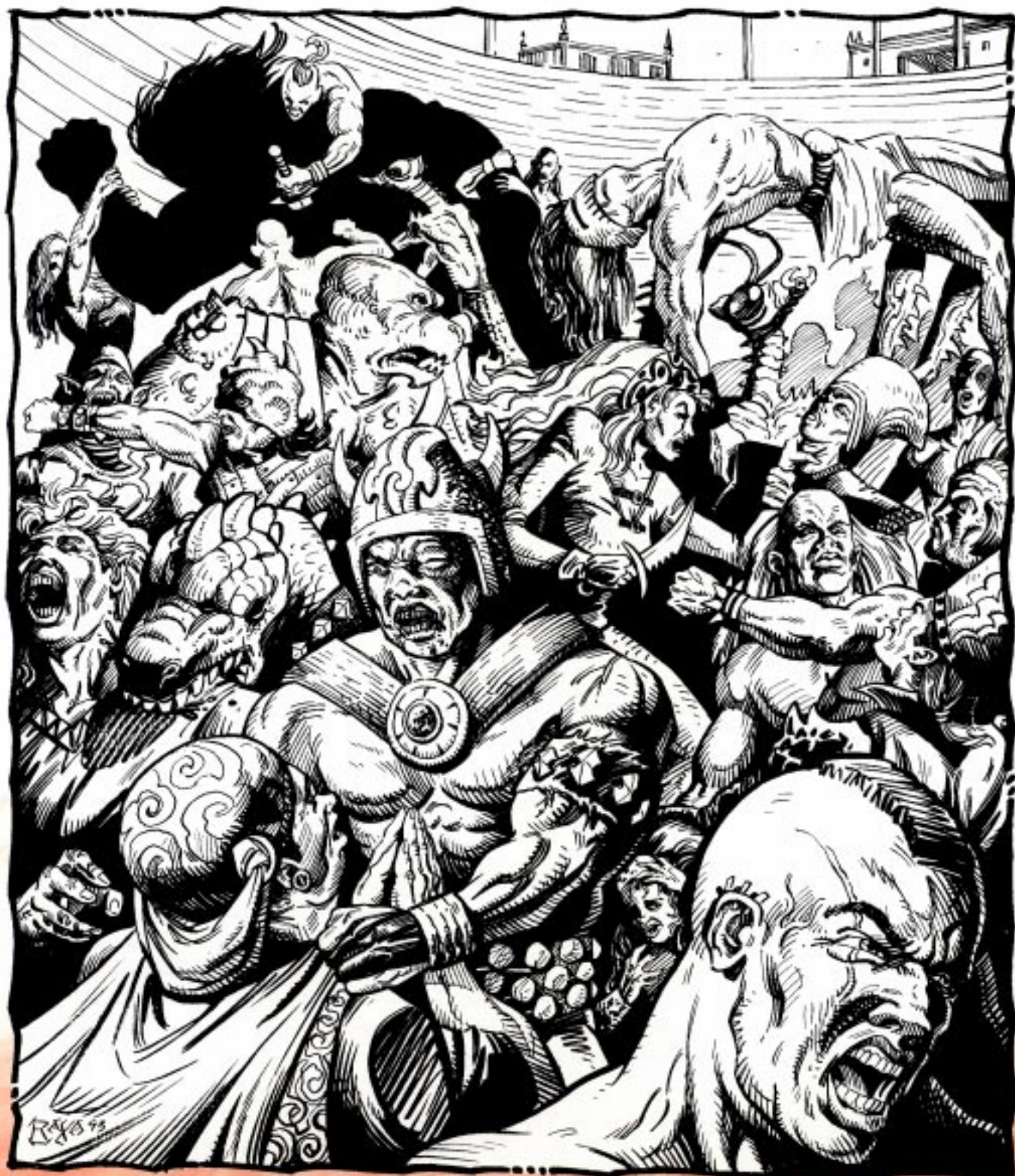
Although sponsored by the city, the basic course does provide healers to the wounded gladiators. Since the gladiators or their owners pay such a large amount to the city for the privilege of having their slaves train there, the city magnanimously provides healers for those wounded in the brutal training sessions. They even provide cremation for those who die on school grounds.

The gladiators are required to stay at the miserable barracks provided by the city for the intensive, two-week course. Guards patrol the perimeter of the camp to ensure that there are no nightly forays into the city for entertainment or better food. Bribing the guards is frowned upon, but is not unheard of. The fee, however, is quite large, as is the punishment for those caught giving and accepting bribes. Death for the guards is immediate, while the gladiator takes a severe beating (10-20 lashes with the barbed whip, each stroke causing 1d2 points of damage).

Disobeying any of the rules set within the school is also grounds for a lashing. The school will never expel any of its students; they are in for the duration, no matter how bloody it gets. If they cannot live by the rules set inside, they will pay for it with a bloody and tattered back.

Of course, slave gladiators receive their training free of charge; it is in the best interests of their owners to ensure that their gladiators receive the best possible training, and

# The Gladiator Campaign





## The Gladiator Campaign

slaves do not receive payment for their work. The city gladiators receive a more specialized training than is available to most who take the city's courses, provided they survive their first battle and the initial training course.

Free gladiators and owners, on the other hand, must pay a flat rate of 10 gp to the city if they want to have the advantage of training in the city's course. Although this is a large sum of money, it is the only way a gladiator will be allowed into the arena, unless he is being admitted as a criminal. In this case, he becomes the property of the state, and must endure through the course anyway.

Anyone entering one of these courses, whether free or not, becomes a ward of the state for the duration of that time. They are not allowed to break with the regimen prescribed or they suffer. Many a freeman has felt the lash on his back when he thought himself above the rules that apply to everyone in the course. The templars claim this is for the good of the gladiator; privation teaches endurance, a lesson everyone, whether noble or base-born, needs to learn.

### Awards and Rewards

Naturally, a good gladiator receives far better treatment than one who is merely lackluster. Likewise, a lackluster gladiator will receive better treatment than one who is utterly wunskilled. Attitude also makes a difference. Even a good gladiator with a bad attitude towards his slavery will be treated more harshly by his masters than one who openly bears his chains. Those who plot evil against their masters but hide behind a friendly face should hereby be warned: the master keeps psionics on his staff for a reason.

The concessions for nicer living quarters and better food is about all an enslaved gladiator is likely to get from his master. Even an excellent gladiator never receives any of the money made from his victories or the wagers won on said victories. The owner is far more likely to pocket all the winnings, justifying this by explaining that he was the one

who provided the gladiator's training, food, and housing, not to mention the opportunity to perform in the arena. Besides, what need has a slave for money anyway?

From the crowd, a good gladiator earns devotion and fame, the notoriety that accompanies a particularly good outing. If he keeps up a good level of performance, he will become instantaneously recognizable in his city-state. This is dealt with further in this chapter under the heading "Fame and Infamy." The adulation of the crowd is the only tangible reward most gladiators ever earn.

Slave owners receive the money for their slaves' appearances in the arena. Though they earn most of their money betting on their gladiators, they also gain the money shown on the following table for bringing their prize gladiators to the games. The money they acquire through the payment is negligible when compared with the money they can earn by betting on or against their gladiators. With a single winning gladiator, a shrewd bettor can win back the money spent on training that gladiator and enough to show a profit. If it weren't profitable, the sport would never have taken hold in the hearts of the nobility as well.

Free gladiators do receive some money for entering the arena, as shown on the table below. They earn half in advance, when they arrive at the arena, and gain the other half after they are done fighting. However, they earn most of their money betting on themselves. It is a rare gladiator who does not spend all his life's earnings wagering on himself; if he dies, he has no need for money, and if he wins, he can double (and sometimes even quadruple) his income.

Each payment the city makes to a gladiator or his owner demands a certain number of fights. The less-experienced gladiators are expected to fight more often for less money, because their names simply do not create a large enough draw for the crowd to warrant huge payments for a single fight.

Of course, if the gladiator should die during the games, the remainder of his money is forfeit to the city. If the fallen gladiator has family, the city is more than happy to

# The Gladiator Campaign



provide burial services; that is, it uses the body to fertilize the fields surrounding the city. In an unusual and unexpectedly magnanimous gesture, the templars do not directly tax gladiators for the money they earn for their appearances in the arena.

## Payments for Arena Appearances Table

Level of Gladiator	Payment	Minimum No. of Fights
1-2	1 bit	4
3-5	1 cp	3
6-8	1 sp	3
3-11	5 cp	2
12-14	2 cp	1
15-17	6 gp	1
18-20	10 gp	2
21+	15 gp	2

It may seem unfair that higher-level gladiators are expected to fight more often than some of those at lower level. The reasoning behind this is typical of an Athasian city: since the gladiator is earning so much money each Game Day, the crowd deserves to see him more than once. The gladiators of very low level have not yet earned a name for themselves, and so need to fight often to earn even a pittance. Those of high level have become famous, worthy of the crowd's attention. Those in between are famous enough to draw a crowd, but not yet famous enough to warrant an additional fight. They draw the crowd, but the mob is far more interested in the extremely high-level gladiators, and therefore need to see him more often to placate their cravings.

Gladiators can also supplement their income by earning bonuses as Famous or Infamous gladiators. (See "Fame and Infamy" later this chapter.) People will always want to see their favorites, even though the gladiators might not be as powerful as some to be found in the arena.



## Punishments

The punishments for misbehaving gladiators are as large as their rewards for good behavior are small. Though they gain only bedding, food, clothing, and training in exchange for their freedom and their lives, the smallest infraction brings down the full wrath of their owners. Though the punishments are not designed to goad the gladiator beyond the bounds of reason, they remind him or her who holds the whip.

Most punishments involve limiting food or water rations, forbidding the gladiator to participate in the upcoming games, and occasionally whippings. The master is unlikely to do anything that will permanently harm his gladiators, but on the other hand wants to make sure that his message has a lasting effect, to guarantee that his property will not misbehave in such a fashion again. The punishments continue until the gladiator



## The Gladiator Campaign

demonstrates a truly contrite attitude.

The food and water limitations are usually enough to frighten a gladiator into subservience. Every gladiator knows that if he is not properly fed and rested the night before a big match, chances are his foe will have the advantage in the match. Most gladiators do not realize that the owner is thereby threatening his investment, and they quickly accede to his demands. Most nurse resentment at this treatment, but hide their true feelings in order to avoid further sanctions.

Although forbidding a gladiator participation in the games may not sound like much of a punishment, one must understand that the games are one of the few things that can break the monotony of the life in the stables. They can also provide one of the true tests of a gladiator's skills, tests that are unavailable in standard training. The gladiator often gives in to the master's demands of sheer boredom.

