

BLOOD BOWL

Extra Time

The thrilling climax to Issue 16's match report

By David Candlish and Paul Gegg

Jim: And we're back after that short commercial break. I don't know about you Bob but I don't think there's any better way to watch sudden death overtime than with a nice, ice cold Bloodweiser, don't you agree?

Bob: I sure do Jim, and I'm sure the folks at home do too. Those players look exhausted but I'm sure that they'll all battle on regardless.

Jim: I bet they will too Bob. Just look at that, Varag is STILL trying to reach Griff even though the match has been paused! It's taking both of those Ogre match officials just to hold him back! The referee had better restart this game soon!

Bob: But until he does Jim I'll recap the events so far for the benefits of those viewers at home...

In issue 16 we brought you a match report between rivals of olde – Orcs and Humans. Legendary Griff Oberwald led the Neuberg Magpies onto the field to play the Trolltooth X-Press, captained by the awesome Varag Ghou-Chewer.

Griff failed to warm up at all and quad-skulled his first block. The Orc joy was short-lived as the Magpies still took an early lead and subsequently turned the Orcs' offence over to end the first half 2-0 up. The second half saw a spirited comeback by the X-Press and some fairly extra-ordinary behaviour from the Black Orcs which eventually resulted in a last second miracle equaliser and extra-time. Bloodbowl; don't you just love it? Rather surprisingly, the Magpies have managed an impressive four casualties to date, but they did have a man sent off after a dubious foul in the dying seconds. As we join it, there are seven green skins (and one blue troll) on the pitch against nine men and Griff. The numerical superiority enjoyed by the Humans could well prove decisive.

Neither team has any re-rolls left so expect cagey, defensive play as they try and score without giving away a chance to concede one themselves. Whoever wins the toss for kick off will almost certainly receive, placing the initiative firmly in their hands.

Just to recap, here are the squads again.

NEUBERG MAGPIES

Coach: David Candlish

1. Griff Oberwald, Star Player – *Has played well, but by no means his best ever performance*
2. Josef Wilhelm, Lineman – *Average performance from an average player*
8. Waffe Enckelman, Catcher – *Scored the first touchdown and fouled Varag out for most of the 1st half*
9. Stefan Spangler, Blitzer – *Has been useful, but not exceptional*
10. Falk Eberhardt, Blitzer – *Outstanding performance – a casualty machine*
11. Weber Brendis, Blitzer – *Gritty & determined showing from the youngster*
12. Albert Zerhacker, Catcher – *Scored 2nd touchdown*
13. Ulrich Valdemar, Blitzer – *Spent most of the match nursing a sore head*
15. Ben Ardal, Thrower – *Woeful ball handling, but otherwise a decent performance*
16. Wagner Lindeberg, Thrower – *A good game so far, barring the failed long pass that let in the equaliser*

Sent Off

3. Alvar Wilhelm, Lineman – *An unfortunate sending off ended an uninspiring appearance from the veteran player*

TROLLTOOTH X-PRESS

Coach: Paul Gegg

1. Varag Ghou-Chewer, Star Player – *Outplayed by Griff Oberwald. No positive contribution*
2. Oknar Halfblade, Thrower – *Two touchdown passes, one to a black orc!*
3. Zark the Mindless, Troll – *Played poorly, caused no casualties or KOs*
6. Azhug the Assassin, Blitzer – *Pushed Griff into the crowd but Oberwald's fans simply stroked his pigeon. Key contributor for 2nd touchdown.*
7. Urg Tuskface, Black Orc – *Average performance, but not causing the casualties he is famed for*
8. Gruk Spinecrusher, Black Orc – *'The Amazing Dodging Black Orc™'*
9. Splut Blackscar, Black Orc – *Terrific play to score the first Touchdown. Rumour has it the Elfheim Eagles want him for his unusual agility*
16. Hocus Bigfoot, Lineorc – *Star of the future – scored the equaliser in the dying seconds*

