

# CHAMPIONS

## THE SUPER ROLEPLAYING GAME

### USING THE *HERO SYSTEM*

#### **AUTHORS**

Steven S. Long and Aaron Allston

#### **ADDITIONAL CONTRIBUTIONS**

Darren Watts and Diana Sherman

#### **EDITING AND DEVELOPMENT**

Steven S. Long

#### **LAYOUT AND GRAPHIC DESIGN**

Fred Hicks

#### **COVER ART**

Paul Pelletier

#### **INTERIOR ART**

Brett Barkley, Storn Cook,  
Brian & Brendon Fraim, Joshua Guglielmo,  
Sam Kennedy, Bradley McDevitt, James Nguyen,  
Klaus Scherwinski, and Jason Williford

#### **AND FROM CRYPTIC STUDIOS**

Aléjandro Garza, Chris Legaspi, and Imario Susilo

#### **DEDICATION**

To all the *Champions* and *HERO System* fans out there who have kept this game alive and vibrant for thirty amazing years.

#### **AARON'S SPECIAL THANKS**

Thanks must go to the players who have made the Strike Force Universe campaigns so much fun, and so instructive to a gamemaster and writer, over the years: Mark Bennett, Eric Bunker, Earl Cooley III, Kerry Gaber, Jeff Jacobson, Jan Lewellen, Beth Loubet, Denis Loubet, Billy Moore, Matt Pinsonneault, Susan Pinsonneault, Bob Quinlan, Roxanne Quinlan, Luray Richmond, Mark Richmond, Allen Sikes, Beth Ann Sikes, and Sean Summers.

**HERO System**™ is DOJ, Inc.'s trademark for its roleplaying system.

**HERO System** Copyright © 1984, 1989, 2002, 2009 by DOJ, Inc. d/b/a Hero Games. All rights reserved.

**Champions**, **Dark Champions**, and all associated characters © 1981-2009 Cryptic Studios, Inc. All rights reserved. "**Champions**" and "**Dark Champions**" are trademarks of Cryptic Studios, Inc. "**Champions**" and "**Dark Champions**" are used under license from Cryptic Studios, Inc.

**Fantasy Hero** Copyright © 2003 by DOJ, Inc. d/b/a Hero Games. All rights reserved.

**Pulp Hero** Copyright © 2005 by DOJ, Inc. d/b/a Hero Games. All rights reserved.

**Star Hero**, **Justice Inc.**, **Danger International**, and **Western Hero** Copyright © 2002 by DOJ, Inc. d/b/a Hero Games. All rights reserved.

No part of this book may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or computerization, or by any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the Publisher: DOJ, Inc., 226 E. 54th Street, #605, New York, NY 10022-48541. Printed in the USA. First printing January 2010.

Produced and distributed by DOJ, Inc. d/b/a Hero Games.

Stock Number: DOJHERO1100

ISBN Number: 978-1-58366-125-3

# TABLE OF CONTENTS



INTRODUCTION .....	5
--------------------	---

## CHAPTER ONE TRUTH, JUSTICE, AND THE AMERICAN WAY: THE SUPERHERO GENRE

WHAT SUPERHERO STORIES ARE ALL ABOUT .....	8
SUPERHERO ELEMENTS .....	10
SECRET IDENTITIES, MASKS, AND COSTUMES .....	10
UNREALISTIC VILLAINY .....	14
DAY JOBS .....	16
THE ACHILLES' HEEL .....	16
FAR AWAY PLACES .....	17
SUPER-MAGIC AND MYSTICISM .....	19
SECRET SOCIETIES .....	20
SUPER-AGENCIES .....	20
CHAMPIONS SUBGENRES .....	21
THE GOLDEN AGE .....	22
THE SILVER AGE .....	27
THE BRONZE AGE .....	35
THE IRON AGE .....	41
GALACTIC CHAMPIONS .....	45
MYSTIC CHAMPIONS .....	50
TEEN CHAMPIONS .....	51
MIXING GENRES .....	53
META-GENRES .....	54
Adventure .....	54
Comedy .....	56
Drama .....	58
Horror .....	59
Romance .....	61
OTHER GENRES .....	63

