

# The Old Toolbox

## Human playbook by Chris Tracey

Humans are the great All Rounders of Blood bowl and form the baseline all other teams are judged. Famous for being a big ball of meh, with no real strengths but having no real weaknesses either. Humans do have more starting skills then just about any other team, and can do just about everything. No team is as versatile out of the box.

This means that there is no hard meta for Humans; there is no "correct" playstyle or build. This is why even smarter coaches then me have a hard time even establishing what tier they are. Humans more then any tier 1 team (and yes they are a tier 1 team) test the abilities of the coach to know when and how they should switch gears from a slow grindy bash game, to an aggressive running and passing game or visa versa. Every turn is a new puzzle to figure out and the Human coach needs to figure out how to solve it.

The thing to note about Humans is they will never be as good at anything as a team that is racially inclined to a specialization. Skaven will always be faster, Elves will always be better with the ball, Humans are not as robust as Dwarves, and Chaos kills everyone better. This forces the Human coach to learn his opponents roster and form a strong counter plan before the game even begins. The most basic strategies are just pressing the weaknesses of the opposing team: focus on fighting on low armor teams, and focus on the ball and leveraging your speed against slow and high strength bash teams. I will go into more detail later, but for now let me just say, Humans are in the starter set for a reason! They are all about mastery of the fundamentals of Blood Bowl and reward that understanding to sometimes surprising effect.

Humans can even change strategies mid drive, and in some cases even mid turn if Nuffle favors you, or if you spot a weakness to exploit; more easily then any other team. Think of them as toolbox full of hand tools your father gives you when you move into your first apartment; not quite as good as power tools but with a little grit and elbow grease you can do what ever you need to do with them.

Humans do have one minor stat advantage in the speed department, being able to field up to four MV 7 and four MV 8 players at once. This makes them one of the faster teams in the game, matching (and sometimes surpassing) elves in this respect. However they are, with the exception of the Ogre, universally AG 3, and thus can't truly rely on evasion and speed like elves can. In fact most detractors of the Human team often dismiss them saying "everything Humans can do, Elves can do better." But Humans have three advantages over elf teams. They are cheaper, can have up to five players with natural strength skill access, and one of the most reliable big guys in the game in the Ogre. This means that they are better bashers, can foul more frequently, and replace players more easily then any elf team can.

Humans however do not bash as well as hard bash teams lacking high strength players, only having medium armor (AV 8 on most players,) and catchers having only ST 2. This middle of the road philosophy that Human teams have is a double edged sword.

At low TV Humans are extremely powerful in the hands of a seasoned coach, but as TV goes up Humans have a much trickier time. Once the opposing teams break the 1300 TV mark they are developing in one of two ways: covering weaknesses or double down on strengths. At 1500 TV they will be doing both. This natural evolution of the competition weakens what few advantages Humans have.

What is worse is if Humans specialize too much in one direction, you may find that you built your team into a corner. This is a weakness no one really talks about and no other team runs this risk as strongly

as Humans. Everyone else has a default strategy or gimmick of sorts to fall back on but only gimmick Humans have is: be ok. So if you paint yourself into a corner with your skill choices (Such as going hard bash in a league dominated by developed Dwarves, Norse, and Orcs;) you're in for a rough season.

Another weakness Humans have is they rely heavily on skills and not stats. This means losing high level players hurts more for Humans. While you can buy back a rookie easily enough; they are going to be MUCH weaker then the star they will be replacing and may be a minor liability on high TV teams.

Also the lack of high stats makes them peak somewhat early; gaining fewer returns with each promotion. Humans do have deep positional wells with four Blitzers and Catchers, so you can have a replacement ready on your bench easy enough; but keeping 100+k of TV on the bench for a rainy day can be seen as wasteful and developing a "B Team" will take a while.

## **Team Roster**

(All Blood Bowl 2 prices or changes are in brackets) Note: No Human player can gain Mutations, double skills are in *Italics*, and skill suggestions are listed in no particular order. This is done intentionally to encourage experimentation

Blitzers

MV 7 ST 3 AG 3 AV 8

Cost: 90k

Hire limit: 4

Skills: Block

Standard Skill Access: General and Strength

Suggested Skills: Guard, Tackle, Mighty Blow, Dauntless, Stand Firm, Grab, Frenzy, Strip Ball, Pile on, *Dodge Jump up, Diving Tackle*

Blitzers are the backbone on the Human team and are you most expensive players outside of the Ogre. You will want all four of them from the start, no matter your team strategy or build idea. Don't argue with me, just buy them!

