

The Bash is Always Greener

A guide to playing Orcs in Blood Bowl

by Pippy

*This article was originally written for Triple POW magazine (check out www.triplepow.com for more). Read on for a subjective account from one of the most experienced Orc coaches on the tournament circuit. **Included are a variety of hints and tips for beginners and seasoned BB veterans alike.***

Of all the teams on the 'bash' spectrum, surely Orcs bear the crown. Norse are too flimsy and twinkle-toed. Dwarfs are not quite beefy enough and too easily tossed aside. Khemri flatter to deceive but their puny skeleton linemen are a brittle *Achilles heel*. The Chaos teams have all the right attributes on paper, but start without the basics and don't develop fast enough.

Yes, Orcs are truly the undisputed Behemoths of Bash. They have strength *and* toughness in spades. Not just the beef, but the mustard too! Knowing your assets is the first step along the way to mastery of the green art.

The successful Orc coach must fully embrace the hallowed pillars of bash - the cage, the stall, the merciless grind. The turn 8 score will become your friend; slowly pounding the enemy into the dirt your favourite past-time. You will learn to show no clemency as you relentlessly bash your way to victory. If these fundamental concepts are as yet unfamiliar, do not fear as I shall explain all later.

But first let's cast a glance over the roster. Orcs are a very affordable team; rerolls are 60,000 crowns and none of the positionals barring the Troll are more than 80,000. As a result, few starting Orc team sheets will find themselves significantly lacking in any department. Of the six player types available, the three most important positions to spend your cash on are Lineorc, Blitzer and Black Orc.

0-16 Lineorcs 5339 (50,000)

The ratio of damage threshold to cost in Lineorcs is unparalleled. They soak up more punishment per pound than any other player. These boys make an art form out of getting knocked down and then standing up again. They are model linemen - unglamorous stooges who, just by sticking around, enable the other guys to use their more exceptional skills and attributes. And don't forget, they also have AG3 so dodging and ball handling are an option if the situation demands it.

0-4 Blitzers 6339 Block (80,000)

Blitzers are probably the best individual players on the Orc roster, for three main reasons. First, they are the fastest players in the team so are vital both for covering on defence, and bursting through gaps on offence. Second, they are the only players who start with block, making them the most reliable bashers in your line-up. Finally, of all your players Blitzers are the most suited to ball carrying - faster than Lineorcs and Throwers, and harder to knock down. Over all, they are completely indispensable. Every Orc team should have the maximum four Blitzers.

0-4 Black Orcs *4429 (80,000)*

Black Orcs typify the Orc ethos. They're big, ugly and hard to shift. Use these Str4 brutes to bully the opposition. On defence, pin weaker would-be attackers, forcing them to dodge or eat biff pie. On offence, barge through gaps and occupy positions of strength in the opposition half. Wherever you place them, they'll be a bitch to budge. The key is to place them carefully as with low MA and AG, they're difficult to re-deploy.

The others are more-or-less bit-part players:

0-2 Throwers *5338 Pass, Sure Hands (70,000)*

'Throwing' and Orcs don't generally mix so your chucker, if you have one, should be used with great caution. Their ability to shift the ball quickly may be vital if circumstances necessitate a quick two- or three-turn score, however they are too slow and vulnerable to be natural ball handlers.

0-1 Troll *4519 Loner, Really Stupid, Mighty Blow, Throw Team Mate, Always Hungry, Regenerate (110,000)*

The Troll is an expensive green cherry on the Orc cake. Probably not worth the price tag, but if you have the spare money he can increase the bully-potential of your team to terrifying levels. Never select a Troll ahead of a Black Orc, as their stupidity can make them a dangerous liability.

0-4 Goblins *6237 dodge, stunty, right stuff (40,000)*

Goblins are too easily squished to be of any real use. They could be useful in a quick score attempt, or when thrown by a Troll (if you're lucky) - best left in the reserves box or at home altogether.

In terms of team development, the two most important skills for any 'bashy' team are *block* and *guard*. *Block* is crucial

for Black Orcs to make their blocking more reliable, with *guard* useful for Blitzers who can use their mobility to apply their uncancellable assist. Black Orcs with *guard* are also a tasty option as opponents will find themselves unable to either cancel their assist or to block them away. Blitzers will find *mighty blow* and *tackle* helpful for hunting down ball carriers and fast dodgy things. *Jump up* and *dodge* are good 'double' picks.

OK so you've picked your team and some skills, but how are you going to use it? Here are five basic principles of Orcy organisation:

1. Take your blocks

You need to be throwing as many blocks as you can in order to thin the opposition ranks. Blocking with rookie Black Orcs can be risky so block with your skilled Blitzers first where possible. You can create more blocking opportunities in the following turn by pinning weaker players with your Black Orcs and negating potential assist squares. However don't just dive in indiscriminately and give away free blocks - AV9 is not invulnerable (statistically, it will break one in every six attempts). Note also that in LRB5 fouling is no longer an effective means to simply gain the numerical advantage. They days of rampant DP are long behind us so foul with surgical accuracy against key low-AV players only.

2. Play the turntrack

Acute awareness of the turn counter is crucial, especially on offence. I'd suggest playing cautiously for 3-4 turns before making a big push for the end zone. If you get within comfortable striking distance, stalling is a no-brainer.

3. Don't over-commit

Orcs are a slow team by nature and must play as a unit. If you over-stretch yourself you'll find it very hard to recover. On offence, hold the ball in a central position and don't declare your intentions straight away. If it's clear at an early stage you intend to commit to one flank, the defence will find their job much easier. Keep your opponent guessing until you're ready to strike then do so *en masse* and with full commitment. On defence, be very cautious about chasing the ball into the opposition backfield. It's almost always best to defend from the half-way line and with your whole team standing shoulder-to-shoulder, between the ball and your end zone. Keep a sweeper in reserve to mop up if any runners break through.

4. Cage up

The cage is still the best way to protect your ball carrier; some things never change! Remember though to cage judiciously and not always rely on a full textbook cage. For instance, against a slow moving defence ultra safety could be sacrificed in favour of players making valuable yards in the opposition half. Those of you not *au fait* with the 'cage' should refer to Carl Brown's classic *White Dwarf* article on the subject. Or watch this space for a future Triple POW strategy feature!

5. Ball handling is for girls only!

Orc plan A is to pick up the ball, and then put it in the end zone. Simple as that. Anything flashier runs a fair chance of going nipples up. If things don't go according to plan, hand-offs may be considered or in desperate circumstances perhaps a quick pass. If you find yourself attempting something longer, then you've probably already lost!

In sum, Orcs are a competitive option in both tournaments and leagues. However, like any other race, there's a knack to getting the most out of them. Hopefully this article will go some way to helping beginners out there achieve this end, and maybe even offer something for veteran coaches out there. Thanks for reading everyone. Questions and comments are very welcome.