## CHAPTER TWO WITH GREAT POWER...:

### SUPERHERO CHARACTER CREATION

BEING SUPERHUMAN .....	70
RATING CHARACTERS AND CHARACTERISTICS .....	71
SUPERHERO ORIGINS .....	73
ORIGIN CATEGORIES .....	73
Born Great .....	73
Achieve Greatness .....	74
Have Greatness Thrust Upon Them .....	74
SUPERHERO MOTIVATIONS .....	75
SUPERHERO ARCHETYPES .....	76
BRICK .....	76
ENERGY PROJECTOR .....	78
GADGETEER .....	80
MARTIAL ARTIST .....	81
MENTALIST .....	83
METAMORPH .....	84
MYSTIC .....	86
POWERED ARMOR .....	88
SPEEDSTER .....	89
WEAPONMASTER .....	91
META-ARCHETYPES .....	92
Anthropomorphic .....	92
Cosmic .....	92
Detective .....	94
Patriot .....	94
Robot/Android .....	96

### MORE POWERFUL THAN A LOCOMOTIVE:

CREATING SUPERHERO CHARACTERS .....	98
General Suggestions .....	98
SUGGESTED GAME ELEMENTS .....	99
Characteristics .....	99
Skills .....	99
Perks .....	103
Complications .....	104
SUPERTEAMS .....	111
HOW TEAMS GET TOGETHER .....	111
TEAM MEMBER TYPES .....	112
TEAM ATTRIBUTES .....	113
TEAM BENEFITS .....	118

## CHAPTER THREE

### ...COMES GREAT RESPONSIBILITY: GAMEMASTERING CHAMPIONS

CREATING YOUR SUPERHERO SETTING .....	120
TIMELINE .....	120
Sources Of Superpowers .....	120
The Appearance Of Supers .....	124
Number Of Superhumans .....	125
SUPERS AND SOCIETY .....	126
Historical Events .....	126
Culture .....	127
Law .....	128
Technology .....	131
The Superhuman Community .....	132
SUPER-MYSTERIES .....	133
POINTS AND POWER LEVELS .....	134
POINT TOTALS .....	134
Point Total Options .....	135
Point Total Problems .....	138
CREATING AND RUNNING	
CHAMPIONS CAMPAIGNS .....	140
CAMPAIGN TONE .....	140
Morality .....	140
Realism .....	142
Outlook; Importance Of The PCs .....	142
RUNNING THE CAMPAIGN .....	143
The Limits Of Superhero Genre Simulation .....	143
Campaigns As They Age .....	147
CREATING AND RUNNING EPISODES .....	148
Villain .....	149
Plot .....	149
Theme .....	151
Subplots .....	151
Gaming It Out .....	152
Champions Instant Plot Generator .....	154
THE CARE AND FEEDING OF COMPLICATIONS .....	159
VILLAINS .....	162
LEVELS OF VILLAINS .....	162
Villainous Agencies .....	164
A COWARDLY, SUPERSTITIOUS LOT:	
VILLAIN ARCHETYPES .....	167
RUNNING SUPERVILLAINS IN A CAMPAIGN .....	169
NON-PLAYER CHARACTERS .....	172
NPC TYPES .....	172
NPC ROLES .....	178
SUPERHEROIC COMBAT AND ADVENTURING .....	179
NEW AND ADJUSTED RULES .....	179
SUPERHERO ENVIRONMENTS .....	182
Superhero-World Physics .....	184



AT LEAST WE  
CAME PREPARED  
FOR A QUICK  
CHANGE!



## CHAPTER FOUR THE CHAMPIONS

<b>THE CHAMPIONS</b> .....	186
Defender.....	188
Ironclad.....	190
Kinetik.....	192
Sapphire.....	194
Witchcraft.....	197
<b>TEAM RESOURCES</b> .....	200
HOMESTEAD.....	200
Champions Personnel.....	200
THE V-JET.....	202
SOCRATES.....	202
RELATIONS WITH OTHER ORGANIZATIONS.....	202
<b>ENEMIES</b> .....	204
Armadillo.....	205
Green Dragon.....	207
Ogre.....	210
Pulsar.....	212
Tachyon.....	214
Talisman.....	216

## CHAPTER FIVE THE CHAMPIONS SOURCEBOOK

<b>GADGETS</b> .....	220
WEAPONS.....	220
DEFENSIVE GADGETS.....	224
COMMUNICATIONS DEVICES.....	226
MOVEMENT DEVICES.....	228
RESTRAINT DEVICES.....	230
DEATHTRAPS.....	231
DESTROYING THE WORLD FOR FUN AND PROFIT.....	231
DOOMSDAY DEVICES.....	232
<b>BASES AND VEHICLES</b> .....	233
SUPERHERO BASES.....	233
Urban Base.....	233
Underwater Base.....	233
Space Base.....	234
Base Equipment.....	237
SUPERHERO VEHICLES.....	240
<b>THE SUPERHERO GALLERY</b> .....	243
GENERAL SKILL SETS.....	245
GENERAL COMPLICATIONS SET.....	246
Aquatic.....	248
Blaster.....	250
Brick.....	252
Earth/Stone.....	254
Electricity.....	256
Fire.....	258

