

THE GOBLIN PLAYBOOK

Or Mean, Green and Dangerously Unclean

by Jim Mawby

GOBLIN TACTICS

Many Bloodbowl coaches will tell you that Goblin tactics is a contradiction in terms. Well, it's time to set the record straight. Although, admittedly, your average Goblin Blood Bowl player is a couple of hundred yards short of a touchdown, so to speak, that doesn't mean that the occasional devious, malevolent, and underhanded bunch of hygienically-challenged criminals can't rise to the cream of any Blood Bowl league. Well, the middle anyway. Or upper-bottom.

The point is, although Goblins **don't** win all the time, they can, with a little cunning, win some of the time. If you're after a truly successful team, you're reading the wrong article. If, on the other hand, you're looking for a rewarding, challenging, and bottom-line fun team to play, then Goblins are for you. There is little more satisfying in Blood Bowl than beating a finely-honed-touchdown-machine with an irreverent rabble of suicidal maniacs. And nothing more distressing for your opponents. Sound like fun? Then read on...

TEAM DESIGN

Now, it must be admitted, there's not a lot of choice when it comes to picking a goblin team. After the obligatory two Trolls, most of your team will be 'bog-standard' (literally) Goblins, at 40k each. You can, of course, have 14 Goblins, but that would leave you having to buy only three re-rolls and a fan factor of 6. Since you're going to need all the re-rolls you can get your grubby **little** claws on, I recommend starting with **at least** four. I would therefore advise going with 13 Goblins, FF 4, and 4 Re-rolls. You could always, especially if planning for a long league, drop one more Goblin and start with a FF of 8, but for most purposes, the following line-up should suffice:

13 Goblins	520k
2 Trolls	200k
4 Re-rolls	240k
4 Fan Factor	40k
TOTAL	1,000k

In general, I don't recommend hiring **freebooted** Star Players, since they are an **unwelcome** drain on precious resources, which you will probably need to replace **mashed players**. However, if you are picking a team for a one off game or playing in a final, you should give serious consideration to buying one or two of the versatile and entertaining Star Players available to Goblins. (although never, never be tempted to pay double and hire a non-Goblin or non-Troll!).

GENERAL TACTICS

If you're still here, it's time to reveal the worst-kept secret in Blood Bowl: Goblins aren't that good at it. However, one of the best kept secrets of the game is this: **nor are they completely useless**. In fact, Goblins have one or two very important advantages, and if you are going to appreciate Goblin tactics, it is as well to get them out of the **squig-pen** right now.

Firstly, a Goblin team is one of **only two** teams capable of fielding TWO Strength 5 players. (We all know who the other team is, and frankly, they're the one team in the league you don't have to worry about). Buy, keep, and try and maximize the use of two Trolls on your team at all times. Trolls will be a target for your opponent, guaranteed; if you're smart, you can use this, leading opponents away to focus on your Trolls while your Goblins score. A word of caution though: be wary of throwing your Trolls into the line – regeneration gives them a better chance than most, but remember that your trolls are there as support for your Goblins; they are essential for many of the successful plays, and losing one or both of them early in the game can spell disaster for the team.

Secondly, at only 40k per basic player, you should have numerical superiority over most teams; especially over the hated (and much feared) Dwarfs, and those too-good, I'm-not-putting-my-hand-in-that, never-had-a-good-festering Elves. Numerical superiority means two things – firstly, you can afford to risk suicidal plays that will probably lose you a player, and secondly, you can foul with a degree of impunity – if the ref sends your

back-stabbing hooligan off, there's another one waiting on the bench to take his place. Later in a league, getting numerical superiority can be harder; teams may have developed to a 16 strong squad themselves by then – hopefully, however, the same judicious fouling can keep these numbers down for your opponent but not for you. Remember the immortal words of famed Goblin coach Rotgang Snufflegut: “sending off is just for fun – a serious injury stays with you for life”.

