

ENEMIES OF OLD

By David Candlish and Paul Gegg

To celebrate the imminent release of the stunning new Human Blood Bowl team, we think it only fitting that we should bring you a match report pitting them against their arch-rivals, the Orcs. These two races have a bitter enmity stretching back almost to the birth of the game itself, and over the years some of the best teams in the history of Blood Bowl have been Orc or Human. Complementing this racial rivalry is one of the deepest hatreds seen on pitches of the Old World; that between Human superstar Griff Oberwald and the behemoth that is Varag Ghou-Chewer.

Coaching these two teams today are David Candlish (Humans) and Paul Gegg (Orcs). Well known on the tournament scene, these two veteran coaches are also rivals in their own league, the ECBBL based in London (see www.irwilliams.com/ecbbl for more information). With so many grudges and so much pride at stake, the scene is set for a match of epic proportions – the winner reaping the spoils of success and the loser being tormented on Blood Bowl internet forums the world over!

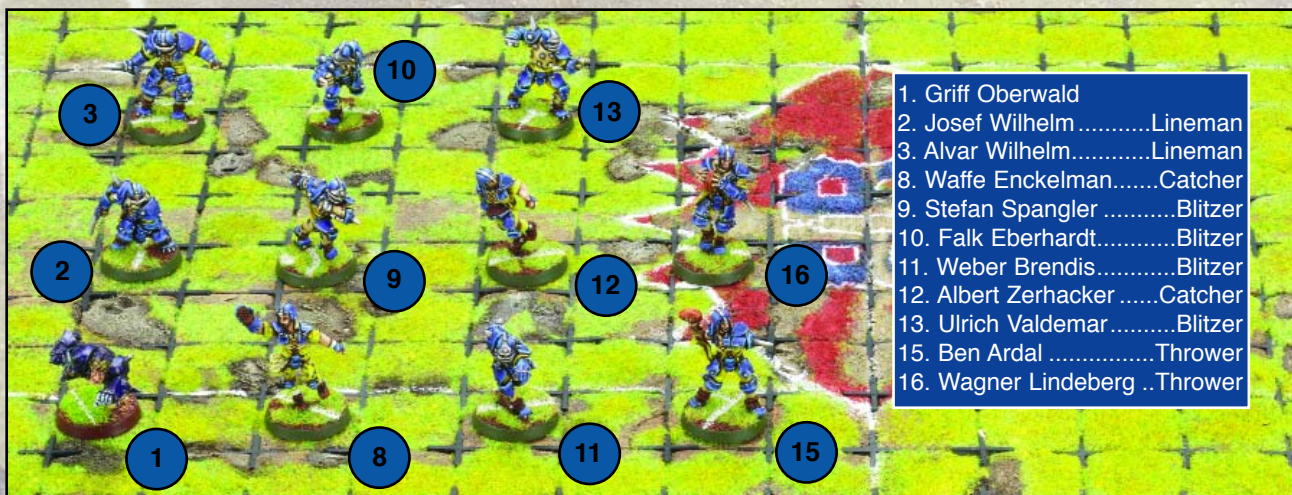
Neuberg Magpies

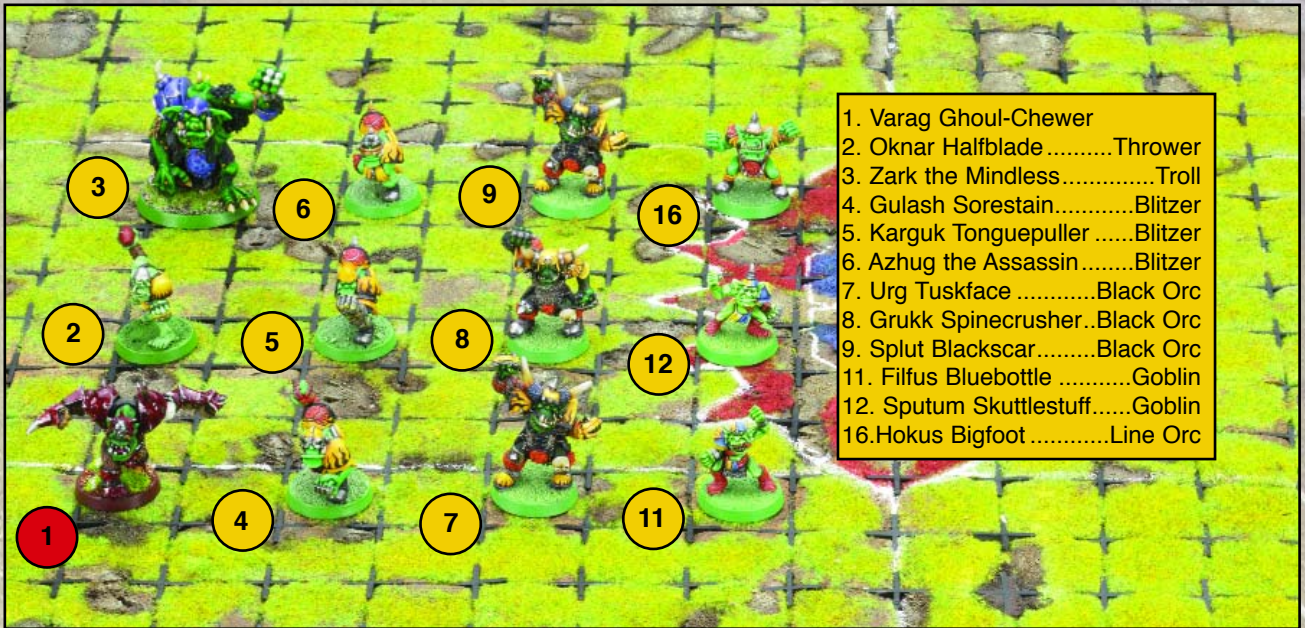
David: As usual, the mainstay of my team will be my four Blitzers. Given that I would probably be facing at least three Blitzers and a similar number of Black Orcs, not to mention Varag Ghou-Chewer himself, the Block skill should afford me some measure of protection as well as giving me a chance to maybe injure one or two of them in return. My other essential purchase was naturally Griff Oberwald. Although he's getting on a bit now, this legend of Blood Bowl would be key in my bid to defeat Paul's Orcs. However, I'm well aware of how big a target Griff is and he is sure to receive plenty of unwanted attention so my plan is to use him as a sweeper and move in when he spots an opportunity or isn't likely to get beaten up too badly. I followed Griff up with two Catchers and two Throwers thereby maximising the amount of skills I could have on the pitch. The Catchers are great for attracting attention when they are forward as most coaches recognise the danger and send at least one player to mark

them. This then means I can usually gain crucial numerical superiority in other areas.

My overall plan is to score quickly when I receive, which will then hopefully pressure the Orcs into going for an equaliser, rather than grind me down and score twice in the second half. Although I'd normally expect to have some problems against a grinding cage, with Griff around I should be able to leap right in and push the ball out into the open. No doubt Paul is well aware of this too, so keeping Griff alive is a top priority. Buying an Apothecary would help me to do this, but it would be at the expense of a re-roll and that is just too steep a price to pay.

The Neuberg Magpies have had an indifferent tournament history so far and this match is set to be their last for a while as I try my hand with other races. Let's hope they go out in style!





Trolltooth X-Press

Paul: Let's not muck around, Varag Ghou-Chewer is a great player. Orc Blitzers are pretty darn useful to start with, but give them Strength 4, and they can be unstoppable. However, Varag is a Strength 4 Blitzer that can stand up for free, re-roll half of his own blocks and has Mighty Blow to help cause those game-turning casualties. So for 160,000 gold pieces you have a real bargain. Give him leader and, well... I think I've made my point, he's just terrific.

