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Mecha Defects and Quirks

by Phil Reed

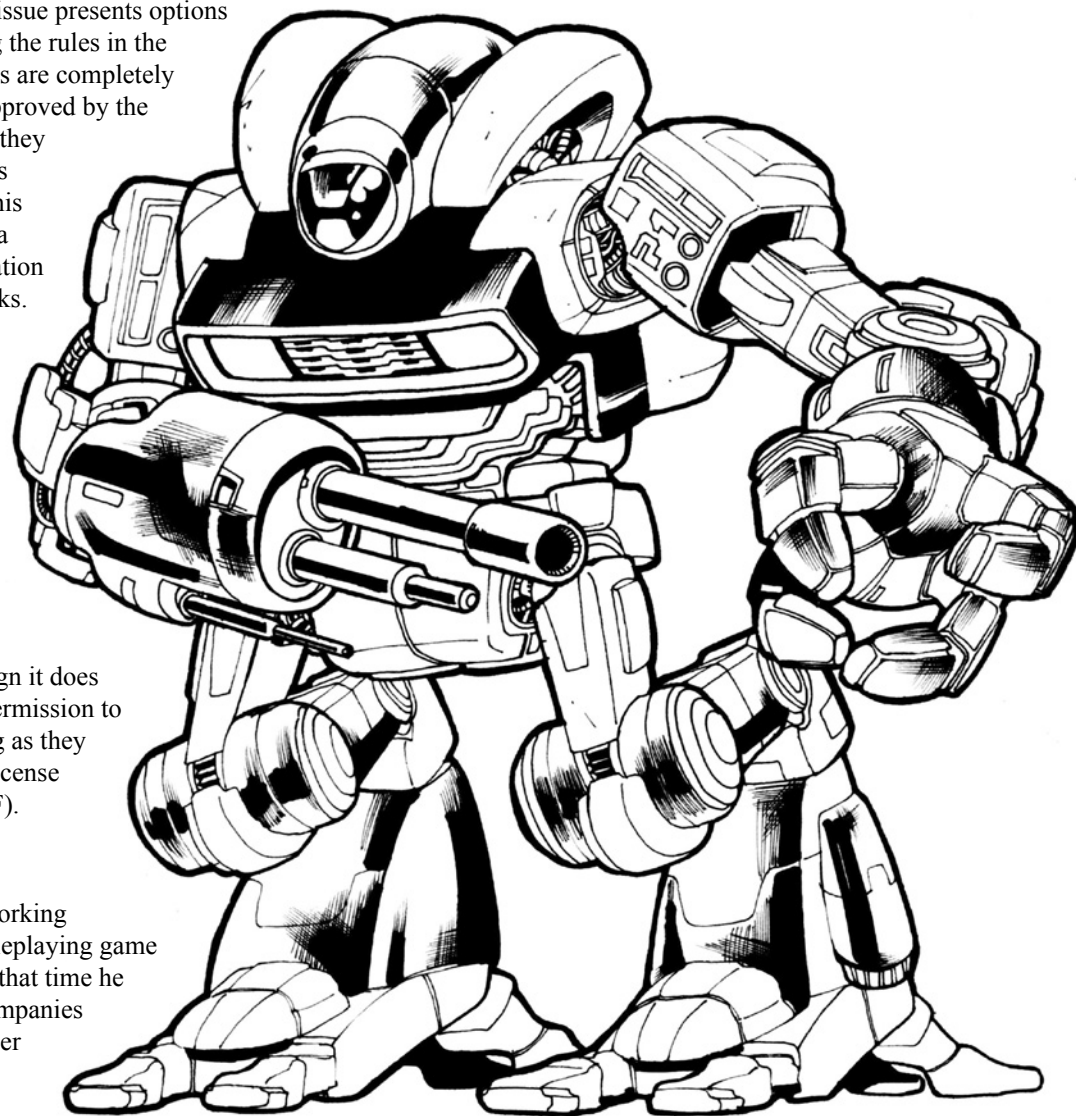
This *Modern Dispatch* issue presents options for mecha created using the rules in the Future SRD. These rules are completely optional and must be approved by the campaign's GM before they can be used. The defects and quirks detailed in this PDF should be used as a springboard for the creation of new defects and quirks.

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About the Author

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Press, and *Scrye* magazine. Today Philip spends his days at home running Ronin Arts, writing and designing new games, and watching DVDs. To learn more about Philip Reed – and Ronin Arts – please visit www.roninarts.com and www.philipjreed.com.

