

BLOOD BOWL

Lecture 1!

A guide on how to coach human teams
By Prof. Robert Elliott (College of Altdorf)

Ahem! Good Morning students... Let's calm down this racket and concentrate on the lecture... I don't care if that imbecile wants to show you an interesting piece of snot he found on the floor... Anyway, I hope you will all to listen to me as I prepare you for the task in hand, which will be "How to play and win with Humans!" So get those fingers out of your noses' and get those quills scribbling because I'm not going to repeat what I say to you now! Pay attention!

WHAT IS THE HUMAN TEAM?

Human teams are best described as unpredictable! These guys can adjust to any game, score from anywhere and beat down the opponent at the same time. What more could you want? You will have the necessary resources to switch tactics during a play if required therefore they are one of the easy teams to coach because of this versatility and are a common starter team for new players. However this versatility can also lead to confusion with new players because of all the options you have.



HOW TO MAKE YOUR TEAM

A lot of coaches fall at the first hurdle, however, you will not! Important questions you should ask before at this stage are; what is my preferred play style? What race are my opponents? Look at each player and list the benefits and drawbacks that they bring your team.

	MA	ST	AG	AV	
Lineman 0-12:	6	3	3	8	50,000 gp

(General)

Pros:

- Cheap & easy to replace.
- Loves to do the jobs other players hate!

Cons:

- Unskilled.
- Limited access to skills.

Summary: These guys should be the backbone of your team. Plugging holes, lending assists, tying up nasty players & they make excellent foulers! Just don't rely on them to do anything else.



	MA	ST	AG	AV	
Throwers 0-2:	6	3	3	8	50,000 gps

Skills: Sure Hands, Pass (General, Pass)

Pros:

- Excellent ball handling skills.
- Can provide another scoring option if you employ the running game.

Cons:

- Are vulnerable and need protection.
- If removed from play then you have no passing option.

Summary: These guys are the glamour players of your team, lofting accurate long passes and can switch style and run accompanied by two Blitzers with the Guard skill. Don't allow them to get blocked as you cant afford to lose the passing option on your team, your teams strength lies in the ability to play all styles of Blood Bowl.

	MA	ST	AG	AV	
Blitzers 0-4:	7	3	3	8	90,000 gp
Skills: Block (General, Strength)					

Pros:

- Excellent stats.
- Can access Strength skills.
- Versatile.
- Can pound the opposition and are capable of the odd deft touch.

Cons:

- Expensive and can be difficult to be replaced.

Summary: You can score or smash with these guys, you can have 4 killers or 4 proficient defenders or a mixture of both, it is up to you! They will never be as good at scoring touchdowns as catchers so it is unwise to develop them in this way.

	MA	ST	AG	AV	
Catchers 0-4:	8	2	3	7	70,000 gp
Skills: Catch, Dodge (General, Agility)					

Pros:

- Fast and capable scorers.
- Can develop into excellent defenders.
- Are relatively cheap.

Cons:

- Very weak with low armour.
- Require careful management as they can hog the experience your team gains through its matches
- Need lots of protection

Summary: Excellent scorers and ball retrievers but they need careful management as they can hog your experience and are very easily injured. They need to be well protected! They are well worth the money for what you get. However if you do lose one they are easier to replace than Elven catchers.

	MA	ST	AG	AV	
Orge 0-1:	5	5	2	9	120,000 gp
Skills: Mighty Blow, Thick Skull, Big Guy, Bone Head, Throw Team Mate (Strength)					

Pros:

- Adds serious muscle to your starting line up.
- Imposing player.
- Will distract your opponent from your main scoring/defensive threats.

Cons:

- Very expensive.
- Unreliable! Especially now he has lost General Access.
- Unable to use team re-rolls. .

Summary: Although he is the most reliable Big Guy in the sport he is still unpredictable so use him when you finish the important tasks of your turn until he has a few skills. When he rolls triple skulls (and he will!) don't say I didn't warn you! He can become the showpiece of your team and the bane of other teams but he is expensive and needs a lot of attention!



STARTING LINEUPS

If you are playing in a long-term league it is tempting to start with as many positionals as possible, 1 Fan Factor and no re-rolls but you will get as far as I would into an Orc stronghold! It is much better to start with high Fan Factor as you will receive more money at the end of your games and will help you cope with the loss of players during the matches. The crowd will also help rally your team at kickoffs. There are many ways to start the team (if you just have the box set the starting lineup included is more than capable) but I will now write down some of the best that spring to my mind for those that have an expanded collection.

