
4TH EDITION SPECIAL PLAYS

by JERVIS JOHNSON

As almost all of you will know, the Death Zone supplement for the 3rd edition of Blood Bowl included 146 'Special Play Cards'. These cards allow for a wide range of wild and wacky events to happen during a game of Blood Bowl, and allowed me (as the games designer) to make sure that many of the things that are mentioned in the descriptive text could take place in a game.

Most coaches I know have a love/hate relationship with the special play cards; they like the fact that they add a lot of character, but are sometimes put off by the highly random element they add to the game. Some coaches simply won't use them, and indeed they were left out of the Italian language version of the game mainly because both the head of GW Italia and the Italian's chief games developer at that time would never allow the cards to be used in their own games (and there you were thinking that decision like this were based on careful market research!). Issues of game balance aside, it also has to be said that some of the cards throw up more than their fair share of rules questions, and this is another reason some coaches do like to use them.

Because of these things it was always my intention to give the special play cards a bit of a 'going over', even if it was only to deal with the more commonly asked questions. Or at least, that was the idea until we decided to reprint Death Zone. As most of you will know, Blood Bowl is now back in print, and will remain available from Mail Order forever, or at least it will if I have anything to do with it! However, although Blood Bowl on its own is a great game, it is the league rules in Death Zone that allow it to achieve its full potential, so I knew that I really needed to get them back in print too. The problem was that on the kind of print runs I'd be looking at for a 'Mail Order only' game, it was hard to see how we could justify reprinting a high spec' product like Death Zone. "Hmmmmm," I thought, "perhaps I could just reprint the rulebook, and put the rest of the things from the box as PDF files on

our web site. Then people could down-load the cards if they wanted to use them, while I could get the rulebook (and those vitally important League rules) into general circulation". This was clearly a good plan, and so its what we've decided to do.

Which brings me back to the Special Play Cards. Although we could have just bunged up PDF's of the old special play cards and told people to glue them to bits of cardboard and use them, I decided a better idea would be to come up with a system that did away with the need for cards altogether. I could then also sort out the 'cards' that caused rules problems, and do something to mitigate the highly random nature of the special play cards under the 3rd edition rules. This article is the result.

For the time being these rules are 'experimental', but they'll become 'new rules' as soon as we've ironed out the bugs over the next month or so, at which point they'll appear on the Blood Bowl web site so that coaches that pick up the Death Zone rulebook can use special plays in their games too. Enough background here are the new rules.

SPECIAL PLAYS

All kinds of extraordinary things can happen during a game of Blood Bowl; sometimes a coach will get hold of a magic item and will use it to gain an advantage during a match, or maybe he'll come up with a dirty trick to help him win a game, or maybe a totally unexpected random event (like the ball bursting) will disrupt the match. The 'special play' rules allow all these things and much more to happen during your games of Blood Bowl as well.

The use of special plays is entirely optional. If used during a one-off match then both coaches must agree to use them. In a league the League Commissioner needs to decide if he wants special plays to be used or not. If special plays are used then the work in the following manner.

PICKING SPECIAL PLAYS

If you are using special plays then at the start of the match, before anything else happens, each coach must find out if he can perform any special plays, and if he can then he needs to find out what the special plays are.

Each coach rolls a D6 to decide if they can use a special play. If the coach rolls a '6' he can use a special play that match, and on a roll of 1-5 he may not. In a league it is possible for a coach to receive bonus special plays; look up the difference between the two teams 'team rating', on the Handicap table on page 19 of the Death Zone rulebook, to see how many bonus special plays the team with the lower rating receives.

Once you know how many special plays you have you must consult the special play tables on the following page to discover which special plays you actually have. There are four different special play tables, and you can choose which one(s) to roll on. You can divide the number of rolls you have as you wish between the different tables, using all of them on one table or splitting them up as you desire. The only restriction is that you may only roll once on the Magic Items table. Note that your roll a 'D66' on these tables, as described in the Death Zone rulebook.

There are four different methods of recording which special plays you receive. You can choose any of these methods, but whichever is picked must be used by both coaches. The four methods are:

Open: Just roll openly and write the result down. This means that the opposing coach will know what special plays you have.

Secret: Roll secretly and write the result down. This method is the most fun, but as its possible to cheat should only be used for friendly matches and/or between coaches who are old buddies.

Half-Open: This method combines elements of both the above. Each coach secretly writes down what tables he will roll on, and draws a line by his choice in which to record the dice roll for that table. The paper is folded over so only the 'dice roll' line is showing, and then the dice rolls themselves are made openly. This sounds arcane, but is easy in practice. It means that while the opposing coach knows what your dice roll is, he doesn't know which table it applies to.

