

Jack of All Trades

By Joe Harkleroad (Joemanji)

INTRODUCTION

Humans are a reactive team, capable of adopting virtually any style of play. They can assess a drive on a turn by turn basis and change tactics whenever necessary. They are best suited to doing the opposite of whatever the other team is good at. They can be bashy against Skaven and Elves, or score early and launch swift counter-punches against Orcs and Dwarfs. They are jack of all trades and master of none - a cliché, but one that could not be more appropriate. This very versatility is also their biggest weakness, as a Human team cannot develop to occupy any one niche. The most common way to build a successful Blood Bowl team is to focus on being very good at just one style of play. But Humans will only ever be okay. No matter how lucky you are with your Improvement rolls, Humans will never out-bash Orcs, and never out-score Skaven. This means that the more extreme the opposing team's design, the harder Humans will have to work to do the opposite. For example, against Khemri they must play almost like Elves, but with only AG3 players and not much Dodge skill. Of all the tier 1 teams, Humans are one of the most challenging to coach successfully. Whilst they might not seem so to a rookie because they start with a number of re-roll skills, in a developed game with more experienced coaches they will struggle. In this context, a Human coach must be comfortable with a number of different tactics and able to weigh up the whole pitch. Human teams never have it easy, but are all the more rewarding for that.

ROSTER OVERVIEW

The Human roster immediately demonstrates its versatility. It has a variety of positions, all with decent if not exceptional characteristics. AG3 and ST3 on most players means you have a team capable of both blocking and moving the ball effectively. There is the option to buy players that start with many of the most valuable, basic skills: Block, Dodge, Catch, Sure Hands. There is a high Strength big guy and your linemen and rerolls are affordable. The players have access to all of the main skill categories between them. However, the roster lacks any exceptional players or characteristics. AG3 means that whilst your players *can* move the ball or dodge effectively, you cannot rely on them to do so en masse. A D6 roll failing once in every three attempts is not something you can build a drive around. The lack of any other players over ST3 means you'll be relying on the Ogre to provide the muscle. Because the players rely on a number of skills rather than above average ST or AG, you must make sure the players with the right skills perform the right roles. Use the Blitzers to block and the Throwers and Catchers to handle the ball. The main weakness of the Human roster is the price of the positionals, with both the Blitzers and Catchers hugely overpriced. This isn't too much of

a problem when starting out, as the low cost of your rerolls and Linemen allow you to absorb this inflation. However, in league play it is almost crippling, with an inflated TV reducing your winnings with which you must then replace overpriced players on a regular basis. Once the bashy teams develop, with only AV8 you'll find yourself taking regular casualties and will struggle to find the 90K to replace a Blitzler.

GENERAL TACTICS

As mentioned above (and in numerous other places) Humans should generally try to adopt the opposite style of play to their opponent. Against fast teams try to grind out a 2-1 or 2-0, bashing down the pitch and trying to kill as many players as possible. Against slow teams use your speed to run the ball, trying to control the clock on offence and disengaging on defence until the time is right to flood the cage or your opponent runs out of time.

The first decision in any drive is which players to put on the pitch. With a full squad to choose from, I'd always use the Ogre, 4 Blitzlers and 2 Catchers. The remaining 4 players should be Linemen or Throwers depending on the context of the drive and their skills. If you are kicking, you might want to protect your Throwers for the drives in which you receive for example.

The main strength of the Human roster is their speed. Whilst their ST, AG and AV are all adequate, their MA is definitely above average. Never underestimate just how fast your Humans can be - they have the pace to take advantage of any mistake or bad luck from your opponent. Always keep this in mind when setting up for a drive or at the start of a turn, and try to position your players so they are able to pounce. In doing so, you are presenting your opponent with a problem, and he will need to play more conservatively to protect himself.

Humans other strengths are based on their skills rather than their stats. This means each position is well suited to his particular role, and so it is important to get the right people doing the right things. Dodge with Catchers, block with Blitzlers etc. Use your built in re-rolls and save your team re-rolls for the important things, or to allow you to take calculated risks.

It is important to start every turn with the easy rolls. This is the most basic thing in Blood Bowl of course, but is especially true for Humans. The team is not one that suits for high risk/high reward plays, you need to build a drive slowly and carefully. Plan your turn, don't just roll some dice and see what happens. Think about where you want to be at the end of the turn. This is where your speed comes into play, as you'll have plenty of options as to where you can go. Move your unmarked players first to cover for an early turnover or support the actions you plan to take in the turn. Take 2D blocks where available and get your positioning right so you can build a chain of similar favourable blocks.

