

PLAYING MINOTAURS

by Robert J. Schwalb

illustrations by Ryan Barger and Marc Sasso

MINOTAURS EMBODY the tension between civilization and savagery—discipline and madness—because the minotaurs stand in two worlds. Tugged toward wanton violence but bound by conscience, numerous minotaurs are driven to rise above their dark impulses. Such a minotaur walks the labyrinthine pathways of introspection, seeking the balance between the monstrous and refined. Like a deadly maze, this personal journey has hazards and traps aplenty. Innumerable minotaurs succumb to the wicked temptations staining their souls, whereupon they find themselves thralls to the dread Baphomet, the Horned King. Minotaurs must struggle to become more than the beasts they resemble or succumb to demonic brutality.

Play a minotaur if you want . . .

- ♦ to be a mighty warrior possessed of incredible strength and endurance.
- ♦ to be a monstrous adventurer struggling against villainous tendencies.
- ♦ to be a member of a race that favors the barbarian, fighter, and warden classes.



RACIAL TRAITS

Average Height: 7' 1" - 7' 5"
Average Weight: 320–350 lb.

Ability Scores: +2 Strength, +2 Constitution
Size: Medium
Speed: 6 squares
Vision: Normal

Languages: Common

Skill Bonuses: +2 Nature, +2 Perception

Ferocity: If you are reduced to 0 or fewer hit points, you can make a melee basic attack before falling unconscious.

Heedless Charge: You gain a +2 racial bonus to AC against opportunity attacks you provoke during a charge.

Goring Charge: You can use *goring charge* as an encounter power.

Goring Charge**Minotaur Racial Power**

You charge the enemy and gore it with your horns.

Encounter

Standard Action **Melee 1**

Requirement: You must charge and use this power in place of a melee basic attack.

Target: One creature

Attack: Strength + 4 vs. AC

Increase to +6 at 11th level, +8 at 21st level.

Hit: 1d6 + Strength modifier damage, and the target is knocked prone.

Increase the damage to 2d6 + Strength modifier at 11th level and 3d6 + Strength modifier at 21st level.

PHYSICAL QUALITIES

Minotaurs combine the features of human and bull, having the build and musculature of a hulking humanoid, but with the cloven hooves, a bovine tail, and, their most distinctive feature of all, a bull's head. Fur covers their upper bodies, coarse and thick on their heads and necks, and it gradually thins around their shoulders until it becomes normal hair over their arms and upper torso. The thick hair turns shaggy once more at the waist and thickens around their loins and

legs, with tufts at the end of their tails and around their powerful hooves. Minotaurs take pride in their horns, and sharpness, size, and color speak to the minotaur's power and place within its society. Fur and skin coloring runs from albino white to coal black, and everything between, though most have red or brown fur and hair, with lighter tones underneath.

Labyrinthine patterns are important to minotaurs and such decoration appears on minotaur clothing, armor, weapons, and sometimes, on their hides. Each pattern is particular to a clan, and its size and complexity helps minotaurs identify family allegiance and caste. The patterns evolve through the generations, growing more expansive based on its members' deeds and the clan's history, each knot remarking on a signature event. Minotaurs live as long as humans do.

PLAYING A MINOTAUR

The minotaurs' preference for labyrinths is legendary, but their connection to mazes is more than a quirk. It is central to their beliefs and how they see the world around them. The labyrinth is the physical representation of the spiritual and psychological journey each minotaur must undertake to make peace with its conflicted nature.

Each minotaur must navigate the perils of the self to transcend bestial impulses. One minotaur might achieve this easily. Another might wander the corridors of his or her mind and soul for an entire lifetime, trapped within the circuitous passages of self-deception and monstrous desires. Those who fail might descend into depravity, becoming the thralls of the Horned King, whose presence darkens every minotaur community like a looming specter.

Minotaur society is similarly complex, stratified into discrete, merit-based castes. A minotaur can move in social rank through aptitude, as well as great deeds or terrible crimes. Among civilized minotaurs, duty and traditions reinforce the caste



structure. Social class is a restriction and a weapon among corrupted minotaurs.

Priests occupy the highest caste. Minotaurs look to holy ones for leadership, so priests command the respect and accord of all the people. They define laws, pass judgment, and keep histories and traditions. The caste can include a variety of mystics, shamans, holy warriors, and clerics. Minotaurs who have escaped Baphomet's depravity look to priests professing faith in Erathis, Moradin, Pelor, and Bahamut, or some subset of these. Cabalists spread Baphomet's wickedness among the minotaur settlements under their control.

