

THE CHAOS DWARF PLAYBOOK

or, Stampede
by Stephen Babbage

Derided as 'pointy hats', Chaos Dwarfs have the reputation of being the third worst Blood Bowl team ever to grace the official Blood Bowl pitch. Being perceived only higher in the pecking order than Halflings and Goblins can have some advantages as you catch your opponents completely unaware.

HATTED HEROES

Chaos Dwarves are more potent in ability than many people realise. As a coach in local leagues, I have played no less than four Chaos Dwarf teams over the many years I have been playing Blood Bowl. In each league, they have managed not only to qualify for the final series, but have also gone on to win every final outright! Although I have not won every game, I can boast that my Chaos Dwarf record is greater than any other team I have coached. With the release of the new Blood Bowl Handbook, these 'evil stunts' have been made even more potent. The Chaos Dwarfs have gained access to two new players on their squad roster, Bull Centaurs. The addition of these players has meant that the Chaos Dwarfs can also take their Minotaur or Troll Big Guy in addition to their trusted magical half-men half-beasts. Their under-dog status has now rocketed them to be one of the 'watch closely' teams. Expect Chaos Dwarf teams to feature heavily in major tournaments around the NAF under the guidance of experienced coaches.

Many people have held onto their condescending view of our hatted heroes because of their statistics on the team roster. With a closer look at the players available however, there are a lot of advantages to this team that are not obvious at first glance.

CHAOS DWARF BLOCKERS

The Blockers in the Chaos Dwarf team have been laughed at in scorn by their hatless cousins, whose Longbeards are identical in statistics to them. However, the Chaos Dwarf Blockers are the backbone of any Chaos Dwarf team - being their traditional role to hold the line. They have amazing potential to inflict casualties and dominate the line of scrimmage given the right number of assists and wise skill choices. Unlike their cousins who can have up to 16 on their team, the Chaos Dwarves can only have 6. Take advantage of that, I would recommend beginning with that number. Chaos Dwarf Blockers' natural Tackle skill is a valuable asset to have sitting in the wide zone against those who would dodge through exploited wide zones. With Thick Skull and Block, these players may be small in stature (when they remove their hats) however they stick around throughout the toughest of mêlées.

HOBGOBLINS

In many ways these not too bright players are the position players of the Chaos Dwarf team. They are the Catchers, the Throwers, the Blitzers, the Foulers and the assists where you need them. At 40,000 gold crowns each, they are an absolute bargain. While their skill-less stat line may look poor, remember that some teams have entire rosters of players with their statistics (Amazons and Norse). With one or two skills under their belts they can be major movers and shakers on the pitch. Because Hobgoblins are not too bright, you need to make sure that if they fail to do their task that your whole game plan does not come unstuck. Given a little responsibility (and a couple of skills), these greenies really respond and grow into amazing Blood Bowl players.



BULL CENTAURS

The Bull Centaurs are the key critical factor to playing a Chaos Dwarf team. They turn a lacklustre team roster into a powerhouse. The key to Bull Centaurs is their movement. Bull Centaurs on the line of scrimmage are a crying shame and waste of their ability. They are the Super-Blitzers of the team – an entirely new breed of Blitzter. They are the most powerful runners of the ball on the pitch, bar none. They also make fantastic players to run down break-away catchers and hit ball carriers hard. Two Bull Centaurs on a Chaos Dwarf team is essential, however with an expensive starting price they may need to be saved for with hard earned winnings.

MINOTAUR

A Minotaur is a big risk on a team. As they are allies they are unable to use Re-rolls. Combine this with Wild Animal, and they can find themselves in trouble before your team turn has barely begun. If you are planning to add a Minotaur to your team, ensure that they are not in a position where they can be surrounded by the opposing team, and are forced to block swarms of them. This sneaky tactic can cause several turns to be lost. Minotaurs are best at blitzing with their Horns ability anyway, leaving them in the backfield to charge down anyone trespassing deep in your half will get the message across to teams who employ that tactic.

TROLL

While not seeming to be the natural choice for a Chaos Dwarf team, the Troll makes a great asset to the front line of a Chaos Dwarf team. Chaos Dwarves with Stand Firm near Trolls provide sound advice to the easily confused Troll on who is the best opponent to be 'downsizing' next. Because of their slow movement they fit right in with your other scrimmage stalwarts. Although they don't have Thick Skull, their own Regenerate ability keeps them as tough as their friends on the line in a slightly different manner.

