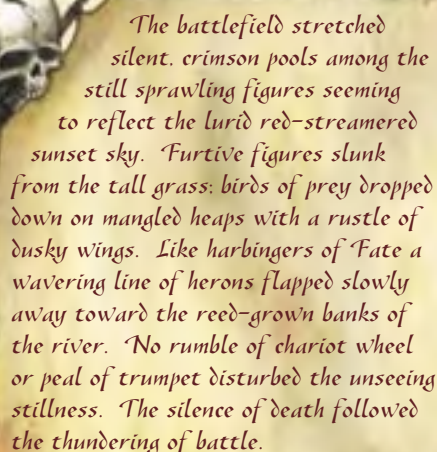# Mass Combat

About His Iron-Clad Feet Grew A Ring of Mangled Corpses

The battlefield stretched silent. crimson pools among the still sprawling figures seeming to reflect the lurid red-streamered sunset sky. Furtive figures slunk from the tall grass: birds of prey dropped down on mangled heaps with a rustle of dusky wings. Like harbingers of Fate a wavering line of herons flapped slowly away toward the reed-grown banks of the river. No rumble of chariot wheel or peal of trumpet disturbed the unseeing stillness. The silence of death followed the thundering of battle.

Units are the 'characters' of the mass combat system. They receive orders, move, fight and react as if they were individuals. They may assume different formations, in which the counters of which the unit is composed are rearranged in a specific way.

THE UNIT ROSTER

Unit rosters are used to record the details and abilities of every fighting unit within an army. These rosters allow players and Games Masters alike to judge the effectiveness of any unit at a glance, and greatly aids combat resolution during mass combat.

The Unit Roster is used as a matter of convenience throughout these rules, from launching a devastating charge at an enemy to recording casualties when being pounded by catapults. There are many circumstances in a game where the Games Master will prefer to use standard rules from the Combat chapter of the main rulebook to resolve combat and skill checks – the Unit Roster is used when large numbers of unit members need to perform one task at the same time.

A typical Unit Roster Sheet, detailing a newly recruited regiment of pikemen from Gunderland, is shown below:

Race: Gundermen   **Class:** Soldier   **Level:** 1
Unit Size: 8
Creatures Per Counter: 10
Unit Type: Infantry
Counter Hit Points: 18
Initiative: +4 (+4 Improved Initiative)
Attacks: Pike +3
Damage: Pike 1d8+1
DV (Parry vs. melee): 13 (+1 Str, +2 large shield)
DV (Dodge vs. melee): 2 (-10 Close formation, +2 large shield)
DV (Dodge vs. ranged): 13 (+1 Close formation, +2 large shield)
Ability Scores: Str 13, Dex 10, Con 12, Int 9, Wis 11, Cha 8
Saves: Fort: +3; Ref: +0; Will: +0
Feats: Improved Initiative, Gunderland Pike-and-Shield Fighting, Weapon Focus (pike)

UNITS

A unit is a group of individuals banded together to a common purpose on the battlefield. For the purposes of this system, every person within the unit has the same function, the same weapons and the same abilities. Units can be disciplined and orderly, with a history of their own, such as the Poitainian Knights, or they can be thrown together on the morning of the battle, as with the Mob Of Angry Fishermen Fresh From The Burning Yuetshi Village.

A unit consists of one or more counters. Each counter represents a certain number of individuals, with the minimum being 10. (For any less than ten per counter, it is not really worth using the mass combat system.) Most units will contain between 5 and 20 counters.

Rounding

Unlike the usual practice in d20 games, fractional numbers in the mass combat system are rounded to the nearest whole number, rather than always rounded down. Thus if you divide 29 by 10 to get 2.9, you will round this up to 3 rather than down to 2. Any fraction of half or above gets rounded up, any fraction below half gets rounded down.

As can be readily seen, the Unit Roster has much in common with the monster entries in the bestiary of the main *Conan* rulebook as do the unit combat rules detailed below.

RACE, CLASS & LEVEL

Unit race and class are determined by simple majority – if a unit has 3 Cimmerian barbarians and 27 Nemedian soldiers, then the unit will be noted as being Nemedian soldiers. The level of any unit is considered to be formed by the average of every member of that unit, rounded down.

UNIT SIZE

This records the number of counters that go to make up the unit. A single unit may not contain more than 30 counters, though an army may contain as many units as you wish.

COUNTER HIT POINTS

Counter Hit Points are used to measure the damage a unit may sustain in combat before being defeated or even wiped out. Whenever a unit receives damage in excess of its counter hit points, one or more counters are removed and the overall size of the unit drops accordingly. Excess damage is recorded on the unit roster. For example, if a unit with 8 counters and 10 counter hit points received 20 points of damage, it would lose two counters; if it received 14 points of damage, it would lose only one counter but the 4 surplus points would be recorded on the unit roster, so it would only need to sustain 6 points of damage on the next round to lose a further counter.

Counter hit points are determined simply by working out the average Hit Dice of every unit member and multiplying this by the number of creatures per counter, modified as follows;

Majority of unit has Constitution modifier	+/-10% per Con modifier
Majority of unit has 3 hp or less	-25%

Add the Damage Reduction for the armour worn by members of the unit, and for any other means of acquiring DR (in a unit with mixed armour, determine the average DR of each member).

For example, the Gundermen in the above unit have 1 HD each, giving a base counter hit points of 1 x 10 = 10. They all have +1 Con bonuses, so this is increased by 10%, to 11. Add 7 for the armour for at total counter hit points of 18.

UNIT TYPE

This is a reflection of how a unit operates upon the battlefield and what its especial competencies are. Four different unit types are used in the mass combat system to reflect differing capabilities and special combat skills. The proper use of such units can ensure victory for a general, even in the face of overwhelming opposition.

Types of unit are as follows:

Infantry: Infantry units form the core of most forces and comprise of any unit that does not meet the requirements of archers, cavalry or skirmishers. Such units receive no special bonuses or penalties within the mass combat system.

Archers: Any unit armed with a ranged weapon with a range increment of at least 60 ft. and not wearing heavy armour is designated as an archer unit. Archer units are able to keep their distance from the main line of battle and rain missile weapons down upon their enemies from a distance.

Cavalry: Any unit riding any kind of mount or chariot into battle is designated as cavalry. In Aquilonia and the other Hyborian kingdoms, cavalry are widely regarded as the only true soldiers – infantry of any kind are simply there to clear the way for the cavalry charge. Cavalry units are fast moving forces in the battlefield, able to attack enemy units almost at will. To calculate the counter hit points of cavalry units, compare the hit points of the mount and the rider and add half of the lower amount to the higher.

