

Vampire Playbook

... or ...

Things to do in Sylvania, while you are dead!

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Introduction

While Vampires are a lot of fun to play, their performance and results can be mixed. They play in a unique style, and because of this, rookie coaches may find them a challenge. To be frank there is a lot of things to keep track of when playing vamps, more so than with any other team.

The vampires are probably the most versatile players and at the same time the most unreliable players in the game. They are supported by measly thralls with one of the poorest stat lines in the game. The team has few starting skills and if not handled correctly (or if you are really unlucky) the worst negative skill in the game. Vamps aren't the fastest team either so what do they have going for them?

The vampires do have the Hypnotic Gaze skill which is a really game changing skill, making the team very strong against "running game" type teams. Also if the vampires are played correctly they do have an amazing statline combined with great skill selection.

The Roster

VAMPIRE TEAMS

Hidden from the eyes of the world live the lords of the night - the vampires. Eternal unlife leaves them with a lot of spare time, so some of the unrulier ones have taken up blood bowl.

Qty	Title	Cost	MA	ST	AG	AV	Skills	Talent
0-16	Thralls	40,000	6	3	3	7	-	G
0-6	Vampires	110,000	6	4	4	8	Regeneration, Bloodlust, Hypnotic Gaze	GAS

0-8 Re-roll counters: 70,000 gold pieces each

Star Players available for inducement: Helmut Wulf (110k), Crazy Igor (130k), J Earlice (180k), Wilhelm Chaney (240k), Count Luthor von Drakenborg (390k), Morg 'n' Thorg (450k)



So looking at the roster your options are limited: Thralls, Vampires and re-rolls of course. But the choices aren't as straightforward as with most teams. Maxing out number of vampires is not a good idea. The reason is the negative-skill Bloodlust¹.

Blood Lust (Extraordinary)

Vampires must occasionally feed on the blood of the living. Immediately after declaring an action with a Vampire, roll a d6: On a 2+ the Vampire can carry out the Action as normal. On a 1, however, the Vampire must feed on a Thrall team-mate or a spectator. The Vampire may continue with his declared Action or if he had declared a Block Action, he may take a Move Action instead. Either way, at the end of the declared Action, but before actually passing, handing off, or scoring, the vampire must feed. If he is standing adjacent to one or more Thrall team-mates (standing, prone or stunned), then choose one to bite and make an Injury roll on the Thrall treating any casualty roll as Badly Hurt. The injury will not cause a turnover unless the Thrall was holding the ball. Once the Vampire has bitten a Thrall he may complete his Action. Failure to bite a Thrall is a turnover and requires you to feed on a spectator – move the Vampire to the reserves box if he was still on the pitch. If he was holding the ball, it bounces from the square he occupied when he was removed and he will not score a touchdown if he was in the opposing end zone.

¹ For extra information about Blood Lust, confer <http://bbtactics.com/bloodlust/>.

Vampires are able to do more stuff in numbers, they have strength 4 and gazed players cannot assist until activated. And therefore more vampires equal more pressure, but with each Vampire action there is a chance to fail the Bloodlust. To deal with this you need either to reroll the Bloodlust roll or bite a well placed thrall. A bitten thrall has a 44% chance to leave the pitch if bitten. This in conjunction with their low AV and no protective skills makes a vampire heavy team prone to losing a lot of players fast. And when there are few thralls left, the vampires will have a harder time doing what you want them to do.

So what is the right mix of vampires and thralls?

The more re-rolls you have the more vampires you're able to field; a good rule of thumb is that you shouldn't purchase more vampires than one per team re-roll. You need to take into account the number of extra thralls you have on the team. As the team progresses do not buy extra vampires if you're running low on thralls.

Having the right number of vampires on the team is important. I do not think a vampire should ever be benched. A vampire on the sideline is 110k of player that you aren't using, even more with skills. I think having 3-5 vamps on your team and filling up with thralls is about right, having at least 5 rerolls is also nice.

Is an apothecary worth considering? After all the vamps have regeneration and the thralls cost less than 50k? Even so – their services are highly valuable. With the apothecary (and regeneration) you have a 89% chance of avoiding horrible injury on a vampire – and losing the wrong vampire could cripple your team! On top of that, the apothecary can keep a KO'd thrall on the field can be a game winner.