So when I'm asked to renew the old rivalry between Orcs and Humans to celebrate the release of the fantastic Fanatic Human team, I'm on my way to the Studio faster than you can say Jack Robinson. It's 1,100,000 gold pieces and with Varag on the team-sheet, I'm already thinking that I can't lose. That is for the millisecond before realisation dawns – I'm going to be playing against the multi-talented Griff Oberwald. Ah!

What with all that heavy armour, Orcs are a resilient lot (especially against those Human pansies). I can therefore afford to pick out a squad of just twelve players. Any fewer players than that, and I go men down with just the one KO. Any more than twelve and I face leaving a good proportion of my team value in the reserves for the match. So twelve it is. Varag's leader means that the Troll is a bit less unreliable so he gets the nod. In any case, he'll be throwing his blocks towards the end of each turn and that Mighty Blow should make some sort of difference to the Human armour.

I'll be needing a Thrower (more for the Sure Hands than for the Pass skill; passing is only for when things have really gone wrong), I then go for three Blitzers, three Black Orcs and two Gobbos for their nuisance value and speed, leaving me with one line Orc. Two re-rolls (three assuming the Leader skill is used) makes me pretty happy. With a good deal of my team wrapped up in Varag, I would be happier still to have an Apothecary, but you can't have it all.

So without further ado, let me introduce the Trolltooth X-Press.

I learn the Magpies have only eleven players and no Apothecary. This comes as a bit of a surprise to me. One well-timed kick to Griff and it's probably game over for the Humans. Okay, without any tackle on my team, Griff is going to be tough to knobble permanently, but the rest of his team are looking a little precarious. And Griff can't win the game on his own, right?

With only the bare eleven, I'll have the numerical advantage with a couple of casualties. I'm therefore going to go toe-to-toe and try and knock him into next week (like the Orcs weren't going to do that anyway). I'm not going to be able defend the ball at the same time (especially against the leaping prowess of star Blitzer Griff), so I'm thinking that I want to start the game on defence, close in on his players and get a few blocks in. He may well score, and in fact I don't really mind if he does, as long as I can KO or worse one or two and get him to use some of his re-rolls. He'll then find it hard to turn me over when I receive the ball. I'll suck him in to base-to-base, and then slap him silly. All sorted.



Human Turn One

David: The Trolltooth X-Press opts to kick after winning the coin toss for the first half and fortunately for both teams the weather turns out fine. The Orc set-up sees the three Black Orcs and the Troll taking up position on the line of scrimmage, a single Blitzter in each wide zone and, sensibly, Varag and the third Blitzter deployed deep – they are clearly, and correctly, expecting an attempt to push forward and score quickly. Rather than meet the brute force of the Orc front line head on, I opt to consolidate my strength down the left wing, leaving only a token defender to hold the right.

With a great cheer from the crowd the match kicks off and the ball soars deep into my half. Fortunately it travels rather too deep and results in a touchback. Thrower Lindeberg takes possession of the ball and the first turn of the match starts in earnest. My first priority is to clear a route up the left wing, so Stefan Spangler blocks the Black Orc facing him on the line of scrimmage with the assistance of two team-mates and jostles him back towards the centre of the pitch. Now that he is free of his Black Orc marker, Valdemar pairs up with Eberhardt and together they blitz the Orc player on their right flank. A resounding crunch echoes around the stadium and the knocked-out Orc is quickly dragged off the pitch! Valdemar continues his advance up the field and ends his turn marking the Orc Thrower, Halfblade. With the way clear and potential Catcher-crunching Orcs marked, Catcher Enckelman races forward deep into the Orc half, ending his move in a dangerous scoring position. This is followed by my ball carrier advancing to within a few yards of the line of scrimmage.

Now my essential moves are over, I can concentrate on trying cause a little damage. Griff squares up against Black Orc Tuskface on the line of scrimmage for his first block of

the match. Clearly in his arrogance he has failed to warm up properly – a “double skull” sees him fall flat on his face! With a growing sense of unease at what might happen next, I opt to use a re-roll and throw the dice again. Another double skull!

Although his armour does him no favours, he is only stunned.

Orc Turn One

Paul: Laughing at an opponent’s misfortune is asking for trouble. Apart from looking like a git, Nuffle is very fickle and it won’t be long before the hob-nailed boot is very firmly on the other foot. However, you don’t often get quad-skulls and coming from the star of the game I do think a bit of a chuckle is demanded. It’s certainly one that my Orcs will remember for a while. Hilarity over, I’ve now got to make the most of the fact that the Magpies’ game-winner is on the floor, stunned and several of the humans are still in my tackle-zones.

The Orcs’ main priority, therefore, is to give Griff a good stamp. Before they do that and have the chance to be sent off (turnover), I make my free moves and then my safe blocks (two dice blocks with the Block skill with spare re-rolls). Enckelman, the only possible scorer, is marked with a line-Orc and Varag blitzes the idle Human Thrower at the line of scrimmage. Ardal is clearly not looking as the Orc Star knocks him out and keeps moving to close within blitzing range of a worried looking ball-carrier in the Magpies’ backfield. I do that so that the Magpies will have fewer options next turn. Now the Thrower Lindeberg may run off backwards if he doesn’t like the chance of being protected by his mates, but that’ll be fine by me as the rest of his team will be getting beaten up.

With the “free” stuff over, my attention turns to the first-turn foul that could possibly win me the game. Lineman Alvar Wilhelm is preventing a really good ganging up on Griff, so Black Orc Spinecrusher, standing next to him, pushes back the rather timid Magpie player. Spinecrusher doesn’t follow up, allowing him to assist in the foul. Gobbo Skuttlestuff races in for the foul with now two assists. I only need a 6 to break Griff’s armour. I roll a 5. The Magpie fans let out a big sigh of relief and I give Skuttlestuff a withering glare. It’s such a poor foul that the Ref isn’t even sure it’s a sending off offence, so the Gobbo remains on the pitch (probably best for him with the Orc bench screaming for blood). Griff was already stunned so I could have waited for the foul next turn instead. This way, I get the chance to stamp on him a couple of times (hopefully); besides David couldn’t prevent any of those lovely Orc assists this turn.

I can now focus on my unsafe blocks (two dice without block). A couple of hits later and half of his team are on the floor. My thoughts are that the Magpies will either run a screen down my left flank or try to force in a long pass. I therefore block with Bigfoot in my backfield, freeing up one of my Blitzers to respond to any threat (should I be given the chance). Across the pitch, Magpie players are marked or down, so the quarterback should have some tough decisions to make.

Note: It’s interesting that both teams wanted the Magpies to start with the ball. Obviously, players should be trying to do the things that make their opponents’ life difficult. Kicking to the Humans was exactly what they wanted so one of us has got our tactics wrong here; we’ll just have to see who it is...

Human Turn Two

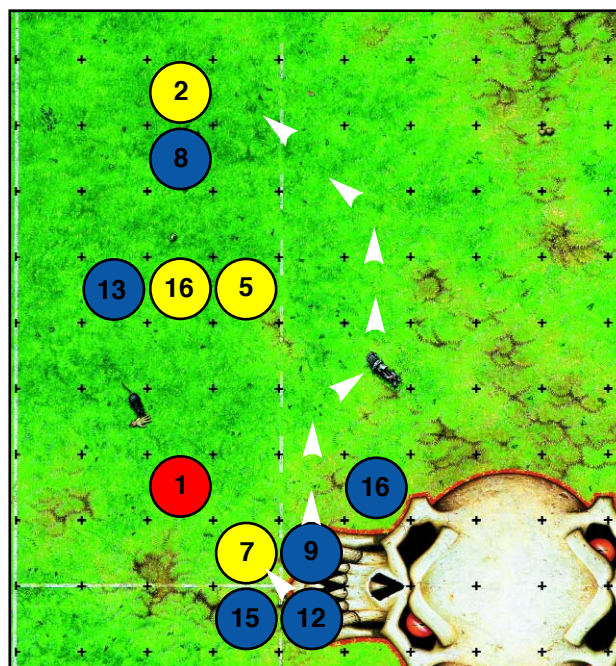
David: Ouch! The second turn of the match and I have already burned a re-roll, one of my Throwers is knocked out and Griff is lying on his face in the dirt surrounded by Orcs gunning for his blood. At this point, it feels like my best shot at recovery is to score this turn, as not only will I be ahead, it will also rescue Griff and give my KO’d Thrower a shot at recuperating. However, I simply don’t have the players to create a formation that will be able to recover sufficiently should my attack fail... it is an all-or-nothing plan!