For example, a counter of ten 2nd level soldiers wearing mail shirts and mounted on Kushite warhorses would add half of a soldier's hit points to those of a horse, as the horse has 3 HD. The counter hit points would therefore be a base of 3 for the horse's hit points plus 40% for its Constitution modifier (i.e. +1.2), plus half of 2 = 1 point for the soldier's hit dice. So, 3+1.2+1 = 5.2, add +3 for the mail shirts (half the creatures in the counter, that is, all the soldiers but none of the horses, have DR 6) gives 8.2. This is multiplied by 10 for the number of soldiers per counter = 82 points.

Skirmishers: Any unit wearing no or light armour may be designated as a skirmish unit, taking to the field in a small dispersed formation that allows them to operate with great flexibility. Skirmish units must remain in skirmish formation at all times. A skirmisher unit gains a +2 competence bonus on all Initiative checks. However, no skirmisher unit may have more than 4 counters at any one time. Cavalry units with light horses or warhorses wearing no barding may also be designated as skirmisher units and gain these bonuses and penalties. Such units are known as skirmishing cavalry.

INITIATIVE

This is the Initiative modifier (calculated in the normal *Conan the Roleplaying Game* method) of the majority of the unit.

ATTACKS & DAMAGE

These are determined by simple majority – the weapons the majority of the unit are armed with are assumed to be carried by all for the purposes of the Unit Roster and unit combat. The majority of the unit are also used to determine base attack bonus and any modifiers for Strength for attack and damage.

FEATS

Any unit that has a majority of members with one or more identical feats will have such feats listed on their Unit Roster. However, the following feats have no effect upon mass combat and so are never listed, no matter how many unit members possess them. However, they may still use such feats individually when not using the mass combat system rules.

Cleave, Combat Reflexes, Great Cleave, Improved Bull Rush, Improved Disarm, Improved Overrun, Improved Sunder, Improved Trip, Whirlwind Attack

FINESSE

Finesse combat is never used during the Mass Combat System, as the chaos of war rarely allows for anything fancier than a hack at the nearest enemy.

ABILITY SCORES & SAVES

Once again, the ability scores and saves of the majority of the unit are noted down on the Unit Roster.

FORMATIONS

The formation of a unit is the pattern made by the counters, viewed from the top down. Formation is important on the battlefield because it affects how vulnerable your units are and how many of them may attack a given target. A unit may change formation as a move-equivalent action.

Units in open or close formation have one or more 'faces'. The face of a unit is one of its edges on which the combatants are braced for battle. The front of a unit, the direction in which it moves, is always a face. The sides and the rear of the unit are not faces.

CREATING A FACE

A face is defined as any edge of a unit where the soldiers are turned outwards and on guard. A unit may take a move-equivalent action to turn one or more of its edges into a face. For example, soldiers at the rear of a unit turn around and ready their weapons to meet oncoming opponents. A unit that has established more faces than just the front may not move again without taking a move-equivalent action to abolish all the faces but one, which is now the unit's new front face.

The importance of faces is their reduction of the unit's vulnerability. Attacking a face is much harder than attacking the sides or rear of a unit. Any unit may freely surge into another unit's space (see the surge attack below) if there is no face established.

SKIRMISH

Skirmish formation is open and loose. Counters must be at least ten feet away from each other but there is no other restriction upon their movement. This formation is used by scouts, snipers and other free-roaming units. It offers good defence against missile fire, allowing for dodges without penalty, but is very bad for attacking or defending in melee combat, as it is very easy for enemy units in closer formation to outnumber you. Units in skirmish formation suffer only half damage from ranged attacks.

OPEN

Open formation is orderly, with room to manoeuvre. Units must be arranged in a linear or rectangular formation. There is room enough to swing any size of weapon but open ranks prevent the battle line from being easily defensible. While you are in open formation, you may arrange the counters in a unit as you wish, so long as no unit is more than five feet away from any other unit and the whole arrangement is a simple block or line with no angles or bends in it. You may therefore create lines, columns or squares as you see fit. Changing from one such arrangement to another uses up a number of feet of the unit's Move allowance equal to the furthest distance moved by any one counter.

CLOSE

Close formation is tightly packed. As with open formation, units must be arranged in a linear or rectangular pattern. While in this formation, units may not fight with two-handed weapons except for melee piercing weapons; there simply is not room to swing a greatsword or shoot a bow without hurting an ally. They may however use reach weapons.

Units in close formation who have large shields may take a move-equivalent action to form a shield wall on their front face, which increases the shield bonus to the unit's Defence Value by +2. If the unit is stationary and has established other faces, they may form shield walls on the other faces but may not move without abolishing the faces and disrupting the wall; see the section on faces above.

Units in close formation have a -10 penalty to DV when dodging melee weapons, as the units are packed together too densely for dodging to be a feasible option. However, if the group has shields there is no penalty to DV when dodging missile weapons, but instead a +1 bonus to DV due to the overlapping shields of the unit's members – in this instance, a 'dodge' represents a duck behind the shield. All Reflex saving throws are made at a -2 circumstance penalty. Close formation is usually employed by heavily armoured units with shields.

Units in close formation may be rearranged, as with units in open formation, but every counter must be adjacent to at least one other counter. Units

in close formation may not run nor charge, though they may 'quick march' to take a double move. Cavalry units may not enter close formation.

MERGED

This is the formation taken by two or more units who are merged on the field. It is not a formation that is taken voluntarily but is the result of one unit moving into another's space, usually by means of a surge attack. The combat between units in a merged formation is referred to as a 'fray'. It is a frantic free-for-all in which targets are hacked at whenever a chance presents itself.

All participants in a merged formation suffer a -2 circumstance penalty to Defence Value, because the chaos and confusion makes it much easier for the various combatants to take attacks of opportunity, strike at opponents' backs, flank enemies and otherwise take advantage of the general melee. However, they may either dodge or parry as they choose, with no further penalties.

Ranged weapons may not be used by units in merged formation; if a unit of archers is ever surged into, they will resort to back-up weapons. Any weapon with reach, such as a pike or war spear, cannot be used in merged formation, as these weapons are intended to be used at a distance, not in a close-up fracas. Other weapons may be used as normal.

