

SOCIAL CLUBS

A chapter cut from the PARANOIA XP supplement *The Traitor's Manual*:

Alpha Complex social clubs

Mongoose Publishing staff writer and Famous Game Designer Gareth Hanrahan wrote the *PARANOIA XP* supplement *The Traitor's Manual*, a comprehensive 96-page treatise of all the major secret societies in Alpha Complex, the game setting. Gareth ended up giving us waaay too much great stuff to fit in the book, including this fine overview of the societies' principal recruiting ground: The Computer's approved Elective Activity or Pursuit clubs. Read about the EAP clubs, then look for *The Traitor's Manual* and other fine *PARANOIA XP* products at your friendly local game store. Or check them out on the Mongoose Publishing Web site: www.mongoosepublishing.com.

The Computer cares deeply for the happiness, well-being and hygiene of every citizen. The Old Reckoning ethos of grueling self-sacrifice—where all citizens were chained to cubicles and worked until they dropped from exhaustion or lead poisoning—are long gone. Now, after completing assigned duties at their service firms, Alpha Complex citizens have a median 4.45 hours of Mandatory Fun Time before the sleep gas is pumped into the INFRARED dormitories.

Many citizens spend much of this Mandatory Fun Time watching Teela-O reruns, the Friendship Lottery and the Daily Execution Show, but The Computer worries about citizens spending too much time alone. Solitude breeds aberrant behavior, and aberrant behavior breeds treason. A citizen alone is a suspect. (Also, the all-important citizen/camera ratio requires Internal Security to cram as many people as possible into one room.) Therefore, most people spend part of their Mandatory Fun Time in **Elective Activity or Pursuit clubs**.

These clubs are dedicated to a particular sport, hobby or pastime. The Computer assigns each EAP club an Activity Center, which it time-shares with other EAP clubs or other functions (this morning's R&D test firing chamber is tonight's 'Wallscrubbing Is Fun' meeting room). IntSec monitors the Activity Center, of course, but the level of surveillance is considerably lower than in other places, like dormitories, corridors or bathrooms. The Computer expects club members to cheerfully and loyally rat on their treasonous fellows, and to some extent they do—unless they're all conspiring together. Some clubs are hotbeds of treason; the rest are merely simmering mattresses of dissent.

The Computer allots EAP clubs a small budget for equipment, administration costs and so on—the budget is proportional to the number of club members, so most clubs recruit enthusiastically.

HPD&MC gives every club 100 credits per year, as well as use of an Activity Center room for two hours per week. The club earns an extra five credits per year for each member beyond the first 20, to a maximum of 1,000 credits. To ensure that a club actually has the stated number of members and is not trying to bilk money out of long-suffering HPD&MC, secret inspectors visit each club annually and count attendees. (HPD&MC is considering outsourcing this duty to a new EAP club, the Club Volunteers Volunteer Club.)

Fraud and theft of club funds are sadly common. The Computer has decreed that, to counter such unlawful theft, an EAP club leader must have at least RED Clearance. Should a large group of INFRARED citizens wish to form a local branch of an EAP club in their sector, they must accumulate the requisite number of signatures on HPD&MC Form 05/EAP/56430/A and must find a RED or higher-clearance citizen willing to volunteer as club leader. In rare cases where no willing citizen is available, The Computer brevets one of the INFRAREDs to RED Clearance for the duration of the meeting.

This does not, of course, lead to hordes of INFRAREDs trying to start every imaginable EAP club in hopes of forcing a promotion.

Approved EAP club types

HPD&MC maintains a list of approved club types. HPD normally approves one of each club type in each sector, although they make exceptions for especially popular clubs, overpopulated sectors or when the HPD&MC clerk really can't be bothered going through the bulging filing cabinet filled by HPD&MC/05/EAP/56430/As filed by hordes of INFRAREDs trying to start every imaginable EAP club in hopes of forcing a promotion.

IntSec periodically updates the Approved list; clubs that fall off the Approved list become treasonous and either die out or move underground as secret societies. In some cases, IntSec blacklists a sector's EAP club even when it still generally approves the EAP club concept. For example, all Creative Writing Club members must beware of displaying their badges in SRD Sector. IntSec encourages citizens to consult the ever-growing list of Unapproved EAP Clubs, available on request.