Thirdly, and importantly, Goblin players have a lot going for them – a fact which will be overlooked by 90% of your opponents. Most coaches will be worried by your Trolls, even fearful of your fouling hob-nailed boots. But the humble Goblin is often seen as a joke at best (on offense) and a sticky mess at worst (on defence). And with a Strength of 2, an Armour of 7, and a nasty little skill that makes them more vulnerable to injury, it's not hard to see why.

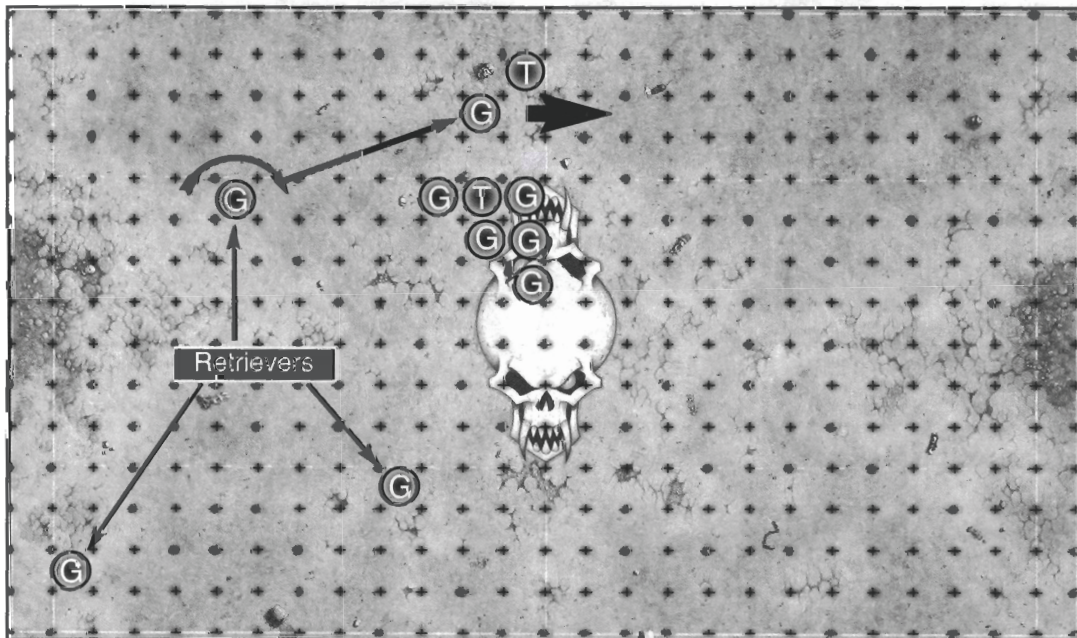
However, every last one of the little runts has the Dodge skill and the Stunty skill. Wherever

they dodge, it's 3+ with a re-roll. Not bad – offensively, this means it's easy to get receivers into the backfield, and defensively, Dodge means they're actually harder to bring down than a Human lineman, despite their Strength of 2. Unbelievable? That's just what your opponent will think as your Goblin scrimmage fails to get brought down, but just edges away from their attack as they roll a string of pushbacks.

There are, of course, some things Goblins can't do, and shouldn't be expected to. Throwing is one of them – try to develop running plays, or at least plays that involve only quick or short passes. Blitzing is another – if you must blitz, try to get a couple of goblins dodging through the line – despite their ability to stay standing against unbelievable odds sometimes, they're not much cop when asked to bring down even a Halfling single-handed.

