

THE 2004 BLOOD BOWL RULES REVIEW

By Jervis Johnson, Dean Maki, Stephen Babbage, Tom Anders, John Lewis, Chet Zeshonski and Jake Thornton, and with a very big ‘thank you!’ to all of our playtesters both on and off-line for their help in making Blood Bowl a great game.

Every year the members of the Blood Bowl Rules Committee hold a month long meeting to decide if any official changes need to be made to the Blood Bowl rules. This article contains the findings of the 2004 Blood Bowl Rules Review.

INTRODUCTION

By Jervis Johnson

Once again, October is Blood Bowl rules review time. It's got so that the nights starting to draw in and the leaves falling from the trees are now synonymous to me with getting together with the rest of the Blood Bowl Rules Committee (or BBRC as it's more commonly known) for our yearly online tussle about what needs to be done to make the Blood Bowl rules even *better* than they already are. I know, I know; is such a thing possible? Well read through this year's review and see what you think...

This years review was rather different to those that have gone before. For a start we had a well worked out agenda that we'd discussed and decided before the review started. Admittedly it was discussed and decided only *just* before the start of the review, but even so this was an improvement over previous years where the agenda was decided pretty much as we went along. As part of this new approach we appointed 'champions' for each week of the review, whose job it was to chivvy the rest of us along and keep track of the decisions we had made. The appointment of champions for each week helped a lot, and ensured that the process worked more smoothly than it had done in the past.

The other thing that made a big difference to the way the review worked this year was the Blood Bowl Playtesters Vault on the Blood Bowl website (you can find it at www.bloodbowl.com). The Playtesters Vault is a dedicated area where new 'experimental' or 'trail' rules are made available. Linked to the vault is a special forum where coaches can say what they think of the experimental rules. The Vault and forum allows coaches to download and try out new rules, and then give us feedback about them. Many of the changes in this year's rules review have been trailed in the vault first, and the feedback we've received made making the decision as to whether to make the rules official or not much easier.

These changes aside, the rules review went pretty much as normal. We discussed each of the points on our agenda in a frank and forthright fashion(!), and then we all voted on what should be done. The result of these votes decided what has gone into this year's review. (I should say, that as president of the BBRC, I do have the right to veto any changes I really don't agree with. Fortunately, as in most previous years, I did not need to use this sanction.)

This years review is quite short compared to some others, but a number of important changes have been made, so you should read through it carefully.

The most obvious change is that the Vampire Count and Ogre teams, having benefited from extensive playtesting, have been updated and finally made official. I'm sure that both teams will have their supporters and their detractors, but I for one think that each team is a very worthy addition to the cannon of official Blood Bowl teams.

Less obvious are a number of quite minor but potentially far-reaching changes made to the core Blood Bowl rules. These effect the way you set up, what happens if you are called for Illegal Procedure, and how turning stunned players face-up is dealt with.

Set Up: You now *have* to set up 11 players on the field if you can, which both fits the games background (the number 11 is sacred to Nuffle, you know), and also stops coaches 'hiding' important players away in the Dug-out in a rather cheesy manner.

Illegal Procedure Penalty: The penalty for not moving your turn marker along the track has been reduced, so you now either lose one reroll, or if you don't have one your opponent gains a reroll instead. This means you can no longer suffer a potentially game-losing Turnover because of a lapse of memory.

Stunned Players: Atunned players may no longer take an action, but are instead turned face-up at the *end* of their *next* team turn, even if a turn-over takes place. Quite apart from being fairer, this change deals with a number of rules issues related to stunned players and how they take actions.

In addition to these changes some changes have been made to the Kick-Off table in order to make it more fair and balanced, and the costs of Star Players have been increased when they are used in one-off games to more accurately reflect their true value (the costs remain as they were before in league play), though it is unlikely that either of these changes will have a drastic impact on actual game play.