Gadgeteer.....	260
Ice.....	262
Magnetism.....	264
Martial Artist.....	266
Mentalist.....	268
Metamorph.....	270
Mystic Master.....	272
Powered Armor.....	274
Sonic.....	276
Speedster.....	278
Stretcher.....	280
Telekinetic.....	282
Weaponmaster.....	284
Weather Controller.....	286
<b>MINION GALLERY</b> .....	288
Agent.....	289
Alien Invader.....	290
Demon.....	291
Mole-Man.....	291
Ninja.....	292
Robot.....	293
Soldier.....	294
Street Thug.....	294
Zombie.....	295
<b>INDEX</b> .....	296





# INTRODUCTION

**"UP** in the sky — look!" Those words opened each of the seventeen *Superman* short films produced by the animation studio of Max and Dave Fleischer in the 1940s. Spoken as if by an everyday man glimpsing something astonishing in the air above, they made it clear to the audience that it would soon witness uncommon wonders.

And it was true. In each entry in that groundbreaking cartoon series, audiences witnessed Superman, the first and arguably most popular of all the costumed superhumans, using the powers that were his alien birthright to battle giant robots, natural and unnatural disasters, enemy spies, and supernatural monsters.

These cartoons were, of course, passive entertainment. The members of the audience could imagine they were the superhero, accomplishing remarkable feats of strength and daring, but those were solitary imaginings, seldom shared, inevitably forgotten. With the *HERO System*, the audience becomes a set of participants, and the superhero up on the big screen is transformed into a more personal alter ego — one designed to give the player the experience he could only imagine previously, and to share that experience with others in a collaborative story.

*Champions* is a *HERO System* genre book — a book of guidelines, advice, and rules to help you use the *HERO System* to create Superhero characters and run Superhero campaigns in the style of your favorite comic books — or, if your tastes lean toward other sources of Superhero adventure, of cartoons, movies, television shows, radio shows, or movie serials.

As a genre book, *Champions* does not include the *HERO System* rules. You can find those in *The HERO System 6<sup>th</sup> Edition* two-rulebook set (or, if you want to start with a streamlined version of the rules, try *The HERO System Basic Rulebook*).

## HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

*Champions* is designed both for players experienced with Superhero roleplaying and those who are new to this style and genre of play. Nothing in these pages is secret or for the GM's eyes only, so you can read it all and then decide which portions you want to utilize.

Chapter One, *Truth, Justice, And The American Way: The Superhero Genre*, describes what Superhero comic books, and the campaigns based on them, are like. Players who are familiar with comics can skip this chapter initially if they want to, since they already know many of the genre conventions it describes. But they should return to it eventually — even experienced comics readers can learn something here, and it has good advice on how to implement genre conventions using the *HERO System*. Players who aren't familiar with Superhero comic books should definitely read Chapter One.