Occasionally, these punishments fail to instill the gladiator with the necessary behavior. In cases like these, the owner resorts to a tried and true method of disciplining ordinary slaves: whipping. However, some gladiators quickly become inured to pain through their daily training, and whipping does little but irritate them. If he can stand it long enough, a gladiator's back can be whipped into bloody ribbons before he falls unconscious. This ensures that unless the owner wants to spend money on magical healing, the gladiator will be useless for several days while he recovers from the lashing.

Along the same lines as the lashing is the pillory. Although it is not as directly brutal, it can be just as punishing in its own fashion. Locked in a wooden stock in the midday sun without water is a devastating experience even to hardened gladiators.

Using the Dehydration rules on page 86 of the *Rules Book*, the DM can determine how much time the PC spends in the stocks, and thus how much Constitution the PC loses for his insubordination. The time spent in the pillory should be proportional to the magnitude of

the PC's obstinance.

If none of these prove to work, a far more effective method is to punish other members of the stable with the above methods until the offending gladiator reforms his ways. If the gladiator cares for his companions, he will accept the changes his master demands. If the offender does not, his compatriots come to hate him, and will discipline him in a far more brutal fashion than his master, and may even allow him to die in the arena. Since the life of each gladiator rests in the hands of the others, this is a particularly effective method of punishment, especially against notably recalcitrant gladiators, such as muls and dwarves.

### Escape and Revolt!

Tired of the constant, brutal punishment, as well as being required to risk their lives every week, gladiators almost invariably grow sick of their enforced captivity, the life of a slave. Even under the kindest of owners, they realize that they cannot bear their slavery any longer.

When they come to this realization, they are at their most dangerous. If gladiators are the most skilled fighters of Athas, how much more ferocious are they when they have set their minds on freedom?

Shocked reports of slave revolts constantly circulate throughout the grapevine of the cities, but none arouse such horror as those of escaped gladiators. The tales of gutted plantations and twisted bodies are enough to whiten the faces and chill the hearts of the owners. Even when the gladiators are seemingly content, they can explode into fury against their former masters, leaving only burning houses behind them as they escape into the deserts of Athas.

Owners of gladiators have learned to keep their eyes out for the warning signs of discontent among their gladiators. Those who do not often awaken to find their guards slain and their slaves freed. As often as not, the owners do not wake at all, their shredded bodies left to rot in their

# The Gladiator Campaign



plantations. Even when the gladiators are being carefully watched, there is often little warning before they revolt against their master and his household.

Therefore, slave owners tend to have their gladiators guarded with at least twice the number of guards an ordinary slave would warrant, with at least one psionicist to back them up. These guards usually have had some sort of gladiatorial training, although it does not compare with that of the gladiators themselves. Still, they have some idea of what to expect when they are rushed by a platoon of gladiators.

Small wonder, then, that many of these guards surrender immediately, rather than suffer certain death. Unfortunately for them, they are likely to die anyway for the crime of enforcing the master's will. Escaping gladiators are merciless.

It does not always help to keep the gladiators sequestered away from their weapons, for their improvisational skills with nearly anything left lying around rivals their skill with weapons. Farm implements, broken chairs, tables—if it can hurt someone, gladiators know how to use it. If they are kept away from their weapons, they will find a way to get to them eventually.

Gladiators do not always escape *en masse*. Some creep away into the darkness at night, eluding the searching gazes of the guards and psionicists. However, if they are making their escape in small numbers, they must do so quietly and carefully. Escape, unlike revolt, is something best done noiselessly. When escaping, the gladiators rely on their master to punish the lax guards, thus eliminating the need for the gladiators to avenge themselves on the guards personally.

When and if the PCs tire of being slave gladiators, their escape from the chains of slavery can provide nights of exciting adventure: the planning, the stealth, and the actual escape easily capture the imagination. The DM should have the PCs role-play nearly every instant of the escape, heightening the tension and suspense as much as possible.

## Social Life

For most gladiators, social life is nonexistent. As slaves, they have no right to expect one. Sometimes their owners will parade them in front of their peers in order to impress these colleagues, but otherwise they are dependent on one another for their social interaction. The stable can provide a semblance of an ordinary social life, but there is a limited potential for intermingling, as each gladiator is, at heart, dissatisfied with his lot.

Those few gladiators who rule their own lives can determine the course of their social lives. However, as gladiators, they must become accustomed to a certain amount of notoriety. Unless they mask themselves entirely while fighting (an uncomfortable proposition, to say the least), they will be recognized. If a known gladiator is good enough, he will develop a following of sorts, a group of people who adore him and follow his every move whenever possible.

Gladiators suffer a strange reaction from most people. Since it is traditionally the occupation of slaves, freemen look down on the gladiator at the same time that they revere him for his exploits. They will take in a gladiator both out of fear and veneration, yet despise him at the same time for selling his freedom for the entertainment of others. Yet even then they hardly realize that his price is merely more obvious than theirs, that they too are chained as surely as he, and often for less purpose.

Among nobles, gladiators are tolerated as amusements and tools for keeping the rabble pacified. Even with these prejudices at the forefront, most nobles are secretly enthralled with the gladiator's sheer physical prowess. The owner freely demonstrates his prizes to his peers, knowing the envy this is likely to arouse. The nobles' fascination often far outstrips their contempt for the gladiator, revealed in the longing glances of the ladies and the jealous ones of the men.

Even those nobles with gladiators cannot help but envy the gladiator. In a world of subtlety, the gladiator lives life





## The Gladiator Campaign

to its fullest, always staring death in the face. Each moment could be his last, and so he is determined to make the most of each that he has remaining. The gladiator's world is brutal and direct, not a land of feigned emotions and false alliances. The nobles, even as they despise the base gladiator, suffer jealous pangs at what they perceive as the simplicity of his life.

Small wonder then, that several nobles have been known to renounce their friends for their time in the ring. Though this means they become immediate outcasts in their social group, they find they begin to enjoy life beyond the faded decadence of the other nobles. Some cities immediately demote the noble who enters the arena, seizing his property and assets, stripping him of his title, and turning him out into the streets.

Still, compared to the heady thrill of the arena, this means nothing initially. Only after the noble finds the scheming and base betrayal he thought he had left behind still affects him personally does he realize that he has thrown away his life. Experienced ex-noble gladiators are among the most bitter of a bitter lot; many without the courage to try to better themselves give up here, dying in the arena without offering much of a struggle. Only those with true strength of character last long after they discover the disloyalty they left behind for the glory of the arena merely wears a different form here.

It is only among other gladiators that gladiators find full acceptance, and sometimes not even then. The experienced gladiators realize what their life means, what their eventual destiny is likely to be. It is a grim acceptance, and not always a friendly one. Yet only the gladiators realize what it is to be a gladiator, only the gladiators know what their lives truly mean amid all the mean squabbling for life around them.

The answer is chilling in its bluntness: their lives mean almost nothing, even as they mean nearly everything to others. They offer a chance for others to see what their fate will be, a chance for liberation for the day. They are the proxies who act for the crowd's will.

The life of a gladiator is a lonely one, yet one they are willing to live. Even when they escape to find freedom and friends, they bear with them the scars of their time in the arena. It is no wonder that most gladiators are sullen and taciturn; they have seen the futility of their lives, and most of them accept it. They are not, for the most part, very good company socially, but they are indispensable when danger threatens.

### Keeping Score

Official score-keepers are in evidence in each of the cities, most often in the form of the bookkeepers. After all, since they must provide up-to-date betting lines in order not to seem corrupt, they have to keep track of the victories and fighting styles of each of the gladiators who appear.

If they wish to scout out new talent, they send their agents to the farms and estates of the nearby nobles. These agents linger around the slave pits and training arenas in hopes of catching sight of the gladiators. The scouts are often keen judges of combat skills, able to tell how a fresh gladiator will behave in his first major encounter. The reports from these scouts usually determine the initial betting lines before the game featuring the particular gladiator. For more on wagering in the arena, consult "Gambling on the Games," page 80.

Templars can easily influence the betting agents into conveniently adding or dropping the gladiators' chances in order to make a profit for themselves. As with all things on Athas, the scores the betting men hold are uncertain.

Other scorekeepers include the legions of death-lovers who flock around the gladiators. Chances are that they will know all the facts available about the gladiators, filing them away in their memories so that they might compare these gladiators with others. These morbid fans have the most accurate system of the common folk, for they are unlikely to forget the smallest detail.

Gladiators themselves are unlikely to keep an accurate tally of their kills, for after so much killing, only the

# The Gladiator Campaign



finest and the most fearsome moments stand out. The others fade into obscurity. Also, the newer gladiators always want to impress the others, and thus they lie about their victories.

Therefore, most people discount the kills a gladiator claims to have made. Even if the gladiator keeps accurate records for himself and his companions, none believe him, discounting the number of victories as either modesty or boasting.

Owners and patrons, too, rarely tell the truth about their gladiators. They want others to be impressed by the prowess of their clients, and thus to marvel at the good sense of the patron and his clever business acumen. Most other wealthy folk simply take it for granted that any number of victories an owner attributes to his gladiator is far overblown.

In more ancient days, owners kept score by branding or tattooing their gladiators after each victory. This practice quickly fell into disrepute when many of the owners began falsifying the tattoos, adding new ones each day in an effort to out-bluff their opponents' gladiators. Even while this method was still effective, the numerous slave revolts that occurred when the branding irons were brought out were enough to prove to the sorcerer-kings that perhaps this method was not the wisest.

While the templars keep records of gladiators' victories and losses in order to keep track of possible troublemakers and to keep accurate score for their own purposes, they do not release these to the common folk. It is in the nature of templars to keep secret any information that might be useful. They cannot risk that the records might fall into the wrong hands.

Trainers have the most accurate information of anyone. Most keep strips of leather or portraits of their gladiators, marking them on one side when that gladiator wins, on the other when he loses. They use this information to determine how well a gladiator's career has advanced, and how it needs improvement. The vagaries of the markings indicate how well the match was fought, the difficulty of





## The Gladiator Campaign

the foe, and the areas for improvement.

Most trainers feel some loyalty to their gladiators, and will not betray this information. They tell the patrons, of course, and cannot refuse templars, but do not share the information among themselves. Divulging a gladiator's record is tantamount to treachery in the trainer's world. When a gladiator is traded, his trainer gives him the record of victories so that his new trainer can keep accurate track of the career of the new gladiator.