Blitzers fall under three general roles: Support where they help other team mates assists and help to control the pitch; (Guard, Stand Firm, Tackle, Diving Tackle) Ball Hawk where they try to get to the player with the ball and knock it loose directly or just tying them down, (Strip Ball, Tackle, Diving Tackle). And finally Killer who specializes in removing players (Mighty Blow, Tackle, Piling on, Frenzy.). I find having two Support and two Killer/Ball Hawks are a good balanced mix.

Get Dodge when you get your first double with these guys as Block and Dodge is just too powerful a combo do not take. Guard works well on any role of Blitzers as Humans need as much Guard as possible to counter Bash heavy teams. However when you should take it depends on what you are going to be up against, vs what you already have. If you have two Guard Blitzers already then it may be a good idea to focus on a ball hawk or killer skills Blitzers first unless you are in a bash heavy league.

Catchers

MV 8 ST 2 AG 3 AV 7 (8)

Cost: 60k (70k)

Hire Limit: 4

Skills: Dodge and Catch

Standard Skill Access: General and Agility

Suggested Skills: Block, Wrestle, Fend, Diving Catch, Sprint, Sure Feet, Side Step, Leap, Jump Up, Diving Tackle, Tackle, Dauntless, Strip Ball, Sure Hands, Shadowing, Dirty Player, *Pass Block, Guard, Nerves of Steel, Dump off*

Catchers are the first of the debated positionals on the human team. "Why pay extra for someone who is weaker than a Lineman and is basically an over grown and overpriced goblin?" they argue. But don't let the "Blood Bowl is Bash" camp fool you! Catchers are one of the most versatile players you have, and are often criminally under rated. Hell, they are the same cost as a Skink in tabletop and have the same stat line, only trading stunty for catch. (And not many will say skinks suck!)

However being only ST 2 and AV 7 means these guys will not last long in the middle of a large scrum. That said they can make decent Ball Hawks and Cage Divers once they have Block, Dauntless, and Leap.

Is that too aggressive for you? Focus on Support then! They are excellent support pieces with their easy access to Block and/or Wrestle and their high speed lets them get where they need to be. Just be sure to give them Side Step, Diving Tackle, Shadowing and if possible Guard. Pass Block isn't bad choice here, as the catch skill allows two attempts to intercept. But it should not be a first skill pick.

Or perhaps you are an Elf weeaboo and want to focus on a fast, aggressive offense? Give them Diving Catch, Sprint, Sure Feet, and Nerves of Steel if possible. Dirty Player is not a bad skill on any of them either as their high movement, dodge skill, and low price (especially in tabletop) means they can almost always get the boot in where it is needed most without too much being ejected. There is so much these guys can do, don't be afraid to experiment, even if it didn't work out, you learned something and these guys are easy to replace.

Thrower

MV 6 ST 3 AG 3 AV 8

Cost: 70k

Hire Limit: 2

Skills: Pass and Sure Hands

Skill Access: General and Passing

Suggested Skills: Block, Accurate, Safe Pass, Leader, Kick Off Return, Nerves of Steel, Dump Off, Fend, *Dodge, Strong Arm, Side Step, Guard*

What do we have here? Why, it is another controversial player! Many coaches feel it is better just to put sure hands on a Blitzler and save the 70k. Often these coaches justify it with the old Dwarf criticism "If you pass and are not Elves, you are playing wrong! And even then it is a desperation play!" These

bastions of wisdom are committing one of the biggest mistakes a Human coach can ever make, **Never turn down a tactical option!** And the Thrower is the tool needed to have those options.

There are two primary roles throwers have and they are traditional Quarterback and Runner. The Quarterback's role is to get the ball and wait for a good opportunity to throw it to an open catcher before they can be hit. Quarterback skills are the obvious candidates of Accurate, Safe Throw, and Strong Arm.

