

Dead Man's Hand

Chronicle part two

Shootin' and Weapons

SHOOTING ACTIONS

As we established in part one's DMH Chronicle, each model may take three actions in a turn. Perhaps the most often used action is Shooting. Shooting is dead easy: check the modifiers for the shooter and for the target, then roll a D20.

WHAT MODIFIERS ARE THERE?

There are modifiers that you'd expect, such as range and cover, but also there are modifiers for the movement of the target, number of shots and, if he's running fast enough, the shooter. They are very, very easy to get used to; in demo games which lasted 15 minutes or so every player was calculating hit modifiers themselves at some point during the game.

WHAT ABOUT AIMING?

Aiming improves your chance to get a hit and also to get a fatal hit. As with everything, it's an action, so choosing to aim may seem a wise choice when there is a bit of time and range to the target, not so wise when at point blank range.

HOW DO I KILL A MAN?

The modified score on the D20 roll tells you how good the shot is. Get high enough and you'll kill a man outright, no matter who he is. Successful shots will either put an "under fire" marker on the target, put a marker on him and force a nerve test, or put him out of action. A failed nerve test puts another "under fire" marker on the target. Most models will get put out of action by accumulating hits rather than a single shot.

WEAPONS

Weapons are very simple in DMH so that you can concentrate on getting the job done and puttin' your man down. There are no long charts of different calibre pistols and obscure hand-to-hand weapons. Dead Man's Hand is about gunfights, and it's the man behind the revolver, not the revolver itself, that makes a deadly weapon.

So, there are just the following weapons: pistol, rifle, repeater, shotgun. Each is different as far as rate of fire, range and so on. The pistol is the weapon for close-up gunwork, with the highest rate of fire of up to 3 shots per turn. Shotguns are devastating up close but have to be reloaded often. Repeaters and rifles have unlimited range and the latter may aim twice. As you might expect, a mix of weapons is good, with rifles giving you the ability to provide support fire from range leaving pistols for the point blank work.

CAN I RUN OUT OF AMMO?

A dice roll of 1 means you're out of ammo or jammed. Cards may also inflict out of ammo results, and shotguns automatically go out of ammo if they shoot both barrels.

DO THE CARDS AFFECT SHOOTIN'?

Yes, a lot! Cards can hamper your opponent's gunplay or benefit your own. They affect modifiers, number of shots, nerve tests and more. As with a lot of the gameplay in DMH, using the right cards at the right time, perhaps resisting the temptation to go all guns blazin', is the way to win. Timing is finely balanced and decision making is a constant challenge to master. Get it right and you will be legendary. Get it wrong and you'll get a one-way ticket to the boneyard.

Move, Reload & Recover Actions

MOVE ACTIONS

Each model may take three actions in a turn. Shooting may be the most used action, but the move action is vitally important for a number of reasons.

Each move action is 10cm (or 4"). First and most obvious is that a move action gets you where you need to be in order to deal out a lesson in gun play, but staying on the move also keeps you alive. As mentioned last week, there are modifiers to shooting and perhaps the most common one is that for a target moving. Each move action that a target has taken that turn means -1 to the shooter's score. A 19 or 20 means a target is instantly out of action, so taking move actions drastically reduces the chance that you can be taken out with one lucky or well-aimed shot.

Also, range is a factor in gunfighting. The most common weapon, the pistol, is at its best in DMH when at point blank range.

By using move actions you can get your man in real close where the range modifier gives a big bonus to shooting.

RELOAD ACTIONS

A natural result of a '1' when shooting means the firer is out of ammo or his weapon has jammed. Certain cards in the DMH deck may also result in a model finding itself caught short in the ammo department. And, finally, shotgun-armed models constantly find themselves needing to reload. The reload action is self-explanatory; when a model is out of

ammo it has to take a reload action before it may shoot.

RECOVER ACTIONS

Most models will go out of action as a result of accumulating under fire markers. For most models, four is the number of under fire markers that they may sustain before being out of action. But Dead Man's Hand swings back and forth and models may take recover actions to remove under fire markers. Simply put, each recover action removes one marker, so it is very possible to have a situation where a gunfighter looks finished having accumulated three under fire markers only for him to get a favourable initiative card and recover one or all of them depending on how many actions he wishes to spend.

As under fire markers also have a negative effect on a model's shooting, it's always a good policy to keep the number of under fire markers on your men as low as possible.



Hand-to-hand fightin' & Interruptions

INTERRUPTIONS

Those of you who have followed how DMH plays will have some idea of how fluid and fast it can be. Well, it's even faster and more fluid than that!

If a model has yet to be activated, it is allowed to interrupt an opposing model's turn and there are two types of interruptions a model may take: duck back and quick shot.

With a duck back, the interrupting model throws himself desperately behind nearby cover. The advantage is self-preservation (the shooter will suffer a penalty to hit) but the disadvantage is that this single action uses up the interrupting model's turn. This is referred to as "burning your activation." A quick shot enables the interrupting model to burn his activation to take a single shoot action against an opposing model.

As with many aspects of playing DMH, the key to using interruptions is timing and nerve. If a model has not yet had its turn and has three hit markers on him,

and the opposing gunhand steps round a corner to finish him off, then a duck back may be the wise course of action. But relying on interruptions too much will keep you on the back foot and allow the opponent to dictate the gunfight.

HAND-TO-HAND

Dead Man's Hand is all about shooting, but there is obviously room for fist-fighting or a bit of knife play. Models move into hand-to-hand using move actions, even able to jump from buildings onto an opponent. There are a few modifiers, then an opposed D10 roll to determine the winner. The loser takes a number of under fire markers equal to the difference in the scores. So, hand-to-hand is a big risk unless, unless the other guy has been shot up a bit.

Hand-to-hand may be broken off by a model if it has a better initiative than the opponent, so after a round of brawling you can step back and finish him off with some good, old-fashioned hot lead.