Defects

Defects represent design flaws that all mecha in a series possess. By selecting defects a mecha designer burdens his new design with a defect – usually minor but sometimes substantially dangerous – that is offset by a modification to some other aspect of the mecha (such as a decrease in the mecha's purchase DC or possibly an extra equipment slot or two).

A mecha design may have no more than three total defects *unless* the GM specifically gives permission for a mecha design to include a larger number of defects. This is *not* recommended, though it could prove entertaining for a unique mecha design that's intended more as campaign flavor than actual combat action.

[Direction]-Optimised Armor

Drawback: The equipment bonus to Defense granted by the mecha's armor protects against attacks from one direction (usually front-optimised) only. Attacks from other directions (for example, the side, rear, top, and bottom) have an equipment bonus to Defense equal to one-half the armor's listed value (round down).

Benefit: The armor's purchase DC is reduced by one-quarter (round down). Additionally, the armor's effective progress level – for purposes of cost – is reduced by one. (*Example: Duralloy Armor, typically PL 6, is treated as PL 5 for purposes of cost if this defect is applied to the mecha.*)

Flammable

Drawback: The mecha is constructed of wood or similar flammable material. All fire attacks against the mecha inflict double damage and the critical threat range of fire weapons is increased by 2 when used against a flammable mecha. (*Example: A Corona Microwave Beam fired at a flammable weapon inflicts 10d6 damage and threatens a critical on a roll of 18-20.*)

Benefit: The armor's purchase DC is reduced by one-half (round down).

Glass Canopy

Drawback: The mecha has a large canopy that does not protect against attacks aimed through it. This may not be taken in conjunction with the Open Defect. By taking a –6 penalty on an attack roll an attacker may target the mecha's canopy, ignoring the mecha's hardness and hit points and applying damage directly to the mecha's pilot on a successful attack. **Benefit:** The mecha's base purchase DC is reduced by 2.

Hangar Queen

Drawback: The mecha requires extra careful maintenance to work properly and spends much of its time in a garage, shop, port, etc. undergoing repairs. For every hour the mecha was used, it should be given at least an hour of maintenance. If the mecha does not get this maintenance time the pilot suffers a –1 penalty to all skill, attack, and damage rolls for each hour of maintenance the mecha is deficient. (*Example: A mecha with this defect that was run for eight hours but only received one hour of maintenance imposes a –7 penalty to its pilot.*) This penalty is negated once the maintenance time and operation time balance out.

Benefit: The mecha is well known and grants anyone that pilots it a +4 equipment bonus to

Reputation. Additionally, all of this hangar time has enabled the techs to customize the mecha, adding 1 equipment slot to the mecha's torso.

High Ground Pressure

Drawback: The contact area of the mecha's legs (or wheels or tracks if equipped with the necessary equipment) is slight compared to the mecha's weight. Consequently, the mecha tends to sink into the ground. The mecha will bog down in any swamp, deep snow, or mud (no movement). It moves at one-half speed (round down) when crossing sand, light snow, or soggy ground.

Benefit: The mecha's base purchase DC is reduced by 2.

Naked Operator

Drawback: The mecha's pilot must be naked in order to operate the mecha. This Defect occurs surprisingly often in anime. The naked pilot is usually floating in some sort of neural-interface tank, often with strategically placed electrodes or tubes connecting them to the mecha's life system. The disadvantage of this, aside from embarrassment, is the time it takes to get dressed before exiting the mecha.

Benefit: Because the system adapts so perfectly to the human operator, the mecha's pilot gains a +2 equipment bonus on all Drive, Pilot, and movement-related skill checks.

Noisy or Very Noisy

Drawback: The mecha is noisier than an ordinary person. A noisy mecha is also detected more easily by sonar or Listen checks. A noisy mecha can never attempt to Move Silently.

"Noisy" means the mecha is as noisy as an ordinary automotive engine. Opponents gain a +10 circumstance bonus on Listen checks to notice it

“Very Noisy” means the mecha is as noisy as an aircraft engine. Opponents gain a +20 circumstance bonus on Listen checks to notice it.

Benefit: The mecha’s noise grants the pilot a +1 equipment bonus to Intimidate checks (+2 for a very noisy mecha). Additionally, the lack of sound dampening equipment reduces the mecha’s base purchase DC by 1 (by 2 for a very noisy mecha). The loss of sound dampening increases the mecha’s total number of equipment slots by 1 (2 for a very noisy mecha); this bonus slot can be in any location on the mecha of the designer’s choosing.

Open

Drawback: The mecha’s does not adequately protect the crew or passengers, only the mecha itself; the mecha provides one-half cover to crew and passengers, or no cover if the mecha is the same size or smaller than the rider.