### Fame and Infamy

One of the few reasons any gladiator returns to the arena is the applause of those who gather in the tiers, the adoration of the ladies and men, and the praise of the populace. Even if they were not goaded to the arenas by their owners or the pinch of a tight purse, the lure of the arena and the acclaim of the crowd often summons those who have tasted these fruits. Even slave gladiators can appreciate the roar of the crowds, and hunger for this even as they despise those who come to watch their suffering.

Indeed, one of the few good things about being a gladiator is the acclaim of the crowds, the roar of the populace, the released sigh of satisfaction or frustration, knowing that the 20,000 or more people gathered there hang on his every action. Hero worship can be found in nearly every culture, but in no culture is it as great as it is in the city-states of Tyr. Neither is it as shallow as in the arenas, for the crowd is always eager to latch onto a successful new gladiator, discarding their former hero as he lies dying in a pool of blood at the feet of the new.

Still, while the gladiator's star shines brightly, there is little the citizens of the city would not do for the chance to meet him. The gladiators are most eagerly sought after by nearly every citizen in the city; to touch him, to feel his power... this is the closest to fame most of them will come.

Of course, some of them can come a little closer by being a part of the gladiator's escape from slavery, the tem-

plars, or the unjust rule of the sorcerer-king. A fleeing gladiator can almost always count on help from the citizens. The warriors know that their escape is probably the most excitement any resident of the city-states will have in their pathetic lives. They can brag (quietly, of course, lest the templars overhear) of their exploits to trusted friends, and gain a small measure of notoriety and satisfaction from their lives in that way.

The gladiator must pick his would-be savior carefully, however, for some folk are outraged to find that the gladiators do not gladly fight for their pleasure. While pretending to be obsequious and servile, they can slip away to fetch templars to apprehend the gladiator. These misguided folk labor under the assumption that because the gladiator is in the ring, he wants to entertain them. They will do anything to make sure he returns there, that he might continue to fight for glory again, that he might continue to redeem their lives, working his mysterious magic with weapons in the arena.

When these folk brag of the fact that they "single-handedly" returned a famous gladiator to the arena, their friends gradually drift away. Only the sycophants of the templars remain, and all the informers find solace in the exploits of the others.

The following table reflects how fame increases with the passage of time and victories. As the gladiator's fame and ability grow, so too grows the devotion of the crowd. A more famous fighter will command loyalty longer than one recently arrived on the scene, even when the more famous one falls on hard times.

In these tables, fame is assumed to be equal to popularity. The more famous the gladiator, the more people will want to help him achieve his goals, and the larger a crowd his name will draw to the arena. His celebrity follows him wherever he goes in his city, whether he wants it to or not.

When the gladiator PC is first created, the player must decide whether his PC is to be Famous or Infamous. They are the two paths to ultimate fame in the arena. By walk-

# The Gladiator Campaign



ing one road or another, the PC chooses his eventual destiny. Though they may change their reputation at any time, they must first begin to change the stories around the deeds that made them Famous or Infamous.

Like the Famous gladiators, Infamous gladiators have their followings. If an Infamous gladiator is billed as appearing at an arena, he will draw a crowd. His exploits shock the city, and they pay their money in hopes of seeing him beaten. The law and the templars turn a blind eye to his activities as long as they are not too blatant, knowing that the gladiator's actions only increase the number of people arriving in the arena.

Though Infamous gladiators are hated by the people in the city, they are a fixture of life there. They can usually get what they want by intimidating the common person, knowing that the templars usually turn a blind eye to their activities. As long as money goes into the templars' pockets, nearly anything is legal.

Infamous gladiators are not necessarily evilly aligned, just as Famous ones are not necessarily good. Though the temperaments are more suited for one or the other, good-aligned people can become Infamous by defying the will of the crowd for blood and more blood. Likewise, an evil gladiator can be Famous simply for the sheer magnitude of his feats.

There might come a time when the PC decides to change his career path. It is far easier for a Famous person to become Infamous. The judicious application or lack of mercy, the flaunting of the crowd's wishes, and various other actions can quickly turn a celebrity into one of the darker variety. Infamous people have a harder time of changing their reputation, for people have a hard time believing that the gladiator has actually reformed. It can be done, but the road is a long, hard one. The modifiers on the Earning Fame Table remain the same regardless of whether the gladiator is Famous or Infamous.

When the gladiator chooses to change paths, he must begin to use the modifiers on the other table, but these modifiers work negatively against the gladiator's current

score. The gladiator must work back down the table until he reaches 0 or lower Fame, at which point the modifiers revert to their ordinary values, and the gladiator once again begins working up the scale on the other path.

The DM should keep track of the Fame awards until the gladiator reaches 0; otherwise, the PC might decide to reverse his course on the Fame table while working his way down, hoping that his defeats and foolish maneuvers will earn him Legendary status. If this proves to be the case, the DM should penalize the character the points he would have lost if he had been continuing on the original path.

Obviously, it is much easier for someone with a small reputation to change their course, and is even recommended for PCs who have sun so low as to be in negative numbers. There is no real limit to the number of times a character can choose to revert from Fame to Infamy and vice versa, though the DM might consider penalizing continual shifts in character direction.

Each reversion to one side or another restricts the maximum Fame or Infamy a PC can achieve by a factor of 10. That is, the first switch limits them to 100 Fame points, the next to 30, and so forth. This continues until they reach a maximum of 50 points. Though they can still switch from one side to another, their maximum will remain at 50, no more and no less. Even truly heroic deeds cannot change this; people have a long memory, and do not revere gladiators who cannot make up their minds whether to be heroes or villains.

The Fame modifiers generally apply only in one's home city. Though word of the gladiator's reputation will spread eventually, the gladiator has a separate Fame rating for each city according to his actions there. As his Fame in one city-state increases, it does in others as well, carried by the words of the Dune Traders.

So that the player can accurately chart his PC's success, it is recommended that he or she write down which of the following modifiers the character achieves. This not only keeps an accurate record of the PC's past, it also



# The Gladiator Campaign

helps the DM and player more fully understand the gladiator's reputation.

## Earning Fame Table

Factor	Result	Infamous Result*
Attitude	-3 to +2 Fame	—
Creative Maneuvers	+2 Fame	—
Every 5 levels	+2 Fame	—
Each Victory	+1 to +3 Fame	—
Each Defeat	-1 to -5 Fame	—
Escaped and Recaptured	-2 Fame	+1 Fame
Famous in Other Cities	See below	—
Famous/Infamous Ancestor	+1 Fame	—
Fighting Flexibility	+1 Fame	—
Game Proficiency	+2 Fame	—
Heroic Death	+10 Fame	+5 Fame
Merciful/Merciless	+1 Fame	+2 Fame
Outside Adventures	-2 to +2 Fame	—
Partner	-5 to +3 Fame	—
Patron	-1 to +1 Fame	—
Refusing to Fight	-3 Fame	+1 Fame
Signature Style	+1 Fame	—
Unorthodox Approach	-1 to +1 Fame	—
Other Factors	See Below	—

\* The Infamous Result column indicates where the Fame awards are different for gladiators on the Infamous path. Those marked with “—” indicate that there is no change from column to column.

**Attitude:** This factor is not one that reverses for Infamy. A gladiator with a hateful disposition quickly earns the loving hatred of the crowd, while a gladiator who plays to the crowd is likely to earn their acclaim. Famous gladiators with bad attitudes are penalized, as are affably Infamous gladiators. This is figured only when the PC is first created, or when the PC decides to change attitude.

**Creative Maneuvers:** Any time the PC performs a maneuver that the crowd was not expecting, or carries one off that they thought impossible, this award comes into play. For example, a diving roll beneath one's opponent earns the applause of the crowd, and a backflip over a foe's head draws a standing ovation.

This award comes into play anytime the PC performs a maneuver that will be talked of for days. However, each Creative Maneuver must be a fresh one for that gladiator, if he keeps on performing it, it becomes a Signature Style.

**Every 5 levels:** PCs can earn fame simply through sheer determination. Whether they wish to do so or not, they draw the attention of the crowd. Even silent gladiators without any style will eventually draw some notice for their excellence in the arena.

**Each Victory:** The Fame award depends on the impact and improbability of the win, the odds the PC had to overcome to defeat her opponent. If the creature's Hit Dice were roughly equal to her level, the Fame award is +2; if less, only +1. More powerful foes warrant a greater Fame award.

If the victory is over a major (50 or higher Fame) Famous or Infamous character, the gladiator receives a +3 bonus to Fame, unless the match was very uneven in her favor. In this case, she gains only +2 for the feat.

**Each Defeat:** Likewise, a gladiator loses Fame for each defeat he suffers. Regardless of how good a fight the PC puts up, a loss reduces his Fame. If he comes close against someone or something that is markedly stronger, his Fame is reduced by only -1. If he loses to an opponent who is equal to or weaker than he, his Fame decreases by -2 to -5.

On the other hand, a gladiator loses no Fame if he is defeated by a major (50 or more Fame) Famous or Infamous gladiator. The honor of fighting against one of these fellows erases any shame the PC might feel at being defeated; the crowd expects no less than the PC's defeat, and do not think less of him for a loss to a figure of such magnitude.

# The Gladiator Campaign



**Escaped and Recaptured:** When an escaped gladiator is recaptured by the templars or her former owners, her reputation as a gladiator suffers greatly. Obviously, reasons the crowd, she could not fight well enough to protect herself from the master's men, and therefore cannot fight as well in the arena as they might have thought at first.

Infamous gladiators who escape and are recaptured actually rise in the public eye. The fans assume that the gladiator has committed a crime heinous enough that her recapture was made a top priority, even if this is not actually true. They will always assume the worst about an Infamous gladiator because they have come to expect that of her.

**Famous in Other Cities:** As a gladiator's ability grows, so too does his reputation all over the region. For every IS points of Fame the gladiator accumulates in one city, he gains a +1 in all the other city-states of Tyr. Furthermore, if the gladiator begins performing in other cities, his Fame increases in all the others.

He gains +5 fame for performing repeatedly (appearing in more than 5 separate Game Days) in one city in addition to his original city. He gains +5 for 2, +10 for 3, +15 for 4, +20 for 5 and an more. His reputation spreads ever further because of his travels, gaining him more fame as word of his exploits spreads to every city-state in Tyr.

**Famous/Infamous Ancestor:** A gladiator from a bloodline that has harbored someone of great repute, generally no more than 100 years ago. Regardless of whether that ancestor was Famous or Infamous, the PC gains a +1 Fame bonus for her connection to such a character. This award applies only if the relative achieved more than 70 Fame. PCs taking this bonus must first have the permission of their DM.