This is my personal favorite setup that I have played which had lots of success:

- 1 Ogre
- 2 Blitzers
- 2 Catchers
- 1 Thrower
- 5 Linemen
- 3 TRR
- 9 FF

This is a good all round setup which will cover all areas of the game. Two catchers provide excellent scoring potential, two blitzers & the ogre will give you some hitting power. The thrower is required to give you a passing option but he can run with the ball too and throw a quick pass when near the endzone if desired. The ogre will scare the life out of your opponent if used well and the opponent will usually sacrifice several players to gang up on your ogre and with a bit of luck throw away rerolls trying to take him down. This is good for you as those players are no longer a menace to your catchers! It is also useful to give him as much match practice as you can, once he gains a skill or two he can really become useful. After the opening match you should have the funds to hire an apothecary and then save for another thrower as you can't afford to lose your passing option on the team. Then aim to get a blitzer and another reroll and then it is a matter of personal preference as to further development of the team.

Another method one can apply is to purchase as many blitzers as you can afford. It is advantageous to have the Blitzers at the beginning so they can develop quickly meaning you can concentrate on their defensive benefits. You have ample rerolls with this setup furthermore it is fast although you possess decent blocking power. I would suggest that you aim for this setup if you don't like using Big Guys or if you can't cope with catchers dropping like flies!

- 6 Linemen
- 3 Blitzers
- 1 Thrower
- 1 Catcher
- 4 Rerolls
- 9 FF

What if you are playing a one off game but don't know what setup to use? Griff Oberwald is the best star in the game alongside Morg 'N' Thorg therefore for one off games I would go with Griff and the following set-up. You contain good blocking potential with the 3 blitzers and Griff but have a capable passing game with the catcher and thrower. For a single match, Fan Factor is not so important however this is a very strong set-up.

- Griff Oberwald
- 3 Blitzers
- 1 Catcher
- 1 Thrower
- 5 Linemen
- 3 Rerolls
- 1 Fan Factor