To quickly run through some basics: the basic currency of a turn is the 2D block, preferably with Block skill. A 3+ roll will fail 11% of the time even with a re-roll. A 2D block with Block will fail less than 3% of the time, and even then you can still re-roll it. That is an action you can control and repeat. With plenty of ST3 players and easy access to Guard on five players you should be able to engineer your 2D blocks consistently. Think about each one and where it will leave you if you get the knockdown or just a pushback. Look for blocks that have value even if you only get a pushback. Value means opening up another 2D block or freeing a player to move to a favourable position. Look for blocks that you'll want to follow up if you get a knockdown, either to lend an assist or mark an opposing player.

Whilst I've said Humans can play in various ways, they still have a default style. That is a running game. Get the ball, then work a gap and move through it. This isn't the same as grinding, which is a slow, linear plod down the pitch. You are looking to move the ball downfield reasonably early within a loose cage, then if you need to control the clock hold it downfield. Do not be fooled into thinking that because they have Throwers and Catchers the team suits a passing, elven style. All of your Agility rolls will be 3+, and they can and will fail even with a re-roll. Against fast teams you will need to grind slowly because this is the safest way to control the clock.

On defence you are trying to disrupt your opponent's plan. Guide slow teams laterally to one side or another, then use your speed to block their chances of making progress down that side. They will be forced to either commit to unfavourable contact, or go backwards.

Your speed dictates one of the best tactics for Humans on offence or defence. Against slow teams, try not to commit too early in a drive. If your opponent goes toe-to-toe with you, you should have options. You should have enough strength to block back and consolidate, or the speed to run off and leave the opposition behind on offence. The thing you lack is the ability to dodge several players per turn reliably. This is the reason for including Catchers in your team, as if you keep them on the second line where they can't be blitzed, you can use their Dodge skill if your opponent pressures hard and breaks through your first line. As your fastest players, they also form a mobile threat, able to support your Blitzers or even apply pressure in pairs.

On defence, keep your players in pairs if possible, don't let them get isolated. Humans need to be able to reposition, and if you keep your players in pairs you can move over an assist, block away a marker and then have a player free to move away. By doing this you should always be able to get your important players (usually Blitzers) where they are needed. If you can free a Blitzier and support him with your Catchers you can sack a ball carrier left without protection.

This threat means your opponent must cage conventionally at all times, rather than just screen off, and gives you some chance of dictating play and stopping the grind.

STARTING ROSTERS

With such a versatile roster, there are a number of ways you can start off your team. However, the choice upon which all others will depend is the one of whether to start with the Ogre. His high cost means without him you can include just about everything else, for example:

4 Blitzers (360K)
2 Throwers (140K)
2 Catchers (140K)
4 Linemen (200K)
3 Rerolls (150K)
10K left.

You could swap the 12th Lineman in this roster for an Apothecary or 4th re-roll. In fact, the latter option is something well worth considering since AG3 across the board means you could end up making a lot of 3+ rolls.

However, my preference would be to include the Ogre from the start. Because he is so expensive, it will otherwise take you several games to save up for him. His high ST and AV are also of great value to the team. In this case you could perhaps take:

Ogre (140K)
4 Blitzers (360K)
1 Thrower (70K)
1 Catcher (70K)
4 Linemen (200K)
3 rerolls (150K)
10K left

This roster (or something similar) has the advantage of including all your most expensive players from the outset. As your team develops, you can add extra players and an apothecary gradually, rather than having to save up over several games to afford a Blitzer or Ogre. However, with only 11 men it is vulnerable to some unlucky casualties early on. The plan with such a roster would be to ensure that the extra value you put on the pitch (in the Ogre and Blitzers) ensures you take fewer casualties.

I won't advocate any one roster in particular: a Human coach must learn which positionals he likes for himself. Some coaches don't like to use Throwers or Catchers at all for example. But note that in both cases above I included the maximum number of Blitzers (four). They really are the core of the team, and you can't do without them.

