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MENTIONED IN DISPATCHES: Two Weapons

by Martin's Oliver

Two blows, or not two blows, that was the question. What happens when a character with 1 attack picks up a weapon in each hand in an attempt to give themselves a little extra edge? (pardon the pun...) Well, the WFRP mailing list wasn't found wanting for ideas.

Firstly, Warhammer Battle was cited as a solution. There, characters with two weapons double their attacks, taking a -1 to hit penalty with one hand and a -2 penalty with the other. This translates to a -10%/-20% WS penalty, with twice as many attacks as usual. The problem with that, though, was that the rulebook (pg. 118) states categorically that: *"characters may strike as many blows against the enemy as they have Attacks. A blow can be struck by any weapon held in either hand, but holding additional weapons does not increase the number of attacks."*

However, it does seem a bit unrealistic to assume that a second weapon gives no benefit whatsoever, and besides, people weren't about to let a rulebook spoil their fun!

The alternative was that characters in WFB have been properly trained to use both weapons at once. If WFRP characters want to get any benefit from the extra weapon, they will need some kind of Specialist Weapon skill "Paired Weapons", or "Dual Weapons", or some such like. But what, exactly, should this skill do?

Most of the suggestions fell in to three main categories:

The skill adds one free attack.

The skill can be bought cumulatively, 100 EPs a time, up to a maximum of your A score.

The skill simply doubles your attacks.

Other options were more complicated, such as doubling the difference between one character's number of attacks and his opponent's. (For example, a character with A2 vs. a character with A1: the first gets $1+(1 \times 2)=3$ attacks, the other gets 1).

Instead of allowing characters to strike more often, the skill could augment their weapon skill, since using two weapons gives a better chance of forcing an opening in a defence. For example, if one attack failed, the next could be made at +10 WS, using the second weapon to follow through on the first.

Another argument was that dual weapons should give an initiative bonus, representing the chance of being better positioned to make a good strike.

Similar to this was a way of tying multiple weapons into the effective initiative rules. If someone normally attacks at I 60, 40 and 20, a second weapon might allow them to get the first two blows in at the same time (I = 60), giving them an edge over slower opponents.

As an alternative to improving the character's profile, using a second weapon might affect the enemy's chance of dodging and parrying, since it would be harder to deal with tactics such as a simultaneous high and low strike.

Another suggestion was to allow characters to change opponents without the loss of an attack. It wasn't really explained why this should work, though; changing opponents is more about altering position and stance, and holding a second weapon wouldn't really

make that any easier.

Also suggested were ways of splitting the skill up into a selection of different combat tactics (Roger Kay's rules for this can be found on page 15).

Should this skill be available to everyone? Several different restrictions were put forward. Wielding two weapons would be exhausting and difficult; maybe the second weapon should be restricted to daggers, short swords, and the like.

Perhaps only "competent" fighters should be allowed to buy the skill characters with a WS over 50, say. It also got suggested that the character would have to be ambidextrous, but most people thought that this should be to do off-setting the penalty for using a weapon in your second hand, rather than being a requirement.

No matter where people stood, though, several points were agreed upon:

A second weapon can act as a reserve weapon in case you drop the first or get disarmed.

A "paired weapon" skill already exists: Specialist Weapon parrying weapons. As far as I'm aware, this is pretty close to the way that second weapons were used historically, especially in European styles of fighting such as the Art of Defencing (which became fencing).

Holding a second weapon can give you a choice of different weapon modifiers.

The most obvious example of this is a shield, which offers +20% to parries. Strictly speaking, though, if it's on your left arm and you also attacked that round, this would cut the modifier down to +0...