Injuries

4. Gulash Sorestain, Blitzer – *Injured by Griff Oberwald*
5. Karguk Tonguepuller, Blitzer – *Injured by Falk Eberhardt*
11. Filfus Bluebottle, Goblin – *Injured by Griff Oberwald*
12. Sputum Skuttlestuff, Goblin – *Injured by Falk Eberhardt*

Paul: Ever since I started using Black Orcs as possible receivers in the second half, my luck has been terrific and the run of luck continues with me winning the toss for possession. I rather obviously elect to receive. With lots of space for Griff to run riot, I'm not confident about ball-retention, but at least I should get the first blocks in of the period and that could mean that we are back to some sort of parity soon. The Orcs have yet to force one Magpie off the pitch permanently and unless that changes very quickly, the comeback is going to end in tears. A slight change in the wind is all that greets the re-start.

ORC TURN ONE

I have only two players with the Block skill, no rerolls and have to roll for Bonehead (at the very least) for the troll every turn to do anything so against superior numbers I feel a cage in the middle of the pitch will just get bogged down, or worse, crumble. And once I lose possession, this game will be over. I feel I need a decoy to take Griff away from my ball-carrier's cage.

On the re-start, I waste no time in sending Varag downfield. As the only greenskin on the team with a possible re-roll (Pro, anyone?), as well as ST4 and block, he is my best chance of an eligible receiver. The Magpies will have to cover him, and that means Griff and at least one other, allowing me to start rolling up the other side of the pitch. Hopefully.

Varag blitzes Ben Ardal and pro's the double pushback, knocking out the poor sap. Almost back to even numbers. Halfblade picks up the short kick and already is more or less protected by the line of scrimmage. Still, the Orcs that are free of tackle zones set up a screen in front of him. I block only with those that I can afford to see down but fail to cause any more damage. Although necessarily alone on my right flank, Varag is looking a little precarious. Otherwise I'm happy.