First things first, I unstun Griff and Ulrich then stand up all my prone players. The next step is to attempt a risky one-dice block with Catcher Albert Zerhacker against Black Orc Blackscar on the line of scrimmage in an attempt to at least push him backwards and create a gap for my Thrower to run through with the ball. When the single skull lands face up I begin to think it’s going to be one of those games. I have to use my second re-roll and

this time it works a little better, with Albert sending the mighty Black Orc crashing to the ground. The next stage in my plan is to free-up Waffe Enckelman who is waiting deep, ready for the pass, but he’s hindered by the presence of a foul-smelling Orc. Stefan Spangler darts deep into the Orc half and needing a (worrying no re-roll left) Go-For-It, thunders into the marker, sending him flying backwards with a rough shoulder charge. Seeing his team-mate now free and in the open, Wagner Lindeberg runs across the line of scrimmage and throws a precarious long pass over the heads of a couple of intervening Orcs into the waiting arms of Waffe who wastes no time in sprinting effortlessly into the end zone. Touchdown!

As the players pause for breath and organise themselves for the kick, both teams KO’d players return, so the teams are back up to full strength. My brave (some might say desperate) plan has worked. I have eleven players on the pitch once more, but more importantly Griff is no longer at the mercy of a Goblin’s boot.

My team deploys for the next drive with four players across the centre, and with my Blitzers and Throwers guarding the wide zones. The Catchers hang back ready to pounce on any Orc players that make it into my half, assisted by Griff who is acting as a sweeper. Unfortunately, just as the final Orc player takes to the field a small band of Orc fans surge onto the pitch and swamp, rather coincidentally, Weber Brendis on the far right wing. When the match officials restore order and the dust clears, Weber is left lying on the turf dazed and confused, but otherwise unharmed. The ball is kicked deep into the Orc half and the Human team brace themselves for the onslaught to come.



Orc Turn Two

Paul: The over-commitment to foul Griff didn't work out. Sure the Magpies used two of their three re-rolls, but on reflection I should have used Varag to blitz his potential scorer rather than bear down on his quarterback. I felt that he wouldn't force the play so much so early in the game. I was wrong and although I half expected to be behind early and I have managed to force the use of re-rolls that I wanted, I feel a good chance to take the advantage has been wasted. Still, plenty of time for payback.

The ball lands deep in my half which is obviously not great for Orcs. I need to collect it and make it into a nice cage to be as safe as possible from Griff. The problem is that the players to form that cage are a long way up field at present. Conversely, it's so deep that I am not going to lose it if I don't pick it up this turn, so I can afford to leave that bit until later in the turn. Nevertheless, spare player Bigfoot races back to make sure a player is near the ball if it all goes wrong on the line of scrimmage.

Griff is standing idly midfield in the Magpie half of the pitch. He's also within easy reach of Varag, so after making a channel at the line of scrimmage and again making the free moves, Varag blitzes with assist from Gobbo Filfus Bluebottle. I need a straight POW to put Griff on his backside, but it's not that unlikely with the use of the Pro skill (46% actually). Double pushback, Pro, double pushback. Griff really is going to be tricky to damage, but I knew that. I'll get him though! Varag follows up. I don't really want to be in Griff's tackle zone, but Varag is a tough guy and I want Griff to dodge backwards if he is going to run towards my lumbering ball-carrier (though he can't reach him in one turn). Varag is now toe-to-toe with Griff and the Spike! Magazine lenses flash.

The rest of the squad hold the line of scrimmage awaiting the arrival of the ball. Halfblade, my Thrower, recovers it fairly easily and trudges upfield towards his mates. He's not really in any rush (or in any danger of being hit next turn). I'm not one for delaying the score for a few turns, but my safest play is a rolling cage. If that works, and I score in turn seven or eight, there isn't enough time in the half to concede again. Half the job will then be complete.

Human Turn Three

David: Now that Paul's Thrower is in possession of the ball, my main concern is to neutralise the threat posed by the Goblin and Varag. Launching Varag deep into my half essentially unsupported means the Orcs' Star is within reach of many of my players, so with luck I could take him down then mark the Goblin. As always, I begin by unstuffing my players. Albert Zerhacker runs wide, then into the Orc half and towards the ball carrier, ready to reach him next turn. My Linemen struggle to their feet. Griff launches himself at Varag, but fails to do anything more than push the huge Orc backwards a step or two. I now have a number of tackle zones around both Varag and the Goblin, so with all my critical moves over I move on to the only option I have left — a midfield one-dice Blitz vs Blitz block. Normally I would not do this as a skull leaves me looking a bit silly, but in this case I reason I am only going to be pounded next turn when the opponent has an assist, so I roll the dice. Seconds later Karguk Tonguepuller is flying through the air and lands awkwardly on his neck. It is immediately apparent that he isn't going to be playing any more part in this match and he finds himself lying in a painful heap in the Orc casualty area!



Orc Turn Three

Paul: Losing a player is always tough, but on a one-dice block, it just makes you mad. The Orcs swear bloody vengeance for their fallen comrade. In the meantime, they are under a little pressure as one of the Magpies is running deep on my left flank and I haven't made my cage yet. Not to worry, Halfblade makes more progress up the pitch and into (more or less) the safety of a pocket behind the steadfast line of scrimmage. With all the defensive assists around, Griff is safe from a Varag block deep in the Magpie half so the Orc Star hits the easier target next to him, a Human Thrower, and stuns him. Sending Varag into a fistfight with Griff behind the Magpie line of scrimmage was arguably not too smart, especially now a few other Magpies have joined in the fracas, but at least Griff is busy in the Magpies half and not threatening to flatten Halfblade before he makes the sanctity of the cage. Once that's happened, and with the Humans down to one re-roll already, the Magpies' only real weapon to stop me will be Griff's leaping blitz.

Gobbo Bluebottle works himself free from the midfield tangle and heads downfield. Gobbos are so tricky that the Magpies will either have to use their blitz or send two chaps after him (helping my Orcs outnumber the Humans at midfield).

Human Turn Four

David: With the Goblin scampering ever deeper into my half of the field I'm now under increasing pressure to keep him marked and maybe take him down if I have the opportunity. Also, Varag is a constant threat so injuring him is another aim for this turn. Crucially, Varag is still beside Griff meaning I can block him and save my blitz for someone else. My main aim for this turn is to blitz my way through his pocket and get at least one tackle zone on the ball carrier, slowing his advance.

I move my Blitzers back to hinder that troublesome Goblin, forcing him to dodge on his next turn or be on the receiving end of two two-dice blocks. Griff faces off against Varag once more and this time plants a cunning sucker punch square on the Orc's jaw. Varag crashes to the floor, but he's taken worse blows than that in his career and isn't overly troubled.

Falk Eberhardt blitzes forward, teaming up with Albert Zerhacker to try and take down Black Orc Splot Blackscar on the side of the Orc pocket and get into the area where the cage will be formed. Another one-dice block and the Human fans let out a collective groan as Falk trips over his own bootlaces and begins to fall. Last re-roll used for the half (oops), but thankfully with surprising skill Falk manages to cushion his own fall and sweep the legs from beneath Splot. This gives the bit of space necessary to get a tackle zone on the Orc Thrower.



