

High Elf Strategy

High Elves play flashy football, but are tough enough to withstand the occasional bad game. This makes them a solid selection for a veteran coach: good management and sound tactics can make a reliable, quick-striking powerhouse. On the other hand, expensive linemen and poor starting skills make High Elves a bad fit for a rookie.

Why Play High Elves?

Few will argue that High Elves are overpowered, but they're far from helpless. High Elves have long been a favourite of game-store gunslingers worldwide, for their sturdy, nimble players and great range of movement. All positions are priced just about right, and all players are competent, with no automatic superstars.

Versatile! Every High Elf player can do almost anything any other could do. A Lineman can dodge, catch or throw, and a Catcher can lay the wood. If one player is close to improving, the coach can always set him up to pass or score.

Mobile! High Elf Throwers are the best in the game, hands down. The combination of mobility, toughness and Safe Throw gives them a lot of different ball-control strategies, and makes it easy to play keep-away against most opponents.

Agile! Every High Elf can get General and Agility skills, and they develop fast. Before long, High Elves can load up on Block, Dodge, Side Step and Wrestle, and still develop a nice "toolbox" of Kick, Tackle, Frenzy, Leap, and other skills.

Hostile! High Elves can blitz deep into the backfield, and swarm the ball with the best of them. The ST3 Catchers are like junior Wardancers, but there are up to four of them on the field at once, and their support is tougher.

Why Not Play High Elves?

One doesn't go to Ulthuan for the cheese. Wood and "Pro" Elves are more aerobic, and Dark Elves are tougher. High Elves ultimately develop into the strongest of the elf teams, as their superior characteristics eventually outweigh their insufficient starting skills, but this lack of basic skills makes them vulnerable at low levels.

No Big Bruisers. Not a single High Elf position offers ST above 3, or access to Strength skills. This can be managed, but you will sometimes need more assists, will probably not deal much damage, and must spend most doubles rolls on the Guard skill.

No Huge Advantages. High Elves are a finesse team, as they lack any capacity to bash. But they are slower than Wood Elves or Skaven, and don't begin with marquee players like Witch Elves or Pro Elf Blitzers. They do pass well, but that's minor.

Management Issues. High Elf linemen are tough and competent, but they're expensive. Even successful High Elf teams have cash flow issues and give up lots of inducements, and struggling High Elves can be very frustrating to manage.

Learning Curve. High Elves have to earn their basic skills. Only the 0-2 Blitzers start with Block, and no players start with Dodge. This is of course a temporary problem, but if the injuries start to outpace the improvement rolls, disaster may unfold.

High Elves vs. Similar Teams

High Elves vs. Dark Elves: High Elves and Dark Elves have the same Lineman profile, but are otherwise two very different teams. High Elves are faster and have better ball skills, while Dark Elves have an aggressive skill profile. Dark Elves have the early edge, but over time, the extra High Elf speed becomes more and more important, and the High Elves pick up the Dark Elves' quality skills. High Elves also suffer less from runaway player costs. Dark Elves have expensive positionals and pay the same for Linemen, heightening the impact of Spiralling Expenses and making player losses harder to bear.

High Elves vs. Pro Elves: These two teams are very similar, actually. Pro Elves pay less for their Linemen, who must suffer with AV7. The price difference is sufficient to let the Pro Elves start an Apothecary or reserve, or several positionals and enough Re-Rolls. Pro Elf Blitzers and Catchers are phenomenal, the best players in the game at what they do. Pro Elf Throwers are inferior, but they're cheap! Like Dark Elves, Pro Elves are a superior team early because they have a better skill base: High Elves surpass them in the long run through team development and player retention, as the tougher High Elf Linemen survive longer and build more SPP over time.

Building Your High Elf Team

High Elf Linemen are good players, and the positionals are good values, so team design is a matter of taste. Teams with more position players tend to be a little more efficient immediately, while having more Re-Rolls and Linemen boosts team development. Here are four solid High Elf starting rosters.

Speedy Tournament Build

*1 Blitzzer, 4 Catchers, 1 Thrower, 5 Linemen
2 Re-Rolls*

This is a very fast team, with four MA8 players, a Block player to open holes, and good ball skills. However, in a league, the position players will tend to hog the Star Player Points unless you make a point of scoring or passing with Linemen. This is a good build for a tournament team in a format with more skills than average.

Tough Tournament Build

*2 Blitzzers, 2 Catchers, 1 Thrower, 6 Linemen
2 Re-Rolls, 10,000 gold or 1 Fan Factor*

This is the natural design for an “out of the box” Citadel High Elf team, because it fits the players at hand. This roster offers all the position players needed for early success. It develops fairly smoothly, too! This is a good build for a relatively inexperienced coach in a league, or for a less skill-intensive tournament.

Speedy League Build

*3 Catchers, 1 Thrower, 7 Linemen
3 Re-Rolls*

This roster is fast and effective, has an easy time improving Linemen, and saves 50,000 gold eventually, on account of the extra re-roll. It may be a little frustrating to play this team in the first few games, as no players have Block. This build is an excellent selection for a veteran coach looking for a mix of challenge and opportunity.