Although the priest caste holds the greatest power and influence, the warrior caste is very powerful.

Battle prowess a high ideal, and many minotaurs strive to master combat training and join the warrior caste. To wield a weapon with skill is important, but to know when to use a weapon is of far greater value. Minotaurs who revere the gods also admire discipline and the judicious use of battle prowess. For Baphomet's minotaurs, weapon skill is a tool for acquiring power and defiling the world.

Artisans, scholars, hedge mages, and other skilled workers form the commoner caste of minotaur society. Beneath these are the slaves. In civilized communities, the slave caste consists the corrupted and the criminal. Evil minotaur societies enslave any whom they conquer, and any slave can be sacrificed to Baphomet at any moment.

Magicians, such as wizards, defy the norm in minotaur culture. One wizard might have only enough skill to be considered a commoner, while another mage is considered a warrior for her great destructive power. A highly educated and pious mage could even be considered a priest.

Station informs a minotaur's outlook. Even those who leave their secluded communities find it hard to escape caste expectations. A minotaur adventurer might show deference to a priest. Similarly, minotaur rogues and other ne'er-do-wells might affect meekness around those whom they see as their betters.

Though many minotaurs are civilized, they suffer suspicion and hatred from other races. Animosity stems not only from monstrous appearance, but also from infamy. Wicked minotaurs are remorseless raiders and killers, and these are often the only minotaurs known in a given area.

Minotaur Characteristics: Bloodthirsty, cruel, disciplined, enlightened, frustrated, militant, mystical, polite, savage, spiritual, tortured

Male Minotaur Names: Asteron, Bjorkus, Codrus, Foostus, Goeban, Jak, Minron, Noostoron, Podrus, Terios

Female Minotaur Names: Duula, Esteru, Hester, Kuonu, Loodra, Oestra, Raastred, Seestra, Uovana, Weoren

MINOTAUR ADVENTURERS

Rare is the minotaur who leaves its hidden society to seek a life of adventure. Such minotaurs might abandon their homelands to right a wrong, flee a crime, or escape the clutches of Baphomet's cultists. Three sample minotaur adventurers are described below.

Bjorkus is a minotaur barbarian who broke free from a clan in the thrall of demon worship. Having watched his loved ones give into the cabalists' filthy promises, he witnessed his home's serenity collapse into violence and mayhem. Upon escaping, he vowed he would fight Baphomet. One day, Bjorkus hopes to return to purify his people and remove the burden of corruption from their souls.

Esteru is a minotaur paladin of Erathis in search of spiritual enlightenment. Unable to understand why people fear her, she is curious about other cultures. She understands she has an odd appearance, but how she looks outside has nothing to do with the purity of her heart. She is eloquent and has unimpeachable manners, confounding those she meets with the disparity of her appearance with her bearing.

Jak is a minotaur fighter. A young warrior filled with dreams of honor and glory, he set out to hone his fighting talents. One day, he hopes to return to his homeland and claim his place as a member of the warrior caste. He has an almost mystical connection with his weapons, spending long hours in quiet contemplation of minotaur fighting techniques—when he's not studying the fighting forms of those he meets.

MINOTAUR ORIGIN

Civilization's wreckage litters the world, and in these ruins, one can divine the secrets of fallen empires that even time has forgotten. The empire of Ruul is one of these lost civilizations, brought low through moral corruption. Minotaurs once tamed themselves and Ruul's lands. Evil shattered all they created.

The demon lord Baphomet was once a great primordial with strong ties to the natural world. He can rightly claim minotaurs, for it is he who raised them as soldiers to claim nature for him in place of Melora, his most hated deific foe. In the Dawn War, minotaurs fought against the gods on the side of Baphomet. But Baphomet was defeated. One myth says the Horned King hurled himself into the Abyss rather than face the final judgment of the gods.

In defeat, minotaurs were without direction in the world. Acting quicker than Melora, Erathis claimed the minotaurs for herself, teaching them language and law. She called on Moradin to instruct them in crafts. In the name of their new guardians, minotaurs founded the city of Ruul on a southern archipelago.

From its first founding, Ruul was destined for greatness. Erathis blessed Ruul's people, and they benefited from a close kinship with the lord of artisans. Legends hold that Erathis's servants walked among the minotaurs of Ruul, advising them and giving them the tools they needed to spread across the islands and beyond.

