

FOREWORD

This adventure is a bit different from previous *Champions* adventures. First, you'll notice that *The Great Super Villain Contest* contains *Superworld* conversions. This makes the GSVVC more useful to gamers who might not play *Champions*. Second, this is a *campaign* adventure; the events described here should take place over many evenings of play. This requires a somewhat different style on the part of the GM.

Also, it's important to note here that the GSVVC, because of its differences, may not exactly fit in with other adventures that you're doing. You may even want to start a new campaign for this adventure. Of course, the important thing to realize is that all *Champions* material doesn't *have* to be used as it's presented, or with other things we've published. We feel very strongly that it's up to the individual GM to tailor the campaigns, organizations, and adventures to suit *his* taste. So, strap yourselves in and enter the Contest!

— Steve Peterson

INTRODUCTION

The Great Super-Villain Contest is an adventure supplement to *CHAMPIONS: The Super Role-Playing Game*. It is designed to be used as the basis for a series of adventures (or, perhaps, even a full-fledged campaign) pitting existing heroes against a recurring cast of powerful villains who have well-defined goals and motivations. With proper care on the part of the GM, *The Great Super-Villain Contest* can provide an opportunity to introduce players to the intricacies of super-villain role playing.

This supplement features eight new supervillains, an outline and map of the Crimson Claw's mountain stronghold, specific rules for conducting the Super-

Villain Contest itself, and numerous ideas for specific scenarios. The eight new villains are meant to add flavor to any scenario you may choose to run. You should *not* limit the contestants to these alone; any super-villains the GM has at his disposal may be included in the Contest.

The scenario suggestions included are merely a sample of the possible adventures that can occur as a result of the Contest. You should use these ideas as springboards for your own. Remember that the villains will be seeking to fight specific heroes; the GM should tailor the circumstances of the scenario accordingly.

FOR THE GAMEMASTER

There are several ways for the GM to use *The Great Super-Villain Contest*. The traditional approach (probably the easiest one for the GM to run) would be to have the players design heroes to oppose the GM's villains. We recommend this approach to the novice GM.

A more difficult approach is to let the players play the villains, and for the GM to design NPC heroes to oppose them. The GM may choose to let the players design their own characters or may have them pick from among already existing villains (including the villains featured in this book).

A third approach — the one we recommend to experienced GMs — is to incorporate the GSVVC into an already existing campaign a little bit at a time. Heroes will be attacked by villains for no apparent reason. Villains who have specific archenemies may choose to avoid those enemies in order to pick on

weaker targets. Properly arranged, it should be some time before the players realize that there's a pattern to these unprovoked confrontations.

When they do make that realization, the GM is encouraged to move on to a fourth approach, and let the players play both sides of the street, heroes and villains. If the GM feels capable of handling it, there is no reason why the players can't design villains to participate in the GSVVC at the same time their player-character heroes are doing their utmost to stop it. This is a very complex approach to the GSVVC, one that requires careful coordination between the GM and his players.

The important thing to remember is that *CHAMPIONS* is a role-playing game! For the players, the object of the game isn't necessarily to win (winning the GSVVC will, or should, carry its own disadvantages for the character who comes out on top); the object is to have a good time.



HISTORY

For several months, the anti-social activities of many of the world's most powerful villains have been on the decline. This has been seen in many quarters as evidence that the constant vigilance of the world's costumed champions of justice has been more successful of late; however, some fear that this observed decline is merely an indication that some greater evil is marshalling its forces for a grand assault upon humankind.

Those fears are correct.

Hidden high in the mountains north of Burbank, California, lies the secret citadel of the Crimson Claw, the mysterious villain whose very existence is

still unknown. From this mountain stronghold, the Claw has sent forth his emissaries of evil to make contact with the most powerful villains of all. He has offered them an opportunity to prove once and for all which among them is the deadliest threat to the forces of law and order. Their immediate objective will be to embarrass, defeat, and ultimately to destroy the superheroes of Earth. Their final goal will be Power Absolute.

To the final victor in the struggle for supremacy, the Crimson Claw has promised the Emerald Eye of Azog — a globe of potent ethereal force capable of granting its possessor mastery over things both mystic and mundane. It is this globe which is the key to the final victory of evil over good.



