

by Steve List

STAR TREK™:

The Role Playing Game.

Design: Guy McLimore, Greg Poehlein and David Tepool. FASA 1983.

\$25 boxed.

This is it, the official STAR TREK role-playing game as licensed by Paramount Pictures. After many years of waiting, Trekkies may now indulge in the "real thing."

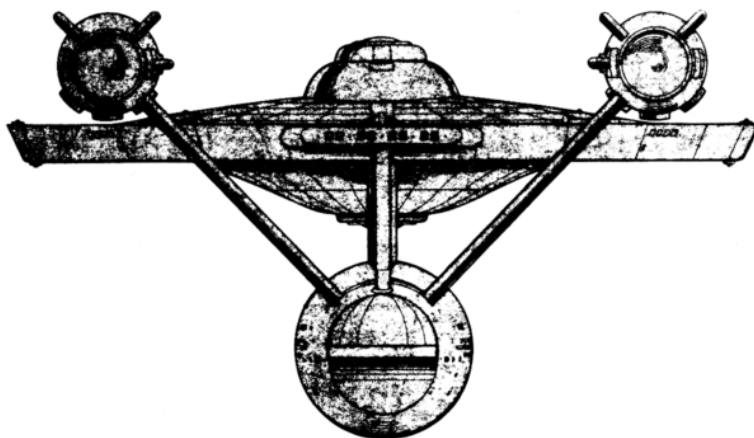
The physical packaging of this product is quite impressive. Inside the 9"x12"x2" box is a 128 page rulebook, a 56 page adventure book, 80 sheets of deck plans and "control panels" for spaceship combat, a 22"x33" hexgrid star map for said combat, 112 die-cut counters printed on one side with spaceships and bookkeeping markers and on the reverse with character figures for use in personal combat, and two 10-sided dice. The physical quality of these components is quite high, and the design quality is as well, though there are a certain number of nits to pick in both areas.

The rulebook is quite complete, both in terms of covering game rules and in giving background information for players not familiar with the STAR TREK game universe (be warned that any similarity between FASA's and Task Force Games' versions is purely fortuitous). The introduction not only discusses STAR TREK and the sources used for the game, it explains the concept and principles of role playing. This is followed by a Glossary, a discussion of character attributes and the player character races (pending later supplements, players are restricted to being Federation member races: Human, Vulcan, Andorian, Caitian, Edoan and Tellarite). Included is a section with character stats on 19 named characters from the TV show and a sample of typical personnel of various races. Then comes the character generation procedures, a description of skills and levels, personal combat procedure, medical aid and recovery from injury. Sections covering common items of weaponry and equipment are followed by procedures for creating worlds, civilizations, and wild animals. After this comes a digression covering the history of the United Federation of Planets. The balance of

the book covers starships (capabilities, combat, and encounter procedures), gamemaster hints and designers' notes.

The Adventure book devotes 35 pages and a pull-out section of ship control charts to three scenarios which can employ player-generated characters or the familiar STAR TREK personae. The remaining 17 pages contain data on the USS Enterprise and the Klingon D-7 class battlecruiser, and are keyed to the deck plans. These are quite well done, con-

ance, Intelligence, Dexterity and Charisma are determined by rolling 3d10 and adding 40, then adding or subtracting an additional modifier determined by the character race. Luck and Psionic potential are rolled directly on percentile dice, with racial modifiers. Any action that will directly use one of the attributes will be resolved by rolling the attribute value or less on percentile dice, with possible modifications. Skills are similarly rated on a 1-100 scale but are



sisting of six pages for the Klingon and nine for the Enterprise measuring 11"x17" and printed on both sides, with a 1/4" square grid superimposed. There are two drawbacks with these plans. One is the 1/4" grid; the personal combat mechanics call for the use of a 1/2" grid, and the counters provided in the game fit that size (these plans have been released separately in 1/2" size as well). The plans are usable, but counters or miniatures will be crowded, taking up more than one space. The other drawback is in the layout. The plan sheets are printed on both sides, so that it is not possible to see all the plans at once. In addition, the larger sections (such as the Enterprise's "saucer") may be on as many as four different sheets, and no key is given to aid in mating the sheets together.

Three key elements in a role-playing game are the procedures for generating and progressing characters, combat mechanics, and the creation of an environment in which to conduct activities. The STAR TREK game acquits itself well on the first two and adequately on the third. Characters have 7 attributes rated on a scale of 1-100. Strength, Endur-

used somewhat differently. A skill rating of 10 is deemed sufficient for proper performance of routine activities, and no roll is made. If the skill is less than 10, a saving roll is made with 1d10. In any event, resolution of non-routine actions must still be resolved by a roll of percentile dice versus the skill rating (combat procedures are treated in yet another fashion).

When generating a character, it is determined what rank and position the character holds in Star Fleet when he enters play and the procedure builds up to this. First, the character can acquire skills prior to entering the academy by rolling 1d10 to determine the rating in each skill (the number of rolls is determined by the Intelligence attribute). Graduation from the academy is assumed, and specific levels of specific skills are granted, depending on the area of specialization. Additional skill rolls can be made at this time. The character then goes on one or more cadet cruises, followed by command school (for commanding officers and department heads) and a variable number of terms, which in turn take a variable number of years to complete. These all translate into

additional skill level awards and die rolls, plus years added to age 18 to determine how old the character is at the start of play. Becoming too old may cause reduction in various attributes. It should be noted that the stats given for Enterprise personnel such as Captain Kirk are virtually impossible to duplicate by these procedures. These folks are considered to be extraordinary and have combinations of skills, attributes and age unobtainable by beginning player characters.