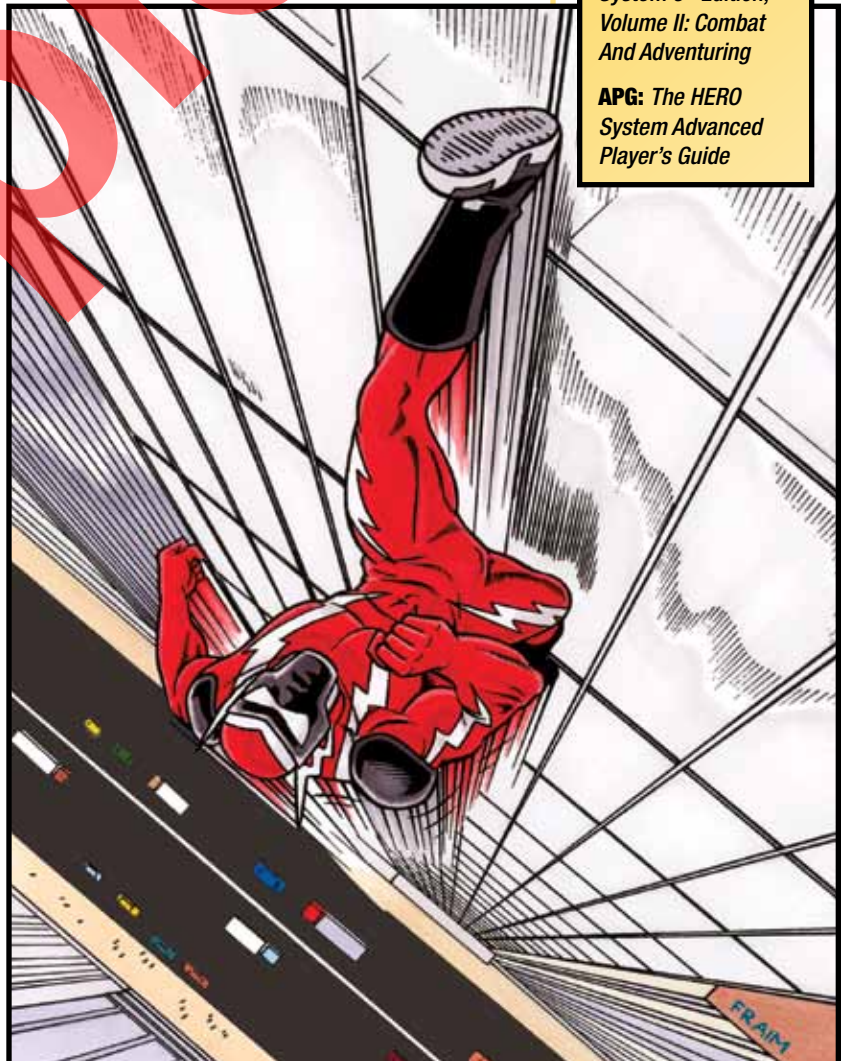
## ABBREVIATIONS

This book uses the following abbreviations to refer to other *HERO System* books:

**6E1:** *The HERO System 6<sup>th</sup> Edition, Volume I: Character Creation*

**6E2:** *The HERO System 6<sup>th</sup> Edition, Volume II: Combat And Adventuring*

**APG:** *The HERO System Advanced Player's Guide*



Chapter Two, *With Great Power...: Superhero Character Creation*, talks about using the *HERO System* rules to build Superhero characters. It discusses what it means to be superhuman, the various types of origin stories that explain how heroes and villains get their powers, and the main superhuman archetypes (including a few sample powers to get you started). Then it goes over the *HERO System* game elements — Skills, Powers, Complications, and more — and discusses their special applications in the Superheroes genre. It concludes with a review of superteams and how to use them in your game.

Chapter Three, *...Comes Great Responsibility: Gamemastering Champions*, as is evident from its title, includes advice for GMs of Superhero campaigns. But even players with no interest in running a campaign should give this chapter a look, if only to have an idea of what the GM may expect of them and what they should expect of their GM.

Chapter Four, *The Champions*, provides a few examples from the *Champions Universe*, the official *Champions* campaign setting of Hero Games, to get you started. It includes writeups for a complete superhero team, the Champions, as well as their base, vehicle, and several of their enemies. Its members can serve as examples of character designs for players who are still new to the rules. In addition, its members might end up as NPCs in your own campaign, if the GM so wishes.

Chapter Five, *The Champions Sourcebook*, continues Chapter Four's approach by providing a wide variety of resources for Superhero players and GMs. It includes a section of gadgets organized by type, and example Bases and Vehicles for superheroes. Next comes the *Superhero Gallery*

— 20 different common types of superhumans, such as a Fire-based character or a Telekinetic. Each character has a two-page spread with a basic character sheet and pre-built abilities that you can “plug in” to that sheet. This allows a player to easily create a PC if he needs one, and the GM to quickly generate dozens of supervillains for the PCs to fight. Lastly, Chapter Five concludes with character sheets for generic minions and adversaries the PCs might encounter.

Taken all together, *Champions* provides a handy jumping-off point for your own adventures. This book, like many Hero Games products, is a toolkit — one addressing a particular genre. Rather than telling you the One True Way of doing something, it typically discusses the options and alternatives (to make you aware of them), and then lets you decide how to implement something in your game or build a particular power. Ultimately the most important ingredient in the mix isn't anything in this book, it's your imagination and creativity.

As with every other set of rules and recommendations related to the *HERO System*, you should remember two important things: first, if you're putting together your own campaign, you should adopt any rules that help you have fun and abandon those that don't; second, if you know enough about the game to question something in this book, you also probably know enough to change it to your satisfaction.

So fetch your impossibly bright, ridiculously bulletproof underwear from the dryer and prepare to have some fun!





**TRUTH, JUSTICE, AND THE AMERICAN WAY:**

**CHAPTER  
ONE**

**THE SUPERHERO  
GENRE**