Baphomet, however, endured in the Abyss. Numerous minotaurs, in Ruul and elsewhere, still revered the Horned King and could feel his influence on their souls. Eventually, Baphomet responded to their rites. He offered unbridled freedom and conquest. Corruption wormed its way into Erathis's grand experiment.

Cultists of Baphomet secretly influenced Ruul's policies. What began as Ruul's peaceful expansion became an adventure of subjugation. The folk of Ruul became cruel. They spread their beliefs by fire and



sword, slaughtering those who stood against them and enslaving the rest.

Although some minotaurs clung to the ways of the gods, wealth and conquest blinded most of Ruul's folk to their traditions. As Ruul swelled in size, it also swelled in corruption. Decadent nobles committed unholy acts in the darkness of their homes. False priests spread through the land, inviting others into mysteries best left alone or put to the sword. Baphomet's blood cults rose, poisoning the civilization with their wickedness. Eventually, the Horned King became the spiritual master of Ruul, his followers bold enough to show themselves in the streets. Conquest quickly turned to desecration.

Its fall complete, Ruul's wickedness was something the gods could no longer abide. With Erathis's allowance, Melora visited volcanic devastation on Ruul. Kord aided her with storms the likes of which the southern seas have not again seen. In the end, Ruul was no more. Its center destroyed, the empire's remnant fell into civil war and eventual dissolution. Its survivors—some of whom, for their loyalty to the gods, received warning—scattered across the world.

Minotaurs developed an abiding fear of divine reprisals and a passionate attitude—love or hate—toward the world's deities. Although the destruction drove countless minotaurs to serve Baphomet more fervently, it made others repent or continue to serve the gods with more zeal. In the early days after Ruul's fall, even good-hearted minotaurs held the empire's destruction against Melora and Kord. They revered the old gods of their people, Erathis and Moradin, and took up allegiance with Pelor and Bahamut to guard them against the reemergence of iniquity. In time, these preferences became traditions.

Minotaurs are products of a tragic history. Ruul's bones are scattered on a volcanic archipelago in the southern seas, and across the world. Baphomet's bloodlust and butchery run in minotaurs' veins, a tainted birthright. But a similar yet righteous ardor allows some to hold to civilization and better ways.

RACIAL FEATS

Minotaurs have lots of options to play up racial traits.

HEROIC TIER FEATS

The following feats are available to a character of any level who meets the prerequisites.

GORING SHOVE [MINOTAUR]

Prerequisites: Strength 15, minotaur, *goring charge* racial power

Benefit: When you hit with *goring charge*, you can also push the target 1 square.

GREATHORN [MINOTAUR]

Prerequisites: Minotaur, *goring charge* racial power

Benefit: The damage dice from your *goring charge* attack increases from d6s to d8s.

NATURAL CUNNING [MINOTAUR]

Prerequisite: Minotaur

Benefit: You gain a +3 feat bonus to Perception checks and to checks made to avoid becoming lost, such as Intelligence checks made against a *maze* spell.

OPPORTUNITY GORE [MINOTAUR]

Prerequisites: Minotaur, *goring charge* racial power

Benefit: Whenever you make an opportunity attack, instead of making the usual melee basic attack, you can use your *goring charge* racial power without expending it, even if you have used it this encounter. When you do so, you ignore the power's requirement and action type, and your target is the creature that triggered the opportunity attack.

PARAGON TIER FEATS

The following feats are available to a character of 11th level or higher who meets the prerequisites.



BEAST WITHIN [MINOTAUR]

Prerequisites: Minotaur, ferocity racial feature

Benefit: While you are bloodied, you gain +1 bonus to attack and damage rolls.

BLOODY GORE [MINOTAUR]

Prerequisites: Minotaur, *goring charge* racial power

Benefit: Whenever you are first bloodied in an encounter, you recharge your *goring charge* racial power.

BRUTAL FEROCITY [MINOTAUR]

Prerequisites: Minotaur, ferocity racial feature

Benefit: When reduced to 0 or fewer hit points, you can use an at-will attack power in place of the usual melee basic attack.

EPIC TIER FEAT

The following feat is available to a character of 21st level or higher who meets the prerequisites.

UNCANNY SCENT [MINOTAUR]

Prerequisites: Wisdom 17 or trained in Perception, minotaur

Benefit: Creatures within 2 squares of you gain no benefit from concealment or total concealment against you, and invisible creatures within 2 squares of you are effectively visible to you.

