

SPASM



"TIME TO LAY ON THE HURT!"

Power Level: 12
Concept: Raw Nerve of Rage

Name: Earl Duke
Other Aliases: Merrill Bergie
Base of Operations: Global
Affiliation: None
Nationality: American
Age: 35 **Height:** 7'2"
Weight: 430 lbs. **Eyes:** Blue
Hair: N/A

BACKGROUND

Merrill Bergie was born a sickly child in a rural Midwestern community in the late sixties. By then, costumed superheroes were just the tip of the parahuman iceberg, as mutants with enhanced senses and super-human intellects flooded the private sector, bolstering the American economy. Radical therapy was cheap and readily available for nearly any affliction. Young Merrill's parents placed him in a program to strengthen his compromised constitution. But for the injections and the blue light that kind of burned, the child enjoyed his weekly trips into the city. By the age of 10, Merrill was not only healthy, but as strong as an ox. Unfortunately, later studies suggested a connection between the drug he had been administered, Panthelox-73, and an increased occurrence of psychotic rage.

Merry made the most of his newfound vigor, leading his high school football team to a state victory. If not for a number of disciplinary incidents, including a narrowly avoided charge of manslaughter, Bergie could have easily enjoyed a high-profile scholarship. His exceptional athleticism made him something of a small-town celebrity, so he easily made the transition to sports entertainment. Over the next ten years, he clawed his way from backyard wrestling to the top of the Global Gladiatorial Federation. Though claiming to favor "man's natural strength and cunning" over the use of parahuman abilities, this utterly corrupt pseudo-sport frequently dumped very dangerous, unstable "powered" individuals into the ring against each other. Of course, GGF matches soon became the most popular media events of all time. Washed-up middle-aged superheroes, battle androids, and kooks with bizarre motifs looking to make a name for themselves were common sights on weekly televised matches. Bergie, fighting under the name Earl Duke and advertised as a "common man," was an easy fan favorite.

Duke's agent, a sinister Hollywood player named Nolly Pratt, managed a number of very popular "gladiators." Though pitching them all as merely well-trained fighters, Pratt maintained a lucrative partnership with a French pharmaceutical company, Renard Prochem, which provided numerous performance-enhancing cocktails designed to slip by the Federation's loose drug testing. The French firm's dodgy ethics caused its share of casualties, and in reality, Renard used the pit fights to field test combat serums intended for the black market. But the serums were far from perfect, and few gladiators escaped unscathed.

Despite his riches and notoriety, Earl Duke's body was being painfully eaten away by the chemicals that helped make him so popular.

Duke managed to return to the ring numerous times after injuries and neuromuscular problems that would have killed the average man. When he could fight no more, Pratt tried to transition him into Hollywood, starring him in a pair of wretched family action movies, *Nuclear Mailman* and *Submarine Mountain*. On set, the star was violent and petulant, often physically accosting crew members before collapsing in pain. Earl Duke was reduced to a caricature, and even his legion of die-hard fans, the Dukesters, drifted away. His physical condition deteriorated suddenly. Swollen, calcified muscles erupted painfully through his skin, while barbed tendons and cartilage twisted and bore through his internal tissue. Pratt took pity on his friend, and secretly flew him to Switzerland to undergo experimental treatment under the direct supervision of Renard doctors.

The physicians did the best they could to stabilize Duke's condition. Unfortunately, the Penthexol-73 he had been administered as a child reacted unexpectedly with the Renard treatments. Earl Duke emerged with a disturbing array of parahuman abilities. Knowing he could never return to his previous life of celebrity, and gracious to Pratt and Renard, Duke, now known as Spasm, Master of Pain, comfortably made the transition to international enforcer and mercenary.

USING SPASM

Spasm has accepted his lot as a follower. By trusting in Pratt, he has tasted a great deal of success. In Spasm's mind, Pratt saved him, and as a result, Spasm is a loyal soldier. He rarely questions missions handed down from Renard, and enjoys the travel and violence. Strangely, Spasm directs his rage over his physical condition toward popular superheroes. He is bitter that his star faded from public memory so quickly, and believes that the fickle American public chewed his body up, turning him into a pop-culture joke. Spasm does not respond well to taunts or jabs at his former celebrity, and is quick to fly off the handle when confronted by costumed, media-whore heroes. When not fighting, Spasm is dimwitted and crass. He is a consummate bully who enjoys frightening old women, children, and pets. The only way he knows to get his way is through intimidation and threats. While obsequious to his superiors, Spasm rarely has the foresight to determine which asses to kick, and which to kiss.

TACTICS

Although he is well equipped to fight a number of opponents simultaneously on his own, Spasm is also well suited to act as the lynch-pin in a coordinated team attack, as long as he can keep his temper in check and avoid mental attacks. In such cases, Spasm focuses on the "pretty boys," especially flyers, who try to stay out of the melee and utilize ranged attacks. He hides on a perch, lashing out with his unwound muscles and tendons at maximum range of 30 feet. Spasm uses his Elasticity only to extend the reach of his flay-

ing attacks. The calcified barbs, enzymatic acids, and raw bio-electricity of this meat-scourge make it a threat to heroes who otherwise consider themselves invulnerable. With a successful strike, he attempts to initiate a grapple, neutralize the opponent's powers, and either overwhelm him with the searing pain of his Fatigue power, or simply throttle him with a Choke Hold. Thanks to Improved Grapple, he is capable of doing this with one hand free. In a free-for-all, Spasm targets the biggest, baddest-looking hero in an attempt to prove "they ain't so tough!" Thanks to his resilient and pliant physiology, and the hit he recovers every other round due to his Regeneration, in many instances he's right.