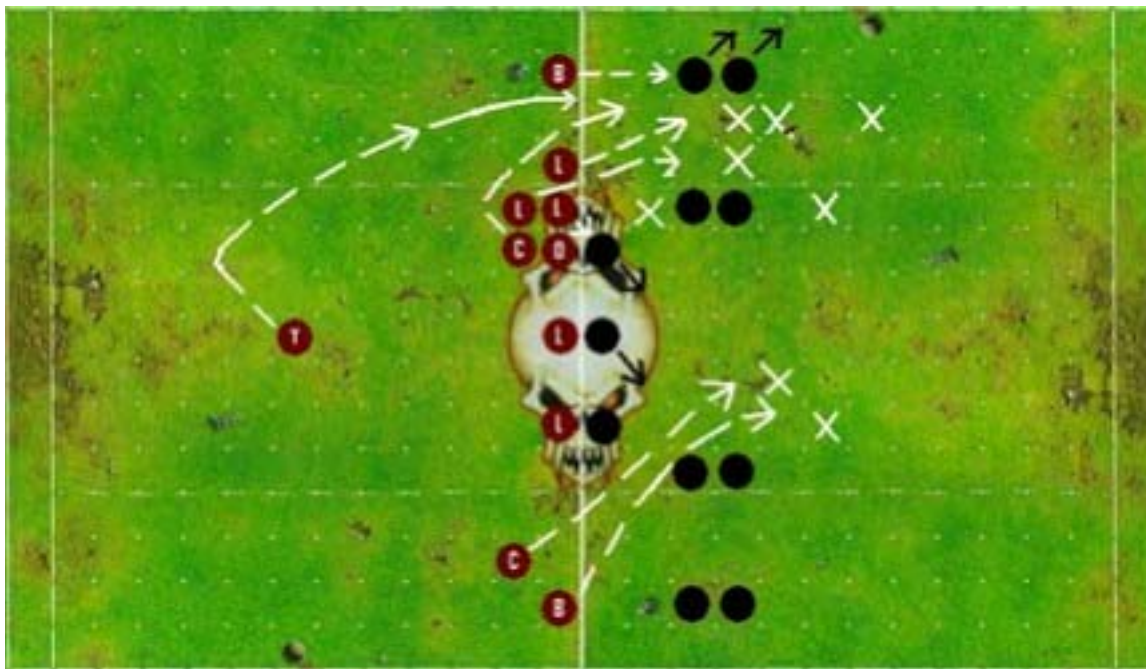
OFFENCE & DEFENCE – GENERAL TIPS

You should now be able to make your own roster (if you can't then see me at the end of the class and my assistant Mr Zug will be happy to help you!) so now it is time for our team to take the field! What do we do now the game is about to commence? If you win the kick-off then elect to kick. If you can learn how to score when you kick-off and manage to turn over your opponent then there will be less pressure on you when it is your turn to receive and more pressure on your opponent to turn you over. If your opponent does score in 2 turns then you have 6 whole turns to score and wear your opponent down to leave it at 1-1 at half time. It is demoralising for your opponent if you can turn him over when he receives. This will put further pressure on your opponent and will help to hinder his judgement. If you can place seeds of doubt in his mind he will start to play negatively,

especially if you can hurt his “pet” players, and you can use this as a platform to play more freely. Fouling is also another good method to cause panic in the opposing quarter. A rampaging Dirty player will often persuade the coach that self preservation is a better tactic than winning the match! A dirty player also gives you a “second bite” at that Wardancer once you knock him over.

If you can grind your opponent down so he has fewer players than you during the match then score quickly as he will have greater difficulty in scoring against you. Humans are also good at scoring in 2 turns and this flexibility is where their strength lies. You must remember that you can score in 2 turns if needed but you can play the clock safe in the knowledge that you can hold your own for 6 or more turns! How to score in 2 turns is explained below if you need to score quickly.