When two or more units are fighting in merged formation, all damage received is applied to the whole unit, with counters being removed accordingly. There are no counters that are out of harm's way, as there are in regular combat.

MOVEMENT

Units in skirmish formation may move in any direction up to their normal movement rate, so long as they remain within the minimum distance of each other.

Units on the field in open or close formation move at their normal movement rate, so long as they are progressing in a dead straight line. They may move backwards in a straight line at half their movement rate.

If a unit has to turn or 'wheel' around, the furthest distance crossed by any one counter in the unit counts as used-up movement for the round. For example, a line of 10 counters with a move of 40 ft. that remained fixed at one end and moved the other end through 40 feet, thus rotating the line about a point, would count as having used up its movement.

A unit that comes up against another unit must stop. A unit may not continue moving into another unit's space without making a surge attack (see below). Most combat on the field is between lines of opponents facing one another and trading blows over their shields, until a surge occurs and breaks the battle lines.

Units in merged formation do not generally move at all, as to do so is to provoke a mass attack of opportunity, one of the only instances in which this can happen in the mass combat system. They are more likely to stand their ground and fight. They may not change formation while they are merged and the only movement they may take without provoking an attack of opportunity is a five-foot step. (Any individual counter may take such as step; the unit does not have to move as one.) They may move in any direction at their full movement rate in an attempt to escape the fracas, though doing so provokes an attack of opportunity. Units emerging from merged formation are always in skirmish formation by default.

SPECIAL ATTACK: SURGE

In a mass battle, a surge is the moment when one unit presses forwards with a roar, attempting to break the other unit's battle line. Surges can be attempted and repulsed several times before one line finally gives way and an attacking unit spills into the defenders' space, the attackers laying about them with wild abandon while the defenders struggle to regain their footing.

Surges place units into merged formation. While units are merged, every counter in the unit contributes to the damage done with a successful hit and every enemy counter is liable to take damage. Large forces are therefore keen to surge into smaller forces, as the ensuing mayhem enables the larger force to slaughter the smaller one more quickly. A well entrenched defensive force can, if it is skilled and fortunate, repel multiple surge attempts and in doing so whittle down the attackers' numbers.

A surge may only be attempted when one unit's face is in contact (or brought into contact) with another unit. This will usually mean being in contact with the second unit's face, though not always. This may be in the course of movement or from a standing start. A surge *may* be combined with a charge attack and in practice often is.

The attackers must have enough remaining movement in the round to move at least 10 feet into the mass of the defenders. An opposed Strength check is then made between the average Strength ability score of the attackers and that of the defenders. The following modifiers apply:

† If either side is mounted, the Strength ability score of the mount is used instead of that of the rider.
† Units armed with reach weapons may not attempt to surge.
† If the defenders have readied suitable weapons against a charge, they may use them against a surge. In this case, the defenders are allowed an attack of opportunity against the surging attackers. If the attack of opportunity removes more than half the counters from the attacking face, the surge automatically fails.
† If the defenders are in close formation, they receive a +2 circumstance bonus to their Strength check.

† If the defenders have a shield wall in place, they receive a +2 circumstance bonus to their Strength check.

† If the attacking side's face extends further in width than the defender's, the attacker receives a +1 circumstance bonus to its Strength check. Two such bonuses may be earned if the attacker's face exceeds the defender's on each side.

† If one side's members are of larger size than the other (such as a unit of ogres attempting to defend against a surging unit of humans) a +1 circumstance bonus is applied to that side's Strength check for every size category that the one side is larger than the other.

† If one unit is wearing heavy armour and the opposing side is wearing medium, light or no armour (such as a unit of knights in plate armour facing a unit of archers in mail shirts) a +2 circumstance bonus is applied to heavily armour side's Strength check.

† If it is able to move into the other unit's space without encountering a face, such as by attacking suddenly from the flank or the rear, the attacking unit may surge into the defending unit's space without needing to make an opposed Strength check.

† It is much easier to let gravity help you when you are attempting a surge, so running downhill into a mass of enemies is the best way to do it; conversely, those who hold the high ground are in the best defensive position. A unit making a surge attack downhill receives a +2 circumstance bonus to its Strength check, while a unit attempting to surge uphill receives a –2 circumstance penalty to the same check.

† If either side is in open or close formation, every rank of counters behind the front line adds a +1 circumstance bonus to the Strength check of that side, to a maximum bonus of +4. So, a unit three deep has a much better chance to resist an oncoming surge than a single line of defenders.

If the surge attack fails, the attackers stop at the defending unit's face without advancing any further, where they may make an ordinary attack with a -2 circumstance penalty on their chance to hit. If the defenders were using reach weapons, the attackers stop at the limit of the weapons' reach.

If the attack succeeds, the attacking unit moves forward into the defending unit's space and the two units are now considered merged. They remain so until one side is slain or withdraws.

The attacking unit may now make an immediate melee attack against the defenders, who suffer a -1 circumstance penalty to Defence Value on account of the disarray that follows the smashing of their battle line. These penalties only apply for the duration of the single attack that immediately follows a successful surge. Remember that all attacks made by units in a merged formation are already made with a -2 circumstance penalty to the defender's DV.

If the attacking unit was charging as well as surging, it receives the appropriate bonuses and penalties on its first attack. The charge bonuses and penalties apply even if the surge is resisted.

BREAKING UP A FACE BEFORE A SURGE

If a face has been broken up by having counters removed and the defender does not have enough counters (or the opportunity) to reform the face, then it no longer counts as a face and attackers may surge freely into the defenders.

MULTIPLE MERGED UNITS

A unit may voluntarily merge with two or more units who are already merged simply by moving into their space, so long as the total number of counters in the fray does not exceed 60 following the merging. In this instance, when it is your turn to attack you must allocate at least one of your counters to fight each enemy counter and allocate the remainder how you will if there are any left over. Separate attack and damage rolls must be made for each combat in the fray.

Bear in mind that in referring to the outmatching table, the total number of counters fighting on each side is what counts, rather than the size of the individual units involved.

For example: Amalric's Free Company have surged into the ranks of the Gunderland pikemen, merging the two units on the field. Amalric has 30 counters and after the first round of combat, the Gunderland pikemen have 8 – a dismal situation for the Gundermen. The mercenaries outnumber them by more than three to one and will probably chop them to mincemeat on the next round.

Just as all seems lost, a unit of dismounted Poitainian knights arrive over the prow of a nearby hill, hurling themselves into the fray. The Poitainians have added 20 more counters to the merged units. This levels the field somewhat; the mercenaries will no longer gain any outmatching benefits.