HUMAN TURN ONE

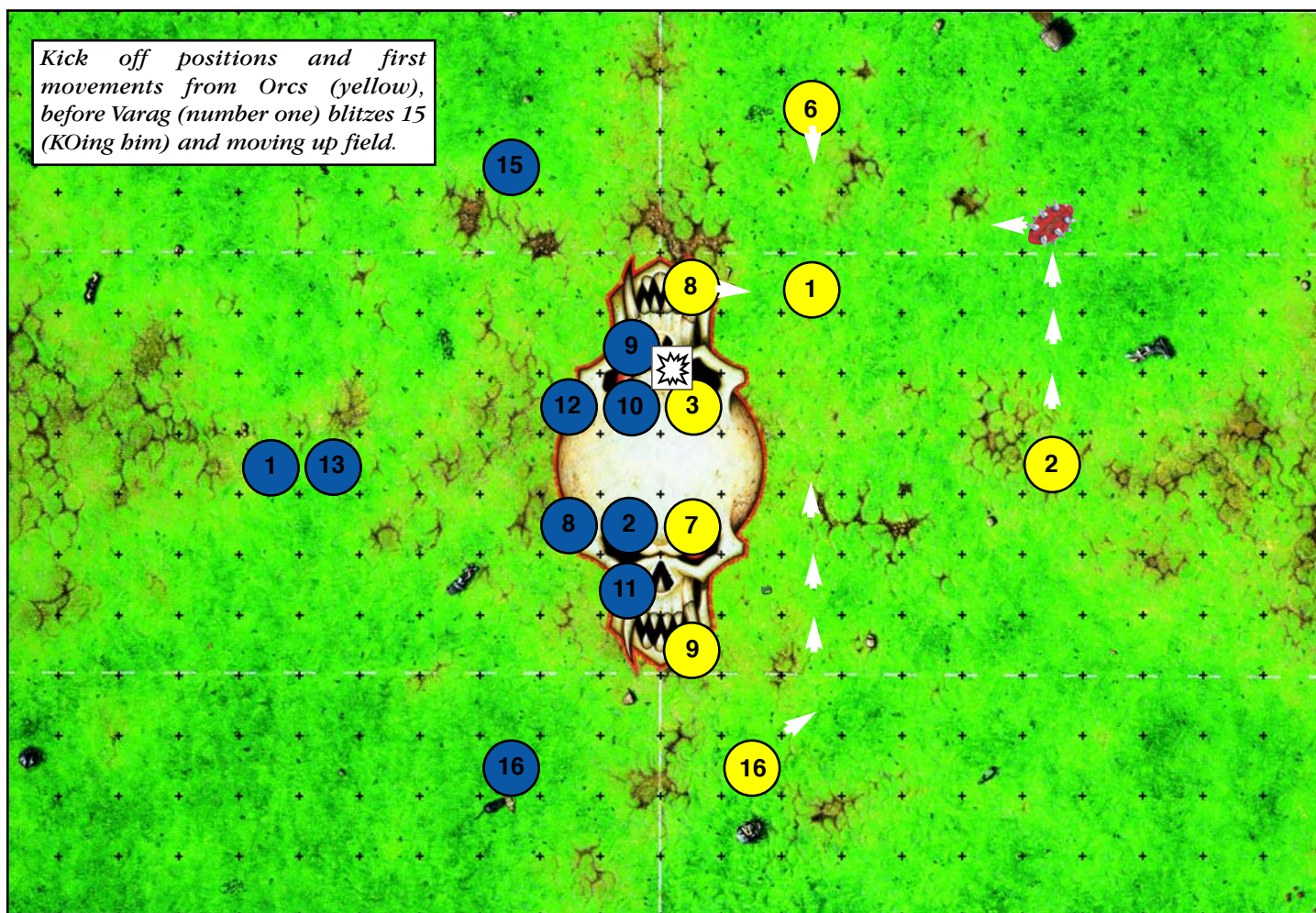
David: The outcome of the Orc blocking on the Line of Scrimmage was better than I had hoped with only one guy knocked down. Varag knocking out Ardal was unfortunate but he's now all alone and unprotected on my left flank. It looks to me like Varag is attempting to blitz his way to my endzone, but with the weight of numbers I have, I'm confident I can stop him. After moving Stefan Spangler to assist, Griff blitzes Varag and sends the monster crashing to the ground, albeit without injury. Falk Eberhardt topples the troll although he wasn't hurt either. With all my other players tied up, I have only one option left open to me; foul Varag!

Although it had worked once in the first half, I am conscious of the fact that if I'm sent off I'll be reduced to 8 men and, rather worryingly, lose the numeric advantage. However, it's just too tempting and Albert Zerhacker elbow-drops onto the Orc captain with two assists and knocks him out. Great stuff! What's more, Albert protests his innocence so vehemently the ref lets the foul pass without incident! The Trolltooth Star is off the pitch and my confidence soars!