**Fighting Flexibility:** This reflects the crowd's delight in a gladiator who can adapt well to the changing conditions of the arena without losing his head. For example, if a disarmed gladiator rearms himself with a piece of the arena or a limb from a fallen foe, he is the talk of the taverns for days.

**Game Proficiency:** Whenever a gladiator shows an unusual proficiency in the games, and one game in particular, the fans remember her. If she continues to prove her aptitude for that game, they remember her all the better. It takes three outstanding appearances in a certain game to gain this bonus. Even if the gladiator loses, she can still gain this bonus, as long as she demonstrates her mastery of the game while doing so.

**Heroic Death:** When a gladiator suffers the ultimate defeat, the fans want him to do it gloriously. If he does it by dispatching his opponent, or by saving his partner, who then finishes the combat, his fame will be assured for at least a small time. The crowd loves heroic deaths, believing that the gladiator has sacrificed his life for their enjoyment; they will remember this sacrifice.

Infamous gladiators receive a smaller bonus for the heroic death. The crowd does not expect to see them die for their enjoyment, and does not believe it when he does. Though thrilled by his exciting death, they believe that he went to his grave a blackhearted knave, and will not remember him as long as they would a Famous gladiator.

A Heroic Death only counts as such if the odds against the gladiator were overwhelming, if the gladiator was sure to fail no matter what, and he stood his ground. If he leaped into the face of his foe even as the last of his life's blood poured from his body, his death is considered Heroic. As long as the PC stands firm in the face of death, not cowering from it as so many do, he gains the bonus.

**Merciful/Merciless:** The habit of granting mercy is a quirk that gains attention quickly. If the PC grants mercy to her opponents three times in a row when she could have slaughtered them as they lay there defenseless, she gains the Fame bonus. A disadvantage to this is a gladiator with a Merciful reputation can often be taken advantage of by enemies feigning surrender.

An Infamous gladiator gains the bonus if she does the reverse. That is, if she kills her opponents when she has the chance to save them, her reputation grows accordingly. The disadvantage to this is that few opponents will ever



## The Gladiator Campaign



surrender, knowing that their foe will not grant them mercy no matter how well they acquit themselves against her. The Merciless bonus can be achieved after three slayings in a row; however, it vanishes when the PC spares an opponent's life. It might thereafter reappear under Unorthodox Approach.

**Outside Adventures:** The adventures of the gladiator help to make or break his reputation. If he returns from his mission boasting of success in the face of nearly insurmountable odds, his Fame can increase by +1 or not at all, depending on how plausible the story is. If members of his adventuring party confirm the stories, the increase can be up to +2.

On the other hand, if the party denies the stories, denounces the gladiator, or if he tells the truth about a disastrous expedition, his Fame can decrease by -2. If he has a normally good reputation, stories told against him by his comrades will always make him suffer; -1 is the minimum he suffers for the accounts leveled against him by his companions.

This bonus is not available to slaves. Their masters are loath to let them even vanish from sight in the stable for more than a few hours; no master wants his gladiator earning experience outside the arena and training grounds. Aside from the obvious danger of the slave fleeing into the desert, there is also the possibility that the slave will die out there, wasting a valuable investment in time, training, and money.

**Partner:** A partner, whether full- or part-time, can enhance or destroy the gladiator's reputation. Though an incompetent partner can make the gladiator seem more talented, more likely the partner makes both members of the team look bad. The bad partner seems to tell the crowd that the gladiator is just as bad because she cannot coordinate attack and defenses with her partner.

Likewise, a good partner ensures that her partner looks like a better fighter, and more coordinated, than she might ordinarily. The two work well together, their skills complementing each other, each bringing the other to new

# The Gladiator Campaign



heights. A perfectly matched team moves in such a way that damage to them is minimal even while their offense inflicts mighty wounds on their opponents.

**Patron:** The difference between a good patron and a bad patron is not only in the quality of material support. It also lies in their ability to promote their client gladiator. A bad patron will not publicize her client, preferring to let her client's actions speak for themselves in the arena. A good one will post bills around the city, speak well of the gladiator to her peers, and generally encourage people to see the gladiator. Indifferent patrons provide some publicity, but not enough to boost the gladiator's fame in any significant way.

**Refusing to Fight:** When a gladiator refuses to fight a game for which he was scheduled, for whatever reason (the game is fixed, the day is too hot, etcetera), the crowd takes an instant dislike to him. He has no spine, they say, and he cannot deal with the rigors of the arena. It takes a long while to recover from the cowardice stigma in the Athasian cities. It also provokes the ire of the game's promoters, some of whom will take steps to ensure that the gladiator does not repeat such a performance.

For an Infamous gladiator, the occasional refusal to fight only boosts the hatred the crowd feels toward him. It reinforces their image of him as a self-loving dandy, unconcerned with the spectators or the money they have wasted to see him. His negative image increases.

There is a limit to how many times he can refuse before it becomes a serious detriment to his career, for no one will schedule him for games, knowing that the crowd will not come to see a game when the scheduled gladiator has a history of not showing for matches. Once a year is the most a PC can get away with when refusing games before serious penalties begin to apply, as well as the loss of Fame for continued irritation.

**Signature Style:** This is any special move the gladiator uses on an opponent to mark the kill or at least the victory as his or her own. For example, one gladiator might make sure to break at least one of her opponent's legs, while

another might dispatch his enemy with a special knife he keeps in his boot. The style need not necessarily be hurtful, but should be distinctive enough that it cannot be easily copied. It takes at least five combats before the spectators begin to recognize a signature in the arena.

**Unorthodox Approach:** If a PC takes a unique view into the arena, attacking his opponent in odd ways, he may receive this bonus. This is a difficult decision to judge, since there are categories for both a Signature Style and Creative Maneuvers. Both of those, however, are single-moment actions, while an Unorthodox Approach is the way a gladiator views the entire combat. If the PC wishes to take this option, the player must describe it to the DM, who will decide whether that approach is acceptable.

**Other Factors:** These include the PC's unforeseeable adventures, the random idiosyncrasies of fate that might vault him into everlasting legend or consign him to a time-forgotten tomb. For example, Rikus's leadership of the army of Tyr and his bold stand against the Dragon Borys, not to mention his aid in the killing of King Kalak of Tyr, all ensured that he will never be forgotten on Athas.

Random Fame awards such as these are left to the DM's discretion. They can go as high as +20 Fame, and as low as -15 Fame. They all depend on the reputation the PC is likely to build from the consequences of his actions.

## Status of Fame Table

Fame Score	Famous Status	Infamous Status
-26 or lower	Scorned	Eliminated
0 to -25	Ignored	Disregarded
1 to 25	Unknown	Unknown
26 to 40	Known	Scorned
41 to 70	Admired	Disliked
71 to 70	Honored	Despised
91-150	Revered	Loathed
151+	Legend	Legend





## The Gladiator Campaign

### Famous Status

The Famous gladiator is, as the name suggests, the darling of the crowds and the beloved of the common people. Crowds gather from far away to be near the more popular gladiators, to be close to someone who could one day be legend.

**Scorned:** No one has anything to do with this PC. The best reaction he can expect from someone who has even a mild interest in the games is Indifferent. His lack of prowess and inept attempts at fame make him the subject of ridicule among others. He might have to pay to get into the arena, rather than have the arena pay him for his appearance there.

**Ignored:** The gladiator, while not as despised as the Scorned gladiator, still has some difficulty in having herself taken seriously. She suffers a -2 to all Reaction Checks from all who are familiar with the games, for she does not yet have the ability to show that she is worthy of the title Gladiator. The arena charges 1 cp for her entrance to the arena.

**Unknown:** Although he is unknown, the PC is not hated by the crowd; he has not yet seriously irritated the crowd nor has he won them over to his side. This is the condition of most gladiators. There is no Reaction bonus or penalty for being Unknown. He can be struggling to achieve higher level or to remain mostly anonymous. Most people will not make an effort to help him, but neither will they try to hinder him.

**Known:** The gladiator has begun to make her name known in a huge way. If she is free, patrons begin to approach her, seeking to sponsor her in the games. People on the street can recognize the PC as a gladiator, and she may develop a small following of people who observe her exploits with the closest scrutiny.

She receives a +1 on all Reaction Adjustments with people who have a passing familiarity with the games. This bonus does not apply to members of rival stables, rival owners, or potential competitors. Word about her

lasts only from week to week, but is easily renewed by fresh appearances in the arena.

**Admired:** An Admired gladiator has acquired a following that can last from month to month without new fights in the ring. He has demonstrated that his ability is not a fluke, and that his popularity is more than the latest thing. He has become a minor star of the arena, and receives 1 sp for every Game Day he attends. The average person of the city has heard of this PC's prowess, for which the gladiator receives a +2 Reaction Adjustment, except in the cases outlined above.

This is the time when patrons most eagerly seek the gladiator's clientship. The gladiator is establishing himself well, but still needs material status to break into the big time. A good home, trainers, and some slaves might mean the difference between survival and death in the arena.

This is also the time when other gladiators start trying to arrange matches with the PC. They increase their own status if they manage to defeat the PC, while making sure not to risk their own reputations at the same time.

**Honored:** When a PC achieves Honored status, she becomes a true star of the arena. Small crowds gather around her dwelling hoping to catch a fleeting glimpse of her in training, or the even more treasured acknowledging nod from the gladiator. The Honored gladiator gains a +3 Reaction Adjustment from normal citizens, and a 5 sp bonus per fight. The gladiator's picture is drawn by children on the walls of the city. She is usually drawn with muscles far out of proportion, posed defeating some horrible monster.

**Revered:** The Revered gladiator is much like the Honored gladiator, but the crowds are significantly larger. This gladiator's fame has spread to other cities, and aficionados from all over the Tyr region converge on the gladiator's city to watch him in action.

His name practically ensures a full arena; parents name their children after him to honor his name. He can go for a year between fights before his fame begins

# The Gladiator Campaign



to die down. He gains a +4 Reaction Adjustment from the people, and earns 1 gp for participating in a Game Day.

**Legend:** The Legendary gladiator is practically worshipped by the hordes of people who flock to the arena to see her fight. They have heard tales of her skill and creativity with her weapons. Her name will live forever in the city's history. Even the most sheltered people in the city have heard her name; common people travel from other city-states to see her fight. If there is even the slightest rumor that the Legend will appear, the arena invariably sells all its seats.

A Legend receives a +5 Reaction Adjustment from the citizens of the city. Even her rivals admit a grudging liking of the gladiator; she has a +2 Reaction Adjustment from them, and, unless they want to establish a reputation as Infamous, are far more likely to withhold a killing blow than they would against any other opponent. Legends receive a 1 gp bonus for each fight in which they appear.