I am about to end my turn, but the sight of Varag prone on the ground is too much, so I opt to foul Varag with Waffe Enckelman. A well-timed kick to the groin sees Varag hobble off the pitch to sit very gingerly in the dugout, while my Catcher is let off with a stern warning from the referee. Things are looking up.

Orc Turn Four

Paul: My thoughts had been to roll the cage up the pitch slowly, sucking the Magpies in and getting a few blocks, before springing the score in turn seven or eight. With the loss of Varag (and the Leader roll that goes with him), I now have to score in turn seven so Varag gets two chances to return for the second half. Good news is that David's out of re-rolls, so Griff leaping into my cage is probably too much of a risk (especially as the "eye" is now on the Magpies and Griff would be fouled mercilessly should he fall).

Only one task of importance and that is to free up Halfblade, so Blitzer Azhug blitzes my Thrower's marker (two dice, both down) and down goes the annoying man. Azhug continues his move up the pitch to be a cornerman for my subsequent cage. The rest of the cornermen run up and Halfblade takes up his position in the middle. The key thing for a good cage is that none of the players are in tackle zones or at the very least easily blockable. That means the blitz has to take out a cornerman and the ball-carrier is safe for another turn.

Bluebottle fails to dodge away from his markers deep in the Magpie half and it's turnover. I'm feeling a bit worried about two players off the pitch, but having formed the cage I should be okay.

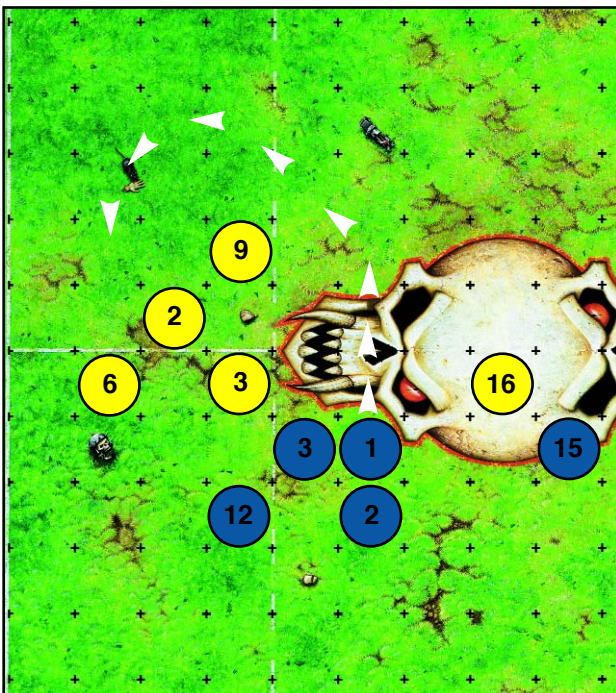
Human Turn Five

David: The Goblin failing his dodge is an unexpected bonus as it means I can guard him without fear of the score next turn. Had I not already fouled Varag I may have been tempted to put the boot in, but I can't risk losing the player if the ref spotted me. All that I have left is to hassle the cage in the hope of slowing the X-Press or dragging some players out of position. Most of my blocking is pretty uneventful until Griff leaps like a rocket at a cage cornerman, Gulash Soreslain, and bends his arm in a way no arm should ever bend. Gulash is carted off the field, howling in agony while the Human fans scream in delight at the carnage they see!

Orc Turn Five

Paul: Ah, I'm in serious trouble now. I've lost two of my best players permanently and Varag for a while too. Griff is standing next to my ball-carrier and my other seven players are mostly marked. I can blitz Griff away from Halfblade, but I can't get to a safe position from being blitzed back by the annoying chap next turn. The downfield Gobbo is so well marked that I'm not likely to score this turn either. I stand him up and move him, nonetheless.

The best I can do is to use my spare cornermen to force the direction from which Griff hits my ball-carrier, so the ball might scatter into a couple of Orc tackle zones should he go down. That's what I opt for. Away from the battle for the ball, Black Orc Blackscar KO's a Magpie Thrower after a both down. It's turnover and I am now open for the Griff blitz.



Human Turn Six

David: Losing a Thrower temporarily is unfortunate, but I still hold the numerical superiority. What's more, I have a direct route for Griff to blitz the ball carrier, and after repositioning my players to catch that slippery Goblin once more, a blitz on the ball carrier was exactly what I do. Although Griff's tackle takes Halfblade down with apparent ease, the ball slides towards the only Orc blitzer on the pitch. Unsurprisingly he fails to catch it, and the ball spins back towards Griff. In three tackle zones and needing a 6. Does he catch it? No problem! My dilemma now is whether or not I should attempt to dodge Griff out of harm's way, but in the end I opt not to roll more dice than is absolutely necessary. In hindsight, I should have made a couple of Go-For-It rolls and dodged, as I had skill re-rolls for both of these actions. At the time I forgot about Griff's Sure Feet!

Orc Turn Six

Paul: Now that's annoying. Without any re-rolls left, Griff's managed to catch the ball and will score what might well turn out to be the winner if he's still standing at the end of this turn. I've got to knobble him now. Although I have re-rolls left and at least two two-dice blocks against him, it's not good enough odds for me to expect to knock him down. However, I see that when I hit him, I can push him towards the sideline and maybe even off the pitch if I don't knock him down. That will give the added advantage of possibly putting him out of the game too.

Spinecrusher stands so that Zark's only got to roll for Bonehead (rather than for Really Stupid) for his block on Griff. Two dice and a push, followed by Tuskface's blitz (again two dice, push required) will leave Azhug, aptly named "the Assassin" to apply the coup de grace (one dice assuming Halfblade stands to cancel the assist). It's all too much for Zark and he predictably Boneheads. That makes it harder, much harder, but still possible.

Tuskface blocks Griff (one dice), pushes him back and follows up. Halfblade stands, blitzes Griff (again one dice) again pushing him back and follows up. Halfblade has one movement left and he successfully dodges behind Griff on fours. That was the tough bit and no re-roll needed as yet. He's standing there occupying the only space that Griff could go to when he is pushed back from his block from Azhug. At present it would be a half-dice block (two dice, opponent chooses) so Bluebottle dodges out of his downfield position and cancels the assist that Josef Wilhelm is lending. Now it's a one-dice block with only a push required. That's exactly what I get and Griff's off the pitch! Cue wild cheering...

That was three one-dice blocks with only pushes required and a dodge (though I would have preferred a POW! of course). Lucky? Yes. Desperate? Yes. But with Zark confused, I was only ever going to get three one-dice blocks wherever I pushed Griff, so I might as well have combined it with pushing him off. It's only now that I realise everyone has moved so I can't close in one where the ball will land. Still, Griff isn't going to score and he may never again if my fans rightly clobber him. Unfortunately, they only stun him. Worse is to follow when the ball heads towards my end zone and lands back in play at the feet of the Magpies' best-placed player. Damn!

Human Turn Seven

David: Well! Some spectacular, well-planned blocking from Paul saw Griff nursing a few bruises in the dugout. It could have been so much worse, and I am fairly lucky for him to come away unscathed. What is even luckier is that the ball has landed right behind my Catcher AFTER all the Orc players have moved. With only a few dice rolls I can score a second.

With no stunned or prone players to sort out, I start my scoring play straight away. My best bet lies in getting midfield Ben Ardal to pick up the ball with his Sure Hands and hand it off to the trusty Zerhacker. To free up Ben I need to throw a two-dice block with Ulrich, hoping for at least a pushback. Without team re-rolls, my heart is in my mouth when I see a skull appear on the first dice, but luckily Ulrich's Block skill saves him with the second dice and Ben is free to move. Ben runs through the gap in the Orc defence and scoops the ball up before handing it to Albert Zerhacker in one fluid motion. The swift Catcher wastes no time at all and dashes into the end zone. Touchdown!