Benefit: The mecha’s base purchase DC is reduced by 2. By removing protective coverings the mecha’s number of torso equipment slots increases by 1.

Poor Visibility

Drawback: The mecha’s pilot has very poor visibility, due to small or no windows and a lack of compensating sensors, or other problems. The only way to get unrestricted vision is to actually stick one’s head out a hatch or window (leaving one with only half cover, as per the Open defect). Otherwise, attempts to spot something visually from inside are at -2 if looking directly forward and -4 if looking in any other direction.

Benefit: The mecha’s base purchase DC is reduced by 2.

Reduced Endurance

Drawback: The default assumption is a mecha has an indefinite range — it can operate for months

at a time, like a sailing ship or nuclear submarine, provided supplies of food and water are available. If the mecha must refuel or recharge before then (something that should take at least half an hour of effort) it has Reduced Endurance. A mecha with this drawback must be refueled once every week in order to remain operational.

Benefit: The mecha’s base purchase DC is reduced by 2.

Service Crew

Drawback: The mecha is complex enough that it requires a crew of engineers to perform regular maintenance. Service crew are in addition to any Operators (pilot, commander, equipment operators, or gunners). The mecha must have sufficient passenger occupancy to carry that many crew. If a mecha loses service crew it will not stop functioning (provided there is someone to pilot it), but it will not run smoothly.

For each 25% a mecha is undercrewed (round up), the GM can impose a -2 penalty on all Skill checks the pilot or crew make when operating the mecha. A short, overworked crew is also more likely to make mistakes, leading to equipment breakdowns. A mecha with this defect requires a number of service crew members based on its size.

Size	Number of Service Crew Required
Medium	*
Large	*
Huge	1
Gargantuan	2
Colossal	4

* A mecha of this size cannot have this defect.

Benefit: Due to the mecha’s advanced, complex design all sensor checks (Computer Use, see the future SRD) are made at a +4 equipment bonus.

Start-Up Time

Drawback: If the mecha is shut down, a character cannot just climb into it and blast off cold — the power plant requires 4d4+5 rounds to warm up. Start-Up Time should only be taken for mecha that have Reduced Endurance

Benefit: The mecha’s base purchase DC is reduced by 2.

Volatile

Drawback: Fuel, a boiler, or ammunition may explode if the mecha is disabled or destroyed. Any time the mecha suffers damage there is a percentage chance (equal to the amount of damage suffered) that the attack scored a volatile hit, igniting an explosion deep within the mecha’s body. This explosion inflicts a number of d6 of damage equal to the mecha’s hardness to the mecha, any characters or creatures within the mecha, and all objects and characters within a number of feet of the mecha equal to 2x its reach.

Benefit: The mecha’s base purchase DC is reduced by 4. Additionally, the mecha has one additional equipment slot in each arm (a total of +2 equipment slots).

Weak Point

Drawback: Due to a flaw in the design, there is a weak point in the mecha. If an attacker knows where it is (this requires a successful; Knowledge (technology) check (DC 15 + the mecha’s PL) an attack to that point is much more likely to cripple or destroy the mecha. A strike against the weak point ignores the mecha’s hardness and inflicts 50% more damage (round up).

Benefit: The mecha gains one additional equipment slot (torso).

Quirks

While defects are shared amongst all mecha of a particular design quirks are unique to each individual mecha, the result of customization. A mecha may possess both quirks and defects, though contradictory elements may never be combined in the same design.

A mecha can possess any number of quirks, though it is suggested that a single mecha have no more than two quirks.

Black Market Tech

The mecha uses a surprising number of components that were purchased on the black market, making the entire design illegal. The mecha's pilot frequently finds himself working to hide the fact that a significant number of systems onboard the mecha are both illegal to possess and stolen.

Disadvantage: In addition to the legal troubles that could impact the pilot if the illegal gear were discovered the systems are prone to failure. At the beginning of each mission a random system onboard the mecha sparks and sputters, dropping to 50% efficiency until repaired. Repairing an affected system requires twelve hours and a DC 25 Repair check.

Benefit: When initially purchased by the player the purchase DC of any components of a PL one higher than the campaign's current PL are not increased (see Progress Levels in the futuristic SRD).

Dents and Bruises

While many mecha are kept in pristine condition, constantly repaired after each battle, this particular mecha is covered in dents, scratches, dings, and all of its paint and insignia is flaking off.

Disadvantage: Well, this is certainly a most unimpressive looking machine. A character suffers a

-2 to Reputation while piloting this mecha. Repairing the mecha's appearance requires 80 hours of work, ten DC 20 Repair checks, and has a purchase DC of one-half the mecha's original purchase DC.

