

To BOLDLY Go



by Ron Currie

As many of you who play *Star Trek: The Role-Playing Game* have probably experienced by now, it is very easy for players and gamemasters alike to lose track of the Trek. When presented with rulebooks, statistics, tables, and dice, humans have an unfortunate tendency to act more like number-crunchers than Starfleet officers (I apologize to Vulcan readers out there). I was a fan of the series long before *ST:RPG* came out, and I know how disappointing 'Statistics Syndrome' can be. So, without further ado, I present for the benefit of you gamemasters out there my suggestions for putting the Trek back on track.

THE PRIME DIRECTIVE

Here's a typical situation. Your players have an incredibly powerful starship, loads of equipment, and a well-trained crew. Throw them into a dramatically charged situation, say a world in the Neutral Zone being courted by both the Feds and the Klingons. As often as not, the players will try to find a way to shoot their way to victory. Sure, Kirk did a lot of that, but only when necessary. Anyone out there remember the Prime Directive? No unnecessary interference, right?

Well, here's the solution. The TV series is full of pencil-pushing Commodores who just love to make trouble for those free-willed Captains out there. When the Captain in your campaign begins to get too high-handed with his treatment of other races, worlds, ships, etc, an official warning from the local Quadrant Commander may often be enough. Back this up by making supplies a bit tougher to get hold of, assigning the ship to a dull (or better yet, dangerous) tour of duty, or make it clear during the next shore leave that officers from other ships are whispering behind the Captain's back. If things are still out of hand after this, have Commodore Stocker show up for the next mission. You never know when he'll get the urge to take over a starship again...

STAND BY, MR SULU!

Before an attack in the series, Kirk always ordered the phasers locked on target. If you are using the *Starship Combat Game*, just remember the rules for locking phasers. Not only does this keep players in character, it makes the effect of sneak attacks more realistic.

ENERGIZE!

After a while, when your players want to beam down, they get into the habit of simply saying 'Okay, we beam down. What do we see?'. Wait until they say 'Energize' first. They should get the message.

NO MORE EXPENDABLE ENSIGNS!

In virtually every other episode of *Star Trek*, some hapless security officer or researcher got killed off. Whenever a dangerous situation arises, it is easy (but often necessary) to send NPCs to a likely death. Kirk often found himself in this situation, and took each loss as a personal one.

In order to humanise these situations, set aside some time to roll up 20-25 NPCs with individual statistics and names. Six or seven security officers, a replacement for each bridge position, science and medical specialists, and the like. Whenever your players want NPCs on a landing party, make them pick from this list.

During starship combat, keep track of the casualties. At the end of combat, if there are 5% casualties for example, roll D100 for each NPC. On a roll of five or less, that NPC is a casualty. This leads on to filling out casualty reports, consoling grieving relatives, and other interesting situations. Remember the newlyweds from *Balance of Terror*? If your group has thrived on action and violence up until now, you may be surprised to see how interesting more personal forms of drama can be.

MIND MELDS 'R US

The Vulcan mind meld is terribly useful for getting out of tough situations. However, there are no provisions in the rules for negative effects should a meld go wrong. Thus, there is a powerful temptation for Vulcan characters to misuse or overuse the mind meld. Spock always seemed a bit hesitant to use this technique, so there must have been a good reason for not throwing it around.

Each time a player uses the mind meld unnecessarily, roll D100 versus his intelligence. For each subsequent use, subtract 10 from his INT score (for the purposes of this roll only). If the roll is greater than his INT, roll 1 D10 on the table below:

Mind Meld Side Effects Table

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| 1-3 | Character gets painful headache which disrupts concentration. Subtract 10 from all INT rolls for the next 2D10 hours. Vulcan pain control techniques are ineffective. |
| 4 & 5 | Character receives sharp mental jolt, and is unable to use psionics for 1D10 days. |
| 6 | The Reticular Activating System (RAS) of the character's brain becomes temporarily scrambled. Character is effectively blind and/or deaf (GM's option) for 2D10 minutes, until the RAS straightens itself out. |
| 7 | Character goes into shock and passes out for 3D10 minutes. Only psionic (and not medical) intervention can revive character. |
| 8 | Portions of the personality of NPC is temporarily overlaid onto that of the player character — the strongest emotional traits of the NPC. This could be real trouble if the NPC was a Klingon! This lasts 2D10 days, unless treated by another telepath with a score of 40 or higher in Psychology (Vulcan). |
| 9 | The psionic floodgates open! Character receives thoughts from all characters and NPCs within 50 feet. Character must either be sedated, totally isolated, or put himself into a trance for 3D10 hours. |
| 10 | Character loses 10 points of PSI and INT until he receives 3D10 days of uninterrupted psionic and psycho-therapy and rest. Any attempt to use psionics again until after this therapy has been finished will result in another such loss. |

I would also go so far as to suggest that the above table be used for *every* meld attempt on the part of a player character who has consistently acted un-Vulcan. This may seem unduly harsh to some, but it may prove necessary for the sake of game balance.

Remember, don't use these tactics unless the game has gotten to the point where it no longer resembles *Star Trek*. As often as not, the players will feel that something has 'gone wrong', perhaps without actually knowing *what*. Live long and prosper!