

BLOOD BOWL



ELF PLAYBOOK PT2

by "Harry" Harrington

This article follows on from Harry's article last month, as the more astute of you will have guessed from the cunning title. Having already covered the basics, this time he delves into the Dirty Tricks box to see what the Pro Elves have in there alongside their skipping ropes and Barbies.

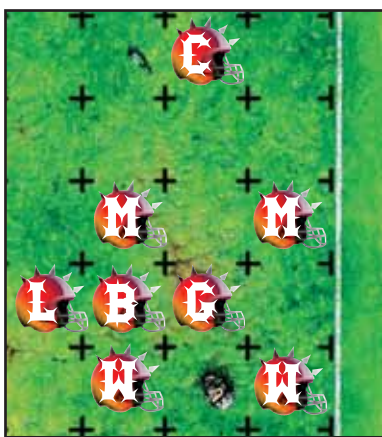
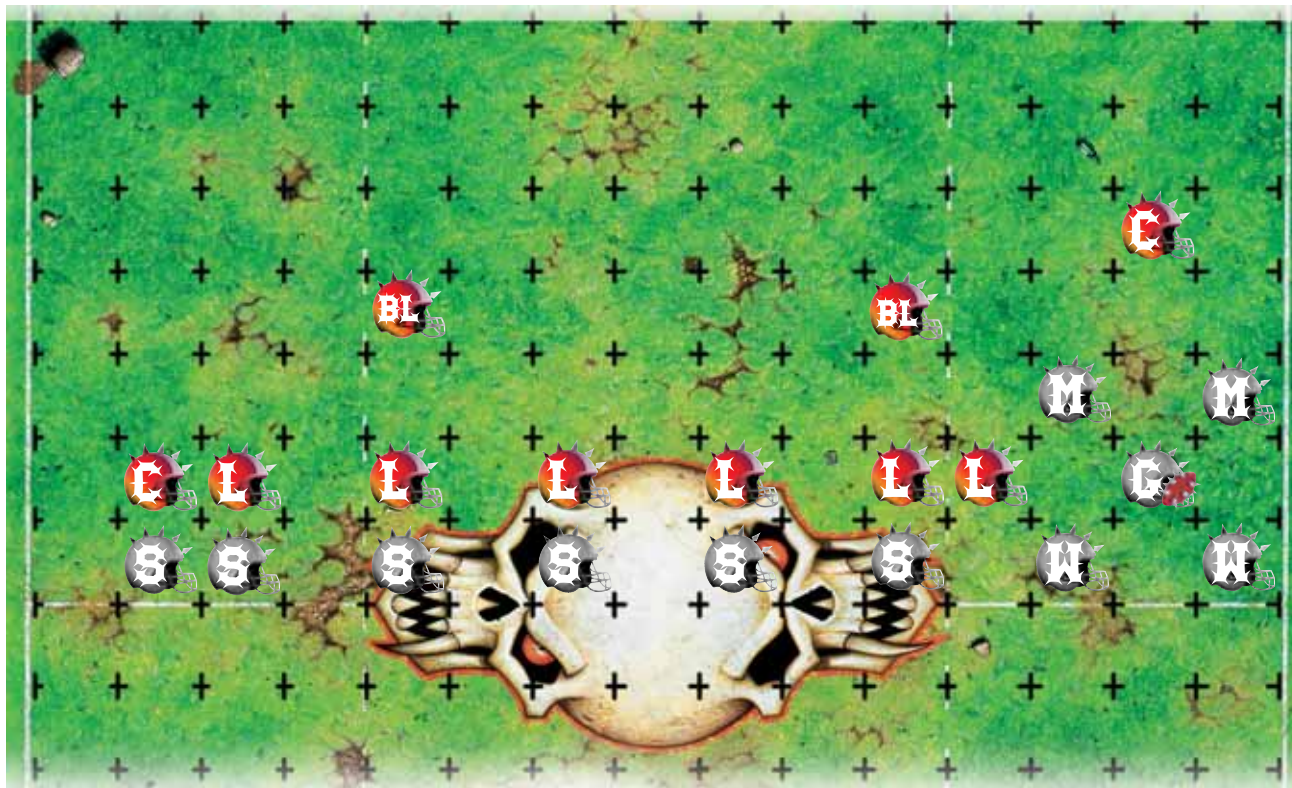
After the first few matches, your opponents are certain to have picked up a couple of skills and can really put the pressure on what is a very fragile line up. Remember that keeping your team alive is a priority; unless the dice gods decide to desert you there should be no team that can outscore you in the league. What you need is the durability to keep a full roster on the pitch for the entire game. There are two ways to do this. For the more aggressive minded among the Elf coaches (like myself) Block is the first skill I give every player (doubles notwithstanding) whereas other, more testosterone challenged, coaches prefer to take Dodge across the board. There are plusses and minuses to each strategy. By taking Block your guys are more durable in defence and offence, whereas a "Dodgy" team should leave you with no one in a square next to an opponent at the end of each turn – meaning you only have to withstand one blitz a turn. I personally feel this is quite a negative way to play and take every opportunity to beef up the durability of my team by reducing the number of opponents they're facing.

