

THE NORSE PLAYBOOK

Or... Drink and Fight and Drink and Fight and Drink and Fight!

Anthony Watts Discusses the Finer Points of Norse Tactics in Blood Bowl

In the northern reaches of the Old World lies the frozen wasteland of Norsca, home to the fearsome ale swilling Norse. A Norseman's life is fairly simple, it consists mainly of drinking and fighting, a pursuit that seems to take up a great deal of their time. However, inbetween bouts of looting and pillaging, some Norsemen become restless and seek infamy and glory in other ways, mainly on the Blood Bowl pitch!

Hard on the Outside, Squishy in the Middle

At first glance, the Norse seem average at best with their basic movement, agility and strength. The biggest turn-off is their lowly Armour value of 7, but don't let that deter you! Armour is for sissies! They also have access to cheap players that are useful right off the bat and can make use of Wizards and Apothecaries like most other teams.

One of the greatest advantages of the Norse is that every player starts with Block. This really speeds up skill progression and let's you develop specialized players very quickly. The Norse are generally very strong in short leagues and in the early stages of league play, they can afford to pick on unskilled linemen and are almost on par with the average Blitzler

in terms of hitting. They also have access to one of the most fearsome position players in the entire game: the dreaded Norse Blitzler! With Block, Frenzy and Jump Up, these guys are gonna mess up somebody's pretty face real quick!

Norse do have their weaknesses though. Their AV of 7 means they are prone to injuries against developed teams and anyone with skills like Mighty Blow and Claw. The trick is to pick your fights first and control the flow of hitting throughout the game. Otherwise, your poor Apothecary is going to run out of space in the dugout for all the ale-soaked bodies. Coaches who like to foul can ruin your day as well, but two can play at that game.

Let's Get 'Em Lads!

Norse positions aren't all that specialized but they can all be developed into some interesting players with only a couple of skills. Let's take a look at them individually:

Linemen

Norse Linemen are the backbone of your team and are more useful than your average gutless Human linefodder. Starting with Block means you have a lot of choice in player



The Norseman hand out cans of whoopass!

development right from the first Skill choice. Tackle is always a good way to go, especially when you already have a bunch of specialized lineman and just can't decide on a Skill. It's almost a must in leagues that have lots of dodgy teams and it's great for beating the living daylights out of those pesky Block/Dodgers! It's a good idea to have at least one player with Kick and a couple of Dirty Players that can apply the boot liberally about the face and dangly bits of tough opponents. If you are lucky enough to roll doubles, Guard is a great choice.

Throwers

The biggest drawback with Norse Throwers is that they don't start with Sure Hands like some Throwers on other teams. This makes them less desirable on newly formed teams since they don't really offer much for the extra 20K they cost. If you're looking to fill out your roster down the road, they do offer a bit of flexibility on scoring drives. Sure Hands is a no-brainer as a first skill and will save you having to use your precious re-rolls for flubbed pick ups. Dump Off and Accurate are great secondary choices. With only two Catchers available as reliable receivers, the Norse passing game is a short distance one at best. Dump Off is great for getting the ball to another player if you are caught on a well planned Blitz, and the +1 to Pass rolls from Accurate is a great choice in any situation.

Catchers

Norse Catchers are pretty crummy when you compare them to catchers of other races. They have low movement and average agility and a maximum of two per team. They don't really seem like they are a great deal for a team that makes the most of its plays by running the ball, but the fact is they can be very useful if you look at them a bit differently. The Norse Catcher's greatest asset is his access to Agility skills. This makes him into quite a good base to build a defense specialist with skills like Diving Tackle, Dodge and Pass Block. Agility upgrades can make these guys a nightmare for passing teams, with AG 4 and Catch you get two shots at intercepting the ball on a 5+ and you can manoeuvre around with Dodge to get tackle zones on Catchers and Throwers. Movement upgrades are amazing as well when you combine them with Shadowing, Diving Tackle and Tackle. Use them as safties in your backfield on defense and watch those Elves eat turf for dinner instead of leaves and flowers.



Blitzers

These guys may have weak armour, but if I was the opposing coach I would be wetting myself if I saw four of these berserkers on the pitch! The best thing about Norse Blitzers is that they start with three amazing skills: Block, Frenzy and Jump Up. Jump Up is usually unavailable to tough players like this and can be devastating when combined with Piling On. This combo is great for taking down tough players with high AV that would otherwise smash their way through your team with ease. Having +3 to armour penetration is a huge bonus, and with Jump Up they can get up and hit anyone beside them next turn without using up a blitz action! Frenzies are also ideal for threatening sidelines and taking players who stray too close to the sidelines off the pitch for a sound beating by the crowd. Blitzers tend to work best in pairs, supporting each other as they search out prey around the pitch. Guard will be very useful in helping you get the most out of Frenzy on other Blitzers as well.