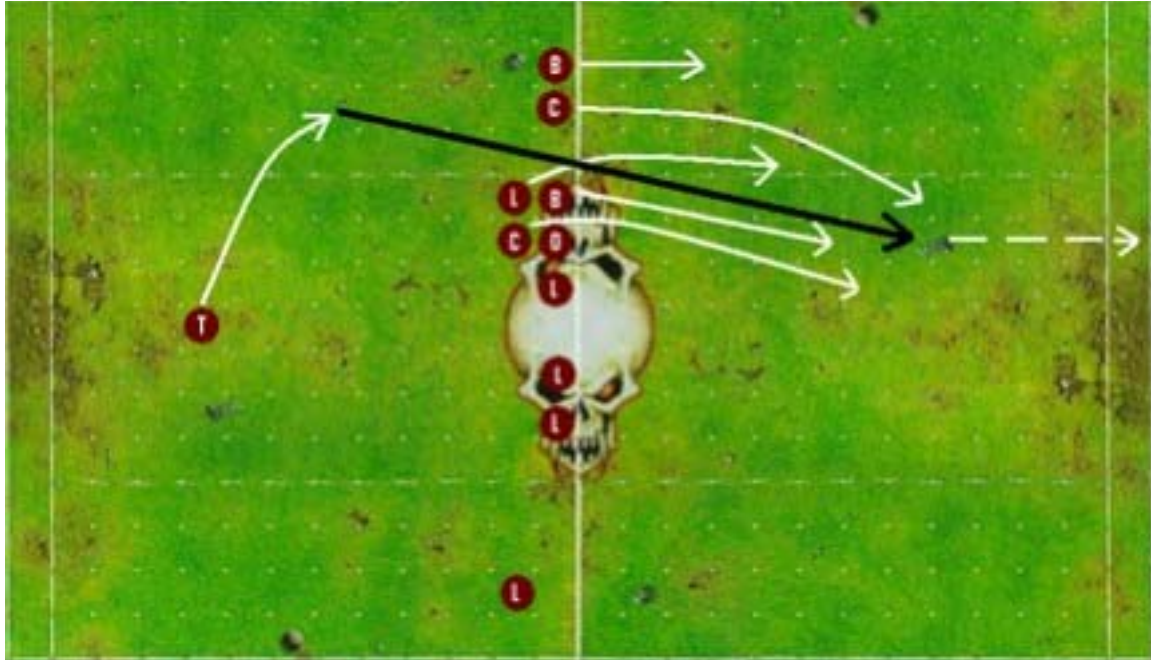
THE MAUL



This is a generic setup. You should use a slightly different one to the one shown here depending on the opponent and the defensive setup he uses. You should aim to flood down one side of the pitch and advance 5-6 squares into the opponents half between 1-3 turns depending on his setup and your confidence. Firstly, if the ball is in a dangerous position you should secure it by guarding it with a free lineman. Using a blitzer, blitz one of the defenders on the flanks and move in as many players as you can to exploit the hole. Using an Ogre at this stage to tie up 2 or more players is very useful. Then you should make any favourable tactical blocks you deem necessary. You can run a blitzer and catcher through the defence if there is a hole on the other flank to either act as a decoy or an alternative scoring option. You can use them to draw players away from your pocket or use them as a scoring threat. After you have finished your important moves you can pick up the ball and advance forward with the retriever. It is ill advised to play the ball first as you will sometimes fail to pickup and will turnover, leaving you very exposed on one flank. Never leave your ball carrier in a position where he can be blocked, and try to protect him in your pocket. In the following turns you should be able to advance up the field with the loose pocket (akin to a maul in Rugby). You have the speed to score a quick TD if under pressure.



THE FLOOD



If you come up against a tough dwarf or chaos team you may need to score as quickly as possible so play “elf ball”, make a hole and flood your receivers through and position them so your opponent can't cover all your receivers. This method will not work as often as their elven counterparts can execute it but it is still a reliable way to score quickly. Just remember that you're not Elves!! Just remember to play safely at all times!

The beauty of the Human game is the ability to switch tactic in mid-drive. If you feel you can't make a safe pass then you have the option of running the ball and scoring in a slower grinding play. It should be remembered that your team aren't specialists but all-rounder's, meaning that care must be taken when switching tactic. This decision will invariably depend on your opponent and the team he uses and you may feel that a grinding play will work well against Elves and using your strength to help remove their players from the pitch while giving them less time to score. On the other hand if playing a killer Chaos team you may feel that you need to score quickly to avoid unnecessary damage his nasty players may inflict on you.

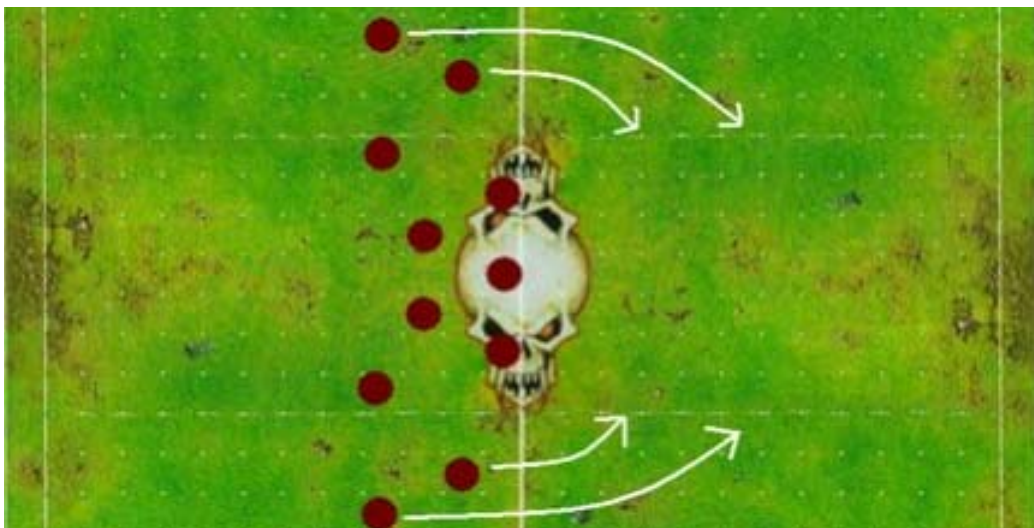
DEFENCE!

Ok so we now know how to score so it is now our turn to defend! It is often said that the team with the best defence will win the championships! In order for you to win you will need to stop your opponent scoring on his drive, turn him over and then you score! Forcing your opponent to make errors is key in this process, and you should achieve this by putting pressure on his players or by playing mind games, forcing him to play your game! You should aim to give a lineman the Kick skill early so you can kick the ball deep and put pressure on his throwers or make your opponent form his cage deeper in his half than he would like to!