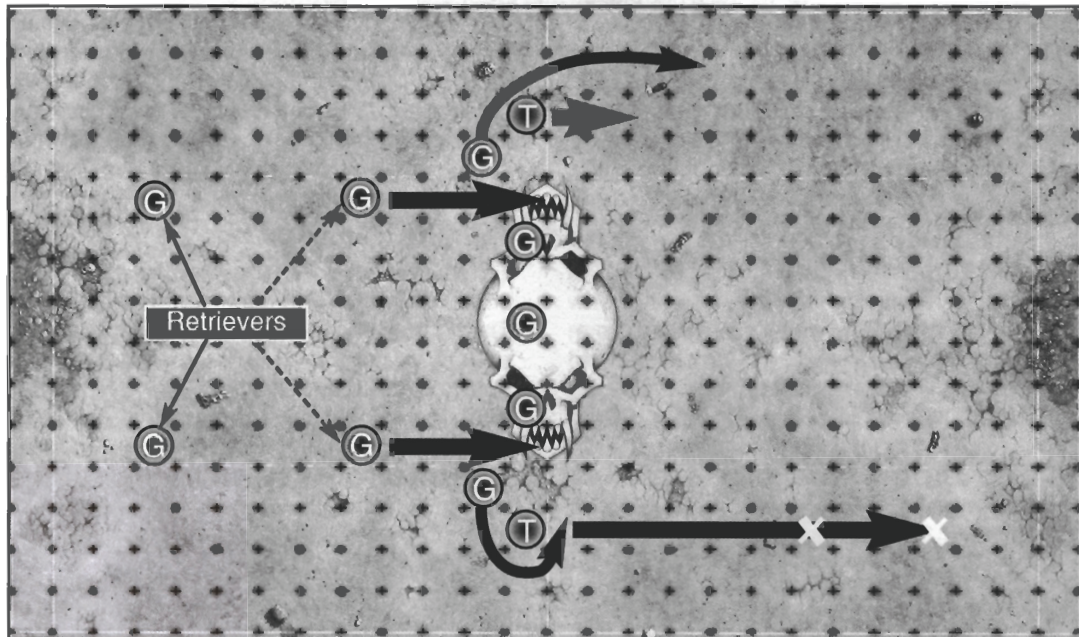
OK, with these general comments out of the way, it's time to have a look at some specific plays as we open the Goblin playbook. Just don't ask what all the stains are...

GOBLIN OFFENSIVE PLAY 1 - The Mugging



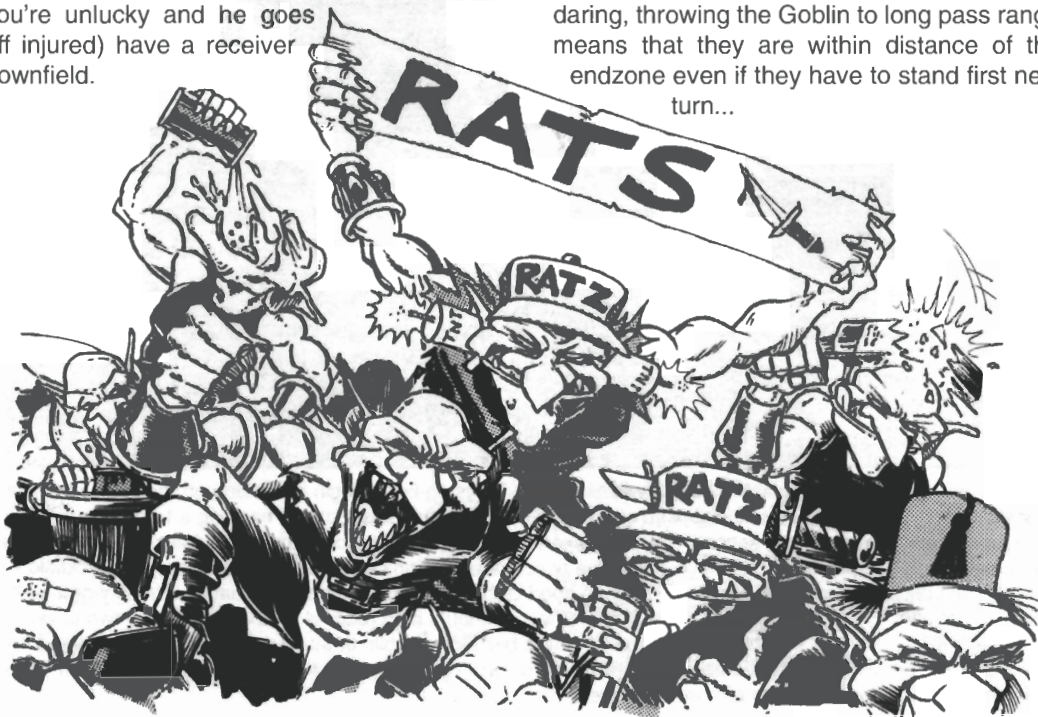
Here's a nice simple play, at least while you've still got two Trolls on-field. Begin by blitzing on the wide zone with your wide zone Troll. When he has disposed of one of the opponents, he should be exerting a tackle zone on the other – you can then bring your second Troll up to exert a tackle on anyone bordering the wide zone as well. Use your Goblin mob to crumble just that side of the line of scrimmage (don't worry about defending your backfield – Goblins can't usually afford such luxuries) and then flood Goblins into the wide zone, creating a 'mesh' around the Goblin target already in the wide zone. One of the retrievers should then recover the ball, (the other two covering him in case it goes wrong), and then pass or hand off the ball to the goblin in the wide zone. Now you should be set for a quick rumble down the sideline in the next turn or two – goblin runs in to score, supported by both Trolls, while your opponent scrabbles to get back to cover.