Tough League Build

*2 Blitzzers, 1 Catcher or Thrower, 8 Linemen
3 Re-Rolls*

This roster isn't amazingly fast, and an inexperienced coach may struggle to score. On the other hand, it's easy to develop smoothly, distributing the ball with the Thrower or Catcher and scoring with the other ten players. This is a good build for a perpetual format or a longer season, especially if there is a tournament at the end.

Building at more than 1,000,000 Gold

In some tournaments and a few leagues, teams are built on more than 1,000,000 gold. High Elves are a great team to play at high values: either of the “tournament” builds above goes great with an Apothecary and/or an extra re-roll! Also great in a tournament or very short season at 1,100,000 gold is a twelve-man roster with four Catchers, a Thrower, two Blitzzers, five Linemen and two Re-Rolls.

Care and Feeding of Your High Elf Team

High Elves may not start out very tough, but they sure build well! The lack of basic skills at the outset can be frustrating, but at high values, their solid core characteristics can make a very powerful team. In just a few matches, a High Elf team can be tough and slippery, with a good complement of survival skills, and with multiple categories of skill access on every player, there really is no upper limit to a High Elf team's potential.

Every Elf Is a Hero: Every High Elf player is a potential superstar: treat your players accordingly. Play and improve your players until injuries prevent them from functioning. Occasionally, injuries will force a player to retire: ST losses and multiple characteristic losses are killers, and Catchers and Throwers should retire on suffering an AG loss. Brand new rookies are the exception: if your team can afford to replace a rookie with -1MA, go ahead.

Not all coaches think this way, but I would take two players with Block and Dodge to man the bench over three rookies any day, even if those two Blodgers suffer from permanent damage, barring a ST loss, -2 MA or two niggling injuries or AV losses.

Build or Be Killed: Rapid improvement is the High Elf team's greatest asset: coaches who don't master it lose ugly over and over. Overcoming the team's skill deficit is the first priority, and the second is building a defensive identity. A good benchmark for High Elf team success is an average of more than two improvements per game over the first ten games.

When it comes to improvements, it's critical for this team to cover its bases. Perhaps one should take a few early “toolbox” skills, like Kick and Frenzy, but most players should be given Dodge, Block, Wrestle and Side Step, only then sprinkling in a little Tackle, Leap, Strip Ball, Dauntless, whatever.

Improving Your High Elf Players

High Elves have one of the best development schemes of all Blood Bowl team races: they may be the weakest of all elf teams as rookies, but no team develops faster, and only Chaos and Chaos Pact get as much mileage out of their improvements. Any High Elf player can throw or catch the ball, so it's not hard to improve all of your players. Dodge is the one common denominator, but otherwise, players should be built into their roles.

Linemen: The first Lineman to get a normal skill gets Kick. Everybody else gets Dodge first, barring doubles, stats, and maybe one who takes Side Step first. The ultimate goal is to have Dodge across the team and Side Step across defensive line, plus at least some Block and Wrestle. The glamour skills should go mostly to Catchers and Blitzers, so most of the Linemen can play on the line.

Catchers: Dodge is Job One, barring a stat increase. After that, build role-players. At 16 SPP, my guys usually all have Dodge, and one each has Block, Leap, Wrestle and some doubles roll or stat increase. Don't let your Catchers hog all the action! When you can, use them as facilitators and option threats so your Linemen get the SPP they need.

Stats and Doubles: On a Lineman, Guard is the obvious doubles skill. Throwers make good use of Strong Arm, of course. Blitzers like Side Step and Grab, or Frenzy and Juggernaut, and a Catcher with Nerves of Steel instantly makes your team better. +ST is great, but +MA and +AG are best on Catchers or Throwers. Don't sweat just one niggling injury or AV loss to a player with one skill, but maybe cut a rookie if this happens to him. Multiple such injuries, or other characteristic losses, are more of a judgment call.

Managing Your High Elf Team

High Elves are a joy to coach in a league. They start off a little frail, but have a quick development curve and as they develop, they start to toughen up for the first several games.

Spread the Love. High Elves, with their universal AG4, are easy to improve. Also, the AV8 Linemen tend to survive, especially once they start improving. Work hard to improve *every one of* your players with Comps and TDs. High Elves need all the quality skill selections they can attain, and the first two skills are the easiest to get *and* the most powerful: after all, you can only take Dodge and Side Step once.

Build Defensive Role-Players. When developing your players, you should always keep in mind the player's job on defence. Does he man the wide zone, the interior, or the line of scrimmage? Does he plug a hole, or is he in a safe spot? Does he make the sack, provide support, get the ball, soak up hits? Develop each player according to his role, at least after Dodge. Make sure to build extra players for the line.