THE RULES

PHASE ONE: The Qualifying Round

In the first phase of the competition, the Crimson Claw has begun contacting supervillains, telling them of the contest and its prize, instructing them to begin assailing superheroes and passing the good word to their villainous allies. However, the Claw *doesn't* mention that every villain on Earth is a contestant — even villains totally ignorant of the contest will be evaluated so long as word of their deeds reach the Claw. The purpose of the contest is to determine the most powerful supervillain on Earth; formal entry into the contest only means that all the formal competitor's actions are known to the Claw.

In this phase of the competition, the goal of the villains will be to gain points by battling, defeating, and humiliating heroes. The more formidable the hero, the more points are awarded for his defeat. Conversely, the more villains there are attacking a hero, the fewer points there are to go around.

The best way to ease a campaign into the opening stages of the GSVC goes something like this: At the beginning of an ordinary adventure, one of our

heroes receives a challenge from an old enemy, probably one of his Hunteds. If the villain wins, instead of pressing his advantage, he'll probably run off cackling. If he loses, he'll trot off to jail in good spirits. Before our heroes can investigate further, the "real" adventure for this session begins. Later on in the adventure, perhaps, an NPC hero will tell the player-characters about being attacked out of the blue by a scrawny ex-foe he hadn't seen in years. At the beginning of the next adventure, another of our heroes may be attacked. (Generally, it's a good idea to use high-INT or psychically-shielded villains, so that it's more difficult for mind-readers to find out what is happening.)

The object of this initial phase is to weed out would-be competitors who are unfit to wield the power of the Emerald Eye, and to locate those fit to wield it but who, for whatever reason, did not immediately come to the attention of the Crimson Claw. Villains who consistently lose to heroes, or who are too stupid to take advantage of their opportunities, or who are too psychopathic to control themselves under stress, will likely not do well enough to reach the second phase of the competition.

HERO VALUES

Before the competition begins, a value of 6 to 14 points should be assigned to each potential superhero target. The typical hero should be assigned a value of ten. A powerful, dangerous hero should be worth more; a fledgeling hero, one without a good reputation, should be worth less. These values will be adjusted during the course of the competition.

All villains start off with zero points earned. Villains accumulate points by battling heroes. The more points a hero is worth, the more points a villain can gain by fighting him. In a one-on-one fight, if the villain defeats the hero, the villain gains a number of points in the competition equal to the value assigned to the hero. If the battle ends inconclusively, the villain gains half that many points. If the villain loses the fight, the villain loses two (2) points in the competition *regardless of the value of the hero*.

Villains may decide to team up to attack a hero or a group of heroes. In such a case, the value of the heroes is totalled and divided equally among the villains, fractions to be rounded down. If the villains win the fight, the full value of the heroes is awarded. If the battle is inconclusive, only half the value of the heroes is awarded. If the villains lose, each villain loses two points.

During the course of the competition, it may become obvious that a particular hero was over- or under-valued at the start. This should be corrected so that super-villains will not begin hounding some hapless (or ignoring some formidable!) superhero. A good rule of thumb to use is that a hero who wins an even fight should gain a point in value while a hero who loses an even fight should drop a point. All adjustments to hero values are, of course, at the discretion of the GM.

The GM should be aware that, when and if the heroes find out what's going on, it can become a matter of pride for them to learn where they stand on the villains' hero value list. It is quite conceivable that a pecking-order competition would develop among the heroes; if it does, this should be encouraged by the GM. It is entirely possible that a hero who succeeds in defeating a large number of villains could end the first phase of the competitions with an assigned value far in excess of 14.

BONUSES AND PENALTIES

The GM should keep in mind that at this stage of the competition the Crimson Claw is not interested in causing any deaths. The goal is to test the relative strengths of the heroes and villains. Bonuses and penalties will therefore be awarded at the discretion of the GM to ensure that the villains understand that heroes are not to be killed, and to ensure that as many villains as possible remain involved in the Contest.