GOBLIN OFFENSIVE PLAY 2 - The Up-Chuck

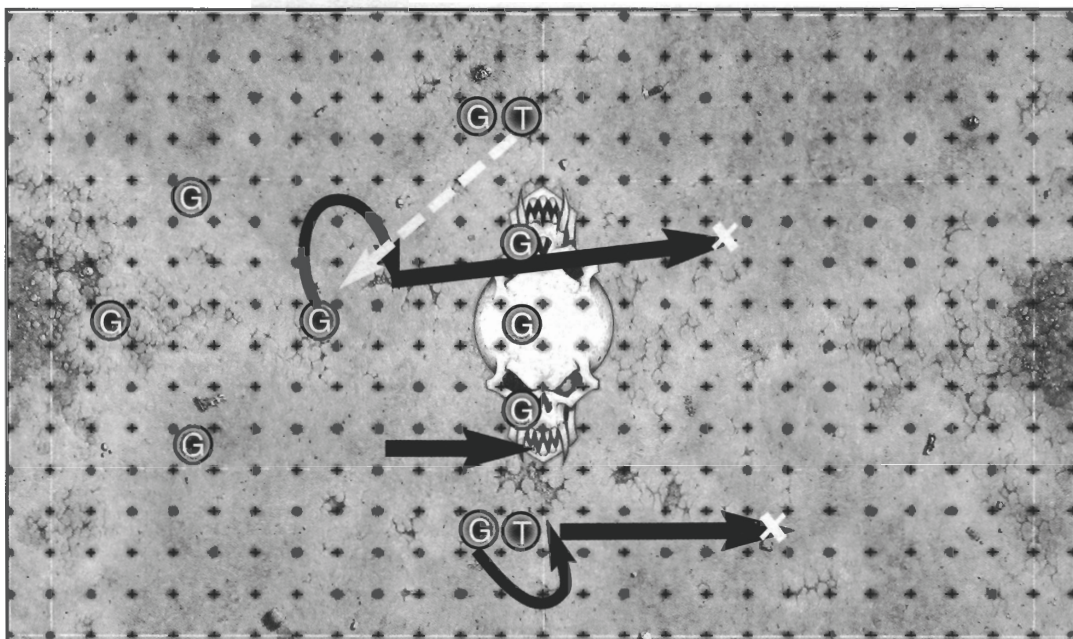


This is an odd play for the goblins, involving more than a bit of throwing; but at least your opponent won't expect it! The idea is that one of your Trolls chucks a Goblin downfield, and then you toss the ball after it, and hope that both end up in the endzone at some point. Although it's tempting to chuck a Goblin who is holding the ball, it's better to resist; that way it's not a turnover even if the Goblin falls down (as he probably will), and you still (unless you're unlucky and he goes off injured) have a receiver downfield.