The bulk of the rest of the rules review concentrates on updating skills and traits, modifying the wording in some cases, and restricting Big Guys to taking Strength only skills (ie, Big Guys can't take General skills anymore unless they roll a double). The change to the Big Guys stops them being an automatic choice on the starting roster for any team allowed to have them, and helps ensure that the Ogre team remains balanced and fair in League play.

As part of the review we took a look at play balance, and decided we needed to do something to take Skaven and Chaos Dwarf teams down a peg or two, as they are currently just a bit too good. For the Skaven we decided to reduce the Rat Ogres agility down from 3 to 2, and for Chaos Dwarfs we have increased the cost of their team rerolls from 50,000 gold piece to 70,000 gold pieces. Hopefully these two simple changes will bring the teams back in line with everyone else.

Our final change was to the Handicap Table. It is generally agreed that the current table doesn't work very well. We considered a number of ways to fix it, ranging from using complicated '3-tier' tables through to using the experimental 'Inducement' rules in the vault, but in the end we decided to take the simplest

option, which was to remove the entries from the table that didn't work very well, and leave in the ones that did. The resulting table is shorter and more focused, and achieves the desired effect without any major changes to the way the game works.

And that's pretty much it. All that remains is for me to thank the members of the rules committee for the hard work they have put in over the last year. I'd also like to personally thank all of you that have provided us with feedback and your thoughts on the game. Your input really is invaluable, so please keep it coming! Now, read through the review, and then get out there and PLAY!

<<<Jervis sig>>>

THE REVIEW

This year's rules review is split into two sections:

The first is the Rules Update – all previously published experimental rules have been reviewed by the BBRC and their status changed to one of the following: Official, Remain Experimental or House Rules.

The second section is Errata – this is corrections and changes to the core rules.

Please note that, miraculously!, this year we do not have any new additions to the FAQ.

PART ONE: RULES UPDATE

Ogre Team – Official

0-12 Ogre 120,000 MA 5 ST 5 AG 2 AV 9

Skills: Bone Head, Mighty Blow, Thick Skull, Throw Team-Mate
STRENGTH access

0-6 Goblin 40,000 MA 6 ST 2 AG 3 AV 7

Skill: Dodge, Stunty, Right Stuff
AGILITY access

Re-Rolls: 70,000 gold pieces

Morg'n'Thorg, Nobbla Blackwart, Scrappa Sorehead, and Thrud will play for an Ogre team

Vampire Team – Official

0-6 Vampire 110,000 MA 6 ST 4 AG 4 AV 8

Skills: Hypnotic Gaze, Regenerate
GENERAL/AGILITY/STRENGTH access

0-12 Thrall 40,000 MA 6 ST 2 AG 3 AV 7

Skills: Dodge, Stunty, Right Stuff
AGILITY access

Re-Rolls: 70,000 gold pieces

Count Luthor von Drakenborg and Thrud will play for a Vampire team.

Vampire Team Special Rules

Vampire teams may purchase an apothecary but it may only be used on Thralls. In addition, a Vampire Team can hire Count Luthor von Drakenborg even if the opposing team has hired him. In these cases, the second Count Luthor is actually another very powerful Vampire Count Lord who has taken an interest in assisting the team for the match.

Vampires must occasionally feed on the blood of the living. Because of this, roll a D6 whenever a Vampire takes an action. On a 2+ the Vampire may carry out the action as normal. On a '1', however, the Vampire is overcome by the desire to drink Human blood and must carry out the following special action:

Blood Lust: The Vampire loses their declared action for the turn and must instead take a Move action. If the Vampire finishes the move standing adjacent to one or more standing, prone, or stunned Thralls, he attacks one of them. Immediately roll for injury on the Thrall who has been attacked without making an Armour roll. The injury will not cause a turnover unless the Thrall was holding the ball. If the Vampire is not able to attack a Thrall (for any reason), then he is removed from the field and placed in his team's Reserves box, and his team suffers a Turnover. If he was holding the ball it bounces from the square he occupied when he was removed, and he may not score a Touchdown (even if he gets into the End Zone while holding the ball before being removed).

