

BLOOD BOWL

Simultaneous Turns

House rules for a very wacky variant of Blood Bowl!

By Anders Skov

"Good evening sports fans and welcome to the Blood Bowl for tonight's contest. The kick off has just happened and the mighty teams clash in a chaotic brawl.

That's right, Bob. Notice, however, how the Raiders are not moving at all – as the Giants have turn. And look at those Giants, – in a fine choreographed push they manage to break the line in just the right order so even the Ogre gets a disadvantage in that final block. Oh, but look – they just fumbled picking up the ball!

They just did, Jim. And the entire team get frozen in place as they just lost their turn and I'm sure the Raiders will utilise their turn to the fullest – Say Jim – what is this 'turn' anyway?

Well, a turn is a convenient structure in a great game as Blood Bowl, but it doesn't reflect how I imagine the disorder and chaos on the playing field. Make no mistake, I love solving a 5 block puzzle so everyone gets 2 block dice, a perfect hand-off and throw, the cage releasing the ball in the last minute and other fine choreographed events. This article will take all this away, but in my view give an even better game."

SIMULTANEOUS TURNS

The core in this conversion is a deck of cards representing the players on both teams. With less than 14 players on a team they can be represented with a single suit, just ensure that each player has one unique card assigned to them and that the cards have the same back.

At the beginning of each kick-off the cards representing the players on the field are shuffled into the action deck.

Each turn proceed as follows:

- A. The coaches move the turn marker on the turn track – yes, only one track is needed as they now have their turns simultaneously.
- B. The first card from the action deck is taken face down and put undisclosed in the discard pile.
- C. The next card is drawn, revealed and the corresponding player must make his action now, if his team is not confused.
- D. If an event happens, that would usually result in a turnover, the acting team is instead confused.
- E. Repeat C-E until the action deck is empty.
- F. Update the action deck, so it just contains the players still on the field. Shuffle.
- G. Go to A.

CONFUSION

Actions will go wrong more often with these rules as players are forced to do actions they would rather have delayed or completely avoided. This is the intension, but that shouldn't freeze the rest of the entire team. Instead it's only the next action card of the confused team that is ignored.

Example:

1. 5 Block, knock down 8.
2. 2 Move, fails dodge, team get confused.
3. 6 Move.
4. 9 Confused, no action.
5. 8 Move, get up.

Confusion is carried through from turn to turn, so if the last player of a team creates a 'turnover' then that team will lose their first card the next turn. A confusion counter/model can be assigned to each team.

No team is confused at kick off, however.

A card belonging to a player already removed from the field still cancels confusion – remember to put this card aside (part F).

PART B

What is this about? Isn't the game way to random already?

No. This conversion is about forcing the coaches to create and use opportunities. With a card missing you can't be sure, that Morg'th N'hthorg will get his block, that the Gutter Runner will make his move or that the thrower will make the pass to the end zone.

This makes the final cards of the action deck much more intense as with 3 cards left each of the 4 last players have a large chance of missing their by now even more important action.

It can, however, be very frustrating, if it turns out that it is the ball carrier that lost his turn (or just got confused), so the old Handing-off rule should be put back, i.e.

A hand-off may be carried out at any time, even part way through another player's action, and does not count as an action for either the player who hands off the ball or the player who receives it. However, the ball may not be handed off more than once per team turn, and the ball may not be handed off during the opponent's actions.

With the ball carrier still inactivated and an almost empty action deck this forces me to choose between either hand-off the ball to the just activated player or gamble on the last cards.

As small as this rule seems it is this uncertainty that makes the simultaneous turns conversion work, - it could be tempting to say 'well, can't I use a reroll to activate the player anyway?', and the answer is 'NO! There must always be a risk that a key player misses a turn'.



ACTIONS

The restricted actions (Pass, Blitz, Foul) can still only be carried out on time per team per turn. Create some counters to keep track of used actions if needed.

STUNNED

Stunned players are turned face up when they would otherwise have had an action. I.e. a confused stunned player stays stunned.

Illegal procedure

As both players have turn this rule is discarded.

A more radical approach is the following optional rule: 'In the beginning of each turn either of the coaches may move the turn marker.' Missed turns represent bribed refs or action so intense that even the ref forgets the time. (This rule should be avoided in league games, where cooperating coaches could generate star player points as wanted in an endless game.)

NEW SKILLS (OPTIONAL)

Concentration (General) If this player's card come up when the team is confused roll a dice. On 4+ the player gets his action anyway. Either way the team loses its status as confused.

Delayed action (General) Instead of taking an action this player may be declared delayed. For the rest of the turn this player may take his action instead of a player on the same team. (I.e. One player's action can only be substituted by one delayed player, and if a player is still delayed at the end of the action deck the action is lost.)

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

We don't know much about Anders other than he is a Blood Bowl fan!

THE RESULT

My experience with these rules is that they create a much more dynamic (and disorganised) game.

The actions get spread out all over the board as the attacker build and protects forward pockets while the defender sends Blitzers downfield to attack the ball carrier.

The skills become more important as you get forced to do ball handling in tackle zones and do unsupported blocks.

The cage is much more difficult to utilise, as you need a cage both around the former and final position of the carrier.

Less touchdowns are scored as both teams are less effective - feel free to experiment with extended halves.

The strategy during setup changes as the receiving team must protect the ball from an agile opponent getting an early action.

This makes Blood Bowl a nice solitaire game.

The coach needs to apply real tactics that can stand the pressure of the opponent interaction and not (beautiful) choreographed moves.

Lady Luck can be a real b#%ch, but she is fair in average.

Good luck and try out these rules in stand alone matches first (or, of cause, in the Chaos Cup).