GOLD RUSH

As you can see, a Chaos Dwarf team has a great mix of the toughness of Dwarves, the strength and speed of Bull Centaurs and the flexibility of Hobgoblins.

When starting a team of Chaos Dwarves, you must realise that Hobgoblins, your true position players, come to your team raw and need to be coached into their respective roles. This can be a frustrating time. To make that



transition smoother, a bunch of Re-rolls is a huge asset. With the removal of 'Extra Training' special play cards as a way to purchase Re-rolls at normal cost after the team has played games, the emphasis on team formation should be to start with more Re-rolls wherever possible.

My starting lineup for The Horror-Rooks III looked like this:

2 Bull Centaurs	260,000
6 Chaos Dwarf Blockers	420,000
3 Hobgoblins	120,000
3 Re-rolls.....	150,000
5 Fan factor.....	50,000
TOTAL 1,000,000 gcs	

Another possibility would be to trade in a Chaos Dwarf Blocker for another Hobgoblin to raise the Fan Factor to 8. Starting without an Apothecary is a risk, however they do not cost extra money to purchase after the first game, whereas a Re-roll does. In my opinion, a Re-roll is far more important to a team's long term development. Make sure you keep your Hobgoblins out of the line of fire in their first game (or until you gain an Apothecary), as their Armour value 7 will leave your team short of players on the pitch if you are not careful.

STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

In any team, it is worth analysing the pros and cons of the team you are coaching. Wise

coaching and development of your team will minimise your weaknesses while maximising your strengths.

STRENGTHS

The best Blitzers in the game: The Bull Centaurs. These players are fast (an effective movement of 9), strong (ST 4) and tough (AV 9 and Thick Skull). With the addition of Block, they are a force to be reckoned with in when used effectively.

Access to strength skills: Skills like Guard, Break Tackle (on the Centaurs), Mighty Blow, Piling On and the trait Stand Firm are all powerful additions to a line of scrimmage to deal pain and keep the game in control.

Cheap players: Hobgoblins, once cash flow isn't a major issue, are expendable. Have a player which develops the wrong way (eg ages, gains a permanent injury or gains a useless increase)? Ditch them! With plenty of reserves, the tide of Hobgoblins can be a useful tool when used well.

Cheap Re-rolls: At 50k, you have the equal-cheapest Re-rolls of all the 'evil' races (a claim you share with those poncy Dark Elves).

Staying power: With Thick Skull, Block and Tackle, your front line should be on the pitch for every game. Make sure weight of

numbers, skills such as Guard and traits such as Dauntless overcome your ST 3 disadvantage against your bigger opponents.

WEAKNESSES

Slow reaction time: With the front line only moving a grand MA of 4 a turn, make sure your Bull Centaurs and Hobgoblins work overtime to make up for the shortfall in speed. Scramble your players when you need to, and don't be afraid to earmark a Re-roll for Go-for-it Re-rolls.

Low armour: Hobgoblins are the biggest weakness in the punch up game, so use them on the weaker players. Don't intentionally leave them around players with Claw, Razor Sharp Claws/Fangs or Mighty Blow. With their low Armour value and being your only real agility gurus, protect them when they become targets. Only use them as catcher types when you have plenty of reserves.

Low agility: Definitely save a Re-roll for picking up the ball with your AG 2 Bull Centaurs. They make an excellent centre to a cage-like formation (see the diagram against a Chaos team on page 10). The Hobgoblins are the only 'real' ball carriers on a Chaos Dwarf team, so use them wisely and protect them well when they have the ball.

FIRING UP THE FURNACE

The important thing is to have specific team goals or game-long tactics to use against your opponent. It may be a good idea to write them down before you begin the game somewhere where the opposing coach won't be looking.

Team strategies might include:

- Taking out or removing the effectiveness of a particularly nasty player such as a player who inflicts a large number of casualties or scores most of the opposing team's touchdowns.
- Focusing on one type of position player and 'double teaming' them so those players are reduced in effectiveness.
- Avoiding players. These players should be players who hit hard but have low movement such as Mummies, Treemen or Black Orcs..
- Playing to the other team's weaknesses rather than their strengths. If they are a fast team, beat them up. If they are a strong team, outscore them!