Amalric must now allocate 8 of his counters to fight the Gundermen and 20 to the Poitainians, with 2 counters left over. He assigns these to fight the Gundermen, hoping to whittle them down quickly.

RESOLVING UNIT COMBAT

The mass combat system follows many of the rules creatures do when they fight using the core game system. Unless otherwise stated below, all combat rules detailed in *Conan The RPG* apply equally to units, the Unit Roster making this transition relatively easy. Unit combat occurs whenever two units meet in battle and engage in combat. A full summary of unit combat, together with the changes made to the rules in *Conan The RPG* is presented here.

ROUNDS

Unit combat is broken up into 6 second rounds as usual.

INITIATIVE

Before the first round of unit combat begins, each unit involved makes an Initiative check. An Initiative check is a Dexterity check (1d20 + unit's Dexterity modifier). If the unit's leader has the Leadership feat, a +2 competence bonus is applied to their Initiative check. Furthermore, the unit leader's Base Attack Bonus is also applied to the unit's Initiative check.

ATTACKS

Units may make a melee attack on every round in which one of their faces is in contact with the enemy, or in which they are merged with an enemy unit. If the unit is using a weapon that allows it a long reach, then 'in contact' means within weapon range. They may make a ranged attack on any round in which an enemy of which the unit is aware is within range of their weapons.

If a unit is in any formation other than merged, only those counters who are in contact with enemy counters are included in the attack. If the unit is merged with another unit following a surge, then all the counters in the merged units are considered to be in contact with one another.

RANGED ATTACKS

Most ranged weapons are propelled upwards in a diagonal 45 arc when used in mass combat. This allows for maximum range, as well as ensuring that all the archers or javelin-throwers in a unit can shoot at the same time. Thus, for most ranged attacks every counter can shoot at once, so long as at least one counter has direct line of sight to the enemy. Any reduction in accuracy caused by this indirect attack is more than compensated for by sheer volume of fire, and even heavy armour is not always sufficient defence against it since at least some of the arrows will find their way into chinks, eyeslits or weak spots of the armour.

Crossbows, however, have a far flatter trajectory. When resolving crossbow attacks, only those counters who have direct line of sight to the enemy may attack. If crossbowmen are in ranks, only those units on an established face may fire, as the bodies of the soldiers in front make missile fire from counters behind them impossible.

ATTACK ROLL

To score a hit that deals damage, a unit must roll the target's Armour Class or better.

Melee Attack Roll: 1d20 + base attack bonus + Strength modifier + size modifier

Ranged Attack Roll: 1d20 + base attack bonus + Dexterity modifier + size modifier

Note that size modifiers refer to creature size as normal, not to the overall Unit Size. Range penalties are never used in the mass combat system, due to the ease of hitting large units of fighting men at any range.

FLANK AND REAR ATTACKS

If part or all of a unit's face is attacking the side of a unit, it receives a +1 circumstance bonus to its attack roll. If part or all of a unit's face is attacking the rear of a unit, it receives a +2 circumstance bonus. These bonuses apply to melee or ranged combat equally.

In addition, when a unit is attacked in the rear, the defenders lose any parry bonuses to Defence Value.

DAMAGE

The majority of attacks in *Conan The RPG* deal damage in hit points. However, units receive damage in terms of Counter Hit Points, which are effectively the number of Hit Dice of each entire counter in the unit.

To calculate damage, roll the unit's base damage a number of times equal to the number of counters that were involved in the attack and apply it across the defending counters. For example, if there were 8 counters attacking at a base damage of 1d6+1, you would roll 8d6+8 to find the damage. It will be immediately apparent that a large force attacking a small one from all sides will quickly cut the smaller force to ribbons.

DEFENCE VALUE

A unit's Defence Value is the result needed for an enemy unit to successfully make an attack roll.

DV: 10 + parry bonus + Strength modifier + size modifier

COUNTER HIT POINTS

Counter Hit Points represent how much damage the counters in a unit can take before they are considered to be wiped out.

ATTACK OPTIONS

When attacking, a unit has four basic options;

Charge: A unit not currently engaged in melee combat may charge any enemy with this option.

Surge: A unit whose face is currently in contact with an enemy unit may attempt to surge into that unit's space. Units may also move until they are in contact with an enemy unit and then surge, so long as they have at least 10 feet of movement left after the move. A charge may be combined with a surge.

Attack: A unit may make either melee or ranged attacks. Units that can strike more than once each round may do so with this attack option.

Withdraw: If involved in melee combat, a unit may attempt to withdraw.

INDIVIDUAL UNIT MEMBERS

Any unit member not actively engaged in unit combat may act as normal, following all the combat rules in *Conan The Roleplaying Game.* This includes making attacks of their own, casting spells or any other action permissible.

ATTACKS OF OPPORTUNITY

Attacks of opportunity are only used in unit combat when one unit attempts to withdraw from melee combat with another or when an attacker is charging a defender who has readied weapons against the charge. The act of withdrawing from combat generates an attack of opportunity. Units that are merged with other units may attempt to withdraw.

TAKING DAMAGE

The Counter Hit Points are a representation of how much damage a unit can take before they are completely slaughtered or routed. A counter reduced to 0 Counter Hit Points is considered vanquished, though not all of its members are necessarily slain; a unit reduced to zero counters is similarly vanquished.

Following an attack in which counters are lost, the attacker decides which of the defender's counters to remove. He may only remove those counters that were in range of the attack. If more damage has been inflicted than there were counters in range to receive it, the additional damage is wasted. On the defender's turn, counters may be moved into position to reform the face of the unit.

Counters that are removed are placed into the dead pile, or if you are not using physical counters or miniatures, kept tally of in the dead column. There is more than one kind of pile, as there are various different ways of becoming *hors de combat.* The number of counters in each pile will affect your ability to recover units after the battle is over.

THE THREE COUNTER CONDITIONS

These are the three possible conditions in which any lost counter may end up. Effects other than simple death are usually produced by spells or special abilities.

Dead: The creatures are mostly slaughtered. This is the pile into which counters are placed if they fall in melee or ranged combat, if they are struck by magic that causes damage or if death magic is used against them.

Crippled: The creatures are not necessarily dead but are useless for combat. They may or may not recover. They are removed from the battle.