ORC TURN TWO

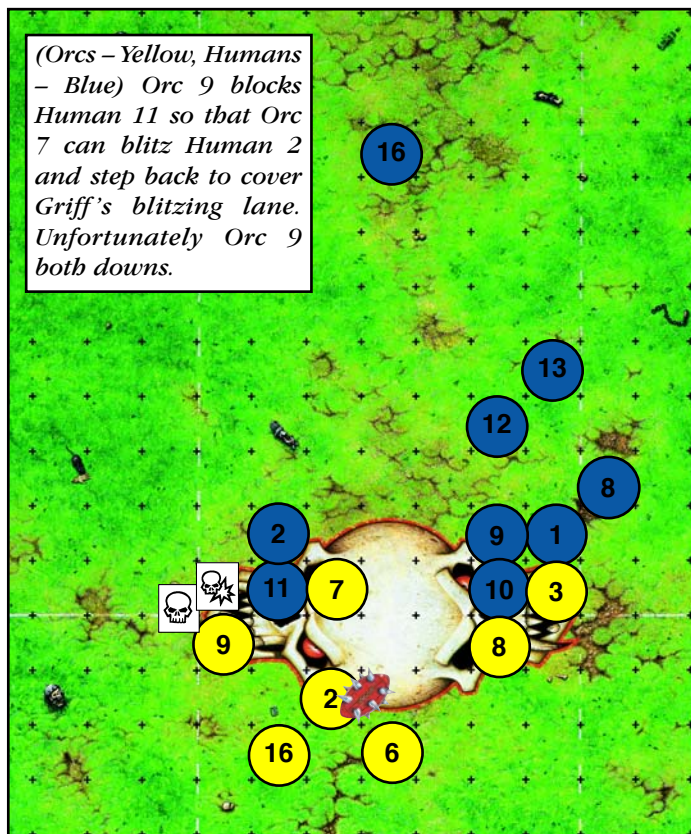
Paul: I sense I've just lost the game. Varag was going downfield to take the pressure away from the cage. Griff would have been tied up by the Orc Legend allowing me to create advantages elsewhere.

But it's backfired. Not only have I lost Varag for good, but next turn I can expect Griff to start worrying my ball-carrier. I'm short of ideas other than that I need to create a cage immediately and wait for something to go wrong with the Magpies defence. One of the cornermen I need for my cage, Black Orc Blackscar, is already in a tackle-zone at the line of scrimmage. I can't expect him to dodge out (again) so Halfblade runs up to a square roughly diagonally behind him.



The rest of the cage take up their places ready for Blackscar to push blitzer Weber Brendis away. If he can knock the pompous Brendis onto his posterior, then my only other available Black Orc, Tuskface, can blitz Wilhelm and then step back to fill up the last corner of the cage.

However, a double both down and my ball carrier will be very vulnerable. All game long I've decided against black Orc blocks when my position would be compromised by the both down. I've been forced into it here and lo and behold, double both down. Well, I say both down, Brendis stands their dusting off his shoulderpad.



Blackscar is okay for now but with his coach making throat-slitting gestures on the sideline, it might only be temporary. Griff will easily fashion a direct path to blitz my ball-carrier. I'm about to lose possession.

It's only now that I realise that I didn't roll for Zark to stand up. He's languishing on the floor, too stupid to even roll the dice. I've fallen foul of one of the unwritten rules of the game - "Make the free and easy plays first" (not very catchy, but you get the idea).

HUMAN TURN TWO

David: Paul not standing his Troll up before blocking is a rookie error, although perhaps understandable given the pressure and tension in the room! I am now in an ideal position to capitalise on his turnover and can see a route through for Griff to blitz the ball carrier. Falk Eberhardt blocks Spinecrusher on my left flank and successfully takes him down, clearing the path. Wasting no time, Griff races through and lands a crushing blow on the Trolltooth thrower, although the plucky Orc avoids the brunt of the impact and staggers back between his team mates. To finish my turn Weber Brendis has a cheeky one dice block on Black Orc Tuskface stunning him. This leaves only three Orc players standing and all of their blockers wallowing in the mud.

ORC TURN THREE

Paul: I've somehow still got the ball. But my troll and the black Orcs are all on floor and Griff is standing next to Halfblade. The troll remains prone on the floor but at least



this time I actually remembered to roll for him! I have no downfield outlets and it's all I can do to push Griff away from my ball-carrier. With no one able to get round the enveloping human defence, it's surely just a matter of time before the ball is on the floor and then in my endzone. I need another miracle.