Where both the aforementioned tactics fall apart is against some of the power teams in the League. Chaos, Orcs and especially the latest version of Chaos Dwarves can grind out a victory simply by scoring after the other team has taken a trip to the morgue. The tactic of receiving the ball and crawling up the park two squares a turn whilst battering the enemy before falling over the line for an eighth turn touchdown is an absolute killer to a team like the Pro Elves. The coach has one of two choices: pick on the stragglers as mentioned in the last issue, or try a snatch and grab. If the opposition is Orcs or Humans I tend to go for option one, and when facing Dwarves, Chaos Dwarves and against other high Strength, high AV teams I go for option two. Why? Because if you're lucky enough to catch a Dwarf straggler it would be a miracle if you get through the armour and actually cause some damage, and against Chaos Dwarves and Undead the stragglers are usually the 30K cannon fodder that the coach won't mind sacrificing. If this is the case a smash and grab is the only real option.

In the case on the next page, the nasty Undead coach has formed a cage and is trundling up the pitch in the Funeral March (slowly plodding towards an eighth turn touchdown).

The ball carrier is a Ghoul and some hard hitters designed to keep him safe surround him. The Elf Blitzzer has Leap and Strip Ball so as the Lineman has cancelled the two assists the Blitzzer leaps between them to Blitz the Ghoul and most likely knock the ball to the floor. Now if he's feeling lucky he can follow up and attempt to pick up the ball. If his luck holds then he can look to dodging clear, but even if he fails the ball will scatter and it will be very hard for his opponents to grab it. Since failing to pick the ball up would cause a turnover, it might be better to sneak a Catcher with Dodge into the cage to pick it up and slip free. OK, the risks are high, but if it succeeds once in a game you will have a two-goal cushion to play with and you can start to play a little more conservatively.





The other way to deal with the cage is to slow it down so much that they eventually have to make a break for it. By surrounding the cage, but keeping one square away, you can slow the march down to a crawl forcing the opponent to leave the cage behind and

dart for the end zone. If you have your guys in position you can swipe the ball on your own touchline and still score a TD that Turn. The Blitz/ Defensive Tackle with Strip Ball will force the Catcher to drop the ball then your Thrower can pick it up and race up towards the halfway line before throwing a quick pass to one of the Linemen who in turn hands off to the Catcher for an end to end touchdown! By always keeping a Catcher within range of the opponent's end zone you will instil a sense of desperation in the away team's coach who knows that even the slightest mistake can be punished with a one turn TD. If you prefer you can leave a Lineman in range of the end zone so he can gain the SPPs and you can keep the more skilled Catcher closer to the action.

This technique has its faults too. You will need to have most of your Linemen with the Dodge skill to assist in keeping one square away and hope the opposition hasn't got Tackle. In games against Tackle-heavy teams it's better to try the smash and grab rather than slowing them down as your team will fall down on a regular basis. Remember though, that if the ball is on the floor your high Agility Elves will have a much better chance at picking it up than the lower Agility teams that usually form the cage.

SPECIALIST SKILL PROGRESSION

You'll find there are at least two types of player for every position and deciding which of these you want to take will determine how your team plays.

Thrower

There's the quintessential quarterback who stays back on his own touchline before launching a beautifully spiralling pass three quarters the length of the pitch. His skill progression is designed to make him the ultimate passer without ever getting close to an opposition player. Ultimately the most headhunted player on the pitch, he relies on others to save him from getting squished whilst he perfects his throw. Accurate, Strong Arm*, Nerves of Steel, Dump off, and Safe Throw, make him the ultimate Thrower in the game.

