

PUTTING THE BOOT IN

By Ian 'Double Skulls' Williams

For as long as anyone can remember, kicking a player when he is down has been an integral part of the game. In fact, many Blood Bowl players would happily stamp on their own mother, let alone a dazed star player holding his bits, if they thought it gave them an advantage. Even the daftest Goblin knows that a well-timed kick can win the adulation of the crowd and maybe even the game! Love it or loathe it, whether you are the boot or the booted, fouling is a tactic you just have to understand.

For the most part this article isn't going to discuss the moral aspects of fouling – that is best handled within your league. Instead it focuses on the risks and rewards. Running around putting the boot in at random might be fun, but it is almost certainly ineffective.

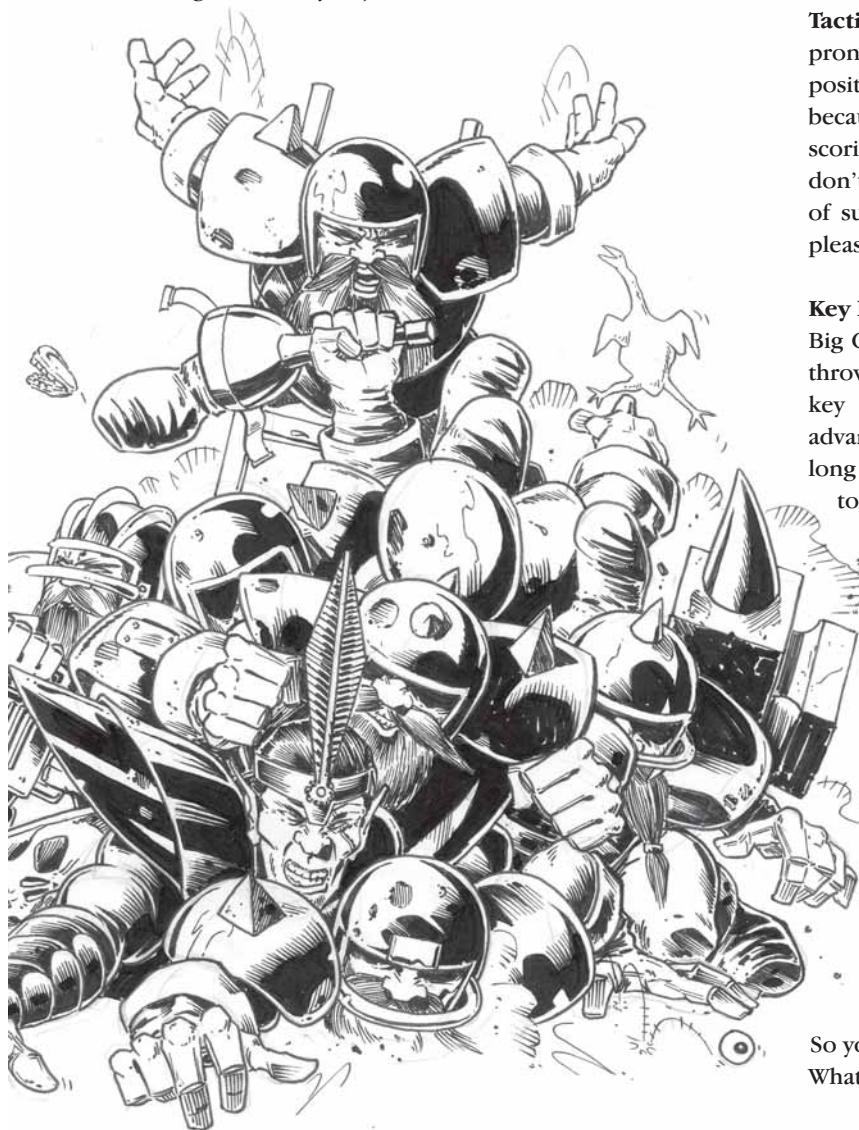
So what are you trying to achieve when you foul? Likelihood is it's one of the following three goals:

Tactical Fouls: Sometimes you are looking to stun a prone opponent who for some reason is in a dangerous position should they be able to get up. Normally this is because they are the only player who can score, stop you scoring, or are able to blitz the ball carrier. In general, you don't care if you get sent off and the main measurement of success is breaking armour. A KO or a casualty is a pleasant bonus.

Key Players: Most teams have key players. War Dancers or Big Guys are classic examples, but it could be that super thrower or a one turn wonder. Removing your opponent's key player(s) from the game can give you a huge advantage. Being sent off can be considered a fair trade as long as you get them off the pitch. Normally you are trying to get rid of key players early on, so a knock out doesn't always help. Sometimes there are considerations beyond the current game. Killing a key player now might give you an advantage in the final...

Numbers: Sometimes you are fouling just to try and gain an advantage in numbers. If so, you will be looking for KOs and casualties. Being sent off without getting your opponent off the pitch as well can be a disaster as you will have given the advantage away. This is a particular favourite for teams with cheap Linemen as they can afford larger squads to absorb a couple of red cards. Remember, if you are going to foul, it always makes sense to target the most valuable opponent you can with the least important of your own players.

So you've worked out who you are going to foul and why. What are your chances of success?



Fouling with a Normal Player					
Effective AV	Break Armour %	Stun %	KO %	Cas %	Off Pitch %
10	16.7	9.7	4.2	2.8	6.9
9	27.8	16.2	6.9	4.6	11.6
8	41.7	24.3	10.4	6.9	17.4
7	58.3	34.0	14.6	9.7	24.3
6	72.2	42.1	18.1	12.0	30.1
5	83.3	48.6	20.8	13.9	34.7
4	91.7	53.5	22.9	15.3	38.2
3	97.2	56.7	24.3	16.2	40.5
2	100	58.3	25.0	16.7	41.7

Effective Av is the Av including modifiers (so fouling an Av 10 Treeman with 3 assists is Effective Av 7. The +1 fouling bonus is included already).