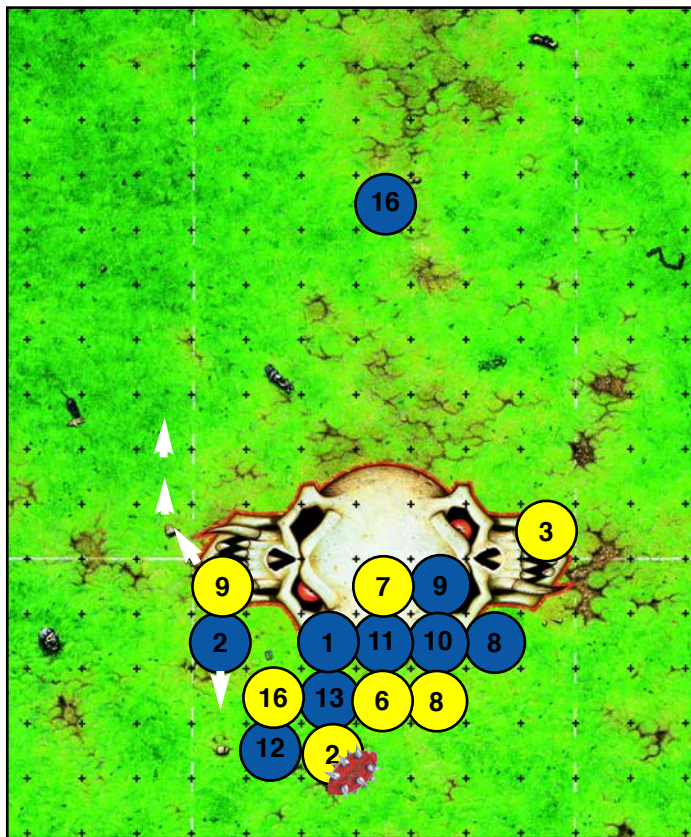
HUMAN TURN THREE

David: I definitely have the upper hand, but I can't see an easy, sure-fire way of getting the ball free and in the open. Griff blocks Hocus Bigfoot shoving him roughly back further into his own half. Ulrich Valdemar spies half a chance and blitzes Halfblade but again only manages to push him back. With their blocking ineffectual, the Magpies resign themselves to simply getting as many players around the ball as possible and see what the Orcs can do in their turn.

ORC TURN FOUR

Paul: All my players are in tackle zones and two Magpie players are marking my ball-carrier. Zark manages to stand, as does Tuskface after recovering from his stun, leaving me with five players to create a play. Desperate times require desperate actions. I blitz my most forward Black Orc downfield. It just happens to be Blackscar who scored earlier so I'm confident he'll catch the ball should I get it to him! Besides after his recent critical both down block, he'd be very brave (or stupid) to give his coach another chance to sack him. I free up Halfblade with some two die blocking and, unmolested; he throws an accurate pass to Blackscar. The crowd hold their breath as the ball comes down. Blackscar catches it with ease. Hurrah! The X-Pressos wave their pompoms frantically; the fans go wild and journalists the world over marvel at the agility of the lumbering idiot. Okay, he's wide open to a blitz from Griff as there is no way that I can put any players between Griff and Blackscar, let alone enough to actually stop Griff from trying. But Blackscar's

been lucky so far and may well still be in his feet come my next turn. It's a mad play to be fair as the Magpies will get at least two turns to stop him but otherwise I'm plum out of ideas.



HUMAN TURN FOUR

David: I can see an opportunity to score and the responsibility falls upon the shoulders of Griff to get the ball loose. I'm in the position now where even if I fail any part of my play I would still have another chance on the following turn. Josef Wilhelm moves up beside the Black Orc ball carrier, hiding his fear well as he faces up against the 8" tall beast. Spotting his opportunity, Griff deftly shrugs off the unwanted attentions of the Orcs around him before charging head first into Blackscar in a bone-crunching tackle. The ball flies free. Wagner Lindeberg races up and retrieves it before snapping off a short pass to the waiting Zerhacker upfield. Everyone in the stadium knows that if Albert makes this catch then he can easily race into the endzone. Albert reaches out and grabs the ball with deceptive ease before sprinting away, throwing himself into the endzone with the last of his strength. Touchdown!