LINEMEN

Human linemen have the perfectly average statline. It is the statline around which all others revolve, since every other player is costed depending on how much they vary from 6338. 'Average' may sound like a bad thing, but it really isn't: for 50,000 gc the Human Lineman can perform in a variety of roles. Some linemen can only really stand on the line and take hits, lacking the speed or agility to do anything else (e.g. Zombies). Some linemen are almost as good as positionals, but are expensive and so unsuited to the basic duties of a lineman (e.g. elves). But with MA6 the Human can keep up with play, with ST3 can block well with an assist, with AG3 can handle the ball or dodge and with AV8 can take a hit or two without being carried off the pitch. The operative word there though is *can*. Being able to do these things fairly often is not the same as being ideally suited to a task or being able to perform it reliably. A Dwarf Blocker is ideally suited to taking a hit in having AV9 and Thick Skull. An Elf Lineman is ideally suited to dodging or handling the ball with AG4. So when using a Human Lineman I always bear in mind that he is up to any job if circumstances demand it, but if you really need something to come off, it is better to see if one of your other players is in a better position. I boil this down to a simple maxim: never rely on a Human lineman, but never underestimate him either.

In leagues a Lineman doesn't have to rely on the random nature of casualties or MVPs to earn his SPPs. With MA6 and AG3 you can score with him or throw a completion if required. I usually try to skill other players up first, but if a Lineman does get an MVP or a couple of CAS, don't be afraid to try and get him up to a skill roll.

For a first skill, look no further than Block. For only 20K extra Team Value you will transform the player's effectiveness. Another good option is Wrestle, which is great for taking down blodgers, blitzing a gap in your opponent's line or just taking advantage of your team's speed. Any statistic increase or double is worth its weight in gold: the players average statline makes a fantastic springboard to take advantage of any lucky Improvement rolls. If I rolled a (5,5) I'd usually take the double. On a (4,6) I'd be tempted to ignore the stat and take Block: your team has plenty of fast players and 16 SPPs is a long way off. However, if the player already has Block, +1 MA is a fantastic pick to give you a 5th Blitzer. For doubles I usually favour Guard, as it builds on your default running game. Dodge generally isn't anywhere near as

effective on an AG3 player. If a Lineman gets a second or third normal skill, think carefully. You won't get as much value from it as you did Block, but it can be a good opportunity to add skills that improve the team overall but you don't want to put on a positional. Kick and Tackle are the classic examples, and Dirty Player also falls into this category (although if I was going to take that I might not want it on a valuable Block-ed up player). Dauntless is also worth considering. It is a valuable skill for Humans, as they often struggle against strong teams, but it isn't *quite* good enough to give to your Blitzers.

Normals > Block/Wrestle - Kick/Tackle/Dauntless - Fend

Doubles > Guard - Ignore 2nd for Block - Dodge/Side Step/Stand Firm (*note these all build on having Guard already*)

ST > Yes

AG > Yes

AV/MA > Only if the player has compatible skills already.

BLITZERS

Blitzers are the best players on the Human team, the undoubted stars of the show. They are fast, start with the best skill in the game (Block) and have access to Strength skills. Otherwise they have the same stats as the Lineman, but as I've mentioned there is nothing wrong with that, and their added MA and hitting power really gives them an edge. Unfortunately they are very expensive at 90,000 gc, unreasonably so in fact, but a coach must work with what he has.

Because the team has other players better suited to carrying the ball, your Blitzers can often end up earning SPPs more slowly than you'd like. Be proactive and try to score with them when you can, as they have the best skill options of any of your players. They make more than adequate ball carriers anyway.

For a first skill, Guard really is your best friend. It is essential to any Human play, as without it you will be outmuscled by strong teams and unable to bully weak teams. Get it on as many of your players as quickly as possible. But I have found it very effective to develop one Blitzler into a killer early on, probably on my second Blitzler to earn an Improvement. Human teams are reasonably resilient, but can often still be fragile, so the option to remove opposing players from the pitch is invaluable. Take Mighty Blow on your killer first, then Piling On. I generally only use PO if I pass the AV roll first time (unless it is a dead turn). If used well (blitz as often as possible), this guy will skill up quickly, and I'd probably take Guard as a 3rd skill. After that, continue to develop his killer role with Tackle and Frenzy. Your other Blitzlers have a number of options. Tackle is needed on one player to let you bully the fast teams, because

otherwise they will dance around you with Blodge. Stand Firm is useful positionally, and to increase the effectiveness of Guard. Frenzy is great for controlling large areas of the pitch. Some more Mighty Blow will help you improve the bashing side of your game. Strip Ball can be a useful passive option - you won't get to use it very often, but just having it will stop your opponent putting his ball carrier anywhere he might be reached even with a half dice block. Overall, you'll benefit from taking a mix of situational skills. Humans work best when you are able to react quickly and efficiently to your what your opponent does, so you should aim to have skills that are valuable in as many situations as possible.