KICKING FORMATIONS

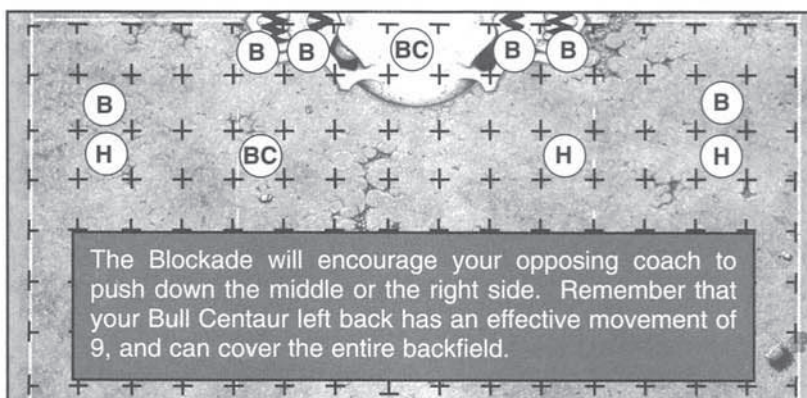
Be willing to adjust your team strategy according to how the team is faring. If the Chaos Dwarfs gain the weight of numbers on the pitch (likely with Thick Skull) then feel free to bolster your front line even further. Players off the line of scrimmage are there to read and react according to which players on your team need assists.

Make sure that you are not too thin in any area in which they specialise. If they have a strong

front line, bolster this area. If they have many fast players who dodge or leap, then make sure you increase the number of players who can react and make the players pay for any brash play into your half. Keeping a fast moving, strong player such as a Bull Centaur or Minotaur back to Blitz any nasty surprises will solve that problem soon enough.

Remember with both kinds of team it is very important you don't just fire-fight against the opponent's moves on offense, but actively

seek the ball out as soon as possible and put pressure on the ball carrier – or even snatch the ball first. The best way to stop a cage is to never let it form in the first place. A Bull Centaur through the line of scrimmage as soon as possible and straight for the ball is a very powerful tactic and hard to defend against.

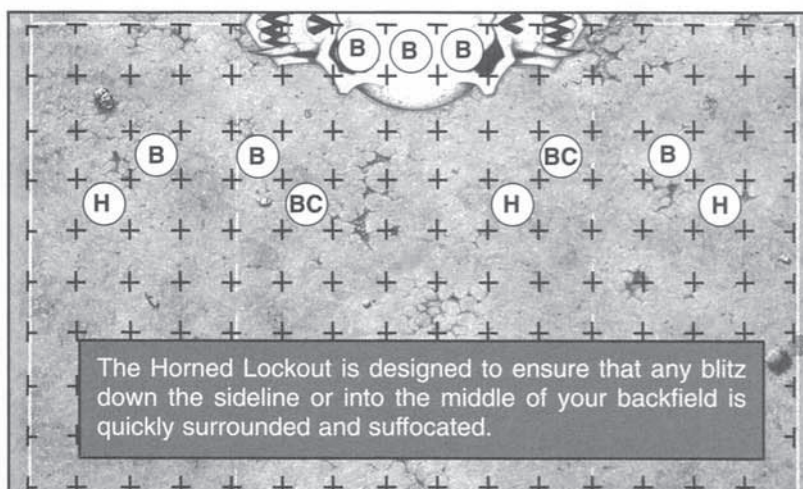


OFFENSIVE TACTICS

Ball control is essential in Blood Bowl. He who has the ball controls the direction of the game. Don't be in too big a rush to score. Make sure you take the opportunity to hit players which 'deserve' to be pounded (they are targets in your overall team strategy). Classic people to catch up with when you are on offense are Throwers, Gutter Runners, Catchers and other scoring types. Let them come to you if you can handle it. Make sure that you keep the ball rolling forward though. I normally make sure that the ball moves four squares forward in a turn. If it isn't heading that far forward, you may have problems scoring in time, or you may be losing control. Make sure that you make 'safe' blocks (two dice in your favour, particularly if you have Block). If you are badly outnumbered on the pitch, speed your offensive play up and change your strategy. Make sure that you always have an 'escort' with the ball carrier at all

times when the player is within reach opponents (and within reach includes when a Wizard is hanging around on the sideline).