Throwers: High Elves need extra linemen and often struggle with high TV, so many teams just take one Thrower. Still, he's a good player, and having two is nice. After Dodge and Accurate, other options include Block, Catch, Nerves of Steel, Dump-Off Pass, Sure Hands and Kick-Off Return. If your team takes a second thrower, consider building one into a pure passer and the other into a safety/halfback.

Blitzers: I like to use Blitzers as support pieces, opening holes and providing Tackle Zones. Side Step is great, and Dodge is almost as good. I tend to give one Blitzer Side Step, then Frenzy, and the other one Side Step, then Dodge or Tackle. Some coaches I know put a high value on having a Block/Dodge player, and get Dodge on one Blitzer right away.

Blow Up Your TV. Successful High Elf teams will race beyond the two-million-mark in Team Value. Never fear: this is a necessary evil. Spiralling Expenses are not so bad, but all the inducements are just a killer. The best way to deal with this is to run up the score: scoring gets Secret Weapons off the pitch, and a big lead blunts the impact of Wizards and big, scary Star Players.

Take Care in Cutting. Generally, it's not wise to go about cutting injured players, unless the injury is severe enough to keep him from doing his job. A single AV loss or niggling injury is no big deal, a MA or AG loss may or may not matter, and a ST loss or multiple penalties may be enough to cut a player. But cutting skilled players is a terrible thing, and should not be undertaken lightly.

High Elf Strategy

High Elves seem on paper like sort of a “middle-weight” team, moderately fast, of average strength and toughness. Like Humans, High Elves can somewhat tailor their strategies to their opponents, playing stall against some teams and speed against others. High Elves are less able to “grind” than are Humans, but their mobility more than makes up for this. Using only broad brush strokes, here are ten points on how to think like an elf.

Ten Basic High Elf Strategy Tips

Win With Architecture. With their high mobility and fair AV scores, High Elves can put strong hedges wherever needed, on offence or defence. Often, newer coaches with elves find their players get hemmed in by bash teams and subjected to unnecessary abuse. Tight hedges and good use of tackle zones are absolutely critical with High Elves.

Keep the Action Downfield. With high Agility and credible Armour, High Elves are good at taking the action to the other side of the pitch. This makes it easy to score in response to pressure, which reduces attrition and enhances development, in turn building tougher players and generating a “feedback loop” of skills, wins and SPP.

Re-Rolls Dictate Your Flow. If you have a Team Re-Roll, you can be more aggressive making two-die blocks and 2+ dodge attempts without skills. You can also make Quick Passes between any two players. If you don't have a re-roll, you might want to consider throwing to a Catcher or with a Thrower, or not throwing at all, and handing off to a Catcher instead.

Be a Square-Counter. More than any other team, success with High Elves is about spatial awareness. High Elves have an excellent set of raw tools, with few of the crutches other teams enjoy in case it goes wrong. AV8 is ok, but if you've just been partitioned it's cold comfort. Being off just one square on your calculations can lead to terrible consequences.

Pick Your Battles. An individual High Elf is fairly rugged as elves go, but a team full of High Elves is actually quite fragile. Marking your opponents all the time is not smart, but you will have to stick in a little if you want to get anywhere. At low TV, when you lack skills, you will need to use your Dodge or Block players wisely, for maximum matchup mileage.

Run Up the Score. If you're kicking and manage to get the ball, *score!* Perhaps you might stall for *one* turn, but scoring on defence is the secret to greatness. Quick defensive scores help win you games, earn you SPP, pressure your opponent to score rather than stalling, get rid of Secret Weapons, and let you recover knockouts.

Don't Die By the Clock. When you're receiving, you may want to let the drive drag out a little so the other side doesn't have time for a long, ugly TD drive. But you also want to be able to score quickly if you start getting hammered. This is a good reason for keeping the action downfield. Stalling is for offence; on defence, just go for the touchdown.

Don't Over-Commit. Keep the man-marks to a minimum against heavy teams, using coverage formations to control space instead. Against speed, you will need to keep a player in your backfield to stop any breakaways. Good hedging makes this much easier. On offence, don't throw the ball until you've drawn off some rushers!

Defend for Development. If you can take the ball away and score every other turn, you will earn 24 SPP per game from touchdowns alone! That's not going to happen, but it's a nice goal. Always remember the mantra: hold them out, get the ball, score, rinse, repeat. The first two turns of defence are your bread and butter.

Manage the Odds. If you haven't developed a sense of what is or isn't safe, start with a brawnier team, and come back to High Elves when you have learned all about blocking; only then are you ready to learn the glorious cruelty of the 2+ roll. Poor risk-management will get your High Elves killed, and it is best to learn the ropes on a less fickle team.

Summary

High Elves are a bad team to get good on, and a good team to get great on. Their high Agility lets them play on a different level from most other teams, and their average Armour and Strength let them withstand a few bad rolls without falling apart. But they're not skilful or fast enough to cover for a bad coach, nor are they tough enough to survive repeated failure. High Elves make a great second or third team for an up-and-comer coach.