A suggested list of possible bonuses/penalties includes:

Being captured	-2 points
Escaping from capture	+1 point
Rescuing a fellow villain	+1 point
Staging a sneak attack	-1 point
Being attacked by surprise	+1 point
Outnumbering opponents	-1 point from total for each extra villain involved
Being outnumbered	+1 point to total for each extra hero involved
Capturing a hero	+2 points
Humiliating a hero	+1 point
Endangering innocents	-2 points
Killing a hero	-7 points
Killing an innocent	-8 points
Creativity	+1 point
Stupidity	-1 point

Note that the first two bonuses/penalties are applied to the total points awarded, before the points are divided among the villains. The rest are applied to or subtracted from the villain's score *after* points have been divided among participating villains.

Examples of Competition:

1) *The Bunny Master, Spider Web, Sand Blaster, and Nitro decide to team up to fight the Galloping Galooper and Captain Freedom. The Galooper, a highly regarded hero who has sent many a villain to jail, has a value of 13 points. Captain Freedom, a hero who hasn't been around very long, has a value of 8 points. The villains ambush and defeat the heroes, but are unable to take prisoners because the police show up.*

The total value of the heroes is 21 points, less 2 penalty points because the villains outnumbered them by two. The remaining 19 points are split equally among the villains, giving them 4 points each (rounding down). But because the villains ambushed the heroes, a penalty of 1 point for the sneak attack is assessed, reducing the net award to 3 points per character in the competition.

2) *The Gemini twins, Pollux and Castor, challenge Solarr and the gallant Defender to a fight. Solarr is considered dangerous, though it isn't clear that she's truly a hero, and has been assigned a value of 12. The Defender has been assigned a value of 11. The battle is inconclusive, so the Gemini twins break off the fight, but Pollux is caught by the police.*

The total value of the heroes is 23 points. Because the actual fight was inconclusive, 11½ points are divided equally between Castor and Pollux, giving them 5 each (rounding down). Because Pollux was captured, he is assessed a 2 point penalty, reducing his net award to 3 points. Were he later to escape from custody, he would recoup one of those points; were his brother to break him out, his brother would gain a point.

3) The Unstoppable Creep decides to take on the entire team of Minutemen in Washington, D.C. He is thoroughly defeated and ends up in jail. He loses two points for the defeat, two points for being captured, and one point for stupidity. However, this loss is more than balanced by the fact that the brave Creep was outnumbered seven to one, giving him six bonus points for a net gain of 1 point in the competition. (Obviously, it is the team defeat that is important; if the Creep defeated one of the Minuteman and was then captured by the rest, he has still lost and they have still won.)

WHAT IS A HERO/VILLAIN?

In some cases, it may not be clear which side of the law a character is on. A character who goes around gunning down Mafia hit-men, for example, may consider himself a hero but may be hunted by the police. A character who secretly knocks over banks to support himself, but who's willing to help out the heroes against some sort of cosmic menace, may have a good reputation among the heroes even though he considers himself a villain.

In cases in which it isn't clear whether the character is a hero or a villain, the GM should assign him a tentative hero value, and should also allow him to accumulate points in the GSVC until such time as it becomes clear which side he is on.

Such characters may at any time declare themselves to be heroes or villains. Hero/villains are fair game for the contestants in the GSVC unless and until they declare themselves participants.

Example:

The Weapons Master is a very chivalrous and honorable fellow who does dirty work for the Soviet government. He is not a crook, and dislikes thieves and villains, yet he has had occasion to use them against heroes in the course of an assignment. Many of the heroes who have met the Weapons Master feel great admiration for him, but know he is a formidable enemy. The Weapons Master is a classic hero/villain. If ordered to do so by his government, he might well compete as a villain in the GSVC, but his personal preference would be to help the heroes stomp on this criminal scum.

STRATEGY

The intelligent villain may see several devious ways to take advantage of these contest rules. Methods include:

THE TAG-ALONG SCHEME

A villain who lacks raw power may offer his services to more powerful villains, and thus gain points fighting heroes he would not otherwise be able to handle. But this scheme works only up to a point; as the wily lesser villain moves up in the standings, more powerful villains will become less willing to have him along.