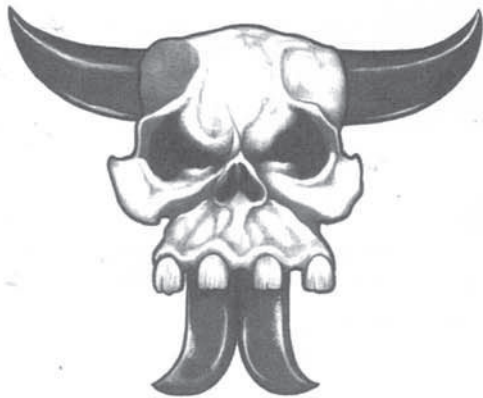
Tackle zones are a critically important factor. With your slow Blockers, tie up their players as best you can, becoming obstacles to them mounting a strong attack on the ball carrier. Where possible, push players out of bounds or injure them off the pitch. Weight of numbers is a decisive factor in the game. Two players off makes the game 11 on 9 – a very big advantage. Because of your slow movement



keep the ball near other players at all times to aid its recovery if something goes awry. Make sure that you don't get caught napping with your Hobgoblins playing fetch after an enemy's Blitz action.

Use your Bull Centaurs to make holes in the defense in the areas where you plan to run. If you face tough resistance, consider keeping a Bull Centaur back for the kick-off and getting him to run with it, however it may take a Re-roll for him to receive a handoff or to pick it up. Because of your speed don't be afraid to be unsubtle in your setup and stack one side. This is particularly effective if your opponent is also slow.

Keep your play focused on the ball, even when striking out opposing players. Make sure that if a block or foul fails (the fouler is sent off), that your ball still has a safe location.



REALLY OFFENSIVE TACTICS

If you're playing Chaos Dwarfs – act like it! Chaos Dwarfs are great at taunts and sarcasm. Feel free to taunt your player before the match, during the match and after the match. Here are some useful pre-game taunts.

Against Wood elves: "Love the Lycra!"

Against Treemen: "Firewood for the furnace!"

Against Amazons: Any male chauvinistic comment will suffice.

If anyone points out the pointy hats, make sure you have a comeback ready.

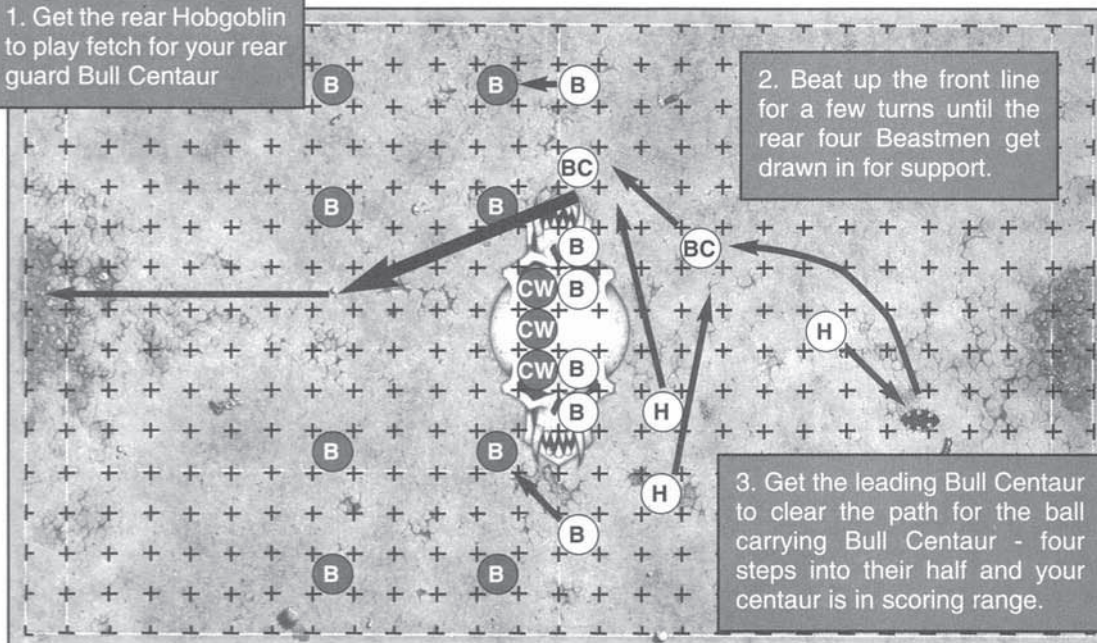
"At least we don't wear high heels!" is a good one for Dark elves / Amazons.

