

BLOOD BOWL

Stars In Stripes

New House rules for Referees

By Jim Mawby

*"S a game of two 'alves, an' if you ain't careful, it's a referee of two 'alves as well. My advice? Get the b*****s before they get you."*

– Max "kneecap" Mittelmann

They are the true heroes of Blood Bowl. With less armour than a halfling, and without the support of a dozen homicidal teammates, they take the field with at least twice as many opponents as the normal Blood Bowl team. Often ex-players themselves, it's a dangerous game for any Blood Bowl referee (unless you count refereeing in the Moot Minor League, and even then the little guys can get quite uppity).

There follows a set of optional rules for running referees in league play. According to these guidelines, referees gain SPPs themselves, and advance in order to become mighty refereeing legends in their own time. Of course, they also suffer the threat of injury, retirement, and, not least of all, death. There are several ways to include referees in your league, and the league commissioner should decide upon which style suits the league best. The first option, best when you are running an open style league where you don't know how many players will turn up for a session, or a very small league, is to keep the referees under the control of the league commissioner. The second option, best in a league with regular fixtures or regular numbers of players, is to allow each team to "sponsor" a referee. The coach gets no direct influence on how a referee acts in a match, but he decides how the referee advances, and if he is lucky, the ref will occasionally preside over his own team's matches. Both options are discussed below.

Whichever method you choose, there should be about as many referees in the league as there are teams. This allows for some spare every week (or whenever your fixtures/games are spaced) to step in for "Got" referees, or to stand in for injured ones. Each referee should have his own name and individual race, chosen from the Blood Bowl races. Every week, you then allocate a referee randomly for each game out of all those available (players missing that week's fixtures due to injury do not count as available). Then roll for niggling injuries, and randomly allocate replacements out of the remaining referees for any allocated referees who cannot preside due to a niggling injury. The referee then behaves as normal throughout the match, with any modifications as determined by the advances he may have made.



LEAGUE-CONTROLLED REFEREES

The league commissioner should start with an appropriate number of referees, each with a different name and varying race. He should try to ensure that there is a good mix of races out there, and if possible, that he has models to represent each referee. Every time a referee gains an advance, (see below), the commissioner should randomly generate which advance he receives. The league commissioner may choose to retire or add new referees at any time, but should ensure that there are always at least as many referees in the league as there are teams, and never less than four (even in a two team league!).

TEAM-SPONSORED REFEREES

Each coach is allowed to choose a name and a race (usually from the races available to the team, but not necessarily) and provide a model for one referee. When the referee gains enough SPPs for an advance, then the sponsoring coach may choose the skill taken (including choosing a racial group if the skill of Hatred is chosen). The coach is free to retire the referee at any time, and may then begin with a new referee. Note that if there are only a few teams in the league (a good bench-mark is less than six), then the league commissioner should also run a couple of referees as described above.



REF ADVANCEMENT

Referees gain 2 SPPs for every sending off that occurs during a game while they are presiding. They advance at the same rate as normal players, so 1 advance at 6 pts, and so on. Whenever they gain an advance, they may randomly generate (if league controlled) or pick (if team sponsored) one skill from the following selection:

2D6	Skills
2-4	Stubborn
5	Corrupt
6	Fearless
7	Hatred
8	Traditional
9	Crowd-killer
10-11	Stickler
12	Psycho

If randomly generating referee skills, then re-roll any result other than Hatred or Corrupt if the referee already has that skill. The Hatred and Corrupt skills can be taken more than once, however.

Referees must also make aging rolls when they gain advances - but instead of rolling for the effects of aging, they automatically pick up niggling injuries if affected instead of stat. decreases. A referee will be unable to referee a match if they roll a one at the start of the game for any niggling injuries they possess - a replacement referee is generated from those remaining available as described above.

SKILL DESCRIPTIONS

Stubborn This referee's decision is final – coaches may never argue the call with this referee.

Corrupt The referee is not averse to a little... persuasion – coaches may pay 10,000 gp to reverse a penalty called against their own team. The skill of Corrupt can be taken more than once, to represent really corrupt individuals! A coach can never bribe the referee in this way more times in a single match than the number of times a referee has taken this skill. (e.g. A referee who has taken Corrupt as two advances, may be bribed a maximum of twice a match by both coaches).

Fearless Whenever this referee comes on as a replacement due to a Get the Ref! result, he will not be intimidated by the fate of his predecessor. Ignore the effects of the Get the Ref! result.

Hatred Randomly generate (or pick if team sponsored) a racial group from the following list:

2D6	Racial group
2-3	Lizardmen (Saurus, Skinks, Kroxigor)
4	Elves (Wood Elves, High Elves, Dark Elves)
5	Dwarfs (Dwarves, Halflings)
6	Big Guys (Trolls, Ogres, Minotaurs, Treemen)
7	Greenskins (Orcs, Goblins, Hobgoblins)
8	Humans (Humans, Amazons, Norse)
9	Undead (All undead)
10-12	Chaos (Chaos Warriors, Beastmen, Chaos Dwarf, Bull Centaurs, Skaven)

The referee will sometimes turn a blind eye to fouls made against a team he hates. So, he will not send an offending player off if he rolls a double on the *armour* roll (although he still will on the injury roll).

