

The Dark Elves: Masters of the running game

Why play Dark elves?

They lack the skills and speed of the other elves.

They have no strength access and they suffer from the dark elf curse.

So what can they do that no one else can?

First of all they have access to four blitzers and then two elite blitzers – the witch elves.

This makes them as bashy as any elf team can get, and with their decent armour combined with their high agility they are quite sturdy.

Like any elf team they are quick to punish even the slightest mistake and capitalize from it.

Finally the team goes from moderately weak in the low team value to very strong when beating the 2000 mark.

Who should play Dark elves:

You are an experienced coach who likes a team where everybody has the potential to be a match winner.

The tactics of the game are obvious to you, and you are capable of noticing every little opening your opponent gives you.

You prefer a team with a good survival chance against all opponents, and no obvious weaknesses to exploit.

You like a team that gets stronger and more competitive, as your team value increases (compared to the other races).

Player types:

Assassin:

The assassin has the worst stats of all the types. 6347, makes him a low armoured lineman.

His one strength lies in his stab ability. I am aware he also has shadowing, but he has too low armour as well as move to actually capitalize from it.

So what is stab worth and when to use it?

Well in general it has two uses. The first is to target hard to knock down opponents like blodgers, the second is a shot at getting to a heavily defended ball carrier.

Armour is of great importance here. The chance of breaking AV 7 is 41.67%, with AV 8 it drops to 27.78%, AV 9 hits 16.67% and finally AV10 only breaks 8.33% of the time.

So it is a fine weapon against low armoured players, but already at AV 8 it starts to lose its advantage.

Personally I find that they are not worth the price, when you tally up their pros and cons.

Blitzer:

The Dark Elven blitzer is one of the very best blitzers in the game – and you get four of them.

These are the backbone of your team

His stats of 7348 makes him every bit as good as the human blitzer, but with much better agility, at only 10k extra.

This is a bargain. It is true that they lack access to guard and mighty blow, however their access to skills such as leap and dodge more than compensates for this. They might not be as hard hitting as the average blitzer, instead they are hard to pin down, very versatile and more likely to survive in the long run.

These can develop into pretty much any kind of player you like.

Hard hitter, safety, sweeper, sacker and catcher are all roles that can be taken on by the blitzers.

Lineman:

You might say why bother skill him up, but that attitude is for skaven, undead and other pesky linemen.

In these guys you actually have great dependable players. They are not as fast as their woodelven counterparts but better armoured, this makes them good in defence and quite durable when combined with their high AG.

In offence you will rarely field too many of these guys so it is a good thing to train at least some of them as perfect linemen – not line fodder.

Runner:

80k for +1 MA and -AV compared to the linemen, and you get dump-off.

Yummy, these are the most important aspect of your offence.

With dump-off you can keep the ball safe when running, but they can also be trained as excellent throwers and thus giving you yet another aspect to play on.

Witch elf:

Finally the Witch elf, oh my do I love that player....

In my eyes she is at the same level as the wardancer – the undisputed kings and queens of bloodbowl.

7347 same stats as the runner, but with dodge, frenzy and jump-up you have one of the most potent combinations in the game.

Her low armour means that she needs to get block ASAP, but then she is nearly perfect.

Alone the threat of her frenzy combined with high agility and dodge is a menace.

Use her as your main blitzer – because that is where she is best. Like a guerrilla soldier she strikes from safety, hits her intended target - possibly crowd pushing him and then back to safety behind the screen of linemen and blitzers again.

Advantages:

This team is the closest you will ever get to a hard hitting elven team.

High agility combined with reasonable armour and many positionals make this team strong and very versatile.

Capable of exploiting any opening or weakness in your opponent defence or offence and capitalize from it.

This team are in many ways quite close to humans.

No weaknesses, and no exceptionally strong points – however there is no doubt that this team has the potential to develop into one of the very best teams in time.

Should I point at one strong point of this team, it is their defence.

I feel it has the potential to become the strongest and most versatile of all the blood bowl races.