Off Pitch % is the chance of getting your opponent off the pitch ie, KO or casualty.

So against a Human Lineman (Av 8) with 2 assists your opponent has an effective Av of 6. That means you've got a 12% chance of getting a casualty, 18.1% chance of a knockout (giving a 30.1% chance of getting them off the pitch) and will at least get a stun 72.2% of the time.

For a dirty player against a Wood Elf Catcher (Av 7) with 1 assist your opponent has an effective Av of 6. That means you've got a huge 32.2% chance of getting a casualty, 26.1%

Fouling with a Dirty Player					
Effective AV	Break Armour %	Stun %	KO %	Cas %	Off Pitch %
10	41.7	19.2	11.3	11.1	22.5
9	58.3	25.5	16.1	16.7	32.8
8	72.2	29.4	20.4	22.5	42.8
7	83.3	30.8	24.1	28.5	52.5
6	88.9	30.6	26.1	32.2	58.3
5	97.2	31.3	28.9	37.0	66.0
4	100	30.3	30.1	39.6	69.7
3	100	28.6	30.4	41.0	71.4
2	100	27.8	30.6	41.7	72.2

chance of a knockout (getting them off the pitch 58.3% of the time) and will at least get a stun 88.9% of the time.

What do these numbers mean in practice? One way of looking at them is to calculate what I'll call a "ratio of worth". That's the odds of you being sent off against the odds of actually getting a casualty. This is particularly important if you are fouling to establish a numerical superiority.

The odds of getting sent off aren't exactly 1/6 or 1/2 because you can argue the call. So long as you can argue you should. There is no effect if you should get sent off yourself, other than that you can no longer argue the call. So it's a 5/36 chance, or 15/36 if the Eye is on you, of getting sent off.



The Elves put the boot in whilst holding off the rest of the team.

Ratio of Worth without the Eye		
Effective Av	Normal Player	Dirty Player
10	5.00	1.25
9	3.00	0.83
8	2.00	0.62
7	1.43	0.49
6	1.15	0.43
5	1.00	0.38
4	0.91	0.35
3	0.86	0.34
2	0.83	0.33

So a normal player fouling an Av 8 Human lineman with 3 assists is an even trade as the ratio is 1.0. That means the odds of getting a casualty are the same as getting sent off. For a Dirty Player fouling an Av 7 Skaven Linerat with 3 assists his ratio is 0.35. That means he is nearly 3 times as likely to get a casualty as he is of getting sent off. If you only need a KO the ratio is significantly better.

Fouling when the Eye isn't on you with a Dirty Player is almost always in your favour. Even if you don't have a Dirty Player, getting enough assists means that the odds are in your favour for a good trade.

As is clearly shown above, if you aren't a Dirty Player the target must be significantly more valuable to your opponent than your fouler is to you. Dirty Players, particularly cheap ones when you have reserves to replace them, can still foul at reasonable odds. After all, a Hobgoblin isn't as valuable as a Mummy.

Obviously, the best chance of a successful foul is gained by using as many assists as possible. A lower effective Av means a better chance of breaking armour and achieving your objective. This means dedicating a significant proportion of your team to taking out one opponent – and having them all in one big lump. There are risks associated with this – you will leave space for your opponent to move into, potentially giving them a better chance of scoring or turning you over. Bear in mind that any player on the pitch is far more valuable than one off it. A skeleton might only cost 30k, but getting sent off might cost you a TD.



One tactic to help your positioning is to foul with the cage. By moving the cage up to the target and then fouling you can get several assists without those players being out of position. However, be wary of leaving your opponent with an easy blitz should you fail to break armour or get sent off. Another tactic is to ensure that your victim is

Ratio of Worth with the Eye on You		
Effective Av	Normal Player	Dirty Player
10	15.00	3.75
9	9.00	2.50
8	6.00	1.86
7	4.29	1.46
6	3.46	1.29
5	3.00	1.13
4	2.73	1.05
3	2.57	1.02
2	2.50	1.00

knocked down into a position where you have several players that have already moved.

You also need to consider the timing of your fouls. If you foul early on in the turn, how badly are you going to be affected should you get sent off? On the other hand, you might have a prime target lying in the middle of your team just begging to be booted in the head. If you have players who are already in a position to assist, it may be better fouling early on and then moving the rest of your team.

The kick off result "Get the Ref" can win you a game if you have a Dirty Player and your opponent does not. Even if you lose the roll, having a Dirty Player can be a powerful incentive for your opponent not to foul at every opportunity.

A quick note on etiquette; most opponents don't seem to mind losing players to blocks, but they can become seriously upset by what they deem to be unnecessary fouling. As there are no SPPs for fouls, don't expect a friendly post-game if you are still trying to kick your opponent into the middle of next week once the result has been decided.

Blood Bowl is a game of balance. Weigh up the risks and rewards of fouling and make your decision. You'll sometimes get it wrong and maybe those times will cost you the match, but don't worry, good judgement comes with experience. Experience comes from making bad decisions and learning from them.

If you decide to foul be clear of your objective, target the most important opponents and ensure that you have enough assists to get a good rate of return. That way your team will not only be winners, but "popular to boot!"

Author

Further Information

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Website

Ian is a veteran coach and a prominent member of the Blood Bowl online community. He was the author of the infamous blocking article in issue one so he knows his tactics.

The Blood Bowl box set is available from all good GW stockists.

Turn to page 90 for the Tourney Round up.

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