Cards: If you wish you can transfer the information on the following table to cards,

TABLE	ROLL
Magic Item	_____
Dirty Trick	_____
_____	_____

fold over so only
the roll is visible.

ROLL
32
61

and just pick cards from the appropriate decks. Coaches that have the special play cards from the boxed edition of Death Zone will find this especially easy to do, though they should make sure they update their cards to show any changes made on the following pages.

USING SPECIAL PLAYS

The following 'general rules' apply to all special plays:

- All special plays may be used once only! Once you've used them they are gone until you roll them up again in a later match.
- The special play descriptions below tell you when you can use a special play and what effect it has on the game.
- If a play is used 'at the start of a turn' then you need to declare it after the turn marker is moved but before anything else is done.
- Using a special play does not interfere with the ability to use team re-rolls or player skills during the same turn.
- Special plays may only be used against opposing players if they are standing on the pitch.
- Special plays that are 'used' by one of your players to effect an opposing player may only be used by one of your player's who is standing on the pitch.
- Players knocked over or off the pitch by a special play must make armour roll and/or injury rolls as normal.
- Special plays that say they inflict injuries do so automatically without any armour roll being made – simply roll straight away on the injury table. In addition the victim is knocked over.

DIRTY TRICK SPECIAL PLAYS TABLE

D66	Result	D66	Result
11	ASSASSIN: Use at the start of any of your turns. An opposing player of your choice is struck by a poison dart and is injured.	24	ROBBED: Use this play at the end of the match. You hire a famous burglar to steal the gate money for the match. You double the money you get for this game!
12	SPY: Use immediately after your opponent declares he is using a re-roll. The re-roll has no effect but still counts as the opposing team's re-roll for the turn.	25	BRIBE THE REF: Use at the start of any of your turns to move the IGMEYOY marker onto the opposing team.
13	SPY: Use immediately after your opponent declares he is using a re-roll. The re-roll has no effect but still counts as the opposing team's re-roll for the turn.	26	SPY: Use this play immediately after your opponent declares he is using a re-roll. The re-roll has no effect but still counts as the opposing team's re-roll for the turn.
14	DOUBLE-CROSS: Use when the opposing coach uses a Dirty Trick or Magic Item. He has been fooled by a con-man, and the special play does not work.	31	BRIBE THE REF: You may use this special play after the referee has awarded an illegal procedure against you, to cancel it out.
15	LOW BLOW: Use before making a block (and only a block, not multiple blocks, secret weapons etc.) with one of your players. He kicks his opponent very hard right where it hurts, and counts as having double strength for this block only.	32	BANANA SKIN: Use this special play when an opposing player attempts to dodge out of a square. They count as having an agility of one for the dodge roll.
16	CUSTARD PIE: Use at the start of any of your turns. One of your players thrusts a cleverly concealed custard pie in the face of an opposing player in an adjacent square. The flabbergasted opponent loses his tackle zone for the rest of your turn.	33	TRAMPOLINE TRAP: Use at the start of any of your turns. Pick an opposing player in your half of the pitch. They fall into the trap and bounce into a randomly selected adjacent square. Treat this exactly as if they had been pushed back and knocked over in the square they land in. If the square is occupied, then the player originally in the square is pushed back into any adjacent square.
21	STILETTO: Declare this special play immediately (now!). A player of your choice in your team counts as having razor sharp claws for this match only.	34	MICKY FINN: Declare this special play immediately (now!). Pick one member of the opposing team's coaching staff other than the head coach. The chosen coach may not be used until the next match the team plays.
22	REFEREE!!!: Use at the start of any of the opponent's turn. Your players intimidate the referee and he calls an illegal procedure penalty against your opponent, just as if he had failed to move the turn marker.	35	OFF-SIDE TRAP: Use after you make a kick-off, before the opponent's first turn. One of your player's tricks an opponent into jumping off-side causing a turnover. The receiving team loses their first turn!
23	KNUCKLEDUSTERS: Declare this special play immediately (now!). A player of your choice in your team counts as having mighty blow for this match only.		