PLAYING VS. A BASHY TEAM

If playing a bashy team you should ideally kick the ball deep and run your catchers and blitzers down the pitch to try to hassle the ball carrier while using the strength of the Ogre and the assistance of the linemen to help the LOS from crumbling. This will achieve 2 things. You are making your opponent feel more pressure as there are catchers and blitzers breathing down his neck and he will without doubt run some players back to help out, leaving you with a numerical advantage on the front line and play the game where you want to, in his half. Another option is to give your catchers shadowing and sidestep and have two of them pester the ball carrier.

DEFENSIVE SETUP VS. STRONG TEAMS



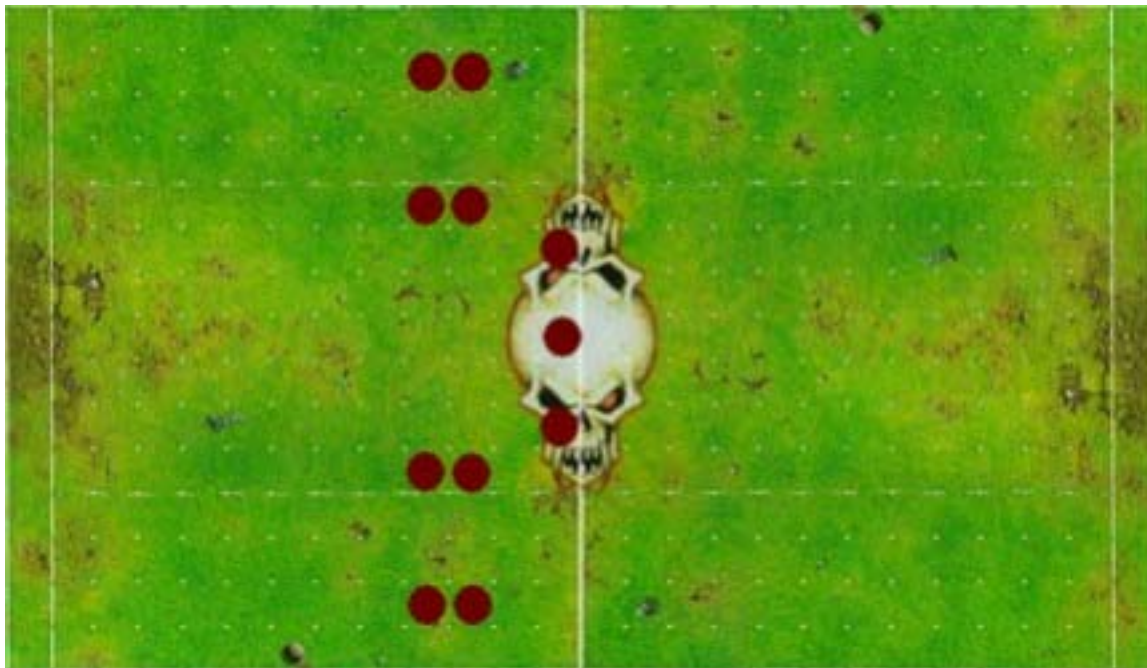
This is a decent setup against bashy teams. Players are well positioned to adapt to a cage and the catchers and blitzers positioned on the flanks can outflank the slower opponents and pressure the ball carrier. An Ogre on the centre of the LOS will help divert the cage to the flanks, where you can use your speed to your advantage. This setup isn't great against agility based teams as they will exploit the flanks with ease.

PLAYING VS. AN AGILITY TEAM

Elves are a team great at scoring and passing the ball. However they aren't so good at fighting. If you have to play an elven team then concentrate on taking down his numbers with your ogre and blitzers and try to make as many blocks as possible whilst

your defence remains intact. Use every trick in the book to get them off the pitch. Diving tackle is the bane of all elven teams and if you can stop them dodging you can use your tougher players to soften them up! Forcing your opponent to roll more dice than he wants to will win you more matches as sooner or later he will roll a 1.

DEFENSIVE SETUP AGAINST FAST TEAMS



This is the most effective and popular method of dealing with Elves. The only weak point of the defence is the centre of the LOS. As a Human coach, you are able to negate this problem by placing an Ogre there! No more flooding of your backfield now! You are forcing a lot of dodges from your opponent to get his players in your backfield. Again your blitzers and catchers should be on the wings (hopefully they should have tackle or shadowing when they develop) to make dodging a real pain for your opponent and hope he will fail a dodge so you can rush round the sides and put pressure on the ball.

