The Last Gasp: ***Reworking Stamina and Fatigue***

Fatigue Points can be a valuable aid to narrative, as every resource-management problem can be an opportunity for the GM and players to tell better stories. The choice between sleep/recovery and beating the villain to the MacGuffin can be very dramatic, and mighty powers limited by massive FP expenditures ensure they're used strategically rather than happhazardly.

However, the current ***GURPS*** rules are incredibly generous when it comes to recovering stamina; a wizard that nearly casts himself to unconsciousness is back in peak shape by time his buddies are done arguing over the loot. Additionally, the exhausting nature of life-or-death combat is poorly conveyed by the rules; a knight in plate and chain will lose only a sliver of his overall FP and recover it almost immediately.

The rules in this document are a more detailed look at fatigue, allowing finer distinctions between levels of exhaustion and making the expenditure (and recovery) of FP a more serious matter.

Long-Term Fatigue

"Regular" fatigue in ***GURPS*** as presented in the ***Basic Set*** is supposedly long-term fatigue, but there's very little long-term about it unless you work yourself to the point of losing HP. The term is used here to differentiate it from *short-term* fatigue, which is discussed later. To make fatigue meaningful, it needs to last longer and have more immediate consequences. Under these rules, spending FP should never be a trivial event.

Dividing Up the Pools

Rather than having one massive pool of FP and impairment from fatigue hitting like a ton of bricks at the 1/3xFP threshold, FP will be divided up into four separate pools, with penalties slowly growing as you spend from each pool.

Your first pool is your *Deep Fatigue* (DFP) pool, which is equal to your HT. Next is the *Costly Fatigue* (CFP) pool, which is equal to half your HT rounded up. After that is the *Available Fagitue* (AFP) pool, which is only 1 FP plus any extra FP you bought separately. Your remaining FP fall into your *Basic Fatigue* (BFP) pool.

Example: A Warrior with HT 11 and 14 FP starts with 11 DFP. His 14 FP are split into 6 CFP and 4 AFP. The remaining 4 FP are BFP.

These FP are spent in this order: Available, Basic, Costly, and Deep. If you forget the order, just look at the letters (ABCD)!

The Cost of Being Tired

You don't suffer any downsides for spending AFP. However, after spending any BFP, you're at -2 to all attributes: damage and Basic Lift decreases, skills drop by 2 (thus Parries drop by 1), -2 to both DX and HT means -1 to Basic Speed (thus reducing Basic Move and Dodge scores), Will and Per drop with IQ, and so on. Only max HP and FP are not reduced.

This penalty applies again and is cumulative when spending CFP or DFP. Thus, you're at -4 when you spend your first CFP, and when you start spending DFP, you're at -6 to all attributes. Additionally, for every point of DFP you spend or lose, you also lose 1 HP as your exhaustion starts to have potentially lethal consequences for you.

When all FP pools are empty, you suffer -10 to all attributes. Rather than forcing unconscioussness, this pushes all but the most desparate to rest rather than persist futilely.

Reducing Basic Lift is liable to make you more encumbered, lowering your effective movement more than the Basic Move reduction alone. Also, for extreme ST scores (large monsters, animals, munchkin barbarian PCs, etc.) replace the -2/-4/-6/-10 penalty to ST with -20%/-40%/-60%/-100%.

I Got Better

The base recovery time for fatigue is now 20 hours/maximum FP, rounded to the next 0.25 hours for ease of use. AFP and BFP recover at this rate while CFP take *four* times as long to recover and DFP takes *twelve* times as long!

Example: Our 14 FP warrior has a base recovery time of 20/14 hours per FP. This comes out to 1 hr 25 min, which we can round to 1.5 hours. He recovers 1 AFP/BFP every 1.5 hours, 1 CFP every 6 hours, and 1 DFP every 18 hours.

FP is recovered from each pool in the same order it is spent in. Quick-to-recover AFP and BFP are first, then CFP, and then lastly DFP. You shed the penalties for exhaustion when you've fully recovered that specific pool. Someone that burns through all their AFP, BFP, and CFP and spends some DFP is at -6. After a day or so of rest, they fully recover their AFP through CFP but are still missing some DFP, meaning they are still suffering a -2 to attributes but not the full -6.

Short-Term Fatigue

All-out thrashing leaves anyone breathless, and fights often have a natural rythm or ebb and flow to them as fighters clash in flurries of action before breaking into lulls as they split to catch their breath. This does not occur organically in ***GURPS***, and there is nothing to prevent or even discourage an almost berserker-like frenzied battle where combatants are constantly moving, attacking, or both.

Action Points

Resolving this requires a new resource for short-term stamina that is depleted and recovered on the scale of seconds. We will call these *Action Points* (AP). AP aims to make lulls and flurries arise organically in combat, to make conditioning matter, and to make exhausting your foe a viable strategy.

Your AP pool is equal to your HT score plus the relative level of your *best* combat or athletics skill.

Example: Our warrior's best combat skill is Broadsword, which he knows at DX+2. His AP pool is equal to 11 (his HT) + 2 (his best combat skill's relative level) for a total of 13.

Spending AP

AP is spent to perform actions in combat. You *cannot* ever go below 0 AP. If an action would put you into the negatives, you simply cannot do it (but see *Burning FP for AP*, below).

Attacking: Each attack costs 1 AP. Note that this is per attack, not per attack maneuver! If you use Rapid Strike or All-Out Attack (Double) to make two attacks as a single maneuver, it costs 2 AP. Feints, as fake attacks, also cost 1 AP.

Defending: Every active defense attempt also costs 1 AP, as do quick contests to resist things like grapples and feints. If your maneuver was All-Out Defense, though, your first active defense that round costs 0 AP.