D66	Result	D66	Result
36	BLATANT FOUL: Use after you make a foul, before rolling any dice. The opposing player automatically suffers an injury, but your player is automatically sent off.	54	MY WATCH MUST OF STOPPED! Use at the end of either half after both teams have finished all their turns. You have bribed the ref' to allow each team one more turn (move both turn markers back one space).
41	BRIBE THE REF: You may use this special play to stop the referee sending off one of your players after they committed a foul.	55	BRIBE THE REF: Use before setting up your team after a kick-off. You may set up 12 players on the pitch.
42	BRIBE THE REF: You may use this special play to stop the referee sending off one of your players after they committed a foul.	56	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.
43	BRIBE THE REF: Use at the start of any of your turns to move the IGMEYOY marker onto the opposing team.	61	BAD PRESS: Declare this special play immediately (now!). Libellous stories you have spread cuts the opposing teams fan factor in half (rounding up) or this match only.
44	SPIKE!: Use after you make a foul, before rolling the dice. The opposing player automatically suffers an injury, but your player is knocked over.	62	WOOOPS! Use after setting up after a kick-off. One of your players gets a sneaky block in while the referee isn't looking. An opposing player who is in the tackle zone of one of your players is knocked over.
45	MORLEY'S REVENGE: Declare this special play immediately (now!). The opposing team's drinks have been spiked with a powerful laxative. D6 players in the opposing team count as having the 'off for a bite' trait for this match only.	63	IGNORE RIVAL COACH: Declare this special play immediately (now!). You've bribed the ref to ignore the rival coach. They may not 'argue the call' with the referee for this match only.
46	SEWER MAP: Use at the start of one of your turns to move a players from your reserves box to any empty square on the pitch. The player may not move on the turn he appears.	64	GREASED SHOES: Use after setting up after a kick-off. Pick a player on the opposing team. You've paid someone to grease the bottom of their shoes and their agility is reduced to 1 until a touch down is scored or the half ends.
51	MICKY FINN: Declare this special play immediately (now!). Pick one player on the opposing team. The player may not be used until the next match the team plays.	65	STILETTO: Declare this special play immediately (now!). A player of your choice in your team counts as having razor sharp claws for this match only.
52	TAKE A DIVE: Use this special play after an opposing player attempts to move an extra square. The player is knocked over but no roll is made for injury.	66	KNUCKLEDUSTERS: Declare this special play immediately (now!). A player of your choice in your team counts as having mighty blow for this match only.
53	PIT TRAP: Use at the start of any of your turns. Pick an opposing player in your half of the pitch. They fall into the trap and are placed back in their own reserves box. No armour or injury roll is made.		



RANDOM EVENTS SPECIAL PLAYS TABLE

D66	Result	D66	Result
11	INSPIRATION: Declare this special play immediately (now!). You may give one player in your team an extra MVP. If the additional SPPs take them up a level you make the Star Player roll before the match starts.		the match and the opposing team counts as having a fan factor of '0'.
12	DOOM & GLOOM: Declare this special play immediately (now!). The opposing team is feeling uninspired and must cut the number of team re-rolls they have in half (rounding down) for this match only.	24	THAT BOYS GOT TALENT!: Use this play at the end of the match. You may hire a talented fan as a new player for your team for free, if you have space for them.
13	PLAYER STRIKE: Declare this special play immediately (now!). Players on the opposing team that receive appearance fees won't play unless they receive an extra +5,000 gps each for this match only.	25	I AM THE GREATEST: Declare this special play immediately (now!). Two randomly selected opposing players refuse to be on the pitch at the same time for this match only.
14	'FLU BUG: Declare this special play immediately (now!). D3 randomly selected players from the opposing team must miss this match because they have the 'flu.	26	DEMO GAME: Use this play at the end of the match. You receive an extra D6x10,000 gps for playing a demonstration game after the match.
15	SNACK BREAK: Use at the start of any of your opponent's turns. Pick an opposing player within 2 squares of the sidelines and who isn't holding the ball. He grabs a snack and may not take an action this turn.	31	BAD HABITS: Declare this special play immediately (now!). The opposing team has picked up some bad habits and must reduce the number of team re-rolls they have by one for this match only.
16	THIS IS WILL HURT A BIT...: Use at the start of any of your turns. Drastic action allows you to cure a KO'd, Badly Hurt or Seriously Injured player and move them back to the reserves box.	32	IT WASN'T ME!: Declare this special play immediately (now!). One randomly selected opposing player is arrested for a minor crime and must miss the match. They escape in time for the next game.
21	GET 'EM LADS: Use at the start of any of your turns. For this turn only all your player's count plus one to their strength.	33	PRESS GANG: Declare this special play immediately (now!). One randomly selected opposing player is press-ganged into the Empire's navy and must miss the match. They escape in time for the next game.
22	A LARGE DONATION: Use at the end of the match, after receiving your money. If you wish you may donate half your winnings to a charity. If you do your fan factor goes up by +1.	34	PEAKED: Declare this special play immediately (now!). One randomly selected opposing player has reached their peak and cannot earn any more SPPs ever again.
23	AWAY FANS BANNED!: Declare this special play immediately (now!). No opposing fans are allowed to attend	35	SPECIAL OFFER: Use this play at the end of the match. You may hire a new player (including a star player) at half price. Use it now or lose it!
		36	THAT MAKES ME MAD!!!: Use after your opponent declares a foul. The player they were going to foul immediately stands up, and the