PARAGON PATHS

The following paragon paths are exclusive to minotaurs.

BEASTBLOODED MINOTAUR

"Beast? Me? You haven't seen anything yet!"

Prerequisite: Minotaur

The fury of Baphomet is at the root of your people's creation. His demonic rage is still connected to you and yours, giving strength. In your line of work, the allure of increased might is a temptation too great to resist. You learned to tap hatred and wrath to lay your enemies low. Fury is your friend when steel rings, and the cries of the wounded and dying fill the air. The grim majesty of combat quickens your minotaur soul. What began as your hesitant step in the direction of savagery has become a full run toward your inner beast. You refuse to pay homage to Baphomet, but you don't turn away from his gifts. Why should you, when you can use the demon lord's own weapons against him? Still, the desire to kill sometimes threatens to overwhelm you. Your body ripples with power, and you become more beastly as time passes. Should you question the wisdom of your decision?

BEASTBLOODED MINOTAUR PATH FEATURES

Beastly Action (11th level): Immediately after you spend an action point to take an extra action, you can charge as a free action.

Bloodied Outburst (11th level): Whenever you are first bloodied in an encounter, you can make a melee basic attack against an adjacent enemy as a free action.

Savage Apotheosis (16th level): Your speed increases by 2 and your reach increases by 1.

BEASTBLOODED MINOTAUR POWERS

Sweeping Gore Beastblooded Minotaur Attack 11

You catch your foe on your horns and toss it out of the way.

Encounter

Standard Action Melee 1

Requirement: You must charge and use this power in place of a melee basic attack.

Target: One creature

Attack: Strength + 6 vs. AC

Increase to Strength + 8 at 21st level.

Hit: 2d10 + Strength modifier damage, and the target slides 2 squares.

Thrashing Horns Beastblooded Minotaur Utility 12

You swing your horns in a deadly arc, catching those who are off their guard.

Daily ♦ Stance

Minor Action Personal

Effect: Whenever you hit an enemy with an opportunity attack, you deal an additional 1d6 damage and push the target 1 square.

Giant's Sweep Beastblooded Minotaur Attack 20

With a vicious sweep of your weapon, you drive your foes down before you.

Daily ♦ Weapon

Standard Action Close blast 2

Target: Each creature in blast

Attack: Strength vs. AC

Hit: 2[W] + Strength modifier damage, the target is pushed 2 squares and knocked prone.

Miss: Half damage, and the target is pushed 2 squares, but is not knocked prone.

HORNED CHAMPION

"I do what I was made to do, for the causes I choose."

Prerequisites: Minotaur, defender or striker role

Your skill and discipline in battle have launched you into the warrior caste of minotaur society. By

mastering your natural weapons and your other combat skills, you have transformed yourself into a living weapon. In searching yourself, you have melded opposing spiritual forces into a finely honed machine of war. The thrill of the fight flows through you, but you temper the impulse to give in to savagery. You know that a tainted body, mind, and soul wait at the end of that road. To you, every contest challenges your resolve and focuses your mind toward absolute control over yourself and your situation.

HORNED CHAMPION PATH FEATURES

Vigorous Action (11th level): When you spend an action point to make an attack while bloodied, you gain temporary hit points equal to your Constitution score.

Aggressive Resurgence (11th level): When you use your second wind, you can forgo the defense bonus and regain no hit points. If you do, you instead-recharge your *goring charge* racial power, and you gain a +2 bonus to attack and damage rolls until the end of your next turn.

Never Say Die (16th level): When you are reduced to 0 or fewer hit points, you are dying but do not fall unconscious. If the result of death saving throw you make is 10 or lower, you fall unconscious. You still die if reduced to your bloodied value expressed as a negative number.

HORNED CHAMPION POWERS

Follow-up Gore Horned Champion Attack 11

You unbalance your foe with a weapon strike, leaving the enemy open to a ferocious gore.

Encounter ♦ Weapon

Standard Action Melee 1

Primary Target: One creature

Attack: Strength vs. AC

Hit: 1 [W] + 2d6 + Strength modifier damage, the target slides 1 square and is knocked prone.