Incapacitated: The creatures are useless for a portion of the battle, but may well recover and will probably survive to fight again another day. Incapacitated counters may not be given orders. The Games Master decides what they are most likely to do, given their condition.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

If the majority of the unit have a special ability (the Barbarian Rage, for example), then this too applies to unit combat. Bonuses to attack, damage and related rolls are easy to apply to the unit combat system portrayed here.

The rules for flat-footed combatants are not used in unit combat.

In addition, the following rules are never used in unit combat;

Magic Actions, Miscellaneous Actions, Injury and Death, Flanking, Aid Another, Bull Rush, Disarm, Grapple, Mounted Combat, Overrun, Trip

UNIT CHARGE OPTION

Any unit not currently engaged in melee combat may charge an enemy unit. In doing so, the unit gains the normal +2 charge bonus to its attack roll. However, the unit will also suffer a –2 penalty to its Defence Value for one round. The charge option or an attempt to surge are the only ways in which a unit may initiate melee combat with another.

If the opponent is armed with weapons that have reach, the charge must be combined with a surge attack in order to have any effect; the only hope in such a situation is to break through the opponent's lines all at once. If the surge is unsuccessful, the attacking force remains at a 10-foot distance from the defenders (20-foot if the reach weapons are pikes) and may not close without making a second surge attempt.

UNIT ATTACK OPTION

Unit combat is treated in the same way as combats between creatures in that Initiative checks are made, followed by attack and damage rolls. There are, however, some important differences to be aware of.

FRESHNESS

Armies often keep their best units in reserve, not just to reduce casualties so those troops are at full strength later in the battle, but to keep them fresh for a sudden push.

When two units are in melee combat with each other, if one of the units has not fought before during that battle and the other has (whether or not they sustained any damage), the fresh unit gains a +2 morale bonus on all attack and damage rolls during the first round of combat.

OUTMATCHING

When one unit heavily outmatches another, either in terms of number or ability, they will soon find they are able to cause an incredible amount of damage upon their enemies whilst suffering very little in return. The table below is used to grant attack and morale modifiers to units who heavily outmatch their enemies, or are outmatched in return.

To calculate the outmatching modifier for a given combat, look at how many counters from each side are within melee combat range of the other side. Assume that any counter that can attack does attack. Next, compare the number of attackers to the number of defenders and adjust the attack rolls accordingly. For example, if ten attackers are facing ten defenders, there will be no modifier, but if one side has surged over another so that there are three times as many attackers able to reach the enemy as there are enemy units, apply the appropriate modifiers.

Group or Army Size is:	Attack Roll Modifier	Morale Modifier
Ten times or more enemy's	+5	+5
Five times enemy's	+3	+3
Three times enemy's	+2	+2
Twice enemy's	+1	+1
50% of enemy's	-1	-1
33% of enemy's	-2	-2
20% of enemy's	-3	-3
10% or less of enemy's	-5	-5

Outmatching does not take into account counters in the unit who are not able to reach the fray. This is why surging is so often the attack that signals the start of the real chaos, as merged units fight as if all counters in the unit were in contact.

Formation also makes a considerable difference, as a unit in close formation attacking a unit in open formation can easily have their attacking counters outnumber the defending counters.

The morale modifier is handled differently. To calculate morale, compare the sizes of each *army* involved in the battle, i.e. the size of every single unit on the field.

RECORDING DAMAGE

If a hit is scored, a damage roll is made for normally, with the result being deducted from the target's Counter Hit Points. If sufficient damage is caused to remove a counter from the unit, the attacker chooses which counters to remove.

A minimum of 1 point of damage will always be caused, even if the dice roll is modified to 0 or less.

Units with less than 10 creatures in them do not use this system – use the normal combat rules described in *Conan The Roleplaying Game* instead.

ROUNDING DOWN

In any situation when a fraction of counter's hit points would be affected, round the damage down as usual.

SAVING THROWS

You may need to use saving throws in the mass combat system for various different purposes, most commonly the avoidance of sorcerous effects. Saving throws work as follows: subtract the appropriate saving throw bonus from the DC of the saving throw, subtract one from the result, and multiply the total by five. The result is the percentage of the counters in the area of effect failed their saving throws. At least 5% will always fail, and at most 95%.

Example: A unit of 40 counters is affected by a black plague *spell. The sorcerer rolls a total magic attack roll of 22, giving the DC of the saving throws. The unit's Fortitude save bonus is +4. 22, -4, -1 = 17. 17 x5 = 85% , so 34 of the 40 counters fail their saves and die horribly.*

Note that this is the average number of individual troops who would die if you rolled separate saving throw for each, too: with a DC of 22 and a +4 saving throw, the troops need an 18, 19 or 20 to succeed, giving them a 15% chance of success – or an 85% chance of failure.

MAGICAL ATTACKS

Hugely damaging spells such as *black plague* can have a devastating effect on the tightly packed mass of a unit. Magic is a powerful force on the battlefield and sorcerers are much sought after by generals and kings alike – often, in fact, they become leaders themselves, such is their dominance.

Sorcerers on the field are always treated as individuals, never as units.

SPELL RANGE

Spells listed as having a range of touch, evil eye, or close may only be used against an enemy unit with whom the spellcaster is currently engaged in melee combat. Otherwise, the ranges of spells are measured out in feet as usual.

SPELLS OR ALCHEMICAL ITEMS TARGETING SINGLE CREATURES

Resolve the use of spells that target single creatures as if the spellcaster was fighting one member of the unit; see the section on Player Characters below. A roll to hit must be made as normal if the spell requires a ranged touch attack to succeed. If the single creature is killed or incapacitated, deduct (creature's hp/10) from the total counter hit points. If it is reduced to half its hit points, deduct (creature's hp/20) from the total counter hit points. Otherwise, ignore the result.

For example, Ankh-af-na-khonsu hurls a globe of Acheronian Demon-Fire at an enemy knight, hoping to incapacitate him and break the morale of the remaining soldiers. He rolls to hit with a ranged touch attack and succeeds; the globe of fierce-burning hell's fire splashes over the noble, dealing 4 points of fire damage and more importantly incapacitating him for the next two hours. The noble's total hit points were 32, so (32/10 = 3) 3 unit hit points are deducted from the unit for his incapacitation.

AREA EFFECT SPELLS AND ALCHEMICAL ITEMS

When calculating the effect of a damage-inflicting area spell or effect, such as Kothic Demon-Fire, upon a unit, map the spell's area of effect on to the units concerned to find out which counters are affected. Next, consult the saving throw section below to find out how many counters are discounted.

