

# THE 2504 BLOOD BOWL

by Jake Thornton, "Harry" Harrington,  
Gerwyn Walters & Dave Candlish

**Jake:** The Blood Bowl tournament is the biggest event in the year for players of, um, Blood Bowl. Yes, the namesake trophy of the game has its own two day tournament, held annually at GW headquarters in Lenton, Nottingham. This year we had 187 coaches from all over the world in attendance, all eager to trip, tackle and foul their way to glory!

The weekend was a hectic one, not only for those playing. For me and the other Fanatics who made it along it was a chance to meet many of the people we talk to on the forums and who write some of the articles you see in these pages every month.

For those of you that haven't made it to one or other of the many Blood Bowl tournaments all over the world, I'd heartily recommend making the effort. There is a great atmosphere of friendly competition, and more Blood Bowl than you could shake a Goblin at. If you do feel like attending an event keep your eyes on the official website where we have a page for such things. You should also check out the NAF website. The NAF are a fan-based organisation who do a lot to promote and help fan







*Furious Blood Bowling action in progress.*

tournaments all over the world. If you're interested, pop along to [www.bloodbowl.net](http://www.bloodbowl.net) and have a look.

But that's enough blathering from me. This year I had the cunning plan of asking some of the attendees to write a few words to describe their experience. I thought that would perhaps better capture the feel of going along yourself and be much closer than the odd angles I see the event from. Oh, and just to throw another spin, I had our excellent head ref, David Candlish, pen some sage words too. He's a scribbler by trade, so most of them were even spelled right...

First up we have Marc "Harry" Harrington who did really well in the rankings, coming 21st overall.

### **The World Tour of Lustria**

**Harry:** So finally the day has come, I am prepared! My team are painted, I have read Sun Tzu's Art of War, watched Mean Machine, fallen asleep listening to "Eye of the Tiger" on permanent repeat and eaten three shredded wheat (which actually counts as dieting on this occasion) for breakfast. So, having collected my team I strut into Warhammer World with the Rocky theme tune buzzing around my head.

So what bloodthirsty, bone breaking and all round evil team am I fielding for this splatter fest? Orcs? Undead? Chaos Dwarves? No, I chose Wood Elves, the Lycra wearing Evian drinking tree huggers from Loren. And the reason for this: I want to win!

There I said it, I'm not ashamed, I'm proud in my competitiveness, defiant to the hordes claiming "I don't care where I come as long as I have a good time". OK, for

those Halfling and Goblin teams out there I tip my hat in acknowledgment of a truly great gamer, someone who has turned up with the express purpose of laughing as one by one his players move from the pitch to the Dead and Injured box and hoping against hope that he can roll at least one serious injury to his opponent so he can gloat about killing a Black Orc with his Halfling hit squad. But I'm not that kind of guy; I want to win at all costs. Some say this is petty and childish and my answer is "True, and my dad's bigger than your dad!". So I have chosen the personification of all things Blood Bowl, the fastest most agile and all together best team to play with: Wood Elves.



*Winner of the 2504 Blood Bowl - Hans Peter Earwaker*







*Some people will do anything to bring themselves luck – even wear silly hats.*

The reason for this competitiveness can be summed up in six words: Andy Jackson Hall and Gerwyn Walters. Andy has been rather scathing in his description of my Wood Elf team and in my abilities as a coach, and this coupled with him being my boss has brought out my latent “Win at all cost” gene, which has kicked into overdrive. Gerwyn is a work colleague whose luck at Blood Bowl is legendarily poor and I feel a small shiver of terror at the chance of him gloating about coming higher than me in the tournament. So, with a mix of pressure and determination I get ready to face my first opponent.

### **Game 1:**

So here I am placing out my Wood Elves when my opponent sits down and starts unpacking Lizardmen. I haven't placed the scaly ones in quite a while so this should be interesting. Two turns later, a Touchdown down, and two players in the KO'd box I reassess the word 'interesting' and swap it for 'worrying'. The rest of the game is a hard-fought contest that I finally win 3-1, but from the look of my Dead & Injured box I am seriously grateful for the rules about casualties in this tournament (the players all come back ready for the next match). OK I won, but for speed and strength the Lizardmen seem to have the perfect balance. Note to self: must get Lizardmen team.