If the Vampire is Knocked Out or Injured before biting a Thrall, then he should be placed in the appropriate box of the Dug Out instead of being placed in the Reserves box. Note that the Vampire is allowed to pick up the football or do anything else they could normally do while taking a Move action, but must bite a Thrall to avoid the Turnover.

PART TWO: ERRATA

(All page numbers refer to the printed handbook)

Page 6: Change the third sentence of the third paragraph to: Each coach must set up 11 players or as many players as they have in Reserves up to 11 between their End Zone and the half way line...

Page 7: Replace the second paragraph of MOVING THE TURN MARKER with: A coach who is called for illegal procedure must use up a re-roll immediately (this counts as using his re-roll for the turn). If he has already used a re-roll for the turn when the penalty is called, or he doesn't have any re-rolls left, then the opposing coach gains a re-roll. If a coach forgets to move the Turn marker, but can rectify his mistake before the opposing coach spots the error, then he cannot be called for illegal procedure. In addition, if a coach is correctly called for illegal

procedure, this counts as use of a team re-roll for the turn. If a coach incorrectly calls an illegal procedure then he must remove a re-roll immediately. If he does not have any remaining re-rolls left, then his opponent gains a re-roll.

Page 11: Replaced Stunned on the Injury Table to: 2-7 Stunned – Leave the player on the field, but turn them face-down. All face-down players are turned face up at the end of their next team turn, even if a turn-over takes place. Note that a player may not turn face up on the turn they are stunned. Once face-up they may stand up on any subsequent turn using the normal rules.

Page 17: Change Griff Oberwald's price on his card to 380,000/90,000.

Page 17: Change the last sentence in second paragraph of STAR PLAYERS to: Star Players may only be hired for a single match for league games (see the rules for Freebooters later).

Page 17: Change last sentence on page to: Cost: The cost to purchase the Star Player is the first listed price. The second price listed is the cost to hire this Star for a single match during league games.

Page 18: Replace Riot on the Kick-Off Table with: 2 Injury Time: The referee waits to allow for injured players and other debris to be cleared from the field. If the receiving team's turn marker is on turn 4 or earlier, he does not adjust the clock so both teams turn markers are moved one space forward along the Turn track. If it is turn 5 through 8, he adjusts the clock to give the teams time to finish so both teams turn markers are moved one space back.

Page 18: Replace Get the Ref! on the Kick-Off Table with: 3 Get the Ref! The fans exact gruesome revenge on the referee for some of the dubious decisions he has made, either during this match or in the past. His replacement is so intimidated that for the rest of the half he will not send players from either team off for making a foul or ban players using secret weapons.

Page 18: Replace Blitz! on the Kick-Off Table with: 10 Blitz! The defence start their drive a fraction before the offence are ready, catching the receiving team flat-footed. The kicking team receives a free 'bonus' turn where any player not in an enemy tackle zone may take a Move action. One eligible player on the Kicking team may take a Blitz action rather than a Move. Players in an enemy tackle zone at the beginning of this free turn may not perform an action. The kicking team may use team re-rolls during a Blitz. If any player suffers a turnover then the bonus turn ends immediately.

Page 18: Replace Field Invasion on the Kick-Off Table with: 12 Pitch Invasion: Both coaches roll a D6 for each opposing player on the pitch. If one team has a higher Fan Factor then they may add +1 to each dice roll. If a roll is 6 or more after modification the player is Stunned.

Page 24: Change Rat Ogre agility to 2.

Page 25: Replace Big Guy entry with: Big Guys prefer to work on their own, and in any case are not noted for paying terribly much attention to what is going on in

team practice sessions! As a result, Big Guys may not use Team, Leader, or Trophy Re-rolls during their actions.

Page 25: Change the last sentence of the Bone Head entry to: The player loses his tackle zone and may not catch the ball, assist either player on a block or foul, or voluntarily move until he manages to roll a 2 or better at the start of a future action.