For a damage-inflicting spell or effect, the amount of hit points of damage dealt by the spell multiplied by the number of counters affected is the amount of counter hit points that are lost from the counters in this area. Otherwise, the spell effect is applied to all those counters that did not save.

For example, Ankh-af-na-khonsu throws a second Acheronian Demon-Fire at four of the third level soldiers making up a different enemy unit's front and second lines, intending to create a break in the line and allow his side to surge forwards. The Reflex saving throw required of the four soldiers is 20. The soldiers have a Reflex saving throw of +1; subtracting this from the saving throw DC, subtracting another 1, and multiplying by 5 gives the result that 90% of the warriors fail their saving throws. The full damage of the demon-fire is therefore applied to all four of the counters (90% of 4 is 3.6, rounded up to 4), as is the 1d4 rounds stunning effect. Each has only taken 1 point of damage, but for the next

ATTACKS OF OPPORTUNITY AGAINST SPELLCASTERS

Assume that any spellcaster who begins to cast when in the threatened area of any counter in an enemy unit suffers an attack of opportunity from 1d4-1 members of the unit. Resolve this as per the normal combat rules from *Conan The Roleplaying Game*. Casting in the middle of a fray (two or more units in merged formation) is a more vulnerable situation and attracts attacks of opportunity from 1d4 creatures.

The Games Master is the final arbitrator as to the ultimate effectiveness of any spell, though the rules provided here will allow him to handle the vast majority of spells available quickly and easily.

OTHER MAGICKS IN THE MASS COMBAT SYSTEM

Spells that cause affects other than damage will only provide their bonus or penalty to a unit if the majority of its members can be affected. If only a minority are affected by the spell, it provides no benefit or penalty in unit combat.

Spells that produce effects other than damage can place a single unit member or a group of counters in the unit into a given condition. The following is how these conditions are applied on the battlefield.

Any spell or effect that causes mass death, such as *black plague* or *agonising doom,* sends affected creatures to the dead pile.

Any spell or effect that renders the victims unable to defend themselves, such as Acheronian Demon-Fire against a single target, places the affected counters into the Crippled pile. (The exception is if they are so affected in the middle of a fray, in which case they count as dead.) They are likely to have suffered fatalities, but most of them remain alive; in the carnage of the battlefield, they are more likely to be left that way, as they do not represent an immediate threat. At the Games Master's discretion, for added realism crippled counters may be left on the battlefield, but turned upside down or otherwise marked; a unit may take a standard action to perform a coup de grace on any incapacitated counters within reach, adding them to the dead pile.

Any spell that interferes with the victims' ability to fight but does not leave them defenceless, such as Acheronian Demon-Fire against an area containing several targets, causes the affected counters to become incapacitated for the duration of the spell. The Games Master should adjudicate these effects but a circumstance bonus of +2 to any attacks made against the incapacitated counters is a good rule of thumb. Incapacitated counters are not able to resist a surge attack.

Terror effects, as well as causing the affected counters to flee, prompt an immediate morale check from any members of the same unit.

UNIT WITHDRAW OPTION

A unit may choose to withdraw if the fight runs against them, either to regroup before launching another attack or to attempt to break off from combat altogether.

A unit attempting to withdraw instead of attacking in a round immediately provokes an attack of opportunity from any enemy in melee combat with them.

MORALE

There are very few units who will truly fight to the death. As the enemy swarms over barricades and defences, long-time comrades start to fall beneath their weapons, and swarms of arrows rain down, many warriors may choose to throw down their weapons rather than risk a cruel death.

Morale checks are made in unit combat whenever the circumstances listed on the table below are met. The DC required to be rolled for each circumstance is also given.

If a Morale check is failed, the unit automatically makes a withdraw option in its next round and will continue to leave the battlefield at the fastest possible speed. A unit must pass a Morale check at DC 20 in order to rally and make another attack option in the following round. Player characters are under no obligation to flee but from this point, they will be fighting on their own! There is also, however, no guarantee that an enemy will necessarily allow an enemy to escape and will mercilessly charge them again and again, causing great carnage and destruction.

RECOVERING CASUALTIES

The loss of counters does not track actual deaths amongst a unit, though there are certainly likely to be plenty of those. Instead it demonstrates a unit's ability to continue fighting through individual death, injury and surrender as the number of men left standing is whittled down.

At the end of every battle, whether involving ranged or melee attacks, a percentage of the counters lost by each unit may be automatically recovered as those injured are helped, those who ran come out of hiding and the death toll is finally totalled.

Morale Circumstance	DC
Enemy surge successful against unit	15
Unit Size reduced to half of original score	15
Unit Size reduced to one quarter of original score	20
Unit Size reduced to one third of current score in a single round	10
Unit suffers more damage in a round than enemy in melee combat	15
Unit is hit by enemy of three times or greater Unit Size	15

The following modifiers apply to Morale checks:

Morale	Modifier
Unit Leader	+ Leader's Charisma modifier
Morale modifier*	+/- Morale modifier
Unit Leader with Leadership feat	+ Leader's Character Level
Player Character actions	Variable
Mercenary unit	-1
Enslaved unit +	-4

* Morale modifiers may come from any source, not just those listed on the outmatching table above. For example, the noble's Rally class feature gives a +2 morale bonus to his followers' attack rolls – however, in unit combat, it will also grant a bonus to Morale checks.

+ Includes any unit whose members have been forced into combat against their will and without any form of pay or reward.

Ranged Combat: At the end of any combat involving purely ranged weapons, 50% rounding down, of lost counters may be recovered from the dead pile.

Winning Melee Combat: At the end of any melee, the victor of the combat may recover 50% rounding down, of lost counters from the dead pile, 75% from the crippled pile and 75% from the incapacitated pile.

Losing Melee Combat: At the end of any melee, the defeated side may recover 25% rounding down, of lost counters from the dead pile, 50% from the crippled pile and 75% from the incapacitated pile.

These percentages are further modified as follows:

Golden Wine of Xuthal or similar magical healing available	+1% per object or potion (max. +10%)
Character with at least rank 4 in Craft (herbalism) present	+1% per character (max. +10%)
Character with at least rank 4 in Heal present	+1% per character (max. +10%)
Unit withdrew in melee	-20%

WAR MACHINES

Upon the battlefield, a general may find himself facing an enemy force comprising of far more than mere infantry, cavalry and archers. Arrayed against his own units may be dreaded ballistae, catapults and awesome mobile fortresses. These are the war machines, giant constructions that can dominate any battlefield with their firepower and sheer strength.

