

SAXA FUN

A MILDLY AMUSING EXPANSION

Skaldic tales are rife with tales of less-than-heroic pastimes. There is little historical evidence these pursuits were ever commonplace, and their existence in tales is often used as a form of metaphor or to make a hero seem more down to earth. Still, that doesn't stop Saxa fuelled up with ale and mead from giving them a try.

In the modern age these pursuits are most likely to be found at fairs and moots as amusements rather than true sporting events.

CUTTING THE BRAIDS

According to skalds cutting the braids was used either to test the fidelity of a woman suspected of cheating on her husband or to test the skill of an axe thrower. Neither is particularly plausible, and it seems more likely alcohol had a part in its creation.

The "target," usually a woman with three long braids, though a man with long hair can serve equally well, places her head through a hole in a large wooden board. Her three braids are then stretched out, one to the left, one to the right, and one sticking straight up, and pinned to the board with nails.

The challenger then has three attempts to cut the braids with a throwing axe (the only weapon allowed in the game). The braids are not particularly thick and so count as a Small target (-2 to Throwing rolls). A critical failure or any result of a 1 or less due to penalties means the target has been struck! Fortunately, there is no time pressure involved, so aiming is a perfectly valid, and very wise, tactic.

GREASED PIGLETS

Guaranteed to have children rolling about with laughter and toothless grandparents chortling, trying to catch a greased piglet in a pen filled with a mixture of muck and dung is not a pastime for those who value their personal appearance. Skalds sing of how brave heroes performed this task to prove their wrestling skills, though in all honesty they are more likely to have wrestled other men.

The principle is remarkably simple. A piglet is smeared with grease and let loose in a pen. The challenger then endeavors to grapple the piglet and hold it for a set period of time. Of course, just because something sounds simple it doesn't actually mean it is simple.

Run the challenge using the combat rules. There's no need to deal action cards until the piglet has been caught. Although there is plenty of movement involved,

it isn't a race, and beside weaving and dodging there isn't anywhere the piglet can run except round in circles.

The adventurer can only make grapple attacks against the pig, whose Parry is considered to be 6 (due to its Size and greasy coating). Due to the muck and mud, the slippery floor counts as an Unstable Platform.

A roll of 1 on the Fighting die, regardless of any Wild Die, means the hero has slipped and fallen prone in the filth. Typically Charisma drops one point (no matter how many times the hero falls) until he gets a bath.

Once the piglet is grappled the real fun begins. Wiggling and squealing, the greased pig tries its hardest to escape. Treat its Agility as d8 (again due to its Size, propensity for wiggling frantically, and greasy coating). If the hero can maintain his grip for a full 12 seconds (two combat rounds), he is victorious. It is considered very bad form to inflict damage to the piglet!

If he's really lucky, the hero gets to keep the piglet. Otherwise all he earns is the temporary adoration of the crowd. Clerics of the Unknowable One have been known to offer sizeable rewards for a quick victory, especially if they feel the challengers needs a lesson in humility.

OAR RUNNING

Practised only in coastal communities or those along navigable rivers, oar running requires a crewed longship. While the crew lean on the oars to keep them horizontal, runners try to run along the poles from one end to the other. Most often this is done in pairs as a race, with one runner to each side of the ship.

For simplicity use the Chase rules for this game. Lay out 10 markers to represent the oars. The first runner to reach the final marker hops into the prow and claims victory.

The oars, although held horizontal, count as an Unstable Platform. As normal, failure indicates no change in position; the runner is balancing on an oar. For each successive round after the first in which he fails to move from a specific marker the hero must make an Agility roll with a cumulative -1 penalty (adding in the Unstable Platform penalty as well) or fall into the water. His tumble might be caused by losing his balance, an oar breaking, or the oarsmen wearying under the strain and lowering the oar. Grabbing the keel for stability counts as cheating, resulting in disqualification.

A critical failure or any result of a 1 or less due to penalties causes the runner to fall into the water.

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