Big Guys

Norse can hire Minotaur and Ogre allies in addition to their normal line-up. The safest bet is the Ogre, you can stick him on the line and let him happily beat up the poor schmucks who are standing in front of him with his massive strength. Safe bets for skills are Block and Guard, and Pro is a good choice to

help negate those failed Bonehead rolls. Guard is great on Ogres. In the middle of the line he essentially makes the guys beside him ST 4, and with his own ST of 5 he is hard to take down from his spot.

Another somewhat riskier option is the Mintoaur. Putting the overgrown cattle on the line is probably not a good idea, these guys are meant to be put in the backfield and make

★ ★ ★ *Did you know...*

The NAF record for the Best Individual Game Catching (paces) was made at the Vynheim Valkyries' Longship Stadium. Unfortunately for the Valkyries, the record was made by the albino Osgar Vilechuck, star catcher of the visiting Goughed Eye, with an amazing 241 paces.

Vilechuck caught six bombs of 30 or more paces in this outstanding performance, particularly impressive, as the Longship Stadium was knee-deep in snow.

anyone who breaks through your defence pay with their life. Wild Animal makes them a bit of a liability sometimes, so make sure you don't put him in situations where he will have to make unfavourable blocks that can cause a turnover. Block is a must for a first skill – after that Tackle and Piling On are great options. On doubles, you can take mutations so don't forget about the havoc you can wreak with Claw and Razor Sharp Fangs!

How to Score Touchdowns and not Spill your Pint

The Norse may look hard at first glance, but you have to be smart about how you coach them depending on who you are playing and at what point in your league you're at. The best times for them is at the beginning of a league when all the other teams are sadly lacking Block and those scary skills like Claw and Mighty Blow. At this point you can afford to be more aggressive and beat up on the unskilled lineman. Use your Blitzers to threaten the sidelines and take anyone who strays too close to the edge off the pitch for playtime with the crowd.





Girls and boys come out to play!

After a few games, your opposition are going to start picking up skills as well. At this point it's time to ease up on the bashing a bit. When you are blocking it's probably not a good idea to follow up unless you are mixing it with a weaker team like Wood Elves or Skaven. AV 7 becomes a liability at this point and a few good rolls can make the rest of the game a nightmare for Norse. This becomes especially true in the later stages of long leagues where even a couple of players with Mighty Blow, Claw, or Piling On are going to rip through your men like rotted herring, Block or no Block. You can't afford to start losing players on a higher TR team where your limited cash flow won't pay for those crucial replacement players. Dirty Player can be a great equalizer here, don't be afraid to take two or three of these fellas and kick anything lying on its back!

With only two Catchers, the Norse will have a harder time with a passing game than Humans. Your Catchers are probably your best option for moving the ball, use their Catch skill to take handoffs from whoever manages to pick up the ball in your backfield and surround them with a loose cage of linemen. Blitzers working in pairs should target key opposition players depending on the team, Piling On and Guarding in unison and filling up the casualty box. Having the man advantage on the pitch will help you move the ball a lot easier since all your guys only have average movement and agility.

On defense, keep those Blitzers in a position to make plays up the side a bad idea. Make sure you have at least a couple of safties in your own backfield to deal with Catchers, Gutter Runners, etc, and put as many Tackle Zones on routes to the End Zone as possible. Hopefully, you will be able to stall the play long enough to pick on a few of the stragglers, make them pay for touchdowns with bodies when possible!

Norse can be an extremely fun team to play with a little practice. Just keep in mind that starting with Block doesn't make you invincible, and your low AV will get you in trouble if you play too aggressively. I hope this article will get you started on the path to victory. If you have any other good Norse tips be sure to share them with me at commish@tbbf.org!

★ ★ ★ *Did you know...*

One of the best sequences of victories in the history of the Asgard Ravens came during the players' strike of 2477. The Ravens won 5 out of 5 during this period. The owners had tried to draft in extra players, but failed, and were forced to field the Valhalla Chorus – the team's Cheerleaders. As a member of the Lowdown Rats put it: "We don't mind geddin' a beatin' sumtimz, but dose wimmin was danjerus!"