The other Thrower is a lot more down and dirty: Sure Hands, Dodge, Block, Sidestep and Nerves of Steel makes for a lot more durable Thrower who relies on chucking short or quick passes to free Catchers so they can sprint away for the TD. He still has a better than average chance of launching a long pass (AG 4 with a re-roll), but can mix it up with the big boys if he has to.

Catcher

There are both offensive and defensive positions that need to be filled by a Catcher (if you think of a rugby winger who has to tackle as much as he gets to run with the ball, you can see why matching skills to positions can really help). In my team I take four Catchers as quickly as possible, two become the scorers whilst the other two become defensive tackles.

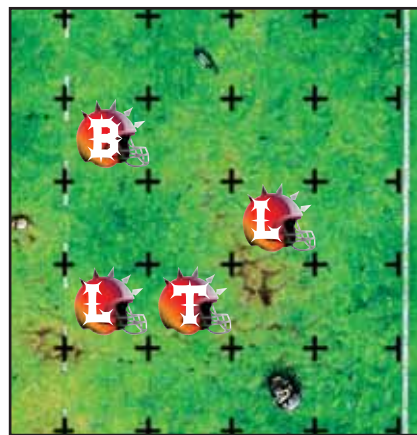
Offensive Catchers are, not surprisingly, designed to survive a blitz and sprint clear for the TD. Skills revolve around keeping him upright and increasing his chances of reaching the end zone. Dodge, Jump Up, Sidestep, Sprint and Sure Feet can really make him almost impossible to stop, but since he is only Strength 3 and won't stay upright for ever, you should try to keep the ball out of his hands until he is ready to score.

Defensive Catchers are there to take down the enemy ball carrier swipe the ball and get it to the Thrower. Block, Strip Ball, Tackle, Sure Hands and Dodge means he can regularly nip into the opponent's cage, swipe the ball and skip clear, or against faster teams he can catch those pesky Gutter Runners, beat them up and rob the ball.

Blitzers are probably the easiest players to gain SPPs in the early days of a league and can become absolutely awesome at taking down even the toughest opponents.

The more aggressive coach can turn his Blitzzer into an enforcer who can take down the biggest baddies on the pitch and make sure they stay down.

Dauntless, Tackle, Dodge, Pile On*, can cause fear in even the hardest Big Guy.



make attempting to throw around this player extremely difficult.

The other type of Blitzzer is the ball thief who nips in and spoils the enemy play by either blitzing the ball carrier or slipping through for the intercept.

Catch, Pass Block, Dodge, Strip Ball and Nerves of Steel

make attempting to throw around this player extremely difficult. In the position above there is nowhere on the pitch that the attacker can throw the ball without the Blitzzer ball thief nipping in the way and getting two 5+ chances to intercept (Pass Block, Nerves of Steel and Catch).

Lineman

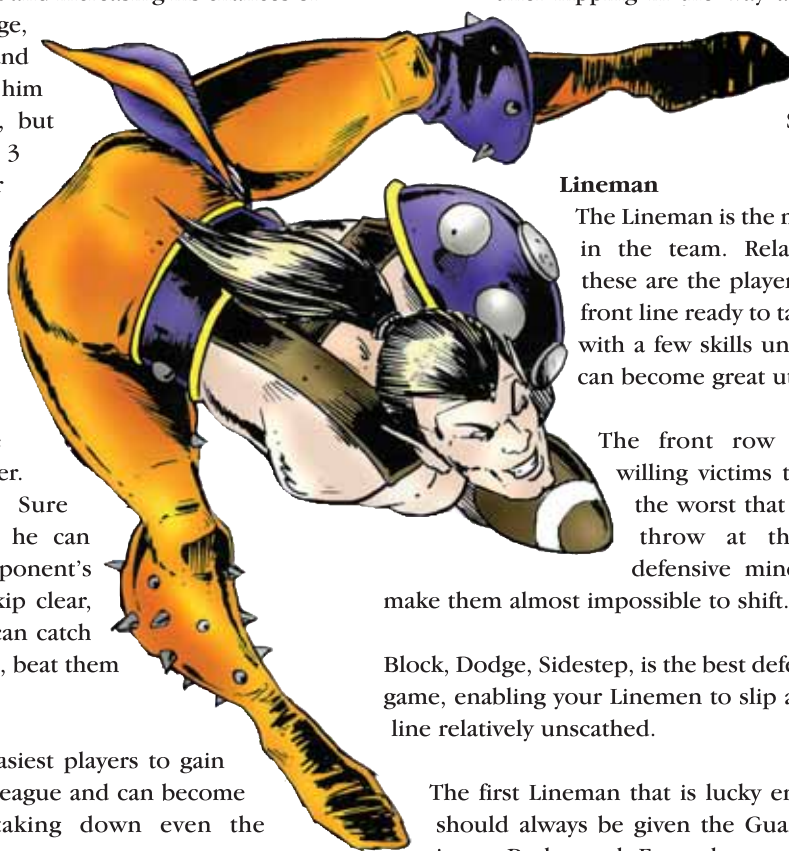
The Lineman is the most versatile player in the team. Relatively inexpensive, these are the players you stand on the front line ready to take a pounding, but with a few skills under their belts they can become great utility players.