As a further optional rule, team-sponsored referees may choose to Hate a narrower racial group than those specified - for example, he could just hate Amazons, or just hate Norse, or just hate Amazons and Norse but not Human teams. A Dark Elf referee might suffer Hatred against Wood Elves and High Elves, for example.

Traditional The referee is especially stringent about the use of illegal weapons – the referee gets a +1 on all penalty rolls to spot secret weapons.

Crowd-Killer Whenever this referee suffers a “Get the Ref!” result, the offending fans get more than they bargained for, and often suffer horrendous casualties in the process; as a result, the team's FF is halved (round up) for the rest of the match. Also, roll a d6 - on a 6, the referee's defence is so potent that the “Get the Ref!” attempt fails, and the result is ignored.

Stickler This referee has a fierce reputation to maintain - the referee will award penalties for fouls committed when the opponent is not in possession of the IGMEYOY on a 5-6 instead of on a 6 as usual.

Psycho As well as sending a player off, this referee dispenses summary justice with the aid of secret weapons, mates, or sheer brutality. Whenever a player is sent off by this referee, also make an injury roll (and if necessary, a Sigurd injury roll) for that player - obviously, results of Stunned, Ko'd, and Badly Hurt will have no further effects, since the player is sent off for the rest of the match anyway. But if the player is unfortunate enough to suffer a serious injury or death, all usual effects apply. Coaches selecting this skill for a team-sponsored referee should beware - it's truly horrible for any coach to suffer a death at the hands of a referee!



REF INJURIES

A referee that suffers a “Get the Ref!” result must be replaced by another available referee, who may use all skills, but will not award penalties against the team that Got the (last) Ref for the rest of the half as usual (unless the replacement is Fearless - see above).

You must also make an Injury roll for a referee every time a “Get the Ref!” result comes up on the kick off table. Badly Hurt referees suffer no additional penalties, Seriously Injured referees are not available for the next game (see below) and also pick up a niggling injury on a D6 roll of 4-6, and dead referees are, well, dead.

FAMOUS REFEREES

Occasionally, a referee will last long enough to make a name for him/herself. These much-vaunted officials are often as big a hit with the fans as the players themselves. Reputedly, in the first Blood Bowl open final of 2490, the Orcland Raiders fans couldn't get into the stadium because the match was being guest-refereed by the infamous goblin referee Mucka Goldtooth. An older rumour has it that Max Mittelmann's following was so large, that many of the crowd casualties attributed to him were actually committed by loyal and devoted fans in defence of the ex-Reaver blitzzer. However, since we can find no one alive to corroborate this story, we must assume that either it is exaggerated, or else Max just killed them all too.

The rules above are intended to allow you to build your own legendary referees over the course of a league, but sometimes you might want a special referee for a special one-off game, or a guest referee for a tournament final. In that case, as league commissioner, you can either design one yourself, or tempt one of these old heroes out of retirement.

Name: Max “Kneecap” Mittlemann

Race: Human

Special Rules: Niggling Injury

Skills: Crowd-killer, Stubborn, Fearless, Stickler, Psycho

Description: An ex-Reikland Reavers player, Max holds the record for Most Players Dismembered, and is also recorded as Spike! Magazines 3rd all-time most-violent player.

Interestingly, “Kneecap” was sacked after his first three games refereeing, but was quickly reinstated due to 'pressure from the fans'.

Name: Mucka Goldtooth

Race: Goblin

Special Rules: –

Skills: Corrupt, Corrupt, Corrupt!

Description: Mucka Goldtooth is reputedly one of the richest goblins in the Old World, and also one of the best loved referees in the game. In his hay-day, he was allegedly fined by the NAF so many times for misconduct, that he apparently simply payed them a percentage of the money that he received from bribes, to save time and administration.

Name: “Blindeye” Scuttlespitt

Race: Skaven

Special Rules: –

Skills: Hatred (all except Skaven)

Description: Not so much a referee as a furry ball of malice, “Blindeye” likes nothing more than to watch opposing teams beat each other up in the most unpleasant ways imaginable. He calls the occasional foul just so he won't have his refereeing license revoked, but he is just as likely to shout encouragement on seeing a foul than to blow his whistle.





Although it is not necessary to provide models for the referee during the game, it can add something to the personality of a referee if there is also a model for them. Modelling referees for the various races can be done more-or-less easily, depending on how much model-converting you want to do.

First, and easiest, GW Direct stocks two excellent referee figures for Blood Bowl – a Human and a Dwarf. These come ready-to-ref, as it were, and require no adjustment at all.

Secondly, some of the plastic regiment sprues from Warhammer can provide great referee figures, with only a minimum of conversion (and plastic is much easier to adjust than metal). Snip off the weapons, try to choose as little-armoured parts as possible, and add a cap – this can be done by filing off the top of a helmet for a flatter top, and then adding a small peak using green stuff or cutting shapes from thin plastic, like a shield.

If there are no plastic models available, then you will have to turn your modelling talents to the range of metal figures – in general, Warhammer figures work best, but occasionally other ranges provide useful possibilities (Dark Eldar make good lightly armoured dark elves, for example) so shop around!

Colour schemes couldn't be simpler – in general, Blood Bowl referees have white caps, black and white striped tops, white trousers and black boots. Add a white “R” in a black square somewhere, and you have a referee ready to take on the league.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jim Mawby is a Blood Bowl fan who occasionally puts his hand to writing some cracking Blood Bowl house rules articles. Thanks Jim – we hope you're still playing!