SUMMARY

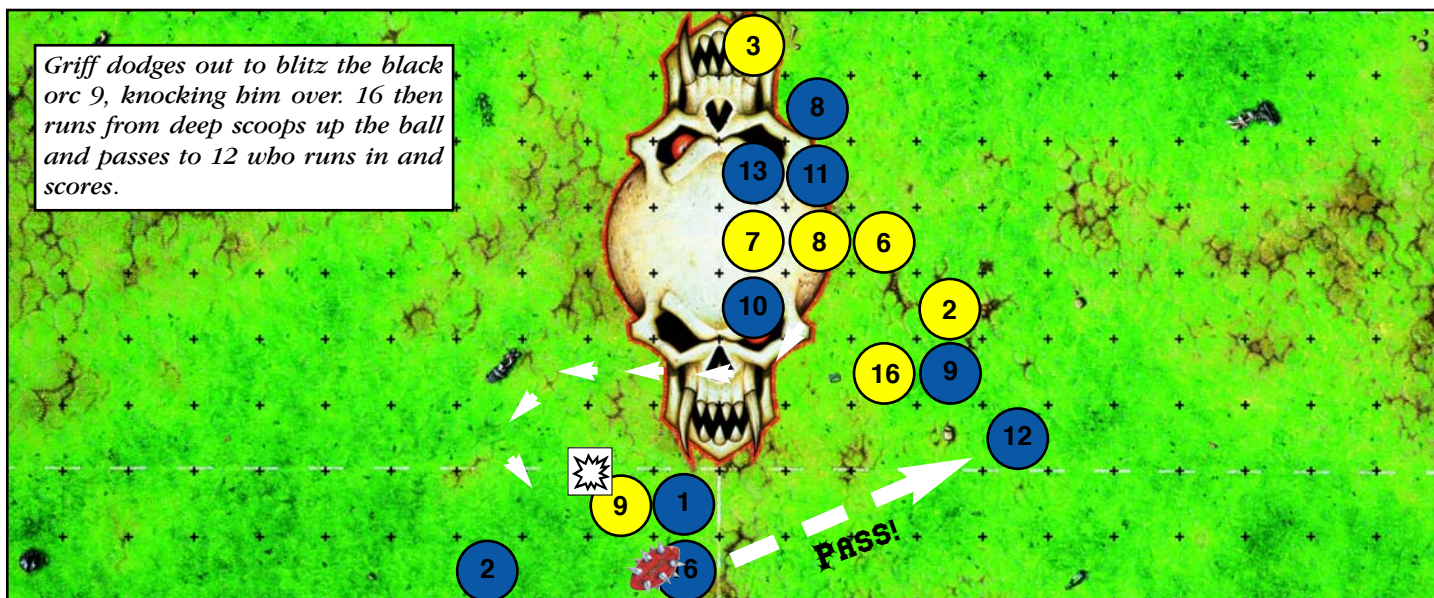
Paul: First up, I haven't enjoyed a game of Blood Bowl as much as that for a while. That game had everything and although I lost, it was one to savour. Quad skulls from Griff (I'm smiling as I write that), a black Orc touchdown, a last turn miracle play that forced extra time and plenty of blood (albeit only Orc blood) is part of the game's strange and lovable nature.

Where did it all go wrong? Well on reflection, maybe I put too much attention into trying to knobble Griff. The first touchdown was conceded whilst I focussed on giving him a kick. Varag was then pasted having gone after Griff on my first kick off reception and coming off second best. Numbers down, Griff then turned me over for the 2-0 lead at the half. So I paid heavily for trying to get him (and failing). However, his very presence dictated my plans for most of the game and he personally went on to turn me over the two times that I lost possession so I think I was right to go after him initially, especially as David didn't have an apothecary to resuscitate him.

In comparison Varag played only okay when he was on the pitch (which was about half of the match) and in retrospect could have been used as a ball-carrier to offset Griff's blitzing power once we got extra time. Or at the very least, form part of the cage. I should have learnt that David was more than willing to gang up on him and foul him (like he did in the first half) so sending him alone into Magpie territory the second time was a mistake. A mistake that David jumped on and which most likely swung the match in his favour.