Note: At this point, my Catcher could have easily outrun the Orc players and stalled the touchdown, only to score in the next turn, thereby denying Paul a chance to get one back before the half. In the spirit of fairness and competition I opted to score immediately rather than hold off.

Orc Turn Seven

Paul: Ouch! Neither Varag nor myself are happy chappies. The whole pushing business worked well, but the ball didn't bounce kindly for the X-Press and Varag shows his disappointment by not taking to the field for the next kick-off. This time the ball lands nicely near Halfblade's right hand in the middle of my half of the pitch. I need at least one player (preferably two) in scoring positions so first of all I send both Gobbos downfield (re-rolling a failed GFI); one on each flank. Halfblade picks up the ball needing his Sure Hands and heads up towards the line of scrimmage.



I make a point of only blocking with players I can afford to see both down. The rest are my screen against attack on the ball carrier. Halfblade is therefore safe, and David can't blitz both Gobbos so maybe I can score here.

Human Turn Eight

David: I have two Goblins that are potential scorers to deal with. What does surprise me is that Paul hasn't kept his Throw Team-mate option open — both Goblins are half way towards my end zone. I could blitz one of them, but before I do that I send two other players to guard the other Gobbo in a formation designed to make Paul roll as many dice as possible if he wanted to dodge away to score.

By blitzing with Griff I manage a three-dice block on Gobbo Sputum Skuttlestuff, although I fail to knock him over. With all my defensive moves completed I once again turn to causing damage, spurred on by the two casualties I have caused already. One swift "both-down" block later and my turn has ended... sometimes it's better to not block for the sake of it!

Orc Turn Eight

Paul: A very simple plan now. I need to blitz off one of the man-markers on my preferred Gobbo (right flank) and to do that Spinecrusher frees up Azhug by pushing away his marker. Azhug two-dice blitzes one of Bluebottle's markers, Zerhacker, and needs his Block skill with a both-down. The Catcher is KO'd. All this leaves is a Halfblade short pass, a catch in a tackle zone and a Dodge roll. All with re-rolls, so it's a good chance to score. Halfblade runs up the pitch, throws an accurate bullet pass, but Bluebottle initially fluffs the catch. The fans are on the edge of their seat. Re-roll used. Can he save the first half? No, it's down on the floor and the Orcs trudge off the field for their half-time Orca-Cola, more deflated than a flat pig's bladder.

Half-Time Thoughts

David: Well I hadn't expected to be 2-0 up at half time with two casualties in my favour. In fairness, I think my luck has held out pretty well, especially considering I used all my re-rolls by turn four. I was very pleased to score on the second turn as if I hadn't the Orcs would have taken my out-of-position team to pieces and Griff would have been in serious trouble.

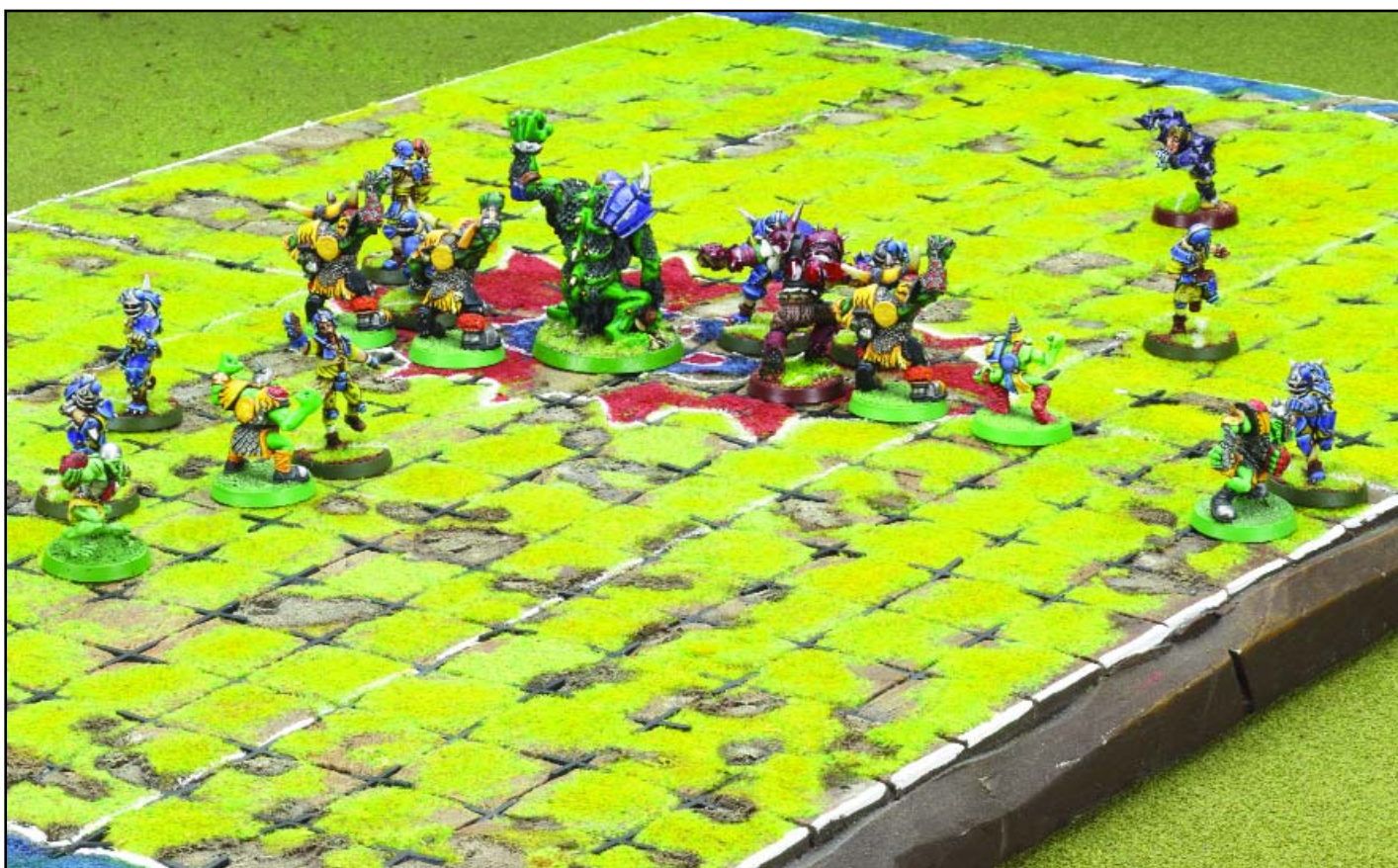
I think my defence against the Orc attacking was reasonable, although in hindsight I wouldn't try a one-dice block against a Black Orc just to get to his ball carrier, as I'd probably have been better off going for the Goblins. They squash easier! Griff is proving to be immensely valuable although thankfully not dominating the match completely as I'd feared he might — one of the flaws of stars is it can be easy to rely on them completely at the expense of using real tactics in your games. This is possibly because I've deliberately kept him back out of harm's way until I need him, and as turn six showed he can be relied upon to seriously upset your opponent's plans.

So what now for the second half? My knocked out players won't be returning from the dugout so I've only got nine. Varag returns, which goes some way to evening up the

sides. My main priority for this half is to avoid taking damage, even if it means letting him score relatively quickly. I can then try for another touchdown to make it 3-1 and secure the win.

Paul: I have to disagree with David here. I think Griff has had a massive effect on the match. Sure David hasn't relied on him and he hasn't scored (yet), but Griff's very presence got the Orcs to over-commit (whether mistaken or not) to allow the first score and he single-handedly turned me over to cause the second. He injured one of my Blitzers before he got in the game and took Varag down allowing him to be fouled and KO'd. Is there no end to his talents? Can I do the Old World a favour and get him this half? We'll just have to see.