Trash talk is worth using too. Watching some wrestling will give plenty of ideas. Some of the comments in fighting video games such as Mortal Combat are useful for gaining clever retorts as well.

Practice the gruff exterior sarcastic expressions. It annoys the heck out of your opponents, which gives you the advantage in clear thinking!

Make sure that you keep a Hobgoblin around for the boot to your opponent's head when the ref isn't looking. At 40k, Hobgoblins are expendable to the game, and removing downed opponents is an important job. Feel free to foul even when the odds are against you if the rewards justify the risk.

1. Get the rear Hobgoblin to play fetch for your rear guard Bull Centaur



2. Beat up the front line for a few turns until the rear four Beastmen get drawn in for support.

3. Get the leading Bull Centaur to clear the path for the ball carrying Bull Centaur - four steps into their half and your centaur is in scoring range.

1. Bring in backup for your Hobgoblin ball carrier in case he fails to pick it up. Chase and kill enemy Catchers with your Bull Centaurs.

2. Tie up Tackle Zones and smash their linemen. Form a cage of players around the ball carrier.

3. Take your time, and edge your way into the End Zone. Make sure there is plenty of protection for your ball carrier.

If the game or dice is beginning to turn against you – have a five minute 'smoko break' (which will confuse your opponents if you don't smoke!). A time out at the right time might change the tide. Rather than the game spiralling out of control, it can settle things back down where you can deal with things at a more Chaos Dwarf pace. On the converse side of the coin, if things are going your way, make sure you don't relent for a moment. Use the advantage for every Star Player point you can. Star Player points count for far longer than just this game.

GENERAL PLAYING ADVICE

A balance needs to be made between playing too spread out where you have no real punch, and playing too bunched up where you will be unable to react to a break away by an opposing ball carrier.



BEEFING UP THE TEAM

As your team improves and has more games under their belt, players will gain Star Player rolls. How your players develop can be a matter of opinion, however some skills are better than others. When players develop, it is worth thinking which teams are proving the most difficult to overcome, and countering their abilities with good skills.

Chaos Dwarf Blockers will benefit from skills such as Guard and Mighty Blow. On Doubles, traits and skills such as Stand Firm and surprisingly Dodge will keep your players where you want them more often. Leader may also be a useful trait to place on one of your Blockers, as they stick around on the pitch well after most have ended up in the Dugout after being wounded.

Hobgoblins will benefit from diversifying. Those which gain extra movement should be developed into Catcher/Runner types with skills such as Block and Dodge (if you gain doubles). Hobgoblins with extra Agility should gain skills such as Sure Hands and Block to run with the ball. Well developed Hobgoblins can also develop into Throwers, however it is wise to develop a short passing game over an elven long bomb style play.

Bull Centaurs should choose Block as a first skill, and other skills such as Strip Ball can infuriate an opponent. Bull Centaurs are ideal to send after the ball straight after you have kicked, so other skills such as Break Tackle and if you are fortunate Dodge will assist.

Stand Firm can also be a big asset when attempting to dodge and being involved in plays near the sideline.

I am a firm believer that boring but reliable skill selection (chosen like a true Dwarf) will serve your team over surprise skill selection such as Pass Block.

HTHARK THE UNSTOPPABLE

Freebooting this player is a huge boost to your team if you can afford to do so and it is an important match like a final or must-win game. Hthark is arguably the best Star Player there is in the stable of Star Players. His amazing ability of 9 movement with his firepower of Strength 6 and Block is not to be trifled with. Make sure that Hthark has room to strut his stuff on the pitch, and saving a Re-roll so he can Break Tackle wherever he chooses is a wise use of his abilities.

ZZHARG MAD-EYE

Only being able to freeboot this player is in my opinion no real loss at all. His ability to peg the ball can be easily replaced by a Hobgoblin with the Hail Mary Pass if you happen upon a fortunate doubles roll. The Hobgoblin will be a better player for the job with increased agility (to pick up the ball) and movement, as well as no chance of being sent off by an angry referee banning his secret weapon.

GET ONTO THE PITCH

Hopefully this article has made you see that the Chaos Dwarf team is far from weak. I hope it has inspired you to pick up your pointy hat and sharpen your tusks for a game or three of Blood Bowl. I look forward to seeing your nasty Dwarf team the other side of the field in an NAF tournament soon. I hear the sound of galloping hooves already.

