

Dr. Death is my name, survival is my game

By CAMILLE BROWN
Staff Writer

They always wear camouflage. During the week they dress in suits, blending in with their office environment. On weekends they wear fatigues to blend in with the greens, browns and blacks of the forest.

During the week they sit behind desks, on Sunday they crouch behind trees.

On the weekdays their game of survival begins with an alarm clock. Weekends the survival game begins with the blast of an airhorn.

As Houstonians go about their daily routines, adventurers are supplied with the equipment to let their imaginations run wild. Because on Sundays they play the Survival Game.

Armed with James Bond-style pistols loaded with plastic pellets of yellow paint, two teams of camouflaged men move off into the woods toward their home base.

Home base is where the team hangs the flag that the defensive team will protect, and the enemy attack squad will try to steal.

The horn sounds and the first game takes off.

Rush. Tension. Then quiet. The defense waits, the offense sneaks in.

The penalty for being loud, careless or obvious is a pelting with speeding paint bullets. When you're hit, you're "dead." The idea of such a sticky death is incentive enough to play the game with genuine effort.

Especially when the player is Dr. Death. Then the game becomes more than a Sunday jaunt through the woods.

His colleagues in the field of psychotherapy know him as Dr. James D. Kristian, a Houston hypnotherapist and psychotherapist. His buddies in the Survival Game call him Dr. Death.

He's an expert at team strategies, stealing flags and applying camouflage, but his biggest boast is the aim of his "007" paint gun. He's got "89 kills" and every player knows it. And he's out to get No. 90. Dr. Death shows no mercy when the paint starts flying.

On defense, Dr. Death lurks behind trees waiting to pounce on un-

suspecting enemies. The red rag (their flag) he is protecting hangs on a wire about 20 yards away.

The blue offense gallops toward red territory for the first few minutes, but as they get closer to red ground they grow cautious. They hide behind trees, crouch along creek banks and slither along under the brush... waiting, listening for any movement.

A judge walks by, his bright orange shirt blaring, "DON'T SHOOT THE JUDGE."

If you shoot the judge, you're out. It's like spitting on a policeman.

The judge plays God. They decide questions of death — was it a direct hit or was it a mere splatter? They send the dead to neutral grounds, the purgatory of the Survival Game, to wait until the winning team has been decided.

Blue offense spots the red flag, they charge knowing full well that they are sitting ducks. Somehow they make it back to their home base with the prize. They win. Game over.

The "dead" people wait for the lucky ones to emerge from the battle ground so they can start the next game.

"Did you get anybody?"
"Naa — wounded Dr. Death, though."

"I knew ya'll were gonna charge in like that for the flag, but it was four of ya'll against three of us."

"Blue's defense was tough — we couldn't get near their flag."

"I got two kills before I got hit. My damn gun got clogged though."

The rest of the two teams wander in, exchanging pats on the back and examining each others wounds. Some players return with yellow paint dripping from their ears and coating their hair. It looks like an epidemic of jaundice has broken out; this strain of the disease is cured with a little soap and water.

Dr. Death complains that in spite of his attempts he still lacks one kill to reach his goal of 90. The next best thing — a challenge. Dr. Death calls for some brave soul to duel with him.



Photo by CAMILLE BROWN

Dr. James D. Kristian, alias Dr. Death still can smile after receiving a direct hit in the face with a paint pellet. Kristian is

a Houston hypnotherapist and psychotherapist. Kristian received his "wound" during a mock duel.

Death is confident, if not cocky about his anticipated victory. His op-

ponent is puny, no threat at all. Back-to-back, the two march 15 steps away, turn and fire. The chal-

lenger coolly smacks Death right in the mustache, without even flinching.

You almost expected the victor to blow the smoke from the end of his gun. Another legend is born.

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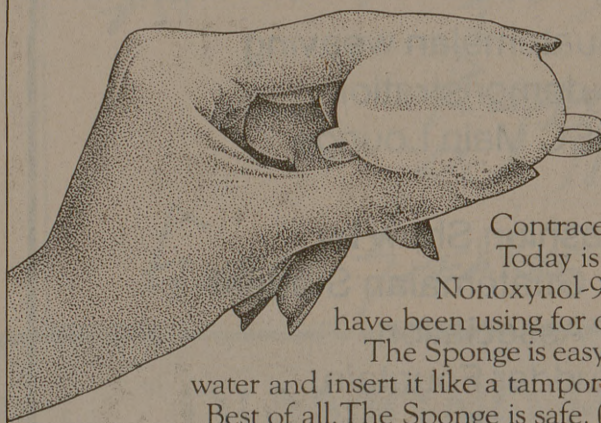
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