It is recommended that no matter the great accomplishments of the gladiator, no character under 7th level should be allowed to achieve Legendary status. Even with this restriction, Legendary gladiators are quite rare.

## Infamous Status

An infamous person draws a crowd the same as a Famous gladiator, but all personal interactions will be different. Instead of adoring crowds, the Infamous PC will find that angry mobs follow him. Although they rarely incite violence against him, their dislike of him is evident. Among these crowds are those who secretly admire the gladiator for his fortitude; few of them ever admit this, but the interest can be seen in their eyes.

In truth, those who watch the games are in awe of the Infamous gladiator. They can see that her prowess is incredible, and envy her for her ability to take what she likes. Even when she uncaringly takes things from citi-



zens without paying, most people don't even begrudge her the fruits of their labors; they can brag that she chose the best available, which happened to be from their personal property. They are glad that she provides them the publicity boost.

Anytime a reaction roll indicates Hostility, change the result to Cautious (or Threatening, if the person approached feels he can take the gladiator). The gladiator will then be able to bully what he wants from the unfortunate soul.

**Eliminated:** The Infamous gladiator has become an embarrassment to his owner and the city. If the owner cannot sell him, he will be killed out of hand. The gladiator has made enough of an impression on people that they know him, and hate him with absolute conviction. Reaction Adjustments with this PC are at -4. Most arenas will not allow him unless he is being tried as a criminal.



## The Gladiator Campaign

**Disregarded:** People are aware that the gladiator seeks to become notorious and avoid her lest they contribute to the legend she is trying to make around himself. She suffers a -2 Reaction Adjustment from everyone she comes into contact with. Criminals seek her out to do their bidding, promising her that these deeds will cement her notoriety. At least half the time, the criminals are templates in disguise seeking an excuse to arrest the gladiator.

**Unknown:** He is just beginning a career in infamy. He suffers no adverse reactions, but neither does he gain any beneficial ones. Gladiatorial aficionados are mildly interested in him. His reputation lives only from Game Day to Game Day. If he misses one, people again forget him until his next appearance.

**Scorned:** The gladiator is beginning to demonstrate signs of true infamy. She practices her killing art for her sake alone, disregarding the needs of the crowd. She can receive a -1 on all Reaction Adjustments from the common crowd when she wants to put on a blustering show for the benefit of his crowd. She can go for two weeks without having to appear in the arena again, though the audience loves it when she does appear.

**Disliked:** The gladiator begins to attract crowds of children who are impressed with his denial of the needs of others. He gains a bonus of 1 sp per Game Day in which he appears. He can go for a month between fights. The gladiator can make use of a Reaction Adjustment of -2 to get what he wants.

**Despised:** Because this is the time when an Infamous gladiator really begins drawing the crowds to the stadium, the organizers of the day's events pay a bonus of 1 sp per fight in which the Despised gladiator takes part. She can utilize a Reaction Adjustment of -4 if she so desires, though she need not. People instinctively react to her at a -1 Reaction Adjustment.

If she is not careful, crowds will follow her at a distance. They want to see her, but will not get near enough that she might be able to hurt them. She can take several months between fights to train, adventure, or do anything

she likes between fights; people will still be talking about her when she gets back.

**Loathed:** The Loathed gladiator gains a bonus of 1 gp and 2 sp per Game Day, because the organizers know that he is one of the reasons the crowd shows at the auditorium. People begin arriving from other cities to see how the gladiator acquires himself against the finest of those thrown against him.

He has an automatic -3 Reaction Adjustment against him, but can modify this to -5 if he so desires. His Fame lasts for a year before people stop talking about him.

**Legend:** The Infamous gladiator by this point has dispatched several of the crowd's favorites in stunning displays of brutality and skill. The crowd hates her, and in hating her, rewards her for her actions. She represents what they cannot be, and they envy her for her bold action and her lack of care for what others feel. However, because she has shown that she will go the distance on her own, the people will never openly help with anything. Though they might leave occasional gifts, they will not want to associate themselves with this warrior.

The bonuses paid to the Legendary Infamous PC are usually 1 gp and 3 sp per fight, for the crowds they draw are at least as large, if not larger, than those drawn by Famous gladiators of equal status. The gladiator goes down in the annals of history as one of the greatest ever; her name will be brought up in conversation for generations. Even if the gladiator reverses her course and becomes Famous, it makes no difference. Her legend rolls on with or without her.

She can immediately put anyone of lesser level into the Cautious status if she so desires. She also suffers from an automatic Reaction chart shift one column to the right, no matter how she acts toward the person with whom she is dealing. For example, if she acts Friendly, her actions are interpreted as Indifferent, while a Hostile introduction might very well make people believe that she is about to explode into a murderous frenzy.





# The Gladiator Campaign

## Patrons

On Athas, most gladiators are slaves, although there are a few freemen and volunteers among the ranks. However, without owners to sponsor them, the few freemen tend to be constantly outclassed by their opponents, and at a severe disadvantage in the ring. This is where the patrons enter the picture.

The patrons offer training and housing in return for no less than 50% of the free gladiator's earnings and the companionship of the gladiator. Any other terms must be agreed upon by the two involved, but the gladiator should be warned that the rich folk can get out of most of their deals by wagging a purse in front of a templar, and the gladiator will be able to do nothing thereafter.

Since most gladiators reach their prospective clients before the clients have a chance to obtain great funds on their own, they can find little harm in receiving patronage. The patron and the gladiator both profit from the arrangement, for the gladiator finally has access to the training slave gladiators use regularly.

The patron, on the other hand, can help the gladiator along on his path to glory and claim a key role in doing so. Also, because of the agreement they had before the patron began aiding the gladiator, the patron can associate himself with the gladiator, thus associating himself with success in the eyes of his comrades.

There are many different kinds of patrons, but the following list includes several sample types:

- **The Lazy, Poor Patron:** This is someone who had a small bit of cash, enough to sponsor the gladiator for a time, hoping the gladiator would hit it big. Although he takes no part in promoting the interests of the gladiator, he is eager to take the credit for the gladiator's success. They rarely stay with the gladiator for long; most of the arena warriors get rid of these fellows in one way or another after a few weeks.

- **The Energetic, Poor Patron:** This sort of patron, while just as poor as the previous example, is willing to

publicize her client around the city, if necessary by dragging people to events in which the gladiator appears. She not only wants to profit from the gladiator, she wants to make it an acquaintance of mutual benefit. She will approach complete strangers and speak to them about the potential of her gladiator. She and the PC can form a long, fruitful relationship, both gaining from the other.

- **The Lazy, Rich Patron:** This sort of patron is the sort who the Lazy, Poor Patron emulates. She is either independently wealthy, or got lucky with a few of her choices for patronage long ago, and continues to capitalize on that success. It is very hard to get rid of such a patron, but the gladiator would be best served by doing so if he ever wants to see credit for his victories.

- **The Energetic, Rich Patron:** This is, ideally, the logical outgrowth of the Energetic, Poor Patron, someone whose verve has captured success for them. In practice, it is generally someone who was wealthy enough before he began patronage to support himself, a young noble who is looking to have a few larks in a way different from that of his peers. He will promote the gladiator among his friends, showing of his new toy for their amusement. Once the thrill of that has gotten old, he discards the gladiator to the streets.

## Trading Gladiators

When a gladiator earns the notice of a city through his daring exploits, chances are that his master is receiving countless offers to trade for or buy the gladiator. Some of the offers are pitiful, while others can be hugely profitable to the owner. Whether or not he accepts depends on his financial situation, how much he relies on the gladiator to maintain his stable, and how the gladiator is likely to perform in the future.

This last reason is one that potential owners often try to capitalize on. By sending a gift of a bard troupe to the owner's house, they can practically guarantee that the gladiator will fall sick (but not fatally so) in a matter of hours. Of course, to avoid suspicion, they make the offer

# The Gladiator Campaign



well after the troupe has left the house, so that the owner will not suspect foul play. Indeed, if many houses make an offer at the same time, it is nearly impossible to tell who the true culprit might be.

Oddly, most of the nobles and merchant houses have a strange code of honor regarding the poisoning of rival gladiators, even ones that they have no chance of acquiring. The code forbids the houses to fatally poison the gladiators, instructing them instead to let the gladiators die in the arena through their own skill or lack thereof.

Part of this stems, perhaps, from the fact that if the commoners ever found out that their favorite gladiators had been killed because of a bidding war, they would exact some sort of retribution against the houses involved. They might boycott the products of one, or secretly contaminate the well of another.

Though the great houses, both merchant and noble, do not hold the peasants in high regard, they recognize that the cunning rabble could conceivably devise a plot that would make them all suffer. Of course, if the nobles could find a poison that would kill and leave no trace of its passing, they might not be so honorable.

The houses also recognize the stupidity of simply raiding the stables of rivals for the prized gladiator; he would be instantly recognizable in the ring. While the laws for nobles and other wealthy people apply much more loosely than they do to the common folk, they do not reward blatant stupidity.

Of course, if the house or estate could ship them off in a slave caravan to another city-state, the theft might be workable. Depending on how quickly they could mobilize this caravan, they could conceivably get away with it. Of course, the owner could distribute some enormous bribes to have every caravan searched for the next few days, thus spoiling the plan. Any templar PCs involved in such a thing could become very rich very suddenly as the two sides play off against one another.

Aside from the intrigues and politics involved with obtaining a gladiator, there are also business-like methods.

One house might offer another the pick of the stable, or a trade of two inexperienced gladiators for one tested one. The variations on these themes are practically endless.

Any owner of a good gladiator should therefore be prepared to fend off all sorts of outrageous attempts to obtain the gladiator. There are the subtle approaches, the attempted kidnappings and poisonings; and then there are the more direct approaches, such as obvious bribe attempts.

An intelligent owner always keeps track of precisely how much money his gladiator brings in, and how much he is likely to gain from potential trades. He therefore also keeps track of how nearly every other gladiator in the city-state performs, so that he might evaluate possible trades more wisely.

Then, of course, there is the offer from the sorcerer-king. No matter how little he offers, all owners would best be advised to give him the gladiator for the asking price. Haggling with the sorcerer-king could earn his amusement and a reward, or, more likely, it could earn instant destruction of the impudent slaveowner for daring to argue against the will of the king. They can expect no gratitude from the king for giving him the gladiator; sorcerer-kings are notoriously inconsiderate.

