

# Fantasy game thrives on survival quest, escape

By Ward W. Triplett III

J.D. Alonzo, Brad Hitch, Bob Davis and Dave Thaut are all college student with average course loads and some free time. But instead of spending that time just partying or relaxing in front of the television set, these four, like hundreds of others, engage themselves in another sort of fantasy.

Dungeons and Dragons, a complicated fantasy game developed by Gary Gygax in the early 1970s, has taken students and others into encounters with dinosaurs, intellect devourers, bulettes, windwalkers, stirges and black puddings among the ordinary dragons, demons and giants.

"D&D puts you back into the old days with hobbits—the supposed Dark Ages," said Thaut a psychology and art major at Hastings College.

"D&D is just a game of survival. Anything you'd do in life to survive, you'd do in D&D," said Barry Sklenar, a sophomore construction management major at UNL.

D&D isn't played with a board, and the only similarity to one is the graph paper that the Dungeon Master, usually the most experienced player, draws out for his own use before the start of the game.

Within the graph, the master will plot out his "world". That may be a castle or a forest or an underground

labyrinth or anything else the master desires. Within the world, the master will place the monsters, traps and treasures the players may or may not run across during the course of the game.

The master has the right to include as many traps or monsters as he wants.

#### Assume characters

The players, having already assumed physical characters (human, elf, gnome, dwarf, elf, half-elf, magic user), then go forth into the world. Each has alignments—good, evil or neutral—and although it isn't a rule, in most games the players tend to stick together and share in any wealth they may achieve.

The dice really control the game. An advanced game calls for a 20-sided die, two 12-sided dice, an eight-sided die, a six-sided die, and a four-sided die with the numbers 16 through 84 on it, and others. The dice are used mainly for combat, Sklenar said.

"You move by description of where you're moving to the DM (dungeon master), and the DM tells you where you are," he said.

By roll of the dice, the master can determine if a player will be attacked or not, and by what character.

#### Player has some control

Life and Death in D&D depends on several characteristics the player himself can control. The most important of these are hit points, special defenses, magic resistance, armor class and fighter level, all of which improve as the game goes on and the character survives.

Hit points are predetermined for monsters and men alike. For example, if a monster inflicts seven points of hit damage on a fighter, and the fighter has only seven left, the fighter is deemed unconscious. If the monster does nine points of damage, the player is dead.

The average fighter will carry at least 25 points of hit damage, although the trick of the game is to obtain as much as possible.

The defensive part of the players' existence also is where player level comes into importance. A first-or second-level fighter will automatically be paralyzed with fright at the mere sight of an ancient red dragon. Third-level players and above stand a better chance of resisting the initial shock and fighting on.

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