War machines are treated as if each were a unit in its own right within the mass combat system. However, to reflect their increased capabilities, war machines have a slightly different profile to regular units as well as some special rules which give them the capability to crush hordes of enemy warriors with their great weaponry.

THE WAR MACHINE ROSTER

The War Machine Roster is used to record the details and abilities of every war machine within an army. This roster allows players and Games Masters alike to judge the effectiveness of any war machine at a glance, and greatly aids combat resolution within the mass combat system.

A typical War Machine Roster Sheet, detailing a medium-sized catapult, is shown below:

MEDIUM CATAPULT

Structure Dice: 1d10 (5 sp)
Hardness: 5
Size: Large
DV: 5 (-1 large, -4 stationary)
Attacks: 1 Catapult shot
Damage: Catapult shot 4d6/2d6
Rate of Fire: 6
Crew: 3
Special Qualities: None
Cost: 675 sp

As can be readily seen, the War Machine Roster has much in common with the monster entries of the main rulebook, as do the unit combat rules detailed below.

STRUCTURE DICE

The majority of attacks in *Conan The Roleplaying Game* deal damage in hit points, whilst units in the mass combat system deal damage in Counter Hit Points. However, war machines receive damage in terms of structure points.

An attack by a single character or creature must cause ten full hit points worth of damage to deal one structure point of damage to a war machine. Any lesser amount is ignored and disregarded, the attack simply bouncing off the side of the war machine.

Some war machine weapons are listed as causing structural damage. These weapons deal damage directly to the structure points of another building or war machine. Hardness is never applied to structural damage, except in the case of a threatened breach (see below) as such attacks are simply too powerful. Attacks by units in the mass combat system automatically cause structural damage to war machines, due to the large numbers of fighting men attacking together.

HARDNESS

War machines only use their hardness score when attacked by single characters, never when attacked by units.

SIZE

This lists how large the war machine is in relation to creatures.

DV

This is the Defence Value of the war machine, used to defend itself against all attacks it may face.

ATTACKS

War machines have devastating weapons, enabling them to slaughter huge numbers of warriors with each attack. Detailed here is each attack a war machine possesses.

DAMAGE

Many war machines are capable of causing structural damage to other war machines and structures. If a war machine is listed as having two types of damage for a single weapon, the latter will reflect structural damage, the former the damage caused to single characters and units alike.

RANGE INCREMENT

This is the figure used to calculate the range penalty to any attack by a war machine. Ballistae and similar weapons that work by bow-like action can fire up to ten increments. Catapults and similar weapons that work by throwing action can fire up to five increments. Range increments for war machines work exactly as for normal ranged combat, with a –2 range penalty to the attack roll for each range increment over the first one.

RATE OF FIRE

Despite having a many crewmen, most war machines are incredibly slow to reload, aim and fire. Listed here is how many full-round actions the crew must expend to fire and reload the war machine's weapons.

CREW

This is simply the number of crew required to maintain the war machine at peak efficiency in battle. Each weapon may lose up to a quarter of its crew, rounding down, before its rate of fire is affected. Each crewman lost after this point will cause the rate of fire to be doubled. The crew on a war machine must all have Profession

(siege engineer) skill. For every 3 ranks (rounded down) they have in this skill, a +1 competence bonus is added to the war machine's attack roll. (If there is variation in skill ranks among the crew, apply the rank held by the majority.) If for any reason a war machine is operated by a crew lacking in this skill, apply the –4 penalty for attacking with a weapon in which one is not proficient to the war machine's attack roll.

COST

Simply a guide as to how much a general must pay to own this war machine and have it within his army.

WAR MACHINES IN BATTLE

In most respects, war machines are handled within the mass combat system and, indeed, the normal *Conan* combat system in the same way as any other creature or object, taking into account new rules such as structural damage. However, there are some exceptions within the mass combat system that reflect ponderous nature of war machines upon the battlefield.

† All war machines suffer a -4 circumstance penalty to their Initiative checks.

† Ballistae within the mass combat system attack all units as if they had a Defence Value of 10, and any resulting damage is deducted straight from the Unit's Hit Points as the power of the huge bolts used allow a single one to skewer many fighting men. However, other war machines are attacked as if the ballista were a single character – the ballista will need to deal 10 points of damage after it has overcome the target's hardness in order to deal 1 point of structural damage.

† Catapults and trebuchets within the mass combat system hit all targets, both war machines and units, as if they had an Defence Value of 10. The amount of damage they cause is deducted from the Unit's Hit Points as they are fully capable smashing several warriors to a pulp with each shot. Against war machines or structures, they cause structural damage, as detailed in their descriptions below.

† Catapults and trebuchets within the mass combat system cannot attack a target within one hundred feet unless it is over fifteen feet tall.

† No war machine can ever make an attack of opportunity.

There are many different types of war machine that may be taken to the battlefield, from small ballistae to huge trebuchets and mobile fortresses. Players and Games Masters are encouraged to create their own, using the examples below as a guideline to cost and effectiveness.

BALLISTA

Structure Dice: 1d6 (3 sp)
Hardness: 5
Size: Large
DV: 5 (-1 large, -4 stationary)
Attacks: 1 Bolt
Damage: Bolt 3d6/-
Range Increment: 120 ft.
Rate of Fire: 3
Crew: 1
Special Qualities: None
Cost: 500 sp

LIGHT CATAPULT

Structure Dice: 1d6 (3 sp)
Hardness: 5
Size: Large
DV: 5 (-1 large, -4 stationary)
Attacks: 1 Catapult shot
Damage: Catapult shot 3d6/1d6
Range Increment: 150 ft.
Breach Range: 19-20
Rate of Fire: 5
Crew: 2
Special Qualities: None
Cost: 550 sp

MEDIUM CATAPULT

Structure Dice: 2d6 (7 sp)
Hardness: 5
Size: Large
DV: 5 (-1 large, -4 stationary)
Attacks: 1 Catapult shot
Damage: Catapult shot 4d6/2d6
Range Increment: 150 ft.
Breach Range: 18-20
Rate of Fire: 6
Crew: 3
Special Qualities: None
Cost: 675 sp

HEAVY CATAPULT

Structure Dice: 3d6 (10 sp)
Hardness: 5
Size: Huge
DV: 4 (-2 huge, -4 stationary)
Attacks: 1 Catapult shot
Damage: Catapult shot 5d6/3d6
Range Increment: 200 ft.
Breach Range: 18-20
Rate of Fire: 8
Crew: 5
Special Qualities: None
Cost: 800 sp