GAME STATISTICS

Spasm: PL 12; Init +3 (Dex); Defense 23 (+10 base, +3 Dex); Spd 30 ft.; Atk +15 melee (12L/reach 30'/crit19-20/Penetrating Attack x3, slam); SV Dmg +10, Fort +7, Ref +3, Will -1; Str 18, Dex 16, Con 20, Int 10, Wis 9, Cha 12.

Skills: Climb +12, Hide +6, Intimidate +13, Move Silently +6, Taunt +4.

Feat: Ambidexterity, Attack Focus (unarmed), Choke Hold, Endurance, Great Fortitude, Improved Critical, Improved Grapple, Improved Pin, Penetrating Attack (unarmed) x3, Startle.

Powers: Amazing Save (Damage) +5 [Source: Super Science; Cost: 1 pp; Total: 5 pp], Elasticity +6 [Extra: Protection; Source: Mutation; Cost: 5 pp; Total: 30 pp], Fatigue +10 [Flaw: Range (Touch); Source: Mutation; Cost: 1pp; Total: 10 pp], Natural Weapon +4 [Extra: Climbing; Source: Mutation; Cost: 3 pp; Total: 12 pp], Neutralize +10 [Flaw: Range (Touch); Source: Mutation; Cost: 1 pp; Total: 10 pp], Regenerate +5 [Extra: Regrowth; Source: Mutation; Cost: 3 pp; Total: 15pp], Super-Strength +4 [Source: Super Science; Cost: 3 pp; Total: 12 pp].

Weaknesses: Disturbing. Spasm's skin varies in consistency from a mucus-like film, like the skin of a tadpole, to a tough weave of strong, silky fibers. It frequently splits, seeps bloody fluid, and regrows. Like visceral serpents, his muscle tissue undulates, often visibly beneath the surface, cracking and re-knit his skeleton. Understandably, Spasm rarely shows his face, and cannot move about in public without illiciting screams of terror.

Unlucky. For whatever cosmic reason, Spasm is an incredible screw-up who often snatches defeat from the jaws of victory. His unique brand of reckless ignorance has led to an accidental self-electrocution on more than one occasion. How this misfortune manifests itself is left to the discretion of the Gamemaster.

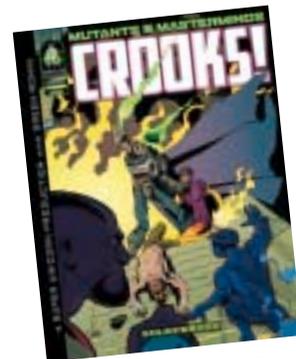
Vulnerable (electricity). Renard's bio-chemicals and numerous sports injuries have ravaged Spasm's nervous system. Many of his nerves are grotesquely enlarged and exposed, and while they carry a jellyfish-like sting, they are vulnerable to electrical surges. Spasm finds these attacks mind-numbingly painful and attempts to avoid heroes with any electrical motif or cybernetic powers.

CAPERS

Show Me the Muscle: Authorities have evidence that Nolly Pratt is seeding other professional sports with parahuman ringers. Heroes are brought in by the police, team owners, or even gambling interests to infiltrate a professional sports team without revealing their powers. Once their true nature is discovered, the heroes are set upon by athletic goons, using sports-related weapons and the Motif feat. Whether challenged on ice by hockey players with bladed sticks and explosive pucks or thrown onto the pitch with their hands in manacles to face an evil team of soccer players enhanced by Renard drugs, the players should find themselves out of their element. Signs inevitably point to Pratt and Renard, but by the time the heroes confront Spasm and mercenary allies (such as Player 2), the evidence will have been destroyed.

Zombie Super Villains Must Die! The Kevorkian Retreat*, a privately funded treatment center for parahuman sociopaths, is under a nightmarish siege. Drugs supplied by Renard Prochem to suppress super-powers have had apocalyptic side effects on the residents of the facility's morgue. Upon death, the chemicals act as a strange catalyst in the pineal gland. The cadavers rise as mindless zombies still wielding their parahuman abilities. After an unfortunate PR debacle, the heroes have been incarcerated, sans costumes and equipment, at the retreat. An obligatory power outage causes heroes' restraints and power suppression devices to fail, freeing them just as the zombies rise. This is a creepy opportunity for the heroes to confront villains and bystanders they have deliberately or accidentally slain. Another unfortunate side-effect of the Renard drug is the zombies' apparent subservience to recent guest Spasm and whatever allies he's recruited from the sanitarium patients.

*Calvin Kevorkian, son of the famous Dr. Jack Kevorkian, is a preminent authority on parahuman deviant psychology.



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