Bloodthirsty Shift Horned Champion Utility 12*Not content with one victim, you spring forward to engage the next.***Encounter****Free Action** Personal**Trigger:** You reduce an enemy to 0 hit points**Effect:** You can shift your speed if your movement ends in a space adjacent to an enemy.**Driving Gore** Horned Champion Attack 20*With a brutal swing of your horns, you knock your enemy back and down . . . just where you want it.***Daily****Standard Action** Melee 1**Requirement:** You must charge and use this power in place of a melee basic attack.**Target:** One creature**Attack:** Strength + 8 vs. AC**Hit:** 5d6 + Strength modifier damage, the target slides 4 squares and is knocked prone.**Miss:** Half damage, and the target slides 2 squares.

MINOTAUR KINSPEAKER

*“Ancestors! Hear our need, and come forth to aid our cause!”***Prerequisites:** Minotaur, leader role

Each generation leaves behind the ashes of the old, but the spirits of the past live on for those with the eyes to see them and the ears to hear them. You dwell in two worlds, opening your inner awareness to look upon death and tease out its secrets. You commune with these spirits, seeking out their advice and divining solutions to your troubles by solving their riddles. Their signs are everywhere—even in the omens you see and the portents you dream.

MINOTAUR KINSPEAKER PATH FEATURES

Ancestral Allies (11th level): Ancestor spirits swirl around you. When you hit an enemy with an opportunity attack, the target grants combat advantage to you and your allies until the end of your next turn.

Counseled Action (11th level): When you spend an action point to take an extra action, each ally that can see and hear you can reroll all failed skill checks until the end of your next turn. The ally must keep the second result.

Lend Spiritual Aid (16th level): When an ally within 5 squares of you that can see and hear you spends an action point to make an attack, that ally gains concealment until the end of your next turn.

MINOTAUR KINSPEAKER POWERS

Unleashed Beast Minotaur Kinspeaker Attack 11*An ancestor spirits awaken violence in your allies.***Encounter****Standard Action** Ranged 10**Target:** One ally**Effect:** The ally makes a basic attack. If this attack hits, the ally gains resist 10 all until the end of your next turn.**Ancestral Congress** Minotaur Kinspeaker Utility 12*Ghostly forms mutter and wail as they swirl about you.***Daily** ♦ Fear, Stance**Minor Action** Personal**Effect:** You and all adjacent allies gain concealment. If an enemy ends its turn adjacent to you, you can slide that foe 1 square.**Ancestral Possession** Minotaur Kinspeaker Attack 20*A ghostly form streaks from you to plunge into your foe's body.***Daily** ♦ Psychic, Reliable**Standard Action** Close blast 5**Target:** One creature**Attack:** Wisdom + 6 vs. Will or Charisma + 6 vs. Will**Hit:** 2d8 + Wisdom modifier or Charisma modifier psychic damage, and the target is dominated (save ends). ☞

MINOTAURS IN YOUR GAME

In the *DUNGEONS & DRAGONS*® world, minotaurs offer players interesting roleplaying opportunities. Although playing the tough, bullheaded warrior can be literal with minotaurs, players can also explore the tug of good and evil that shapes minotaur existence. Baphomet created minotaurs, and his depravity wriggles in the dark places of every minotaur soul. The demon lord is unrelenting in trying to bend all minotaurs to his will. Further, minotaurs have a cruel reputation and unmistakable look, so prejudice and curiosity from others could be issues. Villains might try to use a minotaur for evil ends.

Consider how the minotaurs fit in your game world. Are they as presented here—ancient beings caught between the divine and the demonic? Perhaps Melora created the minotaurs, and Baphomet corrupted them in his desire to usurp the goddess's power. Uncorrupted minotaurs might have turned away from Melora because she abandoned them to Baphomet's depredations. Maybe the rise of right-thinking minotaurs is recent, emphasizing most minotaurs as antagonists. If you prefer to mostly exclude minotaurs from your world, a particular minotaur PC could be cursed, seeking a way to restore his or her natural form.

About the Author

Robert J. Schwalb is a freelance game designer for Wizards of the Coast, and he has contributed design to the *FORGOTTEN REALMS*® *Player's Guide*, *Draconomicon*™: *Chromatic Dragons*, *Manual of the Planes*™, *Martial Power*™, *Demon Queen's Enclave*™, *Player's Handbook*® 2, and numerous articles for *D&D*® *Insider*. Robert lives in Tennessee with his lovely wife Stacey and a herd of feral insectoid half-dragon cats.

Robert dedicates this article to Joe Quarles. “You’re the only guy I know who would suffer through six racial levels to play a minotaur. Joe, this one’s for you.”