Personal combat is resolved using a $\frac{1}{2}$ " square grid for movement and an "action point" (AP) system, with 10-second turns. Each character gets a certain number of APs based on Dexterity, and everything done costs APs. The procedure is used so players may determine who moves first. The first player then moves one character, expending APs as desired, possibly retaining some for opportunity actions later in the turn. Characters not moving can expend APs for opportunity actions (such as shooting a phaser) during another's movement. Players alternate moving one character at a time in this manner. Combat is resolved with weapons or unarmed combat in the same manner. The "to hit" number (average of Dexterity and weapon skill), modified for factors such as range, target size and movement, must be rolled on percentile dice. If a hit is scored, damage is inflicted as points subtracted from the target's endurance. Once a character has lost half the original endurance, a saving roll on Endurance must be made to avoid unconsciousness. Dropping the Endurance to less than 10% of its base value also brings unconsciousness, while reduction below 0 causes death, barring prompt medical treatment. In addition, some weapons produce "stun" results rather than wounds. Losses to Endurance from these cause only unconsciousness, not death.

Starship combat is resolved as a boardgame on the hex map provided. An effort is made to keep a role-playing flavor, however. The players are expected to be in the command positions of a ship, i.e. Captain, Helmsman, Engineer and so on. Each position but the Captain has a "control panel" on which the functions of that job are tracked. The Engineer has engine status, total power

available, and allocates power for weapons, shields and movement. The Science officer operates the sensors and keeps track of structural damage. The Navigator operates the tractor beam and allocates the power given him by the Engineer to the various deflector shields. Communications keeps track of crew casualties, while Helm has most of the work (movement of the counter on the map, arming and firing weapons, changing speeds and executing maneuvers.) The Captain has no control panel, but must coordinate and control the actions of the others. Control panels are given only for the Constitution class starships (and in the adventure book for a Mission class courier). All other vessels will be nominally run by the GM, and to reduce the workload, a modified single sheet panel using a streamlined procedure is available for them. To resolve combat, each ship alternates moving one hex on the map, with the number of hexes to move each turn determined by energy allocated to maneuvers. Weapons may be fired at any point in the game turn. Weapon fire results are based on "to hit" dice rolls, and, if a hit is scored, weapon power versus shield strength at the point of impact. If a hit penetrates the shield, it can damage the engines, wipe out individual weapons, shields, sensors, etc., and create crew casualties which will eventually degrade performance.

The mechanics of play are well done. Less satisfactory is the campaign aspect of the game. The design approach was to make the STAR TREK game episodic, like a TV series, with no direct continuity from one scenario to the next. Hence there is no map of the galaxy and no set of encounter tables to allow cruising around to see what happens. Travel time between planets is ignored, as all action will nominally happen in one place or on one ship. The players are presented with a situation, they resolve it (or not — characters *can* get killed in this game), and that is it until the next episode. Character progression between episodes is limited as well. A character may attempt one saving roll versus Intelligence at the end of an episode. If successful, a 1d10 skill increase of one skill that was successfully used may be obtained. The GM is permitted to performance, but is then cautioned to be

chary of allowing increases above the 40-50 range. Altogether, the RUNE-QUEST game system of skill increases is more rewarding to the player and easier to administer.

STAR TREK game is an ambitious work, generally well-done, with some minor flaws. The worst of these is in any case a matter of taste — the episodic nature of things versus the continuous campaign approach. Further, there is no reason a GM could not make her own campaign a continuous one if she should desire. The matter of a galaxy map is discussed in the rules, and the possibility is held out that one might be published in time. Beyond that, there is nothing really significant that not be cured by the supplements planned for release in the near future. Acquiring all the STAR TREK game material may be financially costly over time, but that is true of all the major role-playing games. What is provided in this package is well worth the price.

STAR TREK™ 15mm Deck Plans. Supplement for use with STAR TREK: The Role Playing Game. FASA, 1983. USS Enterprise \$15. Klingon D-7 Battlecruiser \$12.

The Enterprise and Battlecruiser consist of slight modifications of material already in the STAR TREK game package. In each case, the approach was to print the deck plans in a larger size, a nominal 15mm (the actual grid size is $\frac{1}{2}$ inch), and to include a booklet on the ship which contains the same information given in the RPG's "Recognition Handbook," fleshed out with some incidental illustrations.

Missing from each package is a set of control Panels for tactical starship combat resolution. Although panels for the Enterprise are included in the game itself, there were none for the Klingon vessel. It would seem logical to place the panels in each set of deck plans as they are published, since FASA apparently plans to release more of them in the future. Logic does not seem to rule.

These plans are of use only to players who find they cannot live with the smaller grid versions supplied with the game. Although handsome enough in their own right, these two items are hardly vital to play of the game.