D66	Result	D66	Result
	opposing player must make a block against them instead!	54	HALL OF FAME! Use at the end of the match. The player in your team with the most SPPs is inducted into the NAF Hall Of Fame, increasing your teams Fan Factor by +1.
41	INJURED IN PRACTICE: Declare this special play immediately (now!). One randomly selected opposing player is injured in practice and must miss the match. They recover in time for the next game.	55	CRAZY REF: Use if the opposing team try to 'Get The Ref'. The referee beats off the fans and chases them from the stadium, reducing the oppsing teams fan factor to '0' for the rest of the match.
42	A BETTER OFFER: Declare this special play immediately (now!). One randomly selected opposing player will leave the team unless they are paid D6x5,000 gps immediately.	56	MERCHANDISING: Use at the end of the match. Sale of doublet and hose in the team colours provides an extra D6x10,000 gps.
43	BIASED REFEREE: Declare this special play immediately (now!). The opposing coach starts the match with the IGMEYOY counter.	61	UNDER SCRUTINY: Declare this special play immediately (now!). Your opponent' are under close scrutiny by NAF officials and may not foul or use secret weapons this match..
44	BURST BALL: Use at the start of any of your turns. The ball bursts and both coaches must move their turn markers one space along the turn record track to represent the time lost while it is replaced. Play then continues as normal	62	WILL: Use at the end of the match. Your team is left D6x10,000 gps in the will of a dead fan.
45	HEROIC EFFORT: Use after one of your players has made a block to convert the result to an 'opponent knocked over' result no matter what was rolled.	63	DUH, WHERE AM I?: Use if an opposing player is knocked over but passes their armour roll. They count as having the 'bone-head' trait for the rest of the match.
46	UNSPORTSMANLIKE CONDUCT: Use after the opposing team scores a touchdown. The player that scored is banned for the rest of the match for taunting the opposing fans.	64	CHARITY MATCH: Use at the end of the match. You play a charity match for a local orphanage which increases your teams fan factor by +1.
51	THE BIG MATCH: Declare this special play immediately (now!). The match is being televised by the Broadcast Networks and both teams double their winnings at the end of the match.	65	WOOF WOOF!: Play at the start of any of your opponent's turns if the ball is lying on the ground in an empty square. A dog runs off with it and you may move it to a new empty square within 2D6 squares of where it started.
52	THE CHUCK: Use at the start of any of your turns. Your fans inspire the team with an awesome display of 'The Chuck'. Add +1 to your team re-rolls for this half only.	66	SPONSORSHIP DEAL: Declare this special play immediately (now!). Your team is sponsored by Bloodwieser and receives an extra 10,000 gps after every match – but only if you say 'Make Mine A Blood' loudly at the start of every match!
53	NUMBER ONE WITH A BULLET: Use at the end of the match. Your new team song proves a smash hit earning the team D6x10,000 gps.		