If the first play fails completely, you can always chuck another one next turn; and if you can, at the end of your first turn, try to force/dodge a Goblin through on the other side; this will give your opponent something else to worry about, and you another receiver if they don't. As far as throwing Goblins go, it is generally better to stick to short passes or less to reduce the chance of a fumble (especially since Trolls can't use re-rolls). However, if you're feeling daring, throwing the Goblin to long pass range means that they are within distance of the endzone even if they have to stand first next turn...



GOBLIN OFFENSIVE PLAY 2 (A) - The Quick Up-Chuck



The next play is just an adaptation of the Up-Chuck to take advantage of the remarkable fact that Goblin teams start with an almost unheard of possibility in Blood bowl – the coveted One-Turn-Touchdown. This generally shouldn't be attempted unless there's only one turn of play left in the half, in which case it definitely should – it's really not as unlikely as you might think. Set up as shown in the diagram; as long as the ball lands in either of the shaded areas, you have a shot at it – and if your opponent tries to kick the ball outside of this area, there's a good chance that it'll go off, giving you an even better shot at it! Use the

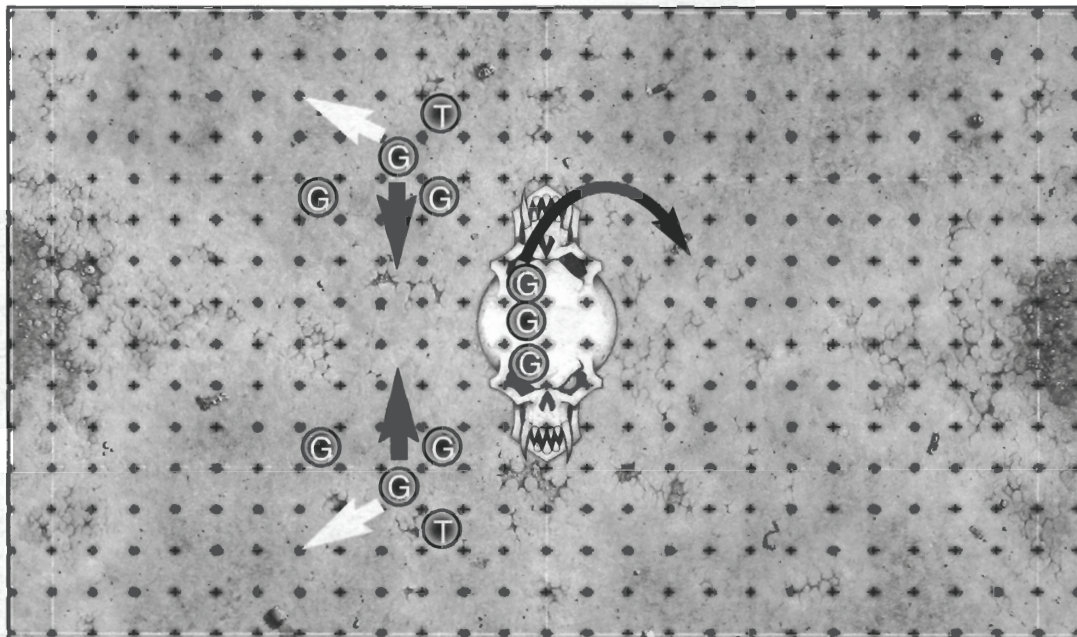
retrievers (or, if it lands on or near the line of scrimmage, a dodging lineman) to gather the ball, and then hand off to one of the Gobblins standing by a Troll, who is

then short-passed to within running distance of the endzone! (If the ball initially lands in the rear shaded area, you will need to give it to the central receiver, and the Troll will need to move back as shown and risk the long bomb).

You're probably thinking by now that this just is never going to work. Pick up (3+), Hand-Off (3+), Troll stupidity (2+), Not fumbling (3+), and then Landing (probably 4+) looks like a tall order. But if you have a re-roll left, the chances of pulling this off are only about 1 in 3 – not bad for a chance at a one-turn touchdown! Of course, the more Go For It's you have to do, the less chance you have, but even so, it's not impossible. And what else are you going to do with the last turn of the half?