TREBUCHET

Structure Dice: 4d6 (14 sp)
Hardness: 5
Size: Huge
AC: 14 (-2 huge, +6 natural)
Attacks: 1 Trebuchet shot
Damage: Trebuchet shot 6d6/4d6
Range Increment: 250 ft.
Breach Range: 18-20
Rate of Fire: 10
Crew: 6
Special Qualities: None
Cost: 1,400 gp

PLAYER CHARACTERS

In the centre of the action of any role-playing scenario are the player characters and in the mass combat system, they truly have the opportunity to act as heroes. As their unit crashes into the enemy, the soldiers and nobles lead their men forward, seeking to engage the opposing unit leaders as their unit fight a desperate combat against their own counterparts. Barbarians nimbly dodge poorly aimed sword swings as sorcerers cast awesome magicks, pummelling the enemy into submission.

The rules presented in this chapter are designed to allow the easy integration of player characters into the mass combat system, with as little work as possible required on the part of either Games Masters or players. The length of a combat round, be it featuring the actions of characters or an entire unit, is always six seconds. Thus, whatever a character could normally attempt in a normal combat round will apply equally in the mass combat system.

ATTACKING AND DAMAGING WAR MACHINES

When attempting to hit a war machine with a ranged attack, the normal *Conan* rules are used. War machines, however, tend to be very large and so can be very difficult for a character to actually miss! The equivalent creature size of each war machine is listed in their entries. When a character attempts to hit a war machine with a close combat weapon, assume the war machine has an Defence Value of 0 – even a cross-eyed fighter will have a great deal of difficulty in missing a such a large object whilst standing next to it. . .

Situations may arise whereby a player wishes to attack a war machine in a direct and specific manner – firing a flaming arrow into an arrow slit, for instance, or hacking apart a wooden wheel to stop it moving. In such circumstances, the Games Mater should determine the outcome of such actions using the rules given in the main rulebook, using the war machine's hardness score as a base line with which to work out damage.

UNIT COMBATS

Player characters are never counted as part of the unit when calculating the Unit Roster – they always act independently, even if they are mere foot soldiers, thus allowing them to do all sorts of heroic (or cowardly) things. Under normal circumstances, combat for player characters in melee combat is handled in exactly the same way as presented in the main rulebook. They are, however, permitted to attack enemy units.

If two units are in combat with one another, player characters may choose to aid one side. To do so, they engage in combat with one or more members of the enemy unit, using the normal combat rules presented in *Conan The Roleplaying Game*. Everyone involved in the combat acts in Initiative order, so the player characters may have the chance to act before anyone else. However, if they manage to slay or subdue any of their enemies, then the 1/10 the hit points of the creatures they overcome are immediately deducted from the Unit Hit Point score. For example:

Whilst leading his stalwart Bossonian skirmisher unit to attack a unit of Nemedian Adventurers in a desperate charge, Balthus the forester, rolling the highest initiative of the combat, attacks a big Nemedian captain as the rest of his men engage the rest of the enemy. The Unit Hit Points of the Nemedians is 30. Balthus dispatches the captain in one round of combat. The captain had 22 hit points, and thus the mercenaries lose 2 Unit Hit Points immediately, bringing them down to a total of 28. The units now fight, in remaining initiative order.

It should be noted that some spells may be particularly destructive in such engagements when fighting men are crowded together in a unit. In such cases, the spell is handled as detailed in Chapter 6: Sorcery, and the Games Master should use his own judgement as to the ultimate effectiveness of it, based upon its listed area of effect

UNIT MORALE

Player characters are immune to the effects of unit morale, though units are likely to take a dim view of players who continue to fight as they try to surrender. However, many of a player character's actions in combat may have a direct influence on how their unit fights. The table below lists some of the more common actions a player character may attempt to boost the morale of his unit, though the Games Master is welcome to add others as the need arises – basically, a player should always be awarded for bravery and will certainly earn the respect of the unit. The morale bonus earned applies to the unit's attack and damage rolls for the rest of the combat, as well as to morale rolls made on the table on pg 10.

Player Character Action	Morale Bonus to Unit
Slaying enemy unit leader	+2
Slaying enemy officer/sergeant	+1
Destroying enemy war machine	+1
Fleeing battle	-4
Slaying 10% or more of enemy unit in one attack	+1

PLAYER CHARACTERS AS LEADERS

The leader of a unit, or of the entire army, can have a significant effect on the battle. A player character who is the leader of a unit will enhance its morale by his very presence, and further by his actions, as detailed above and elsewhere in this chapter.

A player character who is the general of the entire army will have the chance to command all the units on his side, passing on orders to the individual unit leaders. These signals are usually given with trumpets by the armies of the Hyborian kingdoms, though southern forces sometimes use golden or ivory oliphants instead. A good general is capable not only of expert strategy, that is, deciding which units to use and which enemies to have them attack, which is the realm of the player; but also expert tactics, that is, deciding precisely how to employ each unit to its best advantage at the moment it engages the enemy, which is the realm of the character.

During every round of combat when a player character is general, the player should make a Tactics check opposed to that of the non-player character general of the opposing army.

Tactics Check
1d20 + base attack bonus + Intelligence bonus

All the units commanded by the winner of the opposed Tactics check gain a +1 competence bonus to all their attacks during that round. If one general beat the other by 20 or more, this bonus is increased to +2.

UNIT EXPERIENCE

In our playtesting, we tended to find the actions of player characters pretty much guaranteed a high turnover of men in a unit, due to casualties, so that soldiers were never likely to be in the position to gain experience themselves. However, if players are taking a great amount of care over the risks they put their units through, Games Masters may discover that the majority do, in fact, survive encounters.

There are no hard and fast rules for units to gain experience themselves, but the Games Master is welcome to periodically raise the quality of a unit, perhaps every six months during a military campaign, so long as the majority survive each battle. In this way, slave and militia units may become solid soldiers and veterans may actually start to rise in character level.

NON-PLAYER CHARACTERS

It is strongly recommended that these rules for player characters also be adopted for important non-player characters, be they allies to the party or enemies. In this way, even a small Himelian tribe should not have its warlord subsumed into the Unit Roster – he will act as an independent character, encouraging his unit and attacking the player characters at their weakest points. He can also earn the morale bonuses presented above.