

Afterthoughts

While editing the video, I thought of a couple more details to add, or rather, which would have helped:

- Johann, when I talk about moment-to-moment flexibility in interpreting actions in D&D (1977, Holmes), it would have helped to mention the DM's job in interpreting the order of settling separate clashes. That's a good example of the flexibility I'm talking about which is already in the rules.
- John, I thought of the right phrase I didn't quite manage in the video: that a defense is an action. So if you make a defense roll as the next thing you do after taking some damage, then the temporary penalties apply to it because it's an action.

JOHN

Hi Ron, thanks for answering my questions! Some comments in reply:

- How Do Demons Heal? Makes perfect sense, thank-you.
- Temporary Damage: The penalty applies ONCE, to your NEXT roll, whatever that is. Got it! I think I actually misunderstood this when I started playing Sorcerer in the mid twenty-oughts, and I was having temporary damage penalties apply to all rolls until and including the character's next full pro-active action. When I ran a Sorcerer & Sword game, we thought Sorcerer combats were too short, because after the first round, half the combatants had too many penalties to continue. We actually tried out a tweak, "penalties don't start to apply until damage > Stamina". Terrible idea, can't recommend it. Anyway, I'm straightened out now. Only the next roll, no matter what it is.

And your answer contained another surprise for me: with linked Cover-Stamina rolls, if the first roll is a failure, penalties do NOT carry over to the 2nd roll. The first roll just answers the question of whether your Cover provides a bonus in this situation or not, but penalties are not on the table.

Okay, I just looked this up in the book (I'm not trying to argue here, I'm just talking about why I had gotten the wrong idea). There are two examples of linked Cover-Stamina rolls on pg.104. In the first - jumping over a barrier to land on an opponent as an attack -- penalties from a failed first roll WOULD carry over to the 2nd roll, indicating that the character had made a mess of jumping over the barrier. In the second example -- the pirate swinging from the rigging to make an attack -- penalties from a failed first roll WOULD NOT carry over to the 2nd roll; because in this case, the linked roll is answering the question "does my pirate Cover give me a bonus in this action?" and a failed roll just means "no, proceed as normal." When I read these two examples, I didn't properly appreciate the situational differences.

My reply to John

One way of looking at it, too, is to think about whether the "things" - any objects or physical circumstances - are hazardous opponents of their own. In some fiction, things very much are,

sometimes more so than the actual human/creature foes; but in other fiction, they aren't and mostly act as furnishings and sometimes helpers. I was groping toward that idea in those examples.

JOHANN

Thank you for your answers!

Regarding Holmes and Initiative, I guess I'm worried about an exchange along these lines: "I'll cast a spell." "Then the orc throws his axe at you." "Then I drink a potion." "Then he charges the elf." "Then I'll cast a spell." Who's gotta commit first? How do we reach an agreement? On the one hand, if there is an intelligent enemy who is (a) unengaged in melee and (b) has a ranged weapon at the ready, then casting a spell will naturally provoke an attack. On the other hand, a combatant should probably be able to wait for another to commit - at a price, probably, like a chance of wasting his action - and then act.

Regarding the Pool and who limits actions: I'm mostly used to play where the GM does not say 'No' outright if an action is at least theoretically possible. So, no jumping across 40' chasms, but mowing down that SWAT team with a single burst from your Uzi? Naked Gun territory, but possible. So the GM just sets the difficulty insanely high (and graciously accepts an unlikely result, which is made easier because we see the required natural 20 or whatever). This does not work with The Pool because a PC has a whopping 1-in-6 base chance of success to begin with AND can pump it up as he likes (if he has the dice). So I concluded that The Pool does not feature difficulty (as in difficulty class / target number etc.). The effect in play -- I've run The Pool four or five times, for about eight or nine sessions in total --, is that some player pushes the envelope at some point, either focussed on trying to win or simply not in tune with the group's aesthetics (say, by going John Wick rather than John Rambo). The result is either that people adapt (okay, John Wick after all) and get into the spirit of the thing or that they roll their eyes and don't take the result very seriously (the SWAT team is dead, sure, but we do not treat the shooter as if he is John Wick and can take down the scores of regular policemen outside, too).

My wording about "hiding behind the rules" was unfortunate. What I meant is that everyone immediately recognizes how our game works -- players limit their actions according to our shared understanding of genre and plausibility -- and the offending player cannot defend himself by claiming "I'm just playing my guy" because he is clearly not just advocating for his guy in character but does have the responsibility to limit his actions from an authorial stance. Writing "hiding behind the character" would have been closer to the mark. In any case, you did a great job getting to the bottom of my confusion and phrasing where at all possible. I hope I've cleared up the remaining things above.

The realization of how my (apparently unorthodox and likely problematic) interpretation works typically hits the players the first time someone takes down a SWAT team. With one exception, the problem has always been self-correcting.

In light of discussions at Adept Play and in retrospect - it's been a decade since I've run The Pool - I do detect echoes of a struggle for control (less so with The Pool but more so in my only and sadly dysfunctional PtA game, discussed at The Forge) and especially the phenomenon that one's only

having fun with a full pool (i.e. until it crashes and you lose all dice). Echoes only, but they do suggest that we were building on sand.

My reply to Johann

This is probably the best spot to reply overall to your three related comments. I'm not sure we're successfully communicating, although in which direction, I'm also not sure. We may want to take the conversation to voice. I'm trying to express that the effect you're describing doesn't emerge from pushing any envelope or from mismatched genre conventions - it's far more procedural in terms of whether the GM gives a Gift die or not. If they don't, then there's no roll. So it looks to me a lot MORE like what you described for other games, not less. But I may be misunderstanding because I'm totally unable to see what you mean by "whopping 1 in 6 chance." Rather than go around and around - which we're already doing - let's find time to talk directly. [we met for a conversation – RE]

Ooh! I found something - the topic of player-stated actions and Holmes is discussed by Love and me here: <http://adeptplay.com/comment/4417#comment-4417> - at least as useful context for your pragmatic question.

ROSS

Just wanted to say a belated thanks for the answers to my questions. In case anybody is interested it was the two paragraphs at the top of page 175 that were confusing me about the maneuvers, but your answers have cleared things up for me. One small follow up - would I be correct to assume that if you use one of the defensive Ego Maneuvers reactively you can also take the up to two hexes of movement? In fact now that I've typed that I guess this is an instance where the answer is - it depends on the special effects. For a martial arts mentalist probably yes, for a professor X expy maybe not so much.

My reply to Ross

In terms of raw, legalistic "can," the answer is yes. Ego Evade and Mind Bar should be included in the list at the top of page 175. Your reasoning about special effects certainly applies, but only in the sense that it applies to anything.