Varag's recovery means I outnumber the Magpies which is something I've not been used too so far. Okay, so I've got an extra man, but the failed catch at the end of the half really hurts. As does the two lost Blitzers, but my real problem is that I have to score in three or four turns to leave enough time for an equaliser and then turn the Humans over and score again. Of course, the quicker I try and score with the Greenskins, the more that can go wrong and I can end up being totally stuffed. Still, got to try... what does the Kick-off table have in store?



Second Half

David: Hampered somewhat by the absence of two players, the Magpies unavoidably leave gaps on the wings. Griff still stays back from the line of scrimmage, poised just behind Wagner Lindeberg.

Paul: The Orcs' strength is spread out along the line of scrimmage and my fast players are poised to run down a flank. I'm thinking quickish score and then we'll see what happens. Halfblade pants as he wonders where the ball will land, but the Magpies have done their homework and get the "Blitz!"

Human Blitz Turn

David: The whistle to start the second half has barely been blown before the Magpies surge forward into the Orc half! Once the dust has cleared, Sputum Skuttlestuff is left nursing a broken leg in the X-Press dugout, and two Human Blitzers and a Catcher are charging towards the ball which is only yards away from the Orc end zone in the dead centre of the pitch. It looks set to be a long half for the Trolltooth X-Press.

Note: Many players go overboard on a Blitz, pouring players into their opponent's half. This can often lead to an overstretched defence and be counter-productive. In this situation I used fast players to pressure the ball while still keeping the majority of my defence intact.

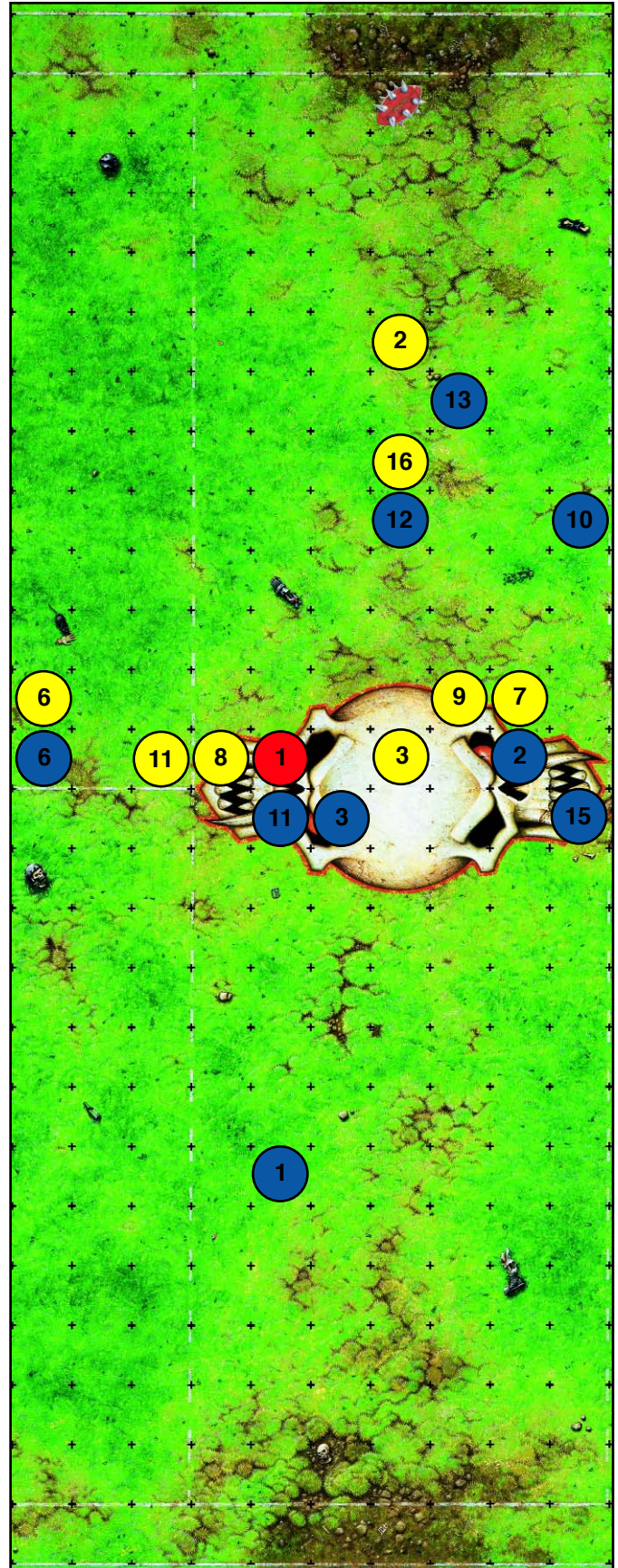
Orc Turn One

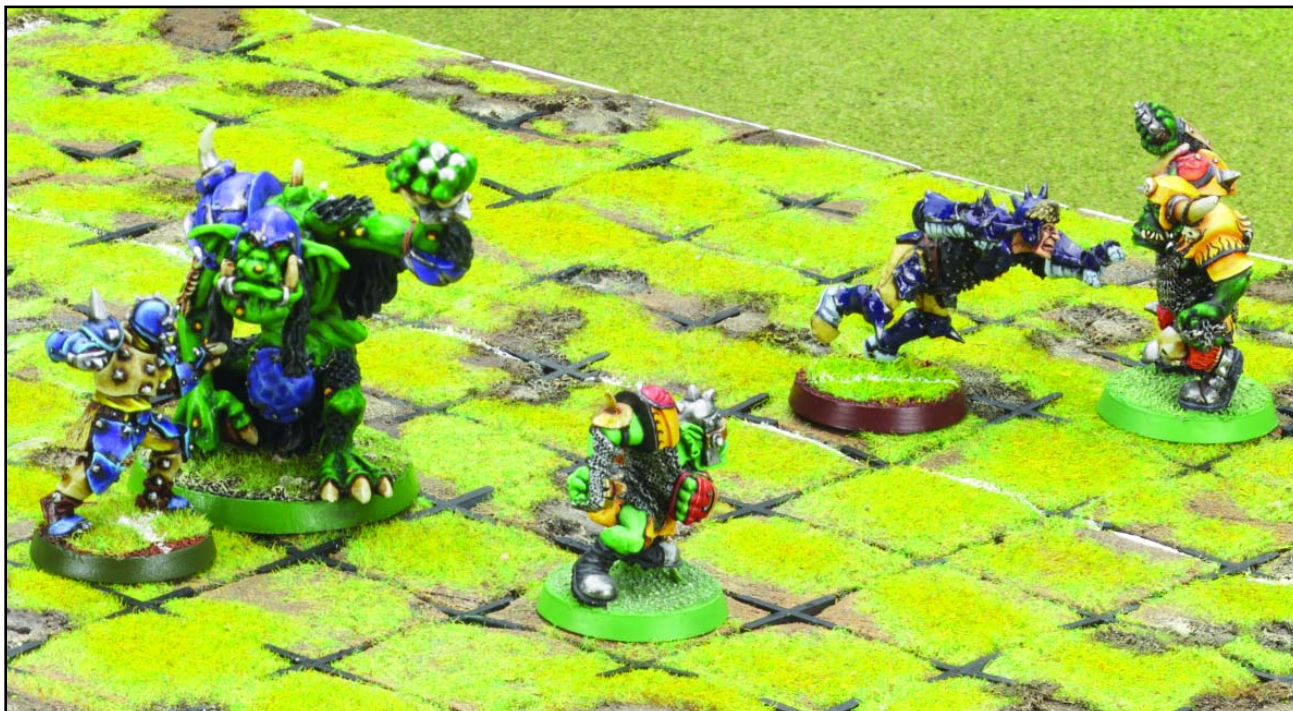
Paul: When I said a quickish score, I didn't mean a Magpie one! My first job is to try and stop them getting possession. That's not going to be easy.