THE AMBUSH SCHEME

A villain may lure heroes into a situation in which the heroes are at a disadvantage. In the case of a high-value hero, the penalty for a surprise attack is effectively small.

THE PATSY SCHEME

A villain may seek out heroes he knows to be particularly susceptible to his attacks, or heroes who are obviously overvalued. This only works once per hero. If the villain thrashes the hero soundly, the hero will be reduced in value in any future encounters.

THE OVERKILL SCHEME

Since there is no limit to the number of battles a villain may fight during the course of the first phase of the competition, a villain who feels confident of his ability to escape from custody may choose to fight heroes time and time again. In this way a lesser villain may make up in volume what a greater villain may gather in the way of points in only a few battles.

SCENARIOS

Once the GSVC has become established in the campaign and word has begun leaking to the player-character heroes, adventures of these sorts can follow:

THE "COME OUT AND FIGHT" SCENARIO

In which a villain or group of villains shows up outside the hero headquarters and demands that some hero or group come out and fight. This approach works best for villains who are not especially wanted by the authorities, and who may have a grudge against a particular hero. It is limited in use, however, because the heroes aren't likely to put up with several such incidents.

THE "BALLGAME" SCENARIO

In which villains hold a large group of people hostage and demand the heroes show up within a specified time...or else. So long as the innocents are in no danger, the Claw assigns the villains no penalty for this approach. This scenario works best where there's a lot of room for a fight. A ballpark is the ideal place. (Supervillains interfering with the Super Bowl will probably find themselves assassinated by fans, however.)

THE "DON'T LOOK NOW, BUT" SCENARIO

In which a hero who makes a scheduled appearance finds himself mobbed by villains out to make points.

THE "RINGER" SCENARIO

In which a hero poses as a villain in order to infiltrate the mysterious Claw's organization. If he succeeds, he may well play out the competition as though he were a real villain in order to learn what the Claw's *real* game is.

THE "BUILD 'EM UP" SCENARIO

In which a criminal mastermind sends wave after wave of minor villains against some poor clown of a hero in an effort to make him look good. Then, when the hero has moved up sufficiently in the ratings, the mastermind stomps on him and grabs the points.

THE "DOUBLE-CROSS" SCENARIO

In which a villain arranges for another villain to be caught and sent to jail in the hope that this will effectively eliminate him from the competition.

THE "OH MY, I'M CAUGHT" SCENARIO

In which a villain who would have little trouble escaping allows himself to be sent to jail so he'll be in a position to gain points by engineering a massive breakout.

THE "SMASH HIM WITH THUGS" SCENARIO

In which a villain gathers a whole mass of thugs and proceeds to trounce some minor heroes. A thug built on less than 100 points counts as only one-half a villain for purposes of computing the point award.

THE "GET RICH WHILE YOU'RE AT IT" SCENARIO

In which the villains stage a robbery primarily for the purpose of luring heroes onto the scene and into a trap.

At some point it will occur to one or more villains — or heroes posing as villains — to wonder why the Crimson Claw doesn't simply take the Emerald Eye for himself. The wise character will mistrust the Claw, assume that he has hidden motives, and play out the game until the Claw slips and reveals part of the truth. The not-so-wise character may choose to confront the Claw or try some other method of finding out what's really going on — such as:

THE "WHO IS HE?" SCENARIO

In which a villain attempts to unmask the Claw and (probably) pays for it with his life.

THE "GRAB THE GLOBE" SCENARIO

In which a villain attempts to short-circuit the competition and (probably) pays for it with his life.

THE "YOU DID WHAT?" SCENARIO

In which a villain does something to embarrass the name of villainy (such as save the life of a hero with whom he is on good terms) and (probably) pays for it with his life.

In all of these cases, a glib villain may be able to talk his way out of paying the final penalty. The GM should keep in mind the fact that, while the Claw would have no compunctions against slaying a total incompetent, he would spare someone who gives him a reason to do so.

ON DESTROYING HEROES

A hero may be destroyed in several ways. The most obvious way, killing him, usually doesn't work, as villains have learned over the years. The clever and creative villain will spurn mere murder in favor of more subtle forms of destruction. After all, you can only kill someone once...in most cases. It is more exquisite to let the hero live, knowing he has met his greatest defeat.