The front row Linemen are the willing victims that line up against the worst that the opposition can throw at them. With a few defensive minded skills you can make them almost impossible to shift.

Block, Dodge, Sidestep, is the best defensive combo in the game, enabling your Linemen to slip away from the front line relatively unscathed.

The first Lineman that is lucky enough to get a skill should always be given the Guard skill and turned into a Bodyguard. From then on you can either use him to shadow your Thrower to prevent him getting squished, or use him in conjunction with the Enforcer Blitzzer to take down the Big Guys anywhere on the pitch.

Knocking down a Star Player or Big Guy is good, but unless he stays down it's often just a waste of time and effort; one or two Dirty Players in the squad can make sure anyone foolish enough to fall over never gets the



opportunity to stand back up. The easiest way to protect your own team and win the game is to reduce the number of opponents that can hit back. Don't worry about getting sent off – if you do get shown the red card it's likely that you've already stomped your way through a couple of the opponent's team and it's well worth the risk (have a look at Doubleskull's article on Fouling in issue 7).

For every Lineman you should try to get Block and Dodge then choose between Sidestep, Leader, Dirty Player and even Kick.

Author

Mark 'Harry' Harrington has been very busy of late, not only has he written this ten page monster but he is one of the creators of the Necromunda Dust Falls campaign that started in last month's issue!



Further Information

Elf teams are available from GW Direct (See the How to Order pages).

More BB

Turn to page 70 for Mr Tournament Organiser.

Website

www.BloodBowl.com

MY VIEW ON SPORTSMANSHIP

If you play a high Agility low AV team you can find yourself in a position where hanging on to the ball near the opponent's end zone for a turn or two may seem an attractive option. In my view this is not in keeping with the idea behind these elegant sportsmen, and in a fun game between friends I recommend not using this tactic. However, this is only if your opponent keeps to the same spirit. There is no team in the game that can't get a player from the line of scrimmage into the end zone in two turns. Those players who regularly take eight turns to crawl over the white line for a TD and spend these turns dismembering your team are being just as beardy, so feel free to resort to the run and hide tactic.

Fouling is a part of the game. Anyone who says I won't foul you if you don't foul me is, in my opinion, a big girl. If you don't want your players broken and bleeding, go play Snap! and leave Blood Bowl for the real men (grrr...). This sort of agreement over illegal procedures is, however, perfectly acceptable in my view. I always thought that Blood Bowl was the greatest friendly game GW have ever made, packed with tongue in cheek humour, sick jokes and fun. The one thing that can spoil it is when your opponent spends the entire game shouting "Illegal Procedure" time and again. I am not a cheat (much), I do, however, get caught up in the game and sometime forget to move my turn counter. In the Blood Bowl Tournament this year EVERY player I faced asked to ignore the Illegal Procedure rule and that made the game a heck of a lot more fun even in the competitive atmosphere of the biggest Blood Bowl Tournament of the year.

Point out mistakes to your opponent and only if he repeatedly offends should you even think of calling him for it. Winning a game because you called an Illegal Procedure on turn eight when he was one square from the end zone is bad sportsmanship pure and simple, and winning on such a technicality won't give you as good a feeling as drawing a hard-fought game.