Disadvantages:

The Dark Elven curse is often spoken of. Many players feel that you simply roll worse with Dark Elves than with any other team.

The reason comes down to three things: Lack of skills, lack of speed and lack of strength.

They lack many of the skills needed for ball handling such as sure hands, pass and catch as most other teams have.

They do not have the speed to race down to score a fast td without GFI once or twice on many occasions and they does not have the strength to pound the opposition to the ground – or even to stand their ground. This often forces them to dodge, and without dodge well it fails every so often.

Obviously there are ways around these lacks, which I will come around later under the tactics.

There is another serious disadvantage of the Dark Elves – they are expensive.

This means it can be quite hard to get a strong team in the first matches – even for the first many matches.

Tactics:

Offence:

First off I want to stress that unlike with the other elves you should not go for a two turn td.

Your players are too slow and lack the skills, forcing failure way too often. Instead go for a three turn td.

Spare on passes, GFI etc. saving your re-rolls until they are really needed.

Try to spread your spp's out as much as possible, so all your players have something to give to the team.

So how to drive?

As already said you should go for a three turn td.

Turn 1: Try and spread your players out covering the entire field from side to side while forcing a whole in the opponent defence and pounding on the line of scrimmage.

This serves two goals, you protect your runner from being threatened by opposing players next turn, as well as you force him not to go in too hard on your potential receivers.

Turn 2: Depending on your opponents defence you should now be able to continue the drive down the road already chosen or you might need to change lane, going down the opposite side.

Now the players who had run downfield will have to move to help close off any holes in your cage.

If any have managed to break through his defence move them towards your new position, while he maintains to be a threat to the opposition. This hopefully lets you form a wall protecting the ball carrier.

Turn 3: If he has managed to close you off again just continue zig-zagging downfield until you eventually force an opening in the defence. Otherwise you can choose to score now, or if preferably strengthen your position to score in a later turn.

Defence:

In defence there are a couple of basic strategies to apply depending on the opponent.

Against strength teams try to force his drive down one of the sidelines, making sure that he can not force himself in towards the middle. Meanwhile you slowly give him less and less space to move on, until he is forced to a halt by positioning players in front and the sides of his cage.

This will hopefully force him to break off or try a difficult move that you hopefully can capitalize from.

Throughout this process try and see if he makes any mistakes and be ready to punish these if he does – especially crowd pushes can become a real threat if used correctly.

As soon as you have a feeling that you might get the ball send a player upwards to be able to turn a sudden possession into a td.

When playing fast and agile teams you are likely to have a harder time. Try to take out either his best player or his weakest each turn while man marking the rest of his potential scorers – preferably with two players.

Meanwhile send a player or two upwards toward his thrower.

Hopefully this will force him to score fast or risk a sack.

With a bit of luck you will have taken out some players and slowly you will start to feel the number superiority, enabling you to press even harder.

Starting team:

When you create a starting team for the Dark elves, there are three things to keep in mind.

They have high individual prices, decent armour and few starting skills.

This means that you can start off without an apothecary as you are likely to survive the first game or two.

But purchase an apothecary as soon as possible afterwards.

Also while you need re-rolls, you need positionals even more and thus should stay at two re-rolls.

Depending on your style of play I would recommend the following start team.

There are several possible variations here.

You can lower your ff or change some of the positionals to get money for a fourth blitzer, an assassin or even a witch elf.

3 Blitzers: 300
1 Runner: 80
7 Linemen: 490
2 Re-rolls: 100
3 FF: 30
Total: 1000

Development:

In any team you should get to four blitzers fast, the real fun however begins when the witch elves join the team.

These are the players that will win you close games, and often found in the middle of the fray.

Apart from that it is hard to say exactly what to get for your team, there are so many possibilities that you can not get them all.

An assassin or two could be handy if you expect plenty of low armour dodging opponents, and the runners are great at both running with the ball and throwing it.

Unlike many other teams you should concentrate at least as much on developing your linemen as your positionals.

There are several ways to build your team – from high armour and staying ability (four blitzers and a pack of linemen), to pace and less armour (two witches, both runners and an assassin or two) and then everything in between.

