



RUNNING A KAIJU GAME

Running a game with kaiju is a little different than running a standard Mecha game. Kaiju are huge, overwhelming creatures that often attack solo. Most mecha games involve squads of relatively evenly matched mecha battling it out with all of the maneuvering and tactics that implies. Kaiju is a little different. Therefore, you have several options with your preferred type of game and how you size the opposition.

TYPES OF GAMES

As most fans of kaiju movies may know, in almost any kaiju film, the kaiju usually handily defeats any human forces. As the players will most likely not want that to be the outcome of each of their battles, this section will provide a few ideas for playing Mecha in a manner consistent with a kaiju film theme.

First, keep most of the Pilots' combat action against other human forces because most of the time the Pilots will be fighting opponents on a more-or-less even footing. Have the players only very rarely encounter kaiju. Start them off against a Titan or two (or the equivalently powered opponent in a custom setting) and give them a lot of time to power up before introducing larger kaiju, such as the Guardians or Champions.

Second, if you want, allow the players to control two different characters.

Once character is a standard Pilot, and the second is a minor kaiju created by the player who is fighting for the good guys. Then you can alternate between human and kaiju battles. This will allow the players plenty of entertaining kaiju action without having to worry about simple human Mecha eventually becoming too powerful.

Third, you can always forget the puny humans! Let the players play as their own kaiju, working to get stronger and finally take on a larger kaiju, like Taiotora and his allies. You'd still use the same Link Stats (and only use Pilot stats for out of combat rolls.)

If you're doing this in *Dreams of Ruin*, you can play kaiju growing in power until they are the undisputed ruler of the beasts. An easily-workable story for this type of game would be four players acting as a Titan seeking to usurp one of the mad Guardians and then to challenge Taiotora to defend the planet.

Fourth, let one or a few of the players to play psionic Pilots. These Pilots are not traditional Mecha Pilots, but rather characters who have formed a psychic bond with a kaiju and who guide and encourage it in battle. In game terms, this means that the Pilot and the kaiju both share an Overdrive pool, and in most rounds, the Pilot will stay still (or even ride their kaiju), watching the battle while the kaiju acts. The Pilot may, once per battle, spend a point of Overdrive to



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add their Intelligence to one of their kaiju's stats for one round. While this may seem at first to be very overpowered compared to a regular Pilot and Mecha, remember that the psionic Pilot is stuck on the ground, not protected by a Mecha. If the Pilot is ever incapacitated or killed, then its linked creature will go berserk, attacking friend and foe alike, or it will simply run off, reeling from psychic shock.

Fifth, you can always underpower the kaiju. However, keeping them awe-inspiringly large can be a fun challenge.

SIZING THE OPPOSITION

Unlike a lot of mecha games, determining the strength of the opposite kaiju can be tricky. On one hand, kaiju are extremely powerful since they are supposed to be the iconic enemies in the game. On the other hand, players won't want to be soundly defeated by superior foes for many battles.

Feel free to start the players off against weaker foes and build up to the kaiju. However, once you put a kaiju down on the bullseye battlemat, it can get killed. If that happens, don't worry about it, just file away the kaiju, make some changes to the character sheet and have the kaiju return a few battles later. Only this time it will appear in a new and more powerful form. Think Mecha-Ghidorah or Gigan's chainsaw upgrade from *Godzilla vs. Mecha-Ghidorah* and *Godzilla Final Wars*. The players will then have both a sense of accomplishment from the achievement of taking down a great kaiju and the dread of

having to face it when it is stronger and very mad.

Also, no matter how strong the kaiju foe, don't let it face the players alone in any game with a Tactical Waypoint. At the very least throw in some mooks so that the kaiju doesn't get flanked or overwhelmed by superior numbers.

A GOOD STORY

While most RPG settings revolve around the plot, as should a kaiju-based SRS, special attention must be given to the kaiju themselves. Think back to the last kaiju movie that you watched. What do you remember most about the film? Is it the dialogue, the story or the nuanced human characters? Or rather, is the first thought in your mind of an enormous reptile breathing fire on his enemies?

Historically, great kaiju movies have striven to be fine films in their own right. Movies like *Gojira* teach lessons about the folly of hubris and the true weakness of humanity in the face of nature. As a GM, you have an obligation to provide a worthwhile story to your players. Keep in mind, though, that the most brilliant of stories will fall flat if it does not offer a cast of truly spectacular kaiju. As with all things in life, balance is needed.

A truly compelling story will drive your players to really appreciate your hard work. Everything in kaiju films is larger than life. Real-world problems work best if presented in an overly dramatic manner. Pollution? Create a monster from garbage! Famine? Use a locust-like kaiju swarm! Poverty? The kaiju have come to level the infrastructure of the rich and return everything to the



INTEGRATING KAIJU

people! In good kaiju stories, the monsters do not exist simply to smash. They are often representative of an issue facing society.

INTEGRATING PLAYERS

In most kaiju films, human characters take a secondary role to the action. While this allows greater focus on the monsters, it would make for a poor role-playing experience.

The good news is that kaiju films do have some advice for how to make humans the star. Some of the most memorable human characters in kaiju film-dom are Captain Gordon from *Godzilla: Final Wars*, Commander Tachibana from *Godzilla*, Mothra, King Ghidora: *Giant Monsters All-Out Attack*, and, of course, Doctor Serizawa from *Gojira*. Each of these characters shine because they show the same larger-than-life attributes as their rubber-suited counterparts. For instance, Gordon, Tachibana and Serizawa display incredible courage and are each willing to put their lives in mortal peril to save the Earth. Pilots should be allowed and encouraged to display better-than-human feats of strength and courage when appropriate.

Finally, the kaiju themselves must be memorable. A truly fantastic monster is instantly recognizable and stands out from the rest. Therefore, when introducing the kaiju, describe in detail the exact attributes of a monster. Any kaiju fan can tell *Godzilla* or *King Ghidora* from their trademark roar or chirps. A shadowed silhouette of the daikaiju is also distinct. If possible, draw a picture of your monsters. Experiment with sound effects to play for your players to reinforce the feeling of dread when your behemoth arrives for battle.

Also, despite their bestial appearance, most monsters have complex and individual personalities. Is *Mothra* in Tokyo? You can bet that she's protecting her people from humanity. Does *Gigan* have his foe on the ropes? He will almost certainly gloat about it and taunt his enemy. Is a child in peril? *Gamera* will be there! Your own monsters should also have believable motivations and personalities. If possible consider your own passions or those of your players and assign personality traits to monsters based on what they value or what they fear.