The list of Approved Clubs is also quite lengthy (in astronomical terms), but the various EAP clubs fall into a limited number of categories:

- ④ Sports clubs
- ④ Hobby clubs
- ④ Pastime societies
- ④ Community Observation Groups
- ④ Junior Citizen Brigades
- ④ Service firm sponsored clubs



Illustration by Jim Holloway

In *FunBall Tournament Variant #145a* (rev. 211.09.04.04 13:45), each team tries to persuade the FunBall's bot brain that their team is happier than their rival. Here, star standsmen of Sectors GYI and WQP face off in their 205th Annual Friendly FunBall Rivalry.



Sports clubs

The Computer expects citizens to maintain a minimum level of fitness, which can be difficult on a diet of Hot Fun—what it lacks in actual nutrients, it makes up for in Double-Plus Xtra-Sweetener. The Computer assigns citizens who fail HPD&MC fitness checks to a Sports EAP club; other citizens can go voluntarily if they have extra energy to burn off.

The Computer expects citizens to take pride in the record-breaking accomplishments of their athletes. HPD&MC elevates especially skilled sportsmen as role models for other citizens and puts them on a fast track to promotion. However, treasonous, unregistered mutants occasionally use their mutant abilities to win, so doing *too* well in a sport arouses HPD&MC's suspicions. The latest ad motto for athletes: Be the best you can be within a single standard deviation of average!

While most EAPs fit neatly into the standard Activity Center, some sports clubs need their own special centers. Not all clubs are so inconvenient—Extra Calisthenics Volunteers or Rubber Ball Bouncing Groups use standard Activity Centers, and kudos to them!

Rivalries among different sports clubs are common. The specialized equipment needed for sports often leads to theft, sabotage and long-running turf wars. Examples of common sports clubs:

Corridor Running: Hordes of track-suited citizens stampede down corridors, trying to beat their best time for getting from the Commissary to the Bathroom Complex. HPD&MC service firms post times and places set aside for Corridor Running on notice boards. They advise citizens not to stand in the path of three dozen overweight INFRAREDs charging full-tilt down a 10-foot-wide corridor, particularly when spoiled HotFun adds incentive for runners to beat their times to the bathrooms.

The similar sport of Transtube Running is also on the approved list, but has been depreciated due to clogs and cleaning delays.

Vat Swimming: Alpha Complex lacks any large, open areas of water, but swimming is still a vital citizen skill, as well as an excellent all-body workout. Vat swimmers use standard food/bio-organic vats filled with water or an approved chemical substitute. Following their enthusiastic club leader, swimmers circle the vat or swim down the connecting tubes to other vats. HPD&MC sometimes requires vat swim teams to serve their complex by acting as replacement stirring devices when the food vat Churn-O-Matics break down.

FunBall: Ancient records show that before Alpha Complex, citizens used to engage in a bewilderingly large array of ball-based games. Some games involved kicking a ball, or punching it, or carrying it, or hitting it with various implements. The rules for these games were

equally varied and obtuse. Even the balls varied in size and hardness. HPD&MC acknowledged the popularity of these sports and the desire of citizens to continue playing them, but the lack of large open spaces within the complex forced a compromise.

R&D engineers studied the various games and developed a new sport that combined the statistically most important and enjoyable aspects of all of them. HPD&MC depreciated the original name ('FootHandCrickTenBaseBasketHockBallPro') in favor of the modern term, 'FunBall.' The sport is officially wildly popular within Alpha Complex, and HPD service-firm-conducted surveys have placed tremendous pressure on HPD&MC for the construction of new FunBall arenas. When HPD&MC can't meet this demand, citizens sometimes construct impromptu arenas in dormitories or on factory floors.

The vid networks televise matches between the larger clubs, with HPD-sponsored subliminal ads encouraging citizens to support one club or another. MNU Sector boasts the current champion club, although the Service Firm Sponsored team from R&D's Steroid Combat Drug Development Group is mounting a surprising forceful challenge.

Electromuscular Sequencing: An innovation from R&D, Electromuscular Sequencing provides all the benefit of exercise with only 84% of the effort. HPD&MC service firm physiobots attach each participant to an Electromuscle Sequencer (called a 'rack' by aficionados of the sport), which directly stimulates each of the major muscle groups using precisely timed jolts of electricity. The resultant writhing gives a complete workout. Power Services firms enthusiastically sponsor many ES clubs.

Strangely, the injury rate in FunBall matches between competing service firms is some 800% higher than normal.

Marital Arts: A misprint in the Approved List led to the banning of the once-popular Self-Defense and Self-Offense classes. At Marital Arts clubs, pairs of citizens stand around looking confused and faintly embarrassed. In rare sectors where citizens have not properly applied their hormone suppressants, these clubs are considerably more active and popular.