All this usually means for the gladiator is a change of scenery, and a new stable to befriend or antagonize. Living conditions could be better or worse, depending on the wealth of the master, and how much he or she spent in acquiring the new gladiator. More expensive gladiators can expect to suffer a bit more than they have been used to, for the new owner will want to make sure the gladiator was a good deal.

Another practical change for the gladiator is the fact that they can now fight against the members of their former stable. For some, this is a curse, because they have developed strong friendships with their former comrades-in-arms. For others, this is a blessing, because they now have a chance to avenge the weeks, months, or even years of hatred for their old stablemates.



## The Gladiator Campaign

Other than these paltry changes, a gladiator is usually likely to find that one stable is much like another, though the personalities inside each are radically different. The vast number of trades that occur are one of the reasons that few gladiators hold a burning hatred for their foes in the ring. They know that any day, they could be traded to the stable of their most hated rival, and fighting partners simply should not have such animosity between them.

Indeed, it is far more common for rivalries to develop only when it appears certain that one of the gladiators will be traded to another stable; they can finally give vent to the emotions they felt for their companions for so long.

### Games Outside the Cities

The big cities do not have a monopoly on gladiatorial arenas. Just because a village lies beyond the reach of the city does not mean that the villagers are ignorant of the entertainment the games afford city-bred folk. Those who have traveled to the cities often return with stories of decadence and grandeur, the likes of which the others have never dreamed. In an attempt to recreate the spectacle of the games, traveled villagers build arenas in their home towns so that the less-experienced peasants may witness the glory of man pitted against man or beast.

Of course, these games hold little of the splendor that the city's games do. They are generally poorly managed, inept performances, with crude walls and cells defining the arena. The makeshift arena can still seat over 500 people; not exactly brimming by the city's standards, but certainly a sizeable crowd given the nature of the towns.

Despite the shoddy surroundings, individual performers can often show great promise. Indeed, city-bred talent scouts employed by templars or nobles regularly visit the outlying towns in hopes of catching some bright



# The Gladiator Campaign



young star and nurturing her to greater glory than she could have ever received in the small villages.

When they capture one of these gullible fools with their tales of fighting in the big city, they act as minor slavers. Taking the confidence of the naive young gladiators, they send the gladiators to their employers, who start them training among the slaves. Although the good ones become stars, they are never allowed to speak with their former townsfolk, for they might reveal that their life has become a living agony, that the price of their fame is their freedom.

Some evade the slavers and make their way to the city anyway. Since they do not have the patrons or the sponsorship necessary for an effective debut, they fail most of the time. Only the truly skilled among them shine brightly enough that they are picked up by independent sponsors who care nothing for enslaving them, or at least care more for their profits than owning the gladiator outright. The "Patrons" section deals more with this sort of benefactor.

Most of the games in the villages are not fought to the death; there is too much work in the outlying towns for them to waste valuable life on entertainment. Unless the one of the combatants is a criminal or a beast from the wastelands, or if the two fighters wish to settle a deadly dispute, the games end when one of the parties surrenders or is knocked unconscious. Most villagers agree that these games are not nearly as satisfying as the games of the city, but they do provide an entertaining diversion from the brutal labor forced upon them by the harsh climate of Athas.

Neither do these games have the variety offered by the city. Because of their demanding schedules simply surviving the rigors of Athas, they have neither time nor the inclination to plan the nuances of the battle or to trap the ferocious beasts.

Once a year or longer, depending on the village, most villages hire professional gladiators or purchase slaves to die for them in the makeshift arena. Most of these can

feign their deaths with loud cries and blood bags; they are usually worth more alive to their true owners, who lease them out for dramatic death scenes.

A few of these traveling circuses do hire out gladiators who fight to the death; any gladiator who signs on with a traveling arena would be best advised to check before committing herself to anything.

Money and other barter exchange hands regularly in wagers on the outcome of all these fights. Like the nobles and templars of the cities, feuding peasants try to drive each other into debt by placing huge bets against their opponents'. Most of the villagers eschew such practices, placing more simple bets that they can afford to lose. The decadents and the fools drive each other under; most villagers know they must cooperate with each other in order to survive the harsh climates of Athas. This ethic does not necessarily extend to those who are not members of their community.

## Expenses

### Typical Gladiator Expenditures Table

Item	Price
Equipment	As listed in <i>Rules Book</i>
Food and Drink	As listed in <i>PHB</i>
Fine	× 2
Nourishing	–
Subsistence	×.75
Healer	
Normal	1 sp/month
Skilled	1 sp/week
Magical	1 sp/day
Masseuse	3 cp/week
Trainer	1 cp/day/level
Training Area	5 sp/month
Training School	10 gp





## The Gladiator Campaign

### Description of Expenses

**Equipment:** All the equipment listed in the *Rules Book* and the *Player's Handbook* that the buyer feels he needs for the course is included in this section. Using the DARK SUN® game rules on price conversions, all prices are as listed.

**Food and Drink:** There are, for purposes of gladiators' food, only three categories. *Fine* food is fit for a templar's table. It consists of the best meat, the finest grains, and the smoothest beverages. Despite its excellent taste and conclusive edibility, it remains good for the fighter, restoring his energy and vitality. Gladiators who partake of this expensive fare gain hit points at 1½ times the usual rate because of the fine qualities of this fare.

*Nourishing* food is just that. It does not have the excellent taste of fine food, but is good, hearty fare. It is certainly good enough for most gladiators, not to mention the average person of Athas. Nourishing food restores lost hit points at the normal rate.

*Subsistence* rations should be eaten only when there is no other alternative. The food is of poor quality, the beverages musty, and are in general unappealing. Though it is typical slave rations, most gladiators deserve better. Those who partake of subsistence food regain lost hit points at ¾ the normal rate because the food is of such low nutritional value. The body simply does not gain enough nourishment from subsistence food to work to its full potential.

**Healer:** There are three classifications of healer. Each category of these healers is more skilled in the healing arts than the one preceding it.

Normal healers have taken the time to learn the Healing and Herbalism proficiencies, and a little more. He or she can provide adequate care for a wounded person, but is certainly not the equal of someone of skilled rank. Normal healers can heal 1d4 points of damage per major wound (that is, a wound which inflicted 8 or more points in a single blow), provided they get to the

wounded person within 15 minutes after the wounds were inflicted.

*Skilled* healers have devoted their lives to learning the secrets of human and demihuman bodies and how to fix them. They are experts in herb lore and healing, having devoted the equivalent of at least three nonweapon proficiencies to both Healing and Herbalism. Some are even more proficient. Skilled healers can heal up to 1d8 points of damage to any wound greater than 6 hp, provided they reach it within an hour.

The most sought-after healers, the *magical* healer is also by far the most expensive. Extensively trained in both Healing and Herbalism, the magical healer combines skilled healing knowledge with magical energy to restore the fall but minutes after they fall. It does not matter how long the wounded has lain without help; the magical healer can cast spells that will instantly restore the hurt to a better capacity. It is up to the DM to determine how much healing magic a particular healer possesses, bearing in mind that the more magic a healer holds, the more expensive he or she is likely to be.

**Masseur:** This is simply someone trained to work the knots, the aches, and the pains from a tired gladiator's back. After a long day's worth of training and fighting, a skilled massage can be more uplifting to a gladiator's spirits than a healer's brisk manner and stinking potions.

**Trainer:** The Trainer is nearly always a retired Fighter or Gladiator of middle- to high-level who is looking to cash in on his reputation without the risks involved in actual arena combat. If the Trainer is a fighter, he has specialize in several weapons, and is willing to train others in its use as described on page 27 of the *Rules Book*. If the Trainer is a gladiator, he has grown sick of his arena days, or was maimed and wounded enough times that he cannot expect reasonably to return, although he will certainly defeat any trainee who challenges him.

PCs can pick up some extra coinage by serving as trainers for a time. This is an especially good option for free

# The Gladiator Campaign



gladiators who are momentarily penniless. Their earnings will pay the rent, and the training will refresh their own skills. Alternatively, they may trade skills for free training, provided the owner of the course is willing to accommodate such a trade.

**Training Area:** The Training School will contain all the ingredients described earlier in the Training section, as well as a plot of land. Any other modifications must be added by the owner or renter, the prices commensurate with the rest of the prices on this list. The rarity of these other ingredients will also affect the price. The price listed here does not include the necessary payments to the templars of the city. The DM has to determine what sort of bribes the templars expect for the use of the Training Area in proportion to what templars usually demand in that campaign.

If the training offered here is unusually good, the PC might be able to make the Training Area work for him by charging nobles and other gladiator owners for training them here. Of course, once this course of action is taken, the PC will also have to supply guards, a horde of trainers for the gladiators, healers, and so forth. However, if run correctly, the Training Area could create a tidy profit.

**Training School:** The Training School is simply a Training Area turned to make a profit by its owners. Prices will vary; the price listed here is for the standard course offered by the city.



## Chapter 6: Running Tournaments

One of the most exciting parts of running a gladiator PC is Game Day. Whether it comes weekly, monthly, or daily, the constant challenges the arena poses present chances for the gladiator to test his skill against that of his opponents. The winner survives to see another Game Day while the less-skillful fertilize the earth with their corpses.

Of course, the Game schedule varies from city to city, but there is typically no less than one set of games per week. During times of festival or relaxation, the games are held with far greater frequency, sometimes for several days on end. This sort of excess is not typical, for even the most bloodthirsty of crowds grows tired of constant bloodshed. The sorcerer-kings, skillful manipulators of mobs, know exactly when the crowd will reach such a point. They end the games before that point so that the crowd will again become anxious to see the next week's games.

Free gladiators have the option of deciding how many games they will attend. Of course, they might be paid less for fewer appearances. That is the risk they have to take—more games for more money, or playing it safe, participating only in as many games as it takes to meet expenses.

### Games

The sheer variety of the games is enough to bewilder anyone not familiar with the structure of a Game Day. This is a simple primer of the basic games found in all the major cities of Tyr, followed by a brief summary of the advanced games of various cities.

**Matinee:** This is usually a simple and straightforward combat between weak gladiators and prisoners, all of whom are lightly armed and armored. They are showcase matches in which newer gladiators can gain the attention of nobles and the populace, provided they are impressive enough with their victories. Matinee fights are always to the death, no matter how much either side might beg for mercy.