If you roll doubles, your choice will largely depend on the skills a Blitzzer already has. Dodge is a popular choice, but on only one or two players can be easily negated by your opponent's Tackle players. Diving Tackle complements Stand Firm, whilst Side Step works well with Guard. Jump Up is also a decent pick. I would tend to avoid Passing skills (such as Leader), since your Throwers can gain those on normal rolls. But Blitzzers really love stat increases. Anything you take on these guys will be worth its TV without question. I'd always taken +1MA over +1AV in the past and found it very effective, but +1AV is good to keep alive a player who has other good Improvements.

Normals > Guard - Tackle/Frenzy/Stand Firm/Strip Ball - Dauntless.

Normals (Killer) > Mighty Blow - Piling On - Guard - Frenzy/Tackle

Doubles > Dodge/Side Step/Diving Tackle/Jump Up (*depending on other skills*)

ST > Yes

AG > Yes

AV or MA > MA.

CATCHERS

Many coaches seem to dislike Catchers, and advise against using them at all. They are seen as an easy target for your opponent, and at 70,000 gc are woefully overpriced when compared with players of a similar role (e.g. elves and Skaven). I am of the opinion that if used well they are integral to any Human team. Perhaps the antipathy towards Catchers is a result of their misleading name: despite that, and the Catch skill, they are not suited to the role of receiver, loitering in the opposing half alone. Their ST and AV makes them very vulnerable, and their AG means they can be marked out of the game and then blocked in the following turn. The Human Catcher is better suited to the role of runner on offence, lurking in the middle of a cage ready to burst forward towards the endzone. Their high MA and Dodge skill are invaluable on defence, allowing you to reposition without having to use a team re-roll on dodges or GFIs. The key is to keep them protected, never allowing your opponent to blitz them but letting you

use their manoeuvrability. For example, in a classic one-step defence you'd keep them on the second line of defence:

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.....  
.O..X..X..X..O.  
.C..X..X..X..C.  
.....
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By positioning your fastest players in the widezones you make full use of their MA to get them where they are needed. If your opponent commits to either widezone by blitzing one of the players in front of a Catcher (marked 'O'), you can dodge your Catcher away and put another player in front of him. Or use the Catcher as an assist and blitz with one of your other players. If your opponent totally commits, your Catcher on the other side has the speed to move all the way over. Play will usually be more messy than in the diagram above, but the general principle is the same. Catchers make a good target for opposition blitzes, but if you keep them safe you can still make great use of their abilities. And of course, they are a big threat on the counter attack.

Catchers will earn SPPs naturally, scoring a large number of your touchdowns. Try not to let them hog all the SPPs, as they are fragile and you'll end up replacing them more than other positions. Don't be afraid to skill them up given the opportunity though, as they have probably the best value-for-TV development path on the roster. There are 5 or 6 skills that are easily worth the extra 20K on your TV, which can't be said so confidently of say Linemen or Throwers.

Again, for a first skill look no further than Block. Catchers are vulnerable, and the combination with Dodge will give them some protection, and the ability to block or blitz their way out of trouble with an assist. For second skills I consider it a choice between Dauntless and Side Step. The former makes them a real threat, especially in pairs, as MA means they can cover a lot of ground to throw a 1 or 2 dice block. If you are going to develop this way, it is worth considering Wrestle over Block beforehand for its value against ball carriers with Block. You won't want to give them all Wrestle though, as it isn't good when you are on offence and want to give them the ball. The latter is very valuable positionally, and offers some passive protection as your opponent may elect not to block him for fear of not knocking him down. Whichever you take second, I would generally take the other third. It is not unlikely that a Catcher will get a fourth or fifth skill, and in this case I like to accentuate their speed with Sure Feet. You will generally only want 2 Catchers on the pitch at once, in which case you can develop your reserves for more specialised roles. Strip Ball complements the Wrestle/Dauntless path for attacking ball carriers. Sure Hands is useful in combination with their MA and Dodge skill for grabbing up loose balls, even in TZs. Diving Tackle, Side Step and Shadowing offer the option for a great man-marker, although that is quite a marginal build. Diving Catch is worth mentioning since the LRB6 rules mean it gives you +1 to catch an accurate pass. However, since passing plays are dangerous for Humans and the bonus doesn't apply to hand-offs, I generally value other skills more highly.

On doubles, Guard is the best option. A mobile Guard is fantastic, especially if your other Catchers are already developed to be a mobile threat. I don't think that other Strength or Passing skills are better than what they can normally get. But you might want to experiment with Nerves of Steel to give options to hand-off if your cage gets swamped. As always, and stat increase is golden. +1ST makes them an extra, faster Blitzier and +1AG makes them almost a Gutter Runner. I tend to favour MA over AV, speed being key to the Catcher's role.