In general you need guard to survive. My rule of thumb is that the first two doubles rolled on any blitzer or lineman should be guard. This rule should be ignored if you are in the process of building a particular player (fx. A blitzer with tackle, frenzy should be given mighty blow instead).

I think that the ideal team consists of 14 players or so, with four or so re-rolls.

The team really shows its full potential once you beat TV 200 and from there on it should get stronger and stronger.

Below I will describe different types of positions, their use and development course.

The succession of skills is not definite, and varies with team needs and expected opponents.

It goes for them all except witch elves and assassins that MA is to be preferred before AV, in these two cases it is a judgement call on what you prefer.

Assassins:

Striker: Leap, Dodge, Side step. **Doubles:** Multiple block.

Stabber: Dodge, Side step, Block, jump up. **Doubles:** Multiple block.

- A striker is used to threaten the ball carrier or to get to hard to down, low armoured key players.

- The stabbers role is to target low armoured block, dodge players.

Blitzers:

Sacker: Strip ball, Leap, Wrestle, Dodge, Pro.

Sweeper: Diving tackle, Tackle, Dodge, Side step, Pass block.

Safety: Dodge, Side step, Tackle, Jump up, Pass block, Diving tackle, Dauntless **Doubles:** Guard, Mighty blow.

Destroyer: Tackle, Dodge, Frenzy, Jump up, Dauntless. **Doubles:** Mighty blow, Piling on.

Fullback: Dodge, Catch, Sure hands, Side step, Leap. **Doubles:** Nerves of steel.

- The sackers prime objective is to threaten the opposing ball carrier as well as sacking him if the opportunity arises.

- The sweeper should be positioned backfield. His goal is to close in and man mark any obvious threat that manages to get through your defence.

- Safeties are there to close the opposition options. They should be placed on the flanks both to close it, be able to deliver help when needed, but also to deliver pressure on opponent players – hopefully praying on any mistake they make.

- Destroyers have one role. Cause casualties. If you are so lucky to get a double on a blitzers first skill roll consider making him a destroyer, hoping for yet another double to make him really lethal.

- The fullback is the back up, target or replacement for your runner. Equally adept at blocking, running and receiving the ball.

Linemen:

Sneak: Sneaky git, Dirty player.

Kicker: Kick, Block/Wrestle, Dodge. **Doubles:** Guard.

Blockers: Block/Wrestle, side Step, Dodge, Jump up (with wrestle), Fend, Diving tackle. **Doubles:** Guard.

Guards: Block, Dodge, Side step. **Doubles:** Guard.

-The linemen should be given skills that enhance their particular role on the team.

-The sneak is a downright bastard concentrating on fouling opponent key players – or just downed players.

-The kicker is rather self explaining. He is a defence specialist helping you with precise kicks.

- The vast majority of your linemen should develop themselves to survive the harsh life on the line of scrimmage.

They do this best by taking skills that help them stay up and letting them get away from the opponent easier.

Here a skill such as side step is a very good skill, often underrated, but its ability to let you get into a better position is priceless – especially on defence.

Runners:

Runner: Pass, Nerves of Steel, Dodge, Sure hands, Catch, Sure feet, Block, Safe throw.

Thrower: Pass, Accurate, Sure hands, Sure feet, Safe throw, Kick-off return, Dodge. **Doubles:** Strong arm.

- The runner carries the ball up-field, before distributing it to the intended receiver or runs for the td himself.

His main strength is his dump-off and he should develop to maximise from it.

- The thrower specialises in delivering long range passes. The idea is to be staying back, out of harms way then moving forward delivering a precise pass to a free receiver in a scoring position.

Wich elves:

Destroyer: Block, Tackle, Side step, Leap. **Doubles:** Mighty blow, Piling on, Juggernaut.

The Witch elves role on the team is to remove as many opponents as possible from the field.

They are the primary blitzers of the team and should not neglect the possibility of a crowd push.

Their jump up is great combined with Piling on. Also consider leap to threaten the sides of the pitch with a crowd push.