MAGIC SPELLS SPECIAL PLAYS TABLE

D66	Result	D66	Result
11-12	KELHOFFER'S MAGIC FOOT: Use when making a kick-off. It allows you to pick exactly where the ball lands in the opposing half – there is no scatter.	41-42	TIME WARP: Play at the start of any of your turns. One player of your choice can take two actions this turn. The actions must be taken one after the other.
13-14	SCUTT'S DELUGE OF DESPAIR: Use at the start of the opponent's turn. The opposing players have their movement halved (rounding down) for the rest of the turn.	43-44	GRASPING TENTACLES OF ALTANSON: Use at the start of any of your opponent's turns. One opposing player of your choice may not take an action this turn.
15-16	MIND BLOW: Use at the start of the opponent's turn. Nominate a player in the opposing team – they may not take an action that turn.	45-46	RAKARTH'S SPELL OF PETTY SPITE: Declare this special play immediately (now!). One opposing player of your choice counts as having the trait of your choice for this match only.
21-22	LABBATT'S FLYING FIST: Play at the start of any of your turns. One player of your choice is knocked over.	51-52	HAWKFING'S CURSE: Declare this special play immediately (now!). One opposing player of your choice may not use any of his skills for this match only.
23-24	MAGIC SPONGE: Use after a touchdown is scored or a half ends to move any KO'd or Badly Hurt players back to the reserves box.	53-54	KNUTT'S SPELL OF AWESOME STRENGTH! Use at the start of any of your turns. One player of your choice may add D6 points to their strength for this turn only.
25-26	RAKARTH'S BOUNDING LEAP: Use at the start of any of your turns to allow one player of your choice to move as if they had the Leap skill for this turn only.	55-56	MAGIC HAND OF JARK LONGARM: Use if one of your players attempts an interception. They automatically intercept the ball.
31-32	POTION OF LURVE: Declare this special play immediately (now!). Pick a player in the opposing team. They are so love-struck that they must miss the match.	61-62	EYE OF THE EAGLE: Use when one of your player passes the ball. The pass is automatically successful, there is no need to roll the dice.
33-34	MAGIC HELMET: Declare this special play immediately (now!). You can give one player in your team to have the magic helmet. Their AV is increased permanently by +1 up to a maximum of 10. Only one allowed per player!	63-64	SPEED OF LIGHT: Use just before a player on your team takes an action to add D6 to the player's movement for that turn only.
35-36	RAKARTH'S SPELL OF OBLITERATION Play at the start of any of your turns. One player of your choice is knocked over.	65-66	THE SECRET WAY: Use at the start of any of your turns. Nominate a player and move them to any empty square on the pitch within D6 squares of where they started. The player may take an action as normal.



PRE-MATCH PREPERATIONS SPECIAL PLAYS TABLE

D66	Result	D66	Result
11-12	HIDE THE BALL: Use at the start of any of your turns. The player with the ball hides it up his jumper. For the rest of the turn he does not have to dodge to leave a tackle zone.	43-44	INTENSIVE TRAINING: Use at the start of any of your turns. It allows one player of your choice to use a skill of your choice for this turn only.
13-14	SIDE BET: Use at the end of the match. If you lose you gain an extra D6x10,000 gps.	45-46	BLITZKRIEG: Use at the start of any of your turns. It allows a second player to take a Blitz action this turn.
15-16	SNEAK PLAY: Use at the start of any of your turns. The player with the ball pretends to throw it to another player. For the rest of the turn he does not have to dodge to leave a tackle zone.	51-52	EXTRA TRAINING: Use once during the match in exactly the same manner as a team re-roll. You may use a team re-roll in the same turn.
21-22	EXTRA TRAINING: Use once during the match in exactly the same manner as a team re-roll. You may use a team re-roll in the same turn.	53-54	OPTION PLAY! Use at the start of any of your turns. It allows a second player to take a Blitz or a Pass action this turn (but not both!).
23-24	FAKE PLAY: Use when one of your players takes a pass action. They look one way and then pass the other. The player may ignore opposing tackle zones when he throws, and may not be intercepted.	55-56	RAZZLE DAZZLE!: Play at the start of any of your turns. On a roll of 1-2 the razzle dazzle is an abject failure and you suffer a turn-over. On a roll of 3-6 it is a brilliant success and the opposing team miss their next turn.
25-26	ON-SIDE KICK: Use after both teams have set up after a kick-off but before the ball is placed. One player of your choice is allowed to move up to D6 squares, ignoring tackle zones as he does so.	61-62	INSPIRING TEAM TALK: Declare this immediately (now!). Following the coach's inspiring speech the boys are really 'up for it'. For this game you get one additional team re-roll for free.
31-32	HALF-TIME TEAM TALK: Play at half time. You receive an extra D3 extra re-roll counters for the second half.	63-64	TEAM ANTHEM: Declare this special play when you first set up your team. As your players enter the pitch from the tunnel they are met by a rousing chorus of "YOU'LL NE'ER WALK AGAIN..." (or whatever the team's anthem is). This inspires the players and fans. Add one to your teams fan factor for this game only..
33-34	GRUDGE MATCH: Declare this special play immediately (now!). You may make any number of fouls each turn.	65-66	PRE-MATCH RITUAL: Declare after both teams have set up before the kick off. Whether it is the Darkside Cowboys "Rain of Blood" routine all the Gouged Eye "Merrhaka" dance your pre-match team ritual, performed in front of all the fans has had a demoralising effect on your opponents and they loose a team re-roll for this game.
35-36	THE OLD ONE-TWO: Use at the start of any of your turns. It allows an extra player to take a Pass action this turn.		
41-42	RAZZLE DAZZLE!: Play at the start of any of your turns. On a roll of 1-2 the razzle dazzle is an abject failure and you suffer a turn-over. On a roll of 3-6 it is a brilliant success and the opposing team miss their next turn.		