Benefit: Looks can be deceiving. While the mecha's previous owners have never taken the time to maintain the machine's appearance they've sunk a lot of time and credits into the mecha itself. The mecha gains a +5 ft. bonus to speed. If its appearance is repaired the mecha retains this benefit.

Electrical Short

A side-effect of too many patched systems, the mecha's electrical system frequently shorts out – especially at the most inopportune of moments.

Disadvantage: Once per hour there is a 5% chance that the mecha's electrical system will fail, shutting down a vital piece of equipment. If this happens a random sensor, weapon, or electronic-based defense or miscellaneous system fails to operate for 2d4+1 hours. A successful Repair check (DC 20), requiring one hour of time, will correct the problem. Otherwise the pilot will just have to wait for the system to correct itself.

Benefit: The mecha gains a single bonus equipment slot that must be used for any electronic-based system. The GM's word is final in the event of disputes regarding what is and is not allowed in this bonus slot.

Limp

One of the mecha's legs has a bad rotator, giving the machine a distinctive, hindered stride.

Disadvantage: The mecha's base speed is reduced by 5 ft.

Benefit: The mecha's base purchase DC is reduced by 2.

No Cargo Space

The mecha has been rebuilt so many times, by so many people, that all of its cargo space is devoted to important systems.

Disadvantage: While the title may be misleading, it's not completely inaccurate. The mecha's cargo capacity (see the future SRD) is equal to a design two size levels smaller than the mecha's actual size. If this takes the mecha to a size smaller than large it has no cargo space.

Benefit: The mecha gains two additional (equivalent) equipment slots.

Structural Flaws

After years of combat the mecha's structure is flawed, suffering from thousands of cracks and fractures.

Disadvantage: The mecha's hardness is reduced by 50%. Repairing this damage is impossible – the very frame of the mecha is damaged.

Benefit: The mecha's combat computers, as old as the mecha itself, have been updated by each pilot that has ever owned it and today these computers grant the pilot a +2 circumstance bonus to initiative and attack rolls.

Temperamental Engine Core

The mecha's engine core, having been cobbled together from stolen and cast-off military hardware, sometimes gives out – especially when pushed to its operational limits. The problem is untraceable and permanent – the only way to repair the problem is to completely replace the engine with an off-the-shelf system.

Disadvantage: Once per turn, if the mecha is moving more than one-half its maximum speed, roll 1d20. If the result is equal to or less than the number of squares moved that round + the number of rounds

the mecha has been moving, the engine fails and the mecha is immobilized. Repairing the engine core requires a DC 25 Repair check and takes 1d4+1 minutes. Reduce the Repair DC by 5 for each failed attempt at restarting the mecha's engine.

Benefit: Increase the mecha's speed by 10 ft..

Underpowered Engine Core

The mecha's engine core, old and abused, no longer performs at its original specifications, leaving the mecha much slower than it should be.

Disadvantage: The mecha's base speed is permanently reduced by 50% (round down). Completely replacing the engine core requires 40 hours of work, 10 successful DC 20 Repair checks, and a full repair bay or garage. The replacement engine core has a purchase DC equal to one-half the mecha's base purchase DC.

Benefit: Though the mecha's engine core is old and rundown, at some point in the past one of the mecha's owners rerouted to the power supplies, bleeding a significant portion of the engine's power into the mecha's energy-based weapon systems. All such weapons, like a microwave beam or laser, inflicts +25% damage (round up) with each shot. If the mecha's engine core is replaced this benefit is lost.

Unfortunate Weapon Failure

The mecha's weapon systems have been scrounged from military wreckage and each one has been overcharged with blackmarket components. Sometimes these second-hand, heavily-modified systems do not function according to the manufacturer's specifications.

Disadvantage: Each time a weapon onboard the mecha is fired there is a 5% chance that the weapon will overload and shutdown, leaving the weapon worthless until repaired. A DC 20 Repair check – requiring one hour of work – is required to fix an overloaded weapon system. Additionally, each time a weapon is successfully fired roll a six-sided die – on an even roll reduce the attack's damage by the amount rolled and on an odd roll increase the attack's damage by the amount rolled.

Advantage: A mecha with this quirk carries an additional number of equipment slots, the exact number determined by the mecha's size. Consult the following chart for specifics.

Size	Number of Bonus Equipment Slots
Medium	1
Large	2
Huge	3
Gargantuan	5
Colossal	7

These bonus equipment slots can only be used for weapon systems.

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