PowerGolf: Golf's association with high-level executives endured even the disasters that led to the foundation of Alpha Complex, probably due to Romantic or Free Enterprise intervention. However, the same lack of wide-open spaces that blights FunBall also caused problems for PowerGolf. HPD&MC solved this problem by creating an indoor variant of the game. Instead of a simple, brutish club, the PowerGolfer uses a complex, reversible vacuum hose to suck or blow the ball around Alpha Complex.

The aim of the game is to get the ball into a PowerBall receptacle, which is normally mounted on the back of a convenient bot (or citizen in a pinch). The rules strictly state that a ball must be played where it lies, so low-clearance citizens are used to the sight of half-asphyxiated BLUE executives rampaging around and firing high-velocity balls at nearby scrubots. Another sport

FunBall rules

The Year 214 revision of the Official FunBall Commission FunBall Rulebook has been published. Some notable changes:

Rule #124/a: Only CNH Regulation funballs may be used. (CNH Regulation funballs consist of a bot-brain, audio sensors and ultra-high velocity gyroscopic guidance mechanism, all wrapped in a rubber composite and covered with a YumFeel coating that is soothing to the average citizen's grip. The shape is that of a Cartesian oval (egg shape) weighted toward the larger end. The bot brain responds adequately to audio stimuli that manage to make it through the various coatings and adjusts the gyroscope to lean or direct the ball toward the loudest source. The louder the source, the happier the ball is, with one caveat... if the funball detects sarcasm or anger in the modulation, it gyrates away from the sound. The end result is a ball that wobbles, bounces and strives to get to the happiest sounding thing out there by any possible means.

Past funballs used in impromptu games throughout the complex have been 'Any vat-damn thing we can throw around that can survive more than 20 minutes of such abuse.' Everything from 'official funballs,' to wadded-up sheets of PaperLyke portable writing surface, to small bots and even grenades have been funballs at one time or another. Such funballs are now banned.

Rule #213/c: A player is outside, and therefore in violation, when he is closer to the inner sanctum, or the outer stratum, without first being presented with an offered play, or where his current position means he is not on the opposite side of the opposing team's second last standsman or third outer kickback, or where his position is level with at least two left-handed, offset center-quarters making a play for the third quarter sixth.



different sector commissaries and food dispensers. Membership in a Yummy Food Group means a citizen can discover where the best 'food' is available, a vital skill at low clearances. Some Yummy Food Groups even organize excursions to far-off sectors of Alpha Complex to eat at famous cafeterias.

Botspotters: They spot bots. No bot goes unspotted near a Botspotter botspotting spot.

Reams of Tech Services analyses actively wonder why anyone would want to spot bots; the eventual consensus was that 'it takes all sorts.'

Genuine Credit Opportunity Clubs: Currently under investigation, these clubs encourage citizens to contribute their credits towards senior club members. The citizens then recruit other citizens, who contribute their money towards the previously junior but now increasingly senior citizens. The largest of these clubs has several thousand members and is rapidly growing, as it attracts citizens through its genuine credit opportunities. The founder mysteriously vanished off to CBN Sector after winning The Computer's Choice Award for Happiest Citizen.

TopWare™ Parties: One of the more impressive R&D innovations, TopWare is a practically invulnerable, immortal and impenetrable storage container. At TopWare parties, hosts encourage guests to buy TopWare boxes and tubs to store foodstuffs. Given that Cold Fun is about the only thing that lasts longer than TopWare, the point of this is somewhat esoteric. R&D discourages storing Hot Fun in TopWare unless you have a burning desire to sear the lining of your lungs. And, while you can keep algae chips 'fresh' in TopWare, the chips taste just the same when fresh or stale. However, recent R&D service firm research shows that TopWare can serve as makeshift armor plating in the more troubled sectors. (It costs 100 credits to buy enough tubs, and gives Protection 2 against Impact and Energy attacks. TopWare armor may attract Armed Forces or IntSec queries.)

Community Observation Groups

The **hickspittles** concerned citizens of the EAP COGs selflessly volunteer their time to make Alpha Complex a *better* place to live. They watch fellow citizens constantly, making suggestions and reports on how fellow citizens could improve their work ethic, cleanliness, thought processes or loyalty index. Other COGs keep watch over the physical maintenance of Alpha Complex—if a painter misses a speck, he can expect to have a COG wagging its collective finger at him within the hour. COGs are high on the Approved EAP list. Be a part of Alpha Complex and become a COG!

Spontaneous Loyalty Demonstration Organizers: The Computer loves it when its citizens are so happy that they burst into song-and-dance routines on the spur of the moment,

or parade in perfect unison down the corridors carrying heart-warming banners sporting approved touching slogans. Such spontaneous demonstrations generally take weeks of planning and pressure to organize.