Matinee fights are always placed at the beginning of any Game Day so the crowd can work into its bloodlust quickly. Although the inexperienced and unpolished fighting styles lack the flair of the later games, the blood spilled is just as red (in most cases) as in the later games. Besides, there is always the chance that a shining star will emerge from the matinee, who will later light the arena with his skill and savagery

**Grudge Match:** The Grudge Match pairs up two gladiators who have faced each other before and survived. This traditionally is a match that goes only until one of the gladiators is clearly at a disadvantage, rather than to the death. This provides the spectators with the enjoyment of knowing that there are future possibilities for the match to continue. It also gives them an excuse to follow the gladiators, so that they will know how to bet on the next match. Sometimes grudge matches take place between gladiators who later grow to be close friends. Not all of these matches end in bad blood, much to the disgruntlement of the crowd. Still, grudge matches are avidly awaited, for the spectators cannot wait to see who has improved, and how much. Betting on these games is always particularly intense.

**Trial by Combat:** Justice is not always dispensed by the templars in the streets. Occasionally, accused felons are brought to the arena to stand trial for their alleged crimes. If they win, they are proven innocent and may go free to continue with their lives. If they lose, they are judged guilty and dispatched with cruelty.

Though this may sound like a fairly easy out for more powerful prisoners, they must still face combat against the pick of the sorcerer-king's stable—not an easy proposition for even the most powerful of offenders. Even if they should win, they are best advised to leave town quickly, to avoid further persecution and prosecution.

**Matched Pairs:** Every self-respecting stable keeps at least one pair of gladiators to match against those of the other stables. Each pair is selected on the basis of how well they complement each other's skills. One team might be

# Running Tournaments



an elf, with speed and subtlety, paired with a dwarf, with strength and persistence, while another might be a half-giant with intimidation and huge size paired with a rapid, tumbling halfling.

These combats come to be like grudge matches, except that they are comprised of multiple teams, and injuries are more often fatal. There are always matched pairs in a day's events, though not always the same pairs pitted against one another. The spectators keep careful watch on the various stables of the cities, observing the progress of every new team.

**Bestial Combat:** A mainstay of the arena in any city is the Bestial Combat, where gladiators are tested against the beasts of the desert. The more exotic beast the better, at least from the crowd's point of view. For the gladiator it means an opponent that is almost impossible to gauge, one for whom the standard attack and defense signals are initially unreadable. Bestial combat, especially against intelligent beasts, has spelled the end for more than one famous gladiator. Those who trap the beasts can gain almost as much fame as a standard arena gladiator, if the beasts they bring are exciting enough.

**Test of Champions:** This is one of the most exciting events the arena has to offer, and it is therefore usually left until the end of the day so the crowd may savor it with growing anticipation. In terms of sheer skill, prowess, and danger, there is no other game to match it. It pits two of the arena's champions against each other, the mightiest the city has to offer. In the games, the crowd sees the epitome of the gladiatorial experience as the finest gladiators produced by the city clash for the crowd's benefit. Though neither gladiator usually desires the death of the other, these combats are left entirely to the whim of the sorcerer-king. If he decrees the death of a fallen gladiator, so be it.

## Advanced Games

Each city and town has its own particular version of the advanced games, specific to that one locale and no place

else. Due to circumstances of the arena and the climate around the city, the individual games sprang up to pander to the tastes of the citizens of those cities. The regulars of the arenas know every intricacy of the rules of these games, and they spend countless hours after the games arguing over minor points of the games and the players in them.

There is not enough space here to describe the complexities of the games in each city. Instead, what follows is a quick summary of the games in each of the major cities. The DM will have to flesh out the minor details of these games; what is provided here is merely the foundation.

**Balic:** The advanced game of the Criterion is one called Earthquake. Twelve gladiators enter the field and are stationed around the walls of the arena. Each wears a scarf of a different color somewhere on their body. When the king signals that the game is to begin, the gladiators rush toward the center of the arena, trying to reach the center of the arena and the red silk scarf. The gladiator who stands atop the center column with the red scarf and the scarves of three other gladiators is the one declared a winner.

The game sounds deceptively simple. The detail that ensures that this game is no easy stroll is the shifting columns. The columns of the Criterion rise and fall, at random speeds and random times. They do not necessarily rise all the way up, and neither do they necessarily descend at the same speed at which they rose. Any gladiator in this game must make a Dex -2 check every round to retain their footing, as well as an Int check to keep track of their enemies. This is one of the most challenging games in the Tyr region.

**Draj:** The trademark game of this venue features 16 gladiators in the arena at a time. Clad only in coverings and wrist razors, the gladiators prowl through a hastily erected artificial maze, searching for each other. The last one standing wins. The crowd can clearly see the gladiators because of variations in the elevations; some walls are as tall as 10 feet while others are barely enough for a halfling to crawl behind.



## Running Tournaments

This variant is sometimes called the “jaguar games,” due to one forgotten combatant’s tactic of spotting herself with mud and dirt so as to blend in with the maze’s shadows.

**Gulg:** An arboreal game is the favorite in this arena. All the action takes place through the trees. Gladiators may not touch the ground, on pain of death at the hands of the crowd. There are some bramble trees that injure and interfere with movement. Winning strategies include luring enemies into a copse of these bramble trees and backing them into corners.

**Tyr:** Tyr, of course, no longer sponsors games. Since the ascendancy of King Tithian to the throne, the arena has been changed into a marketplace and the gladiators have been given their freedom. In the days of Kalak, however, the best game in town centered around a ziggurat erected in the center of the arena. Up to twenty teams of paired gladiators fought to be both the last standing and the first to make it to the top of the ziggurat. Only the best of the best were allowed to enter this competition, for winning set the victors up for life. Though they would still be slaves (if they were slaves before entering), they could spend most of the rest of their days in luxury, coming out only when their masters needed the extra money that their appearances generated. Occasionally, several teams of semi-retired gladiators emerged from their restful lives to perform again; this was always a crowd-pleaser. For obvious reasons, this game was never held more than once every few months.

**Urik:** The hallmark contest here is kickball with the head of a desert beast. The staves are moved so that there is an outgrowth of them only at the end of the playing field. The object of the game is to slam the head of the beast onto the spikes of the other team (Ten gladiators per team, only five on the field at any given time). The game lasts one hour, and the team that spikes the head most wins. Sometimes the head of a criminal is used (and not always after it’s been separated from the body).

## Concluding the Game

Eventually, of course, each game draws to a close. Whether an opponent is humanoid or not, one of the contestants almost always dies. Although certain games allow the crowd in the arena to decide the fate of the fighters, most of the action in a typical day at the arena is too brutal to allow such niceties.

Some contestants in the games invariably decide that faking their own death is preferable to suffering more permanent damage by a superior opponent. When they take any serious blow, they fall to the ground, feigning death. To most tests (such as poking, prodding, and the like) they appear dead. Unfortunately for them, both their opponents and the arena masters like to make sure they are in fact dead—they do not want the crowd cheated of the spectacle of the game. The way they insure this varies from city to city, but the following is the most common: When one of the combatants falls, a team of slaves bearing heated obsidian blades enters the arena. They remove whatever footgear the fallen one wears and press the burning blades into the soles of his feet. A successful Con -12 roll allows the victim to remain motionless; otherwise, he naturally jerks away. The slaves then restrain him as his opponent cuts his throat. Dead people, of course, do not jerk away. Even if the cowardly gladiator does make his Con check, he is likely crippled for life.

In other arenas, they do not even bother with such civilized niceties as heated blades. Often, they simply encourage the victorious gladiator to run his vanquished foe through, then and there. However, most gladiators are loath to perform this duty, for they know their enemy could simply bluff like this to lure them in close and then strike the exposed champion. Even the bravest of gladiators do not enjoy endangering themselves in this fashion, and thus the use of slaves for this work arose.

Certain billed games do allow the crowd to decide the fate of the fighters, depending on which one has defeated

# Running Tournaments



the other. While standing over his fallen, disarmed, and yet-living foe, the victor looks to the sorcerer-king, nobles, or other high-ranking attendees. These folk generally (but by no means always) abide by the decision of the crowd around them, which hoots, yells, and screams for the fallen gladiator's life or death.

If the fallen one put on a good show before his defeat, struggling desperately to survive and fighting masterfully despite obvious handicaps, the crowd clamors for his life. They want to see him again, hopefully faring better the next time, for his skill and tenacity have brightened their lives. On the other hand, even if the fallen gladiator is one of the great champions, if he fought poorly this day the crowd calls for his death. They have no loyalty for has-beens; all they care for is a good show, and if their favorites are unable to provide for it, they move on to new heroes.

Gladiators themselves honor their fallen opponents. After the battle is over, their artificial enmity comes to an end and they are able to respect one another's fighting styles. Even when one of the gladiators must kill the other, the short time between the judgement and the killing stroke is a peaceful place where they can offer their advice, strategy, suggestions, and farewells to one another if they feel the other deserves or needs it.

The greatest salute one gladiator can pay to another, reserved only for the fiercest opponents and thus only those worthy of one's respect, resounds in both the ears of dying men and victors alike: "You fought like the Dragon." On the other hand, those who don't fight well find that the final action they witness is the spittle from their opponent's mouth, the final sound a contemptuous grunt as the victor dispatches his enemy.

## Handicaps

In certain cases, the match between two gladiators is far from even. In these cases, unless the match is specifically meant to be humorous or punishment for the weaker

gladiator, the more powerful of the gladiators is often impaired in some way to make the match more even and entertaining. The more boisterous gladiators even ask to be handicapped as a show of bravado.

Sometimes this involves the binding of one arm or the other, a leg, or perhaps a blindfold across the eyes. In some cases it is only a difference of weapon. The severity of the handicap depends on the apparent difference in skill, the gladiators' reputation, and their bravado.