Page 25: Change the last sentence of the Really Stupid entry to: The player loses his tackle zone and may not catch the ball, assist either player on a block or foul, or voluntarily move until he manages to roll a 4 or better at the start of a future action.

Page 25: Replace the Take Root entry with: Before taking any action roll a D6. On a 2 or more the player may take his action as normal. On a 1, the Player "takes root", and his MA is considered 0 until a touchdown is scored or the half ends, or he is knocked over (and no, players from his own team may not try and Block him in order to try to knock him over!). A player that has taken root may not Go For It, be pushed back for any reason, or use any skill that would allow him to move out of his current square. The player may block adjacent players without following-up.

Page 25: Replace the paragraph after BIG GUYS AND STAR PLAYER POINTS with: Most Big Guys can only take Strength skills. Rat Ogres and Minotaurs can take Physical abilities as well (representing mutations), but only if they roll a double. A Big Guy that rolls a double while making a Star Player roll may choose to take a Strength Trait, or General, Passing, or Agility skills.

Page 34: Replace the entry for Hypnotic Gaze with: Hypnotic Gaze – The player has a powerful telepathic ability that he can use to stun an opponent into immobility. The player may use the hypnotic gaze at the end of any Move action on one opposing player who is in an adjacent square. Make an Agility roll for the player with hypnotic gaze, with a -1 modifier for each opposing tackle zone on the player with hypnotic gaze other than the victim's. If the Agility roll is successful, then the victim is hypnotised and loses their tackle zone and may not catch the ball, assist either player on a block or foul, or voluntarily move for the rest of the team turn. If the Agility test is failed, then the hypnotic gaze has no effect.

Page 35: Add to the end of Multiple Block: In case of each opponent being pushed back, fully resolve the push back for one opponent before resolving the second opponent's push back.

Page 35: Return Pro to a skill as in the text already.

Page 35: Replace the entry for Regeneration with: Regeneration – If the player suffers a Casualty result on the Injury Table, then roll a D6 for Regenerate after the roll on the Casualty Table. On a result of 1-3, the player suffers the result of this injury. On a 4-6, the player will heal the injury after a short period of time to "re-organise" himself, and is placed in the Reserves box instead. Regeneration rolls may not be re-rolled. Note that opposing players still earn Star Player points

as normal for inflicting a Casualty result on a player with this skill, even if the result doesn't affect the player in the normal way.

Page 35: Change the first sentence of Shadowing to: Shadowing – The player may use this skill when the active player on the opposing team moves out of his tackle zone for any reason.

Page 36: Pro should be listed with an S still in the Skill and Trait Categories.

Page 41: Replace the 6th paragraph of 1. Hire Freebooters, Wizards, & Star Players with: Star players may only be hired for a single match when playing league games. The hiring fee of the Star Player is listed as their second price under the Star Player's cost. This means that the only time you will pay the full cost (or first price listed) for a Star Player is when they are being used as a member of a team in a non-league games.

Page 42: Replace the Handicap Table with:

11-12 EXTRA TRAINING: Your team has worked long and hard all week for this opponent. You may take an extra Team Re-roll to use for this match only.

13-14 INTENSIVE TRAINING: One player is really psyched for this week's match, and has been working very hard preparing for it. Pick a player on your team. He may take one extra skill to use for this match only, just as if he had rolled a New Skill result on the Star Player Table.

15-16 INSPIRATION: Watching the opposing team in their previous match has taught one of your players a thing or two. Pick a player on your team and give him an extra MVP. If the additional SPPs are enough to give him a new skill then generate it immediately.

21-22 I AM THE GREATEST!: The two opposing players with the most Star Player Points refuse to be on the pitch at the same time in this match. Only one may be set up on the field at the start of each drive. In case of ties, the coach rolling this result may select the player effected.

23-24 BAD PRESS: Libellous stories you have spread cut the opposing team's Fan Factor in half (rounding up) for this match only.