In fact once the Thrower has Accurate and Strong Arm they can throw long bombs on a 4+ and will only fumble the ball on a natural 1. Only elves can hope to do better than that; so if a Strong Arm Thrower gets an AG up, thank Nuffle and Pass your way to victory! However, The rarity of Strong Arm and AG+ often means human passing should rarely be no further than a short pass.

Runners on the other hand are about running the ball up the pitch themselves, with the support of cages and offensive screens. Skills like Block, Dodge, Fend, Side Step, and Dump Off help them do this job. The Sure Hands a Thrower naturally has makes them immune to Strip Ball too. However at only MV 6 they will take a few turns to get down the pitch, leaving him vulnerable to elf screen tactics and possible attrition from blocks.

Which to use can be tricky and I wouldn't recommend a two thrower build out the gate. Fortunately you don't have to choose right away so play around with them your first few games and figure out what you find the most fun.

If you are in a closed league setting and know what you are going up against, that is a different matter. If there are lots of bash teams like Orc, Dwarves, and Chaos: build a Quarterback. If there are mostly low armor teams like Skaven, Wood Elves and Amazons: make a Runner. As your team develops you can take both types of throwers, and it is often a good idea in open anonymous matchmaking leagues like COL or FUMBBL. Just remember a Quarterback can run, and a Runner can throw. Human coaches become losing coaches if they are too rigid in their tactics and play.

#### Lineman

MV 6 ST 3 AG 3 MV 8

Cost: 50k

Hire Limit: None

Skills: None

Skill Access: General

Suggested Skills: Block, Wrestle, Dirty Player, Tackle, Kick, Dauntless, Frenzy, *Dodge, Guard, Mighty Blow*

Well just thinking about the rage and violence those last few bits have inspired, has quite possibly voided my life insurance. So my wife wants me to talk about something less prone to inspire a lynch mob. The humble Lineman is the unsung hero of many a team, and on the Human team that is no exception. They have a solid stat line and can fill out any role in a pinch, Their low cost makes them good foulers, and as they level they become even more versatile. High TV Humans need their Linemen more than any other team other than Vampires, and that is only because they don't need to eat them.

I find having two Block Tackle Linemen and Three Wrestle Linemen and a Kick Dirty Player Lineman a good mix.

Ogre

MV 5 ST 5 AG 2 AV 9

Cost: 140k

Hire Limit: 1

Skills: Loner, Mighty Blow, Thick Skull, Throw Team-mate, Bonehead

Skill Access: Strength

Suggested Skills: Guard, Grab, Stand Firm, Juggernaut, Multi Block, Piling On, Break Tackle, *Block*, *Tackle*, *Pro*, *Frenzy*

Even the Ogre, like just about everything about Humans, has inspired some controversy. Some say he is unnecessary and ultimately not worth it, due to being unreliable and costing twice as much as most of the other Human players. Others feel he is essential to Humans, offering much needed bashing potential. Others still say "Only stunties should have big guys." I personally believe that the Ogre is near essential to the Human team. They aren't needed out the gate necessarily, but should be one of the first things Humans should plan to add to their team after an Apothecary.

Ogres are there to do one thing on a Human team, and that is hitting fools dumb enough to base them. Ogre development is essentially a race to the doubles, as without double skills Ogres will only ever be living battering rams, smashing lines and cages. But once those doubles come however Ogres can become Super Blitzers! Hell if you are lucky enough to get +AG on one, try making it a ball handler. It may not be efficient but it is fun seeing the look on your opponent's face when you hand off to an Ogre and form a cage when you are leading.

The only issues Ogres have is Loner and Bonehead. Loner means you have to pass a 4+ roll just to use a team re roll, and if you fail you must keep the current roll, but still use up the reroll. Bad dice will come and burning a reroll on a triple skull and failing the Loner roll is frustrating, as is that game critical blitz being forgotten in favor of watching some clouds.

Bonehead is a 2+ check to see if the Ogre can do *anything* other than just stand or lay there. Just Remember that while boneheaded, Ogres are considered to have no tackle zones and can not interact with the ball (but will not drop it if they are already holding it,) so it may be best to just stand around if they are guarding a hole in your screens.

Pro is not a bad skill to consider as not only allows free rerolls on standard rolls like blocks, but also the loner and bonehead check rolls as well! Block is a stronger choice for a prime puncher but if the Ogre should get a second double, it is worth considering.

## **Starting Builds**

There are almost as many Human Builds as there are Blood Bowl Coaches, and because Humans are so cheap and rerolls inexpensive (50k at team creation,) any build I present can be easily modified. That being the case I shall present some of the most common builds I have seen, over the last five years.

### True Balance

4 Blitzers (360)

2 Catchers (120 or 140)

1 Thrower (70)

5 Linemen (250)

3 Rerolls (150)

Total Cost: 950 (Tabletop) or 970 (BB2)

The quintessential starter build for Humans and great for new players. This build gets you almost all your positionals, a good number of rerolls, and a back up lineman on the bench. {If you are playing tabletop you can even get an Apothecary with the last 50k too} No real drawbacks here.

### Bashing Balance

4 Blitzers (360)

The Ogre (140)

1 Catcher (60 or 70)

1 Thrower (70)

4 Linemen (200)

3 Rerolls (150)

Total Cost: 980 (tabletop) or 990 (BB2)

This is a popular variation of the last build where you trade your spare lineman and one of your catchers for the Ogre. You gain more bash potential at the cost of starting with a bench, a little speed and pass options. A good solid build

### Hard Bash

4 Blitzers (360)

The Ogre (140)

7 Linemen (350)

3 Rerolls (150)

Total Cost: 1000

This is the Bashiest you can make Humans out the gate. it is Also it is a common build and a good one for developing linemen, however it guts most of your speed and ball handling options. There is a common variation where you trade a lineman and a re-roll for a thrower, but I feel it doesn't help your options all that much. As while you will save that reroll on pickups, and marginally improves your tactical options; it lowers your overall bad luck insurance.

I would personally drop the Ogre in favor for a thrower and apothecary, as a Thrower is just a lineman with two skills for the price of one, and an apothecary will keep your Blitzers in the game.

Elf Weeaboo

2 Blitzers (180)

4 Catchers (240 or 280)

1 Thrower (70)

6 Linemen (300)

3 Rerolls (150)

Total Cost 940 (Tabletop) or 980 (BB2)

This set up ignores my statement above about having all four Blitzers, but with all that money saved you can buy some extra linemen. You will need them as his build is all about speed above all else and can just adapt the entire elf playbook almost one for one on offense, but you will lose a bit of hitting power. This loss of power will really be felt on defense as having four ST 2 players on the pitch will make taking the ball from the other side tricky without the usefulness of the Elves AG 4. But that is why we're taking all those linemen, so that they can be swapped in for some of the catchers. I have trouble recommending this set up to newer player as it is one big glass cannon, and something of a one trick pony until you can build up and expand on it. However that is why we have...

Who Needs Linemen?

4 Blitzers (360)

4 Catchers (240 or 280)

2 Thrower (140)

The Ogre (140)

1 Re-roll (50)

Total Cost: 930 (Tabletop) or 970 (BB2)

Vary few teams can field a full roster of 11 players and not use linemen, but Humans are one of them. This is a balanced build and has a lot of options, but it has almost no rerolls in BB2, and so I can not recommend strongly it there. However in tabletop you can get a second reroll and that makes it much more viable.

As long as you use your players along the lines of their positions and skills, their skill rerolls will make up for the lack of team rerolls. However players will need to work outside their role from time to time and the Ogre is still unreliable at the best of times (and a down right liability at worst) so the lack of team rerolls will sting you sooner or later. Also taking injuries early with this team's life can be devastating as these are you most expensive players, and any losses will take two or three games on average to replace.

However, you could also trade the Ogre for a single lineman and two rerolls (or a single reroll and

Apothecary) for more newbe friendly build.

Pure Meh!

16 Linemen (800)

4 rerolls (200)

Total Cost: 1000

No skills. No special tricks. Just raw numbers and a solid number of re-rolls. A good roster for those that want a challenge and don't have the balls to play stunties, or those want to help a friend learn the game without handicapping yourself too hard.