GOBLIN DEFENSIVE PLAY 1 - The Dark Alley

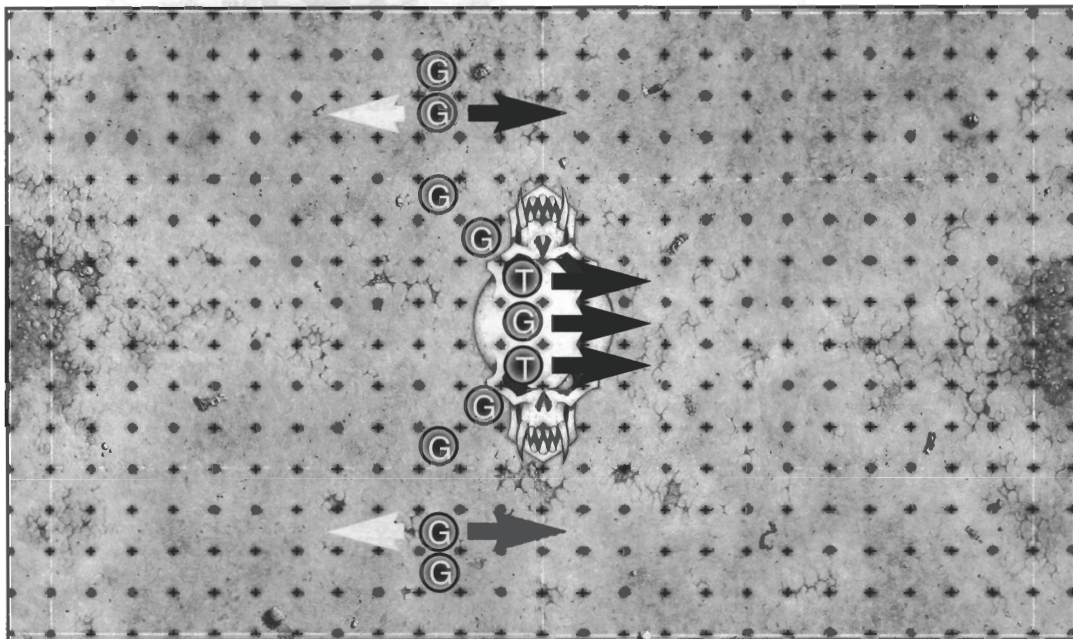


The idea here is a simple one – with luck, your opponent will be drawn down the (relatively open) middle of your backfield, rather than face the Trolls in the wide zones. If he does make a play down the middle, you can then

fold in on him from both sides, with a Troll on either flank. If instead your opponent tries to advance along the wide zones, you have a Troll on each.



GOBLIN DEFENSIVE PLAY 2 - The Squig Hunt



When Goblin Squig Hunters go squig hunting, they use nets to tie up **their quarry** while they poke them into submission with sharp sticks. In this play, use your Goblins as the net, creating complex **tackle zones** several squares deep, and your Trolls as the sharp sticks, to attack enmeshed opponents. You can push through **with your Trolls** if the

opportunity arises, or else just batter your **opponents** as they try to force their way **through** the net. If you're playing against one of the tougher teams, like Orcs or Chaos, you might want to move up two Goblins to have a five strong line that will leave your Trolls initially less exposed to attack.



SKILL PICKS AND LEAGUE PLAY

The choice of skills can have a bearing on the strategy you use; certainly some can support the above strategies well. As a general guide, Side Step can be invaluable, particularly for Goblins on the line; your opponent's surprise will double when his attempt to demolish your three-Goblin front line just succeeds in putting the whole line behind his line of scrimmage! Hail Mary is probably THE skill if you get any Doubles, but the chance to build a blitzing Goblin with Strip Ball is also a nice option. As for Trolls, I actually recommend Pro first, even more than Block, although Block is probably a solid second. After that, Multiple Block, Break Tackle... and if you get any Doubles, what about Nerves of Steel? Great for throwing the green menace just over the line of scrimmage.

Well, that's it for me – go forth, and infect the league with irritating sores. Just time for one last word of important advice: Never play against Dwarfs. Seriously!