David was a little fortunate to get the numerical advantage so early, especially with only eleven of his own players on the roster, but with Griff and four Blitzers, I probably underestimated the casualty threat. David is a good player so once he got the advantage of a couple of players, it was no surprise that he then drove a cart and horses through my defence (going for my gobbos) and went on to make that advantage work for him. But for some rather unexpected second half Orc passing, it could have been a real spanking actually. As it was the humans created the casualties, the Orcs - the passing game. Go figure!

Final thoughts; I find that Orcs seem to act better the duller they play. An eight turn grind where the thrower finds the sanctity of the cage and the blitzers/black orcs knock the living daylight out of anyone who gets in their way seems to be the best way of playing with them. I broke from that pattern by sending Varag into opposing territory - albeit on a mission and once players were picked off, the cage faltered.



Although I moved to a hurry-up offence in the second half and succeeded with some unlikely elven plays to get back to level terms, a more conservative (ie; dull) opening on offence would have undoubtedly left the X-Press in a better position. It's just am I prepared to play them that way?

Orcs are a team with real history in the game and one that I enjoy playing with. For the time being, I guess I need more practice. But if it comes in games like this, then I won't be complaining. Well, maybe just a little bit!

David: That match had everything a game of Blood Bowl should have – vicious blocking wars, desperate scrambles for the ball and legendary displays of agility (even if it was the Black Orcs who never failed a catch!). It was easily one of the more enjoyable and memorable games I've ever played, not only because of how fun it was to play but because of the lessons it taught me. For example, rather than simply pull all my players back to defend against passes out of sheer panic, I will now take the time to see where better some of these players could be used. In this example, I let the tension get to my head and I paid for it!

I hate to admit it but man of the match for me was undoubtedly Griff Oberwald. Although he wasn't terrorising the Orcs every single turn, his presence alone had a strong influence on the Orcs' plans. When he did get stuck in he was magnificent, with the one exception of those quad skulls! I think I can forgive him that. Fouling Varag out of the match was another crucial part of my victory and I think that it was a mistake sending him so deep into my half. Cut off and

isolated from support, it was almost as if I could take him out at my leisure, although I admit it didn't feel like that at the time.

A major point of debate between Paul and I is the composition of my team. Paul was gobsmacked to learn that I only had 11 players and that I was also without an apothecary. Although I can see his point, I didn't feel like I could give up my core of four Blitzers and to some extent I feel this decision was justified as they were certainly very useful. However, if I were to play the match again I might experiment with dropping a Blitzer to take an apothecary and an extra lineman. I was lucky to get through the match unscathed and to actually turn the tables around and injure four Orcs was perhaps the most crucial factor in my win.

Jim: Another win for the Magpies, though I'm sure the coach won't be too happy with his players throwing away a 2-0 lead so late in the match.

Bob: That's right Jim. Of course, the Orc coach can't be very happy either. The X-Press fans wanted to see Magpie blood and they've been royally disappointed. They should remember the successes they've seen under him.

Jim: They should, but it doesn't look like they are a very forgiving bunch. Some idiots have run on to the pitch and attacked him. I can just about make out the back of his head in that scrum, though.

Bob: If only it was still attached to his body, Jim!

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Paul Gegg is the very successful coach of the Skaven team, the Darkthunder Cheatahs. The Cheatahs, along with Paul, have appeared at nearly every Blood Bowl tournament in Europe and must hold some record for the most travelled team. Paul will be sharing his experiences of playing with a Skaven team in an upcoming issue of Fanatic Online.

David Candlish is Editor of House Rulez magazine, an online fan magazine dedicated to Blood Bowl. He is known in the Online Blood Bowl community as Indigo (his other aliases include Mauve, Cherry Pink and Magnolia!). Dave is also a keen Epic player and I'm currently bullying him to write more Epic stuff for me.