Normals > Block/Wrestle - Dauntless/Side Step - Sure Feet/Sure Hands - Diving Tackle/Diving Catch
Doubles > Guard
ST > Yes
AG > Yes
AV or MA > MA.

THROWERS

I find Throwers to be problematic. Their Sure Hands skill is valuable for a starting team, and Pass skill gives the team an option. But they tend to hog the SPPs because you'll usually score with the player who first picks up the ball, and because he'll generally pick up a few Completions along the way. This is dangerous since the player's skills are generally worse value for TV than the rest of the team. Passing is also generally a sub-optimal play even for Elves, and even more so for an AG3 player. Even when developed a Human Thrower needs two skills including a double to get a 3+ long pass. If you avoid the temptation to run the team with a Thrower as quarterback though, they are useful. I like to think of them as a Lineman with extras, as if the ball pops loose they have the skills to give you a good chance of picking it up and getting it where you want it. Late in the game when re-rolls are scarce, a reliable way to pickup the ball and lob it downfield can be invaluable. It is also important to have a way to counter the elf nonsense that is Leap + Strip Ball.

There are two main ways to develop your Throwers, and it might be best to go for one of each. The "Lineman plus" would generally start with Block, and after that might be a good time to take Leader. This player can then develop as a runner/retriever with skills like Kickoff Return, Dump Off and Nerves of Steel. The other path would be the classic quarterback, and it is good to have this kind of player around, as Humans need to be able to alter their tactics from drive to drive. This player would start with Accurate, hope for a doubles for Strong Arm and if you don't get it go for Block then Safe Throw and maybe Kickoff Return or Hail Mary Pass.

Normals (runner) > Block - Leader/Kickoff Return - Dump Off/Nerves of Steel
Normals (quarterback) > Accurate - Safe Throw - Block - Kickoff Return/HMP
Doubles (runner) > Guard/Dodge
Doubles (quarterback) > Strong Arm - Guard/Dodge
ST > Yes
AG > Yes
AV or MA > MA. On a doubles consider taking the skill.

OGRE

The Ogre is incredibly valuable to a Human coach. The team is otherwise ST3 or under, so when going toe-to-toe with the opposition his bulk will be invaluable. The Ogre is best suited to a supporting role, as roadblock and nuisance, using his ST and AV to mark several opposing players and take hits so that other players don't have to. Because he has Loner, he isn't well suited to a blitzing role, and luckily you have Blitzers who can do that well enough on their own. If you want to ram the Ogre into a cage, it is best to make the hole with a Blitzer and then declare a Move action with the Ogre to get him into the mix. Be conservative with the Ogre, his ST5 makes him difficult for your opponent to shift, so if he is well positioned don't activate him and risk losing his TZ. Don't think of the Ogre like a Minotaur or Rat Ogre, who needs to be involved every turn. The Ogre can be effective in a passive role. If he gets marked out of the game, don't be afraid to throw blocks at the end of a turn, as Mighty Blow means he is quite capable of gaining a valuable KO or CAS and removing his marker.

Ogres will generally only earn SPPs from CAS and MVPs. There is no real point trying to score with him or get him a comp: it is much more likely to work with one of your other players.

His development is pretty straight forward. On normal rolls, Guard is again excellent as a first skill. After that Stand Firm complements Guard well and suits his supportive role. The other ST skills are not so well suited to this role, and so you'll have to decide whether you want to improve his killing ability with Piling On or Multiple Block, or introduce a more risky playing style with Juggernaut or Break Tackle. I'd generally opt for the last of these, as it will discourage your opponent from marking the Ogre out of the game, and give you a 2+ option to get away if he still does.

On doubles, Block is the definite choice. It transforms the player from one you have to nurse through every turn to a real terror that you can almost begin to rely on (Bonehead withstanding). After that Pro makes a good foil for Loner, and Frenzy or Tackle increase his hitting power. I'd generally ignore stat increases, even ignoring +1ST in favour of Block. Either is as useful in my opinion. If you already have Guard, it might be worth taking +1AV on a (4,6), it helps with his punchback role. Never take +1MA, he isn't mobile enough to make use of it. Obviously on a (5,5) take the doubles skill.

Normals > Guard - Stand Firm - Break Tackle - Piling On/Juggernaut/MultiBlock

Doubles > Block - Pro

ST > Maybe, Block might be better.

AG > No

AV or MA > No unless he already has all the worthwhile skills, then AV.