Basic Roster

3 vamps (330K) + 8 thralls (320K) + 5 re-rolls (350K) = 1000K

The idea behind this roster is to max out the re-rolls from the start lost thralls will be replaced by journeymen and you trust in regeneration on the vampires. You can switch 1 or 2 rerolls (and a thrall) for one vampire each.

Cautious Roster

3 vamps (330K) + 10 thralls (400K) + 3 re-rolls (210K) + 1 apothecary (50K) + 1 FF = 1000K

This is a more durable team can quickly run out of rerolls, as the vampire team starts without stability-skills – and suffers from Bloodlust on top of that.

Tactics (or how to make the vampires behave on the pitch)

The main strength of the vampire team is that they can break any cage with the use of hypnotic gaze. Hypnotic gaze is really what makes this team so special and no other team can do what the vampires do.

Hypnotic Gaze (Extraordinary)

The player has a powerful telepathic ability that he can use to stun an opponent into immobility. The player may use hypnotic gaze at the end of his *Move Action* on one opposing player who is in an adjacent square. Make an Agility roll for the player with hypnotic gaze, with a -1 modifier for each opposing tackle zone on the player with hypnotic gaze other than the victim's. If the Agility roll is successful, then the opposing player loses his tackle zones and may not catch, intercept or pass the ball, assist another player on a block or foul, or move voluntarily until the start of his next action or the drive ends. If the roll fails, then the hypnotic gaze has no effect.

If you move your vampire next to a single opponent this means that you can successfully remove his tackle zone 2 out of 3 times – allowing you access to run right past the player and either whack the opposing ball carrier or simply score a touchdown of your own. It is really hard to do the classic 8 turn stall-grind against a vampire team, as they can so easily penetrate the standard x-formation type cages. Furthermore a slow grinding coach may very well choke up as he positions his players to cover for every eventuality – unavoidably spreading his players so thin that he'll be badly equipped to handle a straightforward assault on his cage.

Compared to leap, a failed gaze doesn't cause a turnover and this leaves you with multiple chances to open the cage on the same turn. This is why vampire teams do quite well against running style teams, while they have some difficulty against passing teams such as high elves.

On defence vamps - like all other teams - need to consider the actual chance of recovering the ball even if sacking the ball carrier looks easy. Committing to cracking the cage will leave a lot of players next to opposing players and you just might lose some. As mentioned earlier Vampire teams lose players faster than most, so try not to stack the odds against you by giving away more blocks than necessary!

The vampire offence is a bit slow with only MA 6 players on the team, but it should be reasonably easy to score in 3 turns courtesy of Hypnotic Gaze. Against elves and other teams that rely on exposed receivers waiting around for the pass/hand-off it is worth noting that a hypnotized player cannot catch the ball. This is useful to know multiple receivers have penetrated your backfield and the thrower is way back on his own side of the field. Blitzing one receiver and hypnotizing the rest can make things unusually difficult for the offense.

Other than the above, you should always think about two things: Positioning and adapting.

Positioning

Make sure your thralls are positioned where your most vital vampire actions are headed – but try to stay clear opposing players, as your thralls are really fragile. If you are taking a move with a vampire, make sure that you have a thrall positioned so that you can avoid a turnover if bloodlust fails. If you need to block for example, you need the thrall to be positioned next to you vamp so that you don't need to change your block to a move action, also positioned so that a follow-up is possible if that is what you're going for. Having a thrall in position so that you could bite him if you manage to push (and follow up) is also an idea but a bit riskier.

Often making pass moves instead of handoffs is a good idea with vamps that can save you the use of an early RR on the bloodlust – since it is a lot easier to get next to a thrall and still be able to get the ball to the intended receiver when you can throw it.

Recognizing when not to move a vampire is also valuable. Placing the vampires correctly so you don't need to move them the forthcoming turn can save you some RR or thralls. With a starting team, consider whether your thralls can do the blocking on the LOS – as long as they get 2-die blocks they'll be hitting just as hard, and your entire plan won't go belly up when a vampire fails his Bloodlust roll.

Make sure that your vamps can cover the most of the field and try to keep them closer to the centre of the pitch, so you can get a vampire to gaze at the right place. The vampire team is slow; your

opponent knows this and a way avoid attacks on the ball carrier is to keep him out of harm's way. So keep this in mind and try not to over commit.