These suggested setups are basically a taster for the multitude of options you have as a Human coach. With practice and growing confidence you will devise new setups, plays and defences, doing so is playing to your strength, the ability to adapt your game to confuse your opponent.

DEVELOPMENT

If you are playing in a progressive league then your players will gain experience from the blocks they make and the passes they complete and will learn new skills. I will suggest some skills that will prove useful for your squad.

Linemen

The meat and potatoes of the team. These boys will be the line fodder on the team so give them something that will increase their life expectancy. Block is a great skill and should be given to all linemen and tackle is a good second. If you are fortunate to roll doubles then I suggest you take guard to increase the hitting potential of the team. You will need a player with the kick skill to make defending that little bit easier for your team so it is best to give to your lineman. Dirty player is a frightening skill for your opponent every time one of his players goes down.

Throwers

You should aim to buy your second thrower as soon as you can but you should develop the 2 throwers differently. Your original thrower should be your offensive thrower with skills like Accurate, Strong Arm etc and your second thrower will be your defensive thrower, used when you kick. He will have skills such as Block, Dump-Off etc. Block is a valuable skill on these guys if you plan to run down the pitch with some guard assists. Sure Feet & Sprint are skills many coaches would regard as a waste on a double but gives your thrower a little extra range & can prove vital in tight matches, especially as Humans are not aerial specialists.



Blitzers

The best players on the team and you can have 4! As you have a healthy number of these players it is wise to develop them into a number of roles. If you plan on playing Strength teams then you must go for Guard as it will help with your strength 3. Tackle is essential if you want to take down receivers. If they roll doubles then I suggest getting them Dodge. With your other two Blitzers I suggest you give them Guard, Tackle and (Mighty Blow, Pass Block or Shadowing) in that order. If you are fortunate enough to roll a double then Stand Firm is the skill of choice. These guys will give you some extra hitting power if needed and Stand Firm means you can go for dodges safe in the knowledge that you won't fall over. They are also capable of scoring in the early games so you can try to get them to score rather than the catchers as the catchers will find no difficulty in scoring and it also helps you "beef up" the team with guard.

Catchers

They aren't that strong or tough, but they are reasonably fast but score with ease and have a hidden defensive ability when they develop. They should be given Block and Sidestep to increase their lifespan and then I would suggest giving them shadowing or Diving Tackle. On doubles I would give them Dauntless followed by Strip ball to make him a fearsome ball winner! Their high movement gives you a flexible defence capable of covering a large area and a Dauntless Strip ball catcher will cause your opponent a lot of concern. You may find you want to develop one into a pure scorer but he will start to hog all of your star player points and inflate your team rating. It is much more sensible to develop your catchers into ball retrievers as scoring is of little difficulty to them.

Ogre

Ogres, along with the rest of the big guys, have lost general access, and as a result, they have become less potent! If you decide to have an ogre then you should consider the following skills. Guard, Break Tackle, Multiple Block and Piling on, in that order. Guard will help the lack of strength that your team possesses, Break Tackle makes for mobile plug! If you are fortunate to roll a double, then Block and Pro are essential skill picks. Ogres are big and strong but they are untrained and are unreliable. Never blitz with your ogre unless absolutely necessary as he will invariably bonehead or roll double skulls and cost you the game!

Any stat increases should be snapped up, as they are highly valued. A few +AG or +MA catchers are a menace, and ST4 blitzers are a terrifying sight.

FINALLY!

If you are playing in a long-term league, try to score with all players, especially your blitzers and try to build up a good base

of skills on many players from the start because a great team isn't built around one or two great individuals but a team that works together (much like this class... well those that haven't left yet...)! Humans provide a different challenge to coaches because this team will rely more so on skills than natural ability however they are a rewarding team to play with! Humans are a team that take a while to get going but can bounce back from a mauling quite easily so do not be disheartened if you lose a player or two.

Obviously you should play according to the atmosphere around you... if you are playing in the final of the 50 game hardcore league by all means foul and use any dirty tricks up your sleeve to win but if you are teaching a friend the game he may not appreciate your "competitiveness".

Listen up you lot! That is it for today! I expect you go and win some matches now (For a change!). Oh and have fun while you're at it! Don't forget to tell your friends about the beautiful game as well and get them to join your league!

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Robert Elliott is a long time fan & coach of the "beautiful game". His first major tournament was the Blood Bowl in 2006. He'll be back in March 2007 to compete again.