All my players in the backfield are marked and I have to work my Thrower free, get the ball and then get him safe. First up, Black Orc Spinecrusher leaves the line of scrimmage and blitzes a Magpie Blitzer in my half needing two GFIs and thankfully KOs him (needing a re-roll). My sole remaining Gobbo can now assist Bigfoot in blocking away Halfblade's marker with a POW! I can afford to go after the ball now as the deep Magpie players cannot recover if I fluff the pick-up. That's just as well with a double one from Halfblade. The position is bad, but this drive is not dead yet.

Human Turn One

David: My front line is a bit of a mess and the players I sent after the ball are not going to reach it. Just as well I didn't go all out on the Blitz or I'd really be in bad shape now. With Varag standing all alone, he's an awfully tempting target, but the Orc Blitzer near the sidelines is even more tempting. After a quick pause to check that the battered front line have regained their feet, Falk





Eberhardt races across the pitch ready to push him into prime position for Stefan Spangler to knock him out of bounds, but falls flat on his face just before he can make his block. Turnover!

Orc Turn Two

Paul: I've lost three of my six Movement 6 players so far, so I need to get someone downfield with speed who might survive a Griff blitz. Remember I've got to be scoring soonish. Varag blitzes his Blitzer marker, but gets both down, leaving him stuck in a tackle zone. He fails his Pro check and I'm not prepared to make a dodge downfield with him so early in my turn with the ball loose near my end zone, so he stays where he is and wastes his remaining movement.

The rest of the team take a little encouragement from a mighty block from Blackscar and four Magpies get put on their butts. Halfblade even picks up first time and gets into a bit of a pocket. Zark ends the turn in style with a Bonehead with a rather nervous Magpie Lineman in front of him. Scoring is going to take at least another three turns and that's if I score at all. It's not looking good.

Human Turn Two

David: Griff, lurking dangerously in the Magpies' backfield, spies his chance. Filfus Bluebottle, the last Goblin is standing with his back turned just inside the Human half of the field. Taking the opportunity to put some serious hurt on one of the Orcs' last remaining realistic scorers, he piles into the Goblin with a ferocious neck-high two footed tackle. POW! Filfus keels over

instantly and is dragged from the field, his head hanging at an unhealthy angle. Another casualty for the "überwald"!

The rest of the Magpies hurriedly take up defensive positions once more and brace themselves for the inevitable Orc onslaught...

Orc Turn Three

Paul: I've lost another player and the Magpies are giving the X-Press a lesson in causing casualties. The X-Press are going to have trouble explaining this one to the fans. And Griff is lurking ready to pounce in the next turn should I not be able to get the ball away from him (and with movement 11, that's going to be tricky). It's do or die and time to throw the Orc playbook out of the window (not that it's done me much good to date). The Magpies' defence is centred around Varag on my right-flank as no-one in their right mind would see the Black Orc on my left flank as a scoring threat. Apart from me today, that is.

Before I do that, I need to get rid of his marker, so Bigfoot blitzes him off (and down). Halfblade runs up and hands-off to Blackscar who receives it with some surprise, but quickly turns and runs downfield. Halfblade can now be used to help Zark to move and between them, they set up the screen. Spinecrusher decides not to block, thus tying up a Magpie Blitzer. Varag double pushes his Lineman target, but then succeeds with his Pro skill and on the re-roll knocks him down. Pro — got to love that skill. Azhug finishes the rather successful turn by dodging out to complete the screen.

Note. Black Orcs aren't very agile, but they still catch three in four balls should a re-roll be available. That's not too bad odds when nothing else is on. They aren't very quick though so whether he makes the end zone before the end of the week is another matter...

Human Turn Three

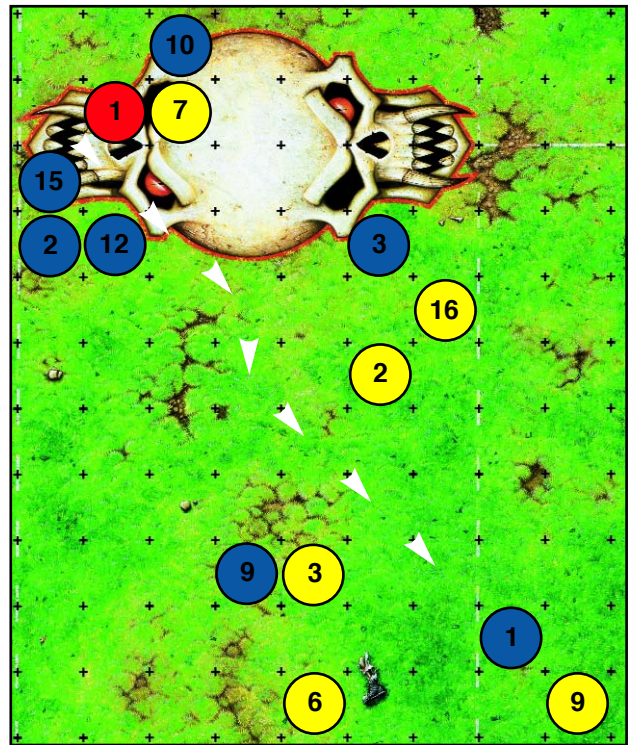
David: Handing off to the Black Orc! This was something I didn't expect at all, and because it's worked it has caught the Magpies completely off guard. I need to act fast and get tackle zones on the Black Orc, and preferably more than one. Paul can't rely on the Agility of this brute to save him too often, so putting two TZs on the ball carrier should buy me time to get more men in position. I have maybe a turn or two at the most to stop this guy. The prime choice for the first player to use is my Catcher as although he may be marked, his Dodge skill usually makes him pretty reliable. Not today... he crashes to the ground and my turn ends abruptly.

Orc Turn Four

Paul: I can't score this turn so I roll the Black Orc ball-carrier up the left flank and GFI one square so he can score without rolling for extra squares next turn (he might have to roll for something else as well, depending on how close the Magpies get). With very few players in tackle zones, the rest of play is defending the screen against the sure-to-come blitz from Griff.

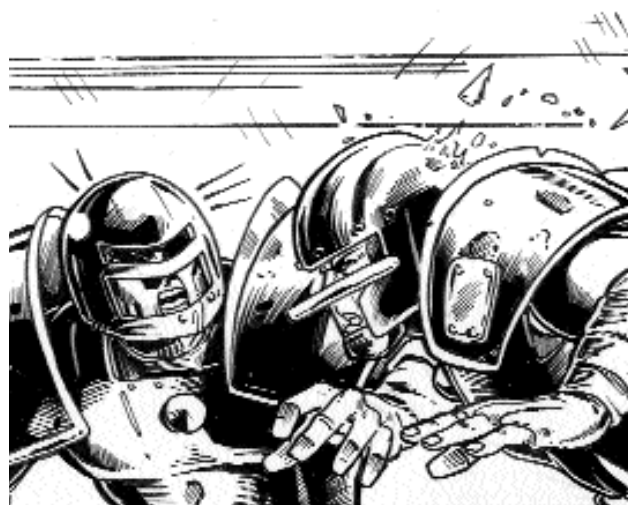
Human Turn Four

David: As I had feared, that Black Orc is now in a definite scoring position. I can see only one possible way to stop him and naturally I will need Griff to save the day. After a quick block to help clear the route, minimising the number of risky dodges I need, Griff begins his single-handed blitz all the way across the pitch on the well-guarded Black Orc steaming up my right wing. His first dodge fails as he trips on the outstretched leg of Varag, but he turns his tumble into a controlled roll and escapes harm (I use his Dodge skill re-roll). His desperate sprint continues, but what should have been an easy dodge away from the flailing arms of a Black Orc turns bad. Once again Griff's expertise and training save him and he continues on undaunted (now I've used my Team re-roll). In a show of sheer athletic excellence he leaps effortlessly over the clueless Troll before landing deftly on his feet. All that remains are a few desperate last paces before he throws his block... but he trips! I'm really sweating after I fail the GFI to Block, but Paul reminds me that Griff has Sure Feet. Nuffle smiles kindly on such benevolence as Griff makes the GFI and launches himself into a one-dice block only to be caught in the face by the outstretched fist of the towering Orc. It's a skull and Griff falls face first into the mud.