### **Game 2:**

So here I am placing out my Wood Elves when my opponent sits down and starts unpacking Lizardmen. I haven't placed the scaly ones in... wait a minute! Déjà vu everyone! This time I'm more prepared for the strengths of the Saurus-Skink combo and decide to even the score by whittling down the stunty little Skinks as quickly as possible. The free skill I had chosen was Strip Ball for my

Wardancer and this proved completely unnecessary as my opponent had the worse case of double 1s I have ever had the misfortune to witness. It was one of those games where you start wincing every time he rolled the dice as his double skulls and snake-eyes marathon continued unabated. One thing I should mention at this time is the sportsmanship of every player I faced during the tournament. Every one of them was a joy to play, the few rules queries we had were dealt with amicably and I had a laugh with them all. Of all the opponents I faced this was the one that had every right to be a little bitter. Far from it, maybe it was gallows humour or maybe he had won the lottery that week, but in my most enjoyable match of the tournament I won 2-0 and left the table with aching ribs thanks to my wise cracking opponent. Note to self: put Lizardman team on hold – they have no luck.

### **Game 3:**

Suffering from altitude sickness I head for the top row of tables, but a quick glance further up the line shows me a couple of guys streaking away with massacres in both their opening games. No problem. All I need to do is take my next victim to pieces and I will be up there fighting for glory and look! It's the Amazons – the only team I can beat up in a straight fight and I'm still quicker than them. Stand back gentlemen a lesson in Wood Elf superiority is about to begin...

Turn 2 and I'm in serious trouble, both Catchers sitting in the Dead box, 1-0 down and struggling to pin down the lithe lovelies from Lustria. Due to some fluky dice I manage to get an equaliser, but by now I'm seriously outgunned and outnumbered. My second Wardancer Step Aside skill had prevented him being punted into the crowd and I have the chance to score the winning TD. AJ





Hall has repeatedly called my Wood Elves a beginner's team with stabilisers, and with Agility 4 they do most things on a 2+ so I can accept his criticism. Well this is where the stabilisers fell off and with my first snake eyes of the day I fail to pick up the ball two squares from my end zone and stand back in horror as the Latino babe dances through my lack of defence and strolls over the line for a 2-1 victory. Note to self: buy an Amazon team.

#### Game 4:

Smarting from my defeat I trudge down the second isle to face my next opponent. Oh look – another Lizardmen team! Yet with a subtle variation of only four Skinks, but with the world's supply of Saurus and a Kroxigor! Great! Well at least this guy must have lost his last game too since I had noticed him sitting quite close on the last round. I sit down and shake his hand, and it's only now I notice what's written on his baseball cap: WORLD LEAGUE CHAMPION! It's here that my beard starts to show, after my defeat in the previous game I decided to take something with a little punch so that when I knocked someone down they would stay down, so there in the middle of my roster was a Dirty Player. I had started the tournament determined to prove



*The finalist prepare for battle in the big arena.*

that skill and ability was more than a match for brute force and after one little setback here I was putting the boot in. I feel so... well, dirty.

By half time the dirty feeling has worsened, the Kroxigor is asleep in the dug out and he has two Skinks and a Saurus to keep him company. This is my formal apology to Thomas and my next two opponents, I'm so sorry I don't know what came over me. I'm so ashamed. Even with



*Everyone gets together to watch the final on the big screen in Bugman's.*







nibbling half his team Thomas put up a brave defence and I struggled to a 3-2 victory.

### Game 5:

This is the shortest write up of any game, and not due to my opponent who played with skill and panache. Let's just say the karma fairy came to town and my team not only lost they also spent half the game picking up teeth with broken fingers. 3-2 and my second defeat of the tournament to a rampaging Chaos Dwarf team.

### Final Game:

Whilst the big boys were battling for the trophy I was battling for my pride and the one thing standing between this and me was an Orc team with a snazzy paint job and a coach who knew how to use them. Half time and I had five players left on the pitch and was 1-0 down. It was then that my