25-26 ILLEGAL DRUGS: Declare this special play immediately (now!). You may choose one player in your team to have either +1 ST OR +1 AG for this match only.

31-32 MORLEY'S REVENGE: The opposing team's drinks have been spiked with a powerful laxative. D3 randomly selected opposing players have drunk the spiked drink, and must roll a D6 before every kick-off. On a roll of 1-3 they are otherwise engaged and may not take part in this drive. On a roll of 4-6 they may be set up normally.

33-34 SMELLING SALTS: You make all rolls to move a player from the Knocked Out box to the Reserves box on a roll of 2 or better for this match.

35-36 PALMED COIN: You automatically win the coin toss to start the game. Do not flip the coin.

41-42 DOOM & GLOOM: The opposing team is feeling uninspired. For the first half, their Team Re-rolls are cut in half, rounded down.

43-44 IT WASN'T ME! One randomly selected player on the opposing team has been getting a little rowdy in anticipation of today's 'cakewalk,' and he's been arrested! He must miss the match.

45-46 THAT BOY'S GOT TALENT In your last match you spotted a talented fan in the stands, and he agrees to play for your team. Add one player at any position to your roster for this match only. The player leaves the roster when the match ends. Note that you may add a 17th player to a match in this fashion.

51-52 DUH, WHERE AM I?: One player of your choice from the opposing team has been out all night on a bender, and isn't really ready for the game. The Bone Head rule that applies to Ogres applies to the player for this match only.

53-54 BRIBE THE REF: You have taken up a collection to 'convince' the ref that your players are a nice, clean bunch of fellows! You may ignore the first penalty called against your team.

55-56 KNUCKLEDUSTERS: A player of your choice in your team counts as having mighty blow for this match only.

61-62 VIRUS: A mysterious illness breaks out among the opposing team, knocking out the unhealthiest members of the bunch. Any opposing player with a niggling injury is too sick to show up for this match.

63-64 IRON MAN: A player of your choice in your team is determined to play hard for the whole game, no matter what the cost – in fact, he refuses to get injured! If an opposing player beats his Armour roll, he is only Stunned (do not roll of Injury).

65-66 BUZZING! A player of your choice in your team has gone heavy on the coffee in anticipation of today's game. For this match only he gains the Jump Up trait and the Frenzy trait, but will automatically fail any attempt to pick up, intercept or catch the ball.

Page 45: Delete the last sentence from 3. Fan Factors: An unmodified roll of 1 always counts as a 1, and an unmodified roll of 6 always counts as a 6 (ie, the rule of 1 & 6 applies to rolls on the Fan factor table).

Page 76: Change the re-roll cost for the Chaos Dwarf team to 70,000 gold pieces.

Page 79: Change the price of the Mummy on the Undead team to 110,000 gold pieces.

Page 81: Change the prices of the Star Players as follows (the first value is the cost to hire the player for a one-off game, the second cost is used when the player is hired as a Freebooter in league play):

Bomber: 80,000/40,000

Count Luthor: 380,000/90,000

Deathroller: 160,000/80,000
Deeproot: 250,000/90,000
Fungus: 60,000/30,000
Grashnak: 320,000/80,000
Griff: 380,000/90,000
Grim: 220,000/70,000
Hakflem: 230,000/60,000
Headsplitter: 350,000/80,000
Horkon: 120,000/60,000
Hthark: 360,000/90,000
Jordell: 240,000/70,000
Lord Borak: 250,000/80,000
Mighty Zug: 180,000/60,000
Morg: 430,000/100,000
Nobbla: 80,000/40,000
Moranion: 180,000/70,000
Ramtut: 350,000/80,000
Ripper: 200,000/70,000
Scrappa: 60,000/30,000
Silibili: 230,000/70,000
Thrud: 100,000/50,000
Varag: 290,000/80,000
Zara: 270,000/70,000
Zzharg: 100,000/50,000