## Handicap Table

### Difference

in Level	Handicap	Result
1-2	Different weapons or armor	Skewed weapon speeds and damage
3	One arm bound	-2 to hit, no shield
4-5	One leg bound	-2 AC
6	Blindfolded	-4 to hit
7+	Blindfolded	-4 to hit
	One limb bound	According to limb bound (see above)

# Appendix

## Punching Table

Attack Form	Defense Form										
	Arm Block	Leg Block	Arm Catch	Leg Catch	Duck	Leap	Feint	Roll	Clinch	Retreat	None
Attack Form	SS/OS	SS/OS	SS/OS	SS/OS	Duck	Leap	Feint	Roll	Clinch	Retreat	None
Head Jab	+3/-	+3/+3	+1/-	+3/+3	-1	+1	—	-2	+2	-4	+3
Torso Jab	+2/+1	+2/+1	+1/+1	+3/+3	+3	+1	—	-2	—	-4	+3
Head Hook	+3/-	+3/+3	-1/+1	+3/+3	-2	+2	-1	-3	—	-4	+4
Head Cross	+1/+1	+3/+3	+1/-1	+3/+3	-2	+2	-1	-3	—	-4	+4
Head Uppercut	+3/+1	+2/+1	+1/+1	+1/+2	+2	—	+2	+1	-1	-4	+2
Head Combination	+1/-	+3/+3	-2/+1	+3/+3	-3	-1	+1	-2	+2	-3	+3
Torso Combination	+1/-	-2/+1	-2/+1	+2/+2	+1	—	-1	+1	-3	-3	+4
Elbow	+1/+1	+2/+2	-2/-2	+2/+2	-1	-1	+1	—	+1	-6	+4
Shoulder	+1/-	+3/+3	+1/-2	+3/+3	-1	+1	—	-2	+3	-6	+2
Head Butt: Head	+2/+2	+3/+3	+3/+3	+3/+3	-4	+1	-2	-2	+4	-4	+2
Head Butt: Torso	+1/+1	-2/-2	+3/+3	+3/+3	+3	+1	+2	+1	-2	-4	+3
Kidney Punch	+2/-	+1/+1	-1/-1	+3/+3	+1	-2	—	-1	+2	—	+2
Other Vitals	+3/-	-4/-4	-1/-1	-2/-2	+2	-3	+2	—	+1	-4	+4

## Wrestling Table

Attack Form	Defense Form										
	Arm Block	Leg Block	Arm Catch	Leg Catch	Duck	Leap	Feint	Roll	Clinch	Retreat	None
Attack Form	SS/OS	SS/OS	SS/OS	SS/OS	Duck	Leap	Feint	Roll	Clinch	Retreat	None
Trip	+3/+3	-/-	+3/+3	-/-	+2	-6	+3	-2	+1	-3	—
Elbow Smash	+1/+1	+2/+2	-1/-	+3/+3	-1	-1	+1	—	+1	-6	+4
Gouge	-2/-2	+3/+3	-2/-2	+3/+3	-1	-2	-1	-2	+3	-3	+2
THROWS FROM											
Ankle	+1/+1	-2/-2	+3/+3	-2/-2	—	-2	+2	-3	+1	-4	+3
Hand	-2/-2	+2/+2	-2/-2	+2/+2	+1	-1	—	-3	—	-3	+2
Hip	+3/+3	-/-	-1/-1	-/-	+1	+2	+1	-2	+3	-3	+3
Leg	+2/+2	-1/-1	-2/-2	-2/-2	+1	—	+1	+1	—	-4	+3
Shoulder	-/-1	+3/+3	+1/-	+2/+2	—	+1	12	-4	—	-4	+3
Ankle w/ Lock-	+2/+2	+2/+2	+2/+2	+2/+2	+2	+2	+2	+2	+2	+2	+2
Hand w/ Lock	+3/+3	+3/+3	+3/+3	+3/+3	+3	+3	+3	+3	+3	+3	+3
Hip w/ Lock-	+4/+4	+4/+4	+4/+4	+4/+4	+4	+4	+4	+4	+4	+4	+4
Leg w/ Lock	+4/+4	+4/+4	+4/+4	+4/+4	+4	+4	+4	+4	+4	+4	+4
Shoulder w/ Lock*	+4/+4	+4/+4	+4/+4	+4/+4	+4	+4	+4	+4	+4	+4	+4
HOLDS†											
Bearhug	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	-3	+2	+1	-2	+4	-4	+4
Standard Hold	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	-2	+1	+1	-2	+3	-3	+4
Stranglehold	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	-4	-2	—	-3	+1	-3	+4
Arm Lock	-2/-2	+3/+3	-4/-4	+2/+2	-2	—	+1	-1	+2	-4	+3
Head Lock	-/-	+3/+3	-4/-4	+3/+3	-6	-2	-2	-2	+3	-3	+4
Leg Lock	+1/+1	-2/-2	+2/+2	-4/-4	—	-6	+2	-2	—	-3	+3

\*The defending character must first break the lock to reduce this chance. Until the attacking character actually makes the throw the defender is helpless.

† Once a hold has been achieved, the defender can try to break the hold. No other actions are possible for as long as the hold is maintained.

# Appendix



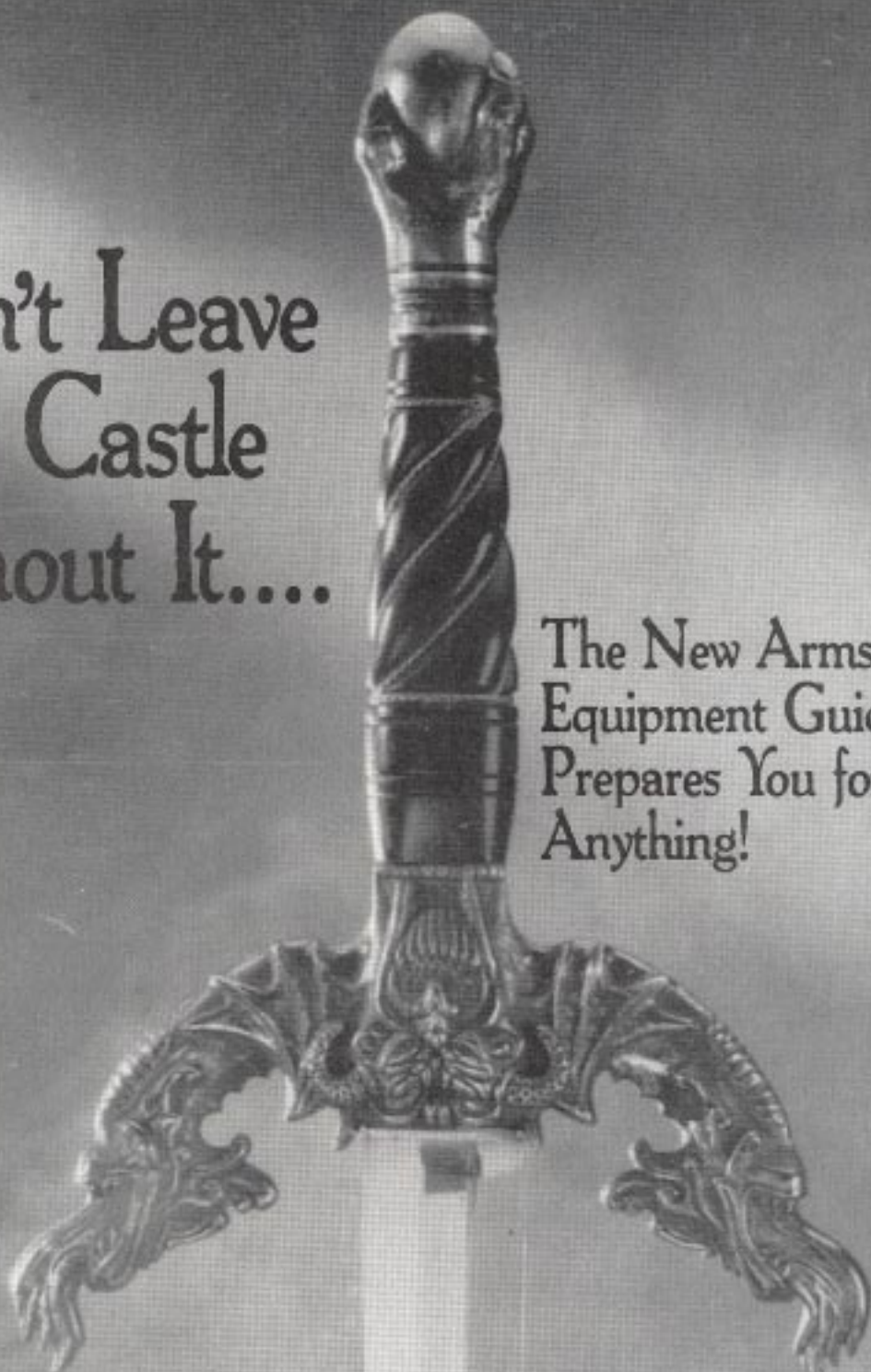
## Martial Arts Table

Attack Form	Defense Form										
	Arm Block	Leg Block	Arm Catch	Leg Catch	Duck	Leap	Feint	Roll	Clinch	Retreat	None
	SS/OS	SS/OS	SS/OS	SS/OS							
<b>HAND TO</b>											
Head	- / -2	+3 / +3	-2 / -	+3 / +3	-1	-	-	-2	+1	-4	+4
Throat	-1 / -3	+3 / +3	-2 / -1	+3 / +3	-2	+1	+1	-2	-	-4	+4
Chest	- / -1	+3 / +3	-1 / -1	+3 / +3	-	+1	-1	-1	+2	-3	+3
Vitals	-1 / -2	- / -1	-1 / -2	+1 / -	+2	+1	+2	-	+1	-4	+4
Groin	- / -1	-2 / -2	-3 / -3	-2 / -2	+3	-2	+1	+2	-	-4	+3
Arm	- / -1	+3 / +3	-2 / -1	+2 / +2	-	-	-1	-2	-1	-3	+4
Leg	+2 / +1	-1 / -2	+1 / -	-1 / -2	+3	-1	+2	-1	-1	-2	+2
<b>FOOT TO</b>											
Head	+2 / -	+3 / +3	-1 / +1	+3 / +3	-2	+1	-2	-3	-2	-4	+4
Roundhouse: Head	+3 / -	+3 / +3	- / +2	+3 / +3	-3	+1	-3	-4	-3	-4	+4
Chest	+1 / -1	+3 / +2	- / -1	+3 / +2	-	+1	+1	-	-1	-3	+3
Vitals	+2 / -	+1 / -1	- / -	+1 / -1	+2	-1	+1	+2	-	-3	+3
Groin	-1 / -2	-1 / -2	-2 / -3	-1 / -1	+2	-2	-	-	+2	-4	+4
Shoulder	+1 / -2	+3 / +3	- / -1	+3 / +3	+2	-	-1	+1	-3	-3	+3
El bow	+2 / -	+3 / +3	-1 / -2	+3 / +3	+1	-2	-1	-1	-2	-4	+4
Knee	+3 / +2	-2 / -3	+3 / +3	+3 / +3	+2	-3	+2	+1	+3	-3	+4
Foot	+3 / +3	-3 / -3	+3 / +3	-3 / -3	+4	-3	+2	-	+3	-4	+4



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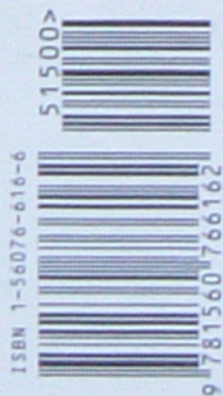
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\$15.00 U.S. \$18.00 CAN £9.99 U.K.