Villains may destroy a superhero by finding a way to strip him of his Powers, by exposing his Secret Identity, by manipulating him (perhaps by taking advantage of his Psychological Limitations) into giving up his costumed identity, by tricking him into a flagrant violation of the law, or by any one of a number of means.

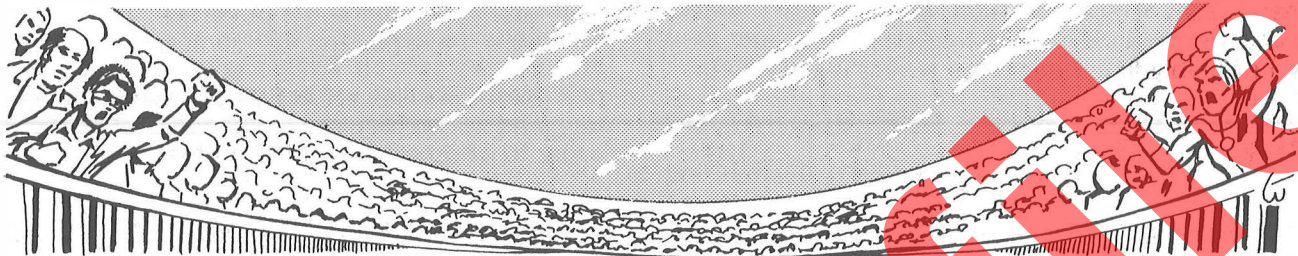
THE TIME FRAME

The referee should allow a period of time sufficient for the cream to rise to the top in the first phase of *The Great Super-Villain Contest*. The real-time duration of the Contest will, of course, depend

on how often scenarios are played. A period of one real month should be sufficient if scenarios are played several times a week. As few as a dozen scenarios may be sufficient, though we would recommend playing substantially more than that.

As the competition nears an end, the referee

should make real-time allowances for each villain to make his final attacks on heroes. At the end of this first phase, the villains who have accumulated the greatest number of points will be invited to move on to Phase Two.



PHASE TWO: THE ROUND OF DOOM

In the second phase of competition, the goal of the villains will be to capture a specific target-character and bring him alive to the citadel of the Crimson Claw. In this way, the resourcefulness of those villains who may have relied on brute power or good fortune during Phase One can be tested.

Only the highest finishers in the qualifying round will be invited to participate in Phase Two. We recommend for the sake of playability that no more than a dozen contestants be involved in the second round, though circumstances may require more or less.

THE HERO POOL

The Crimson Claw will have assembled the names of the six to ten top-qualifying heroes from the first round. Each villain may add one name to this hero pool; in most cases the name added will be of the villain's personal enemy, though a particular villain may have some esoteric reason for wanting an obscure hero to be a target. Obviously, there will be more heroes in the pool than there are villains in the competition.

Each villain will then choose a name at random from the pool; that hero will be the villain's target. He must be defeated and brought to the Crimson Claw in order for the villain to advance to the final phase of the Contest.

Example:

The Annihilator absolutely hates the Galloping Galooper and has sworn to see him be annihilated. But it's the Wingless Gizzard who draws the Galooper's name out of the pool, and the Annihilator considers the Gizzard an incompetent dolt. At this point, because the Gizzard refuses to give up an opportunity to destroy the hated Galooper, the Annihilator attacks the Gizzard, and a free-for-all breaks out. The villains are smashing each other, and it's up to the Crimson Claw to put a stop to it!

THE HERO PERSPECTIVE

By this time, the player-character superheroes should be aware of the existence of the Contest. One or more superheroes may have begun investigating the Contest, perhaps taking on villain identities and actually participating. Word of the Contest is spreading among the superheroes and the pecking order is becoming better-known. Some hostility among heroes may result; this can only make a campaign more entertaining. Here are some possibilities for scenarios in the second phase of the competition:

THE "DISGRUNTLED LOSER" SCENARIO

In which a villain who didn't make it to the second phase, but who thinks he should have, interferes in a