Collective Information Synthesis Friends: These clubs share information about other citizens, looking for signs of treason or disloyalty. For example, citizen John-G-ABC may seem unimpeachably loyal with his shiny new cone rifle—but if one Information Synthesis Friend tells the group that John-G got demoted at work, another advertises the correct salary level for a citizen of John-G's new pay grade, a third knows the price of a new cone rifle and the fourth has heard rumors of a Free Enterprise cell operating in the sector... well, it may be time to impeach John-G after all. Essentially gossip circles reporting to IntSec, Collective Information Synthesis Friends spy on all their dormitory mates and coworkers.

Volunteer Form Checkers: The Volunteer Form Checkers provide a vital backup to normal CPU Form Checkers and related service firms. While overburdened CPU and service firms can only check for the most important factors on a form (*Did the Troubleshooter fill out every item? Did he check the box marked 'Do not check this box'?*), the Volunteer Form Checkers review forms with the zealotry of the convert. VFCs scrutinize everything from poor grammar to graphology analysis for signs of subconscious treason. Normally, local CPU service firms ship them forms to check, but some overly trusting Troubleshooters have taken to dumping their half-completed forms at VFC meetings and hoping the society members fill in the blanks.

Smiling Club: A big, wide smile is the best and most obvious sign of a truly happy citizen. Members of Smiling Clubs study and imitate the best smiles. Stretch those cheeks—and if you can't, there's always the option of smile-enhancement surgery! Spin-offs of the Smiling Clubs include the Cheery Humming Teams and the Enthusiastic Little Hop-Skip as You Walk Down the Corridor Club.

Junior Citizen Brigades

Recently decanted clones spend most of their time being educated, but they too get to participate in EAP clubs. Volunteer(ed) RED citizens oversee junior versions of the various sports clubs. Some other forms of EAP have junior versions. Volunteered club leaders generally regard assignment to a Junior Citizen Brigade as cause to break out the extra-strong happiness pills, as young people tend to be surly, vicious, biting little brats who have not yet had their wills broken, yet harbor a fanatical desire to report others to The Computer. The Computer holds RED-Clearance club leaders responsible for the Junior Citizens in their charge, and requires them to bring the same number back to the crèche as they left

with at the start of the club meeting. Desperate club leaders sometimes kidnap young people as replacements.

Service firm sponsored clubs

The EAP/56430/B amendment that allows a service firm to create an internal EAP club was originally made as part of the 'Healthy Competition Has Been Deemed Non-Treasonous' initiative. The idea was that having workmates play sports or watch reruns together would build team spirit and increase productivity. This was somewhat successful, and inter-firm FunBall matches are common. (Strangely, the injury rate in FunBall matches between competing service firms is some 800% higher than normal.)

However, some bright citizen who doubtless has a future in the termination booth had an idea: Why not 'outsource' firm activities to eager club members? Instead of, say, checking the serial numbers of every guardbot in FAR Sector, why not use the EAP/56430/B amendment to form the FAR Sector Guardbot Spotting Society? The firm then just has one of its employees attend society meetings, write down the numbers, and the job is done. True, the firm (not HPD&MC) has to pay the club's costs, but this is normally a considerable savings over actually paying employees to do the work.

Not all firm-sponsored EAP clubs are dodgy credit scams; a few have valid reasons for existence:

Citizen's Home Guard: Sponsored by the Armed Forces, the Home Guard consists of volunteer citizens armed with cast-off, surplus or defective weapons. They drill constantly, knowing that they are the last line of defense against Commie takeover and that nothing repels a horde of evil Commie invaders like *close-formation drill marching*. The Home Guards (a.k.a. Vulture Reserves) are absurdly arrogant and self-important, but have the unstable firepower to justify some of this attitude.

Complex Laser Association: Believing every citizen has a right to bear arms and vaporize much of the scenery, the CLA meets to discuss and trade weapons. It also operates firing ranges in the Activity Centers. R&D sponsors the CLA and uses it to bypass testing regulation on newer, shinier weapons. IntSec closely observes the CLA to ensure weapon trading doesn't violate citizen clearances.

Power Conservation Brotherhood: A corrective measure that took on a life of its own, the PCB was sponsored by Power Services in an attempt to stop a series of troubling brownouts. Members were taught basic power conservation tips, like switching off lights when they leave a room and unplugging devices not in use. The PCB didn't stop there—now the members spy on dormitories to see if residents have left on lights, rush to unplug vidshow monitors the microsecond