Orc Turn Five

Paul: What do I do now? I've got a touchdown just waiting to be scored, but Griff is lying on the floor helpless. If I foul and injure him, then Griff's out of the game. But if I get sent off at the same time, Griff's departure will be a hollow victory as I won't have enough time to score twice (and may not even score once — bringing shame on the team). I can only get two assists in so the chance of injuring Griff is roughly one in nine against one in six of being sent off. I decide against the foul, but with re-rolls to spare, I try to injure a couple of other Magpie players with safe blocks (two dice with Block). Armour rolls hold so Blackscar scores without incident. Touchdown! Whatever else happens, a Black Orc score has regained some credibility.



Human Turn Five

David: With an uneventful kick-off, things look reasonably solid. All three of my knocked out players are back and Griff is still alive and kicking. A full team and I get to receive. If I can score here I will seal the match. My plan is to emulate the first half — run deep, forcing him to chase my Catchers. I can then choose to either run the ball in with Griff, a Blitzter, or dodge away with a Catcher to receive the match-winning pass.

Things go pretty smoothly and my turn is almost finished with both Catchers deep, Griff distracting Varag deep in the Orc backfield and everyone else still on their feet. All that remains is to pick up the ball. Ben Ardal moves to collect it but fails, his eye caught by one of the cheerleaders at the edge of the pitch. Still, my team and formation are in good shape so I'm not overly worried.

Orc Turn Six

Paul: I have only eight players to defend against his eleven and I need to send at least one of mine into his half of pitch so that I have some sort of chance of getting an equaliser. Problem is that when you do that, your player becomes something of a target. So I send two, one on each flank and defend the Human offence with the remaining six players. I can't cover all the receivers so I'm relying on the Magpies throwing this away. With not much left to do I order a petulant one-dice block on Griff from Varag near my end zone. Varag Pros his pushback hoping for that elusive POW and rolls a skull. Stunned. Great. Turnover.

Human Turn Six

David: I had to smile when Varag knocked himself over. It may not have been quite as impressive as Griff's display of ineptitude in turn one, but it's always fun when Star Players fail disastrously. All I need to do now is get the ball into the hands of Griff downfield, so I opt for a long pass with my Thrower directly at him. Wagner Lindeberg, the more experienced player, gathers the ball easily enough. However, a gust of wind blows the ball off target and it comes to rest not too far from Zark the Mindless, near the corner of the field.


Orc Turn Seven

Paul: The ball is loose and I've players that can reach the Magpie end zone in the next two turns. It's not very likely, but I can still equalise. First of all Varag unstuns. I've got to get one of the two movement five players in his half close enough to score in turn eight and Bigfoot only needs a successful dodge, so I move him first. He makes his dodge and closes to within five squares of the end zone on my right wing. Whatever else happens this turn, I can still score in turn eight.

My only potential ball-handler, Azhug the Blitzter, is marked near midfield so Blackface blitzes his marker. It's a both down so I use one of my two remaining re-rolls. Azhug is now free to run back towards his own end zone to recover. The pick up is a bit of a worry without a re-roll, but he gets it. Looking downfield, the position looks bleak, but we've got the ball. Halfblade dodges out from his marked position in the Magpies half and comes back



"Take this Zark... BOK!" "Ouch! Ref! Reeef!"



to midfield (as I decide he won't get into scoring range with a player in his way, but he could be of use with his Pass skill at the line of scrimmage).

Black Orc Spinecrusher is forced to become the second possible receiver so he dodges (somehow) out of his midfield position and heads down the field needing two GFIs. A very lucky turn. David is probably now thinking that I might just be able to get that equaliser. My ball handler is definitely going to be blitzed by Griff, but as I've got Block and the Magpies don't have a re-roll, he's got a fair chance of staying on his feet.

Human Turn Seven

David: Going from a fairly likely looking chance to score and seal my win, I now find myself facing two players within scoring distance (albeit one of them a Black Orc). If I'm not careful he could equalise here. I pull everyone back to get tackle zones on both potential scorers, both to try and grab a lucky interception, but also to make him dodge away. Foolishly, I make the mistake of moving a player back unnecessarily when I could have moved him up to mark the Orc Thrower; a decision I could come to lament later.

There isn't much I can do defensively now, so Griff dives headfirst at the ball carrier. Frustratingly I don't manage to knock him down, but at least the player is marked. I've done as much as I can, let's see what these Orcs can manage.

Orc Turn Eight

Paul: Result. Azhug is still on his feet and Varag is within reach of Griff so he can knock the pigeon-helmeted star away from my ball-carrier. Varag jumps up, dodges out of his tackle zone and blitzes Griff. POW! Now I get him when I only need a pushback! Griff, however, is just stunned. Azhug runs up and hands-off to Halfblade at halfway. The last team re-roll is needed, but Halfblade safely gathers. Bigfoot dodges out from his marker's tackle zone deep downfield and runs into the end zone. Halfblade takes a deep breath and runs forward sending out a long pass. Needing a 5, he rolls a 4. Pass re-roll and it's a 6. Accurate! The Studio comes to a halt as the ball sails towards Bigfoot's open arms in the end zone. He only needs to catch it to equalise and force extra time. Is it caught? Oh yes. Touchdown! The fans go wild! The Orcs go wild! Even Tonguepuller with his broken neck in the Injured Box lets out a bit of a whimper.

Note: This is the sort of length of the field play that I expect from my Skaven, not my Orcs! Having said that, it's not that unlikely, about one in four. However, if David had marked my Thrower at the line of scrimmage, rather than put another unnecessary tackle zone on the eventual

scorer, then it would have needed a long bomb and an extra dodge aside from a tougher catch by Halfblade in the first place. It might not seem much, but it would reduce the odds to about one in fifteen.

Human Turn Eight

David: Disaster! I've gone from leading 2-0 to facing Sudden Death overtime. Losing a lead like this is pretty disconcerting, and I've the horrible feeling it will all get even worse in extra time. Since I can't score, I spend the last turn of normal play blocking as much as possible. The frustration at throwing away a near-certain win is too much for Alvar Wilhelm, however, and takes his anger out on the prone form of Zark the Troll. Although Zark is left unhurt, the referee spots Alvar and promptly sends him off!

Human Summary

David: Will I ever be able to live it down, losing a lead like that? In fairness I think I was a little unlucky not to score in turn six of the second half, but it was my own silly fault for not marking the Orc Thrower that facilitated the equaliser. So far it's been a hugely enjoyable match and extra time is sure to be as exciting and intense as normal time has been. I still have a slight advantage despite losing a Lineman, so hopefully I will receive the kick and score quickly. If I don't receive, I'm not sure I want to think about the outcome...

Orc Summary

Paul: Yep, it's extra time. I've got eight players, am outnumbered and am still playing against Griff. But the Orcs are still in this which is a bit of a result having been nearly 3-0 down at the start of the second half. It's been a terrific game so far and extra time without team re-rolls on either side is going to add to the excitement. That's if I can stand it.

With the luck I've had since I started using the Black Orcs as receivers, I'm thinking I can't lose this now... Join us soon to find out what happens...