Moving: Steps, either as part of a maneuver or as a retreat during an active defense, cost 1 AP. If you're covering more ground than a single Step, spending 2 AP lets you cover up to half your Move (rounded down) while 4 AP lets you cover your entire Move. If you are moving for multiple rounds in a row, you can maintain your pace for only 1 AP.

Readying: Ready actions cost 1 AP most of the time but only 0 AP for very minor movements. As a rule of thumb, moving around anything that weighs BL/10 or more costs 1 AP. Thus, drawing an arrow (0.1 lb.) or holstering a 1.5 lb. pocket pistol costs 0 AP for most people while drawing a 6 lb. sword usually costs 1 AP. As for attacking, this cost is per readying action, not per maneuver. Skills like Fast-Draw still cost 1 AP if the weapon's heavy enough.

Recovering AP

If you don't have enough AP to take an action, you need to back off and catch your breath. There are a few select maneuvers that allow you to recover AP.

Do Nothing: Roll HT+4 and recover AP equal to your margin of success (minimum 1, even on a failure or critical failure), up to your max.

Evaluate or Wait: In additional to Evaluate's normal effects, you can make an HT roll and recover AP equal to your margin of success as described above. Also, if you chose to Wait and the turn passed without you taking an action, recover AP in the same manner.

Losing AP

Getting hit can knock the wind out of you even if it doesn't floor your, KO you, or kill you outright. To represent this, getting injured costs you 1 AP for every HP you lose. For large HP scores of 20+, you instead lose 1 AP for every HP/10 you take in injury--no rapping on a giant's toe to exhaust him!

Additionally, due to how severe the rules for FP recovery are, replace the 1 FP/second loss for suffocation and strangulation with 1 AP/second. When forced to 0 AP through lack of air, each second thereafter, roll HT to avoid falling unconscious. If your airway if freed and you're not dead yet, you can roll HT-4 each turn to return to wake up, albeit stunned. All other rules for suffocation (p. B426) remain unchanged.

Other Actions

Basically, if it's not exhausting like an attack, defense, or movement nor truly passive like Evaluate or Do Nothing, the action neither costs nor recovers AP.

Spells and Abilities

By and large, powers, skills, and spells that cost FP and are meant to be combat-useful cost AP instead of FP at a rate of 10:1. This is most useful for cinematic martial arts skills and extra effort that cost 1 FP, though a skilled battle wizard can be a terror on the battlefield if they get their main spell down to only 1 FP.

Burning FP for AP

If you absolutely must spend AP (such as needing to dodge an incoming club to the face) but have 0 AP, you can burn 1 FP to recover AP equal to half your HT (not FP). If spending the FP would trigger new penalties, those take effect immediately. You may not burn FP unless you are at 0 AP currently or your intended action (usually movement) will take you to 0 or below.

AP and NPCs

In an effort to keep the GM sane, here is a simple, abstract system for tracking the AP of mooks and fodder (though players with combat Allies may also make use of it). At the beginning of the NPC's turn, roll 1d. On 1-5, the NPC takes their turn as normal, engaging with whatever tactics they normally would. On a 6, though, roll again. On a 1-2, he still acts normally. On a 3-4, he backs off to catch his breath (treat as Evaluating). On a 5-6, or if forced into a corner, he burns 1 FP and continues fighting.

Automata, Undead, and Other Unstoppables

Both sci-fi and fantasy include terrifying monsters that absolutely will not stop, ever, until you are dead. ***GURPS*** often handles creatures like these as having no FP score and treating it as a 0-point feature, since the creature is neither able to spend it on extra effort nor able to lose it to mundane exhaustion and require rest. It's not such a fair trade-off with AP, however, as it forces mere mortals to take regular rests even in stressful situations. For creatures like this, it is fair to charge an extra 25 points per point of AP and let them automatically recover to full at the end of their turn for free. This numbers-crunching can be safely ignored when making monsters, but keep it in mind if making an Enemy, Ally, Alternate Form, or PC template where points values need to be tracked.

Combining With Other Rules

GURPS thrives on its modularity, and in the spirit of that, a few other related rules are discussed here.

Last Gasp and LFP

GMs wanting a truly brutal experience should also include the rules for Long-Term Fatigue Points (LFP) from ***GURPS: After the End***, the series that focuses on post-apocalypse campagins and survival in unforgiving climes.

LFP, like regular FP, is divided between the four pools, affecting AFP first, then BFP, CFP, and DFP in turn. This can make even a few points of LFP dangerous; characters with small AFP pools can easily find themselves stuck with -2 to all attributes if they miss even a few meals or have to skimp on sleep.

Last Gasp and Conditional Injury

Conditional Injury (Pyramid #3/120) is an extensive rework to the injury system that replaces discrete hit points with conditions and statuses. For those wanting to combine this system with Last Gasp's approach to fatigue, you only need to make a few changes.

Firstly, instead of losing HP when spending from DFP, the character suffers an injury, treating his missing DFP as the attack's penetrating damage. For example, when a character that has already lost 4 DFP loses or spends another, he suffers as though he were struck for 5 damage, for a Wound Potential of 2.

Secondly, replace the rules with losing AP due to injury with the following:

> *At the end of every turn you are in pain, you lose 2 AP if in Mild Pain, 4 if in Moderate Pain, 8 if in Severe Pain, and a whopping 20 AP/turn if in Agony. In addition to their normal effects, High Pain Threshold halves the rate of loss while Low Pain Threshold doubles it. If driven to 0 AP through pain effects, you may need to burn FP just to gather the strength to limp or crawl away. Though after that you may also have to deal with penalties for FP loss...*