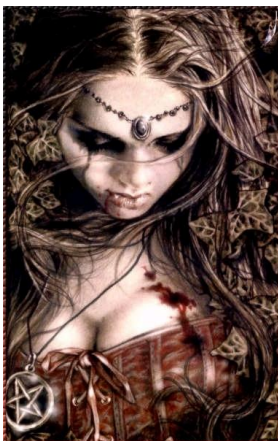


Adapting:

During a turn a Vampire coach often needs to rethink his plan as the dice gets rolled. Failing a Bloodlust roll or Gaze roll is not a turnover, but it may seriously change your plans for the rest of the turn. A lucky gaze or a thrall that leaves the field might also change how you proceed. Try have plan B whenever you do something. If you fail the first bloodlust roll in a turn it might be an idea to just take a breather, re-roll the Bloodlust and don't do much else that turn.

I guess real insight in knowing when to commit everything and when to just keep your position comes with experience. But still, as a new vampire coach, always try to have alternatives in mind when taking your turn; vampires can fail a lot of rolls without getting an actual turnover. The Thralls will suffer though if you go through with a turn with a lot of failed blood lust rolls; make sure that it's worthwhile. And remember – your opponents fear of what you just might do will sometimes hurt him more than what you actually do.

Skill choices and Inducements



Skilling the vampires:

2 skills that are really nice for vampires are dodge and pro. Dodge makes sure you can move your vampire with relative ease, getting to the right gaze spots and even more importantly making sure that the vampire can get to a thrall if he gets to thirsty.

Pro gives you an extra chance avoiding bloodlust as well as an extra chance of succeeding a gaze. It can of course be used on other rolls too, but are really good for vampires as these 2 rolls will not give you a turnover.

Block versus wrestle. Wrestle is a nice skill for the sacking an opposing ball carrier – but if you've failed your Bloodlust roll then wrestle is useless, as you need to be standing to feed on a thrall. Therefore one wrestle

vampire or maybe two are enough. Block vamps should be the ones doing the gazing and so on.

Vamps should be given skills according the role they have. Vampires mainly doing gazes should go for block, guard, pro, dodge, stand firm/sidestep. While ball sackers should go for wrestle, frenzy, strip ball, tackle and dodge. You could go for a take-out vampire, with mighty blow, frenzy, piling on, juggernaut, block, to help you out in the elf games. The sure hands skill on a block dodger also makes for a very hard to handle ball carrier.

On doubles some coaches prefer to get a pass vampire, he can get strong arm to become a really competent thrower. Remember that he will be a lot less useful in defence though.

The thralls should go for block or wrestle. It will help them survive – but also remember that thralls too can attack on opposing ball carrier if his defence has been hypnotized. As his second skill one thrall should take kick. Kicking short to make your opponent pressured from the start is a nice strategy with vamps. Other secondary skills could be fend, tackle and dirty player, the usual lineman type skills – or strip ball.



On doubles a leader is quite useful for 3 tr, as you go through RR like a Halfling goes through anchovy sandwiches! But else guard and dodge are really useful! Thick skull may sound good in theory, but there are better skills to be had.

Stat increases take them all! Favour MA over AV for the vamps. Agility 5 vamps that gaze on a 2+ are really awesome - never miss this opportunity. AG+ thralls are nice as they allow you to handle the ball reliably without rolling for Bloodlust. ST+ thralls make for more reliable sackers - so give this thrall wrestle. If a thrall is doing the sacking then you'll have one more vampire ready to use his hypnotic gaze.

Inducements

If you can afford Wilhelm Chaney he is worth every penny, especially in the early stages of your team's development. He can, with his move 8, ST 4 and wrestle, cover a lot of ground and get most ball carriers down helped by a well placed gaze. He has claw to deal with orcs and dwarfs or other highly armoured players and he can score as he is easy to handoff to with the catch.

Against bashy teams I find wandering apothecaries and bloodwieser babes to be useful – after all losing players on both your and your opponents turn can put your team under a lot of pressure. But the wizard is also useful, as it will make stall-grinding even harder. Against elves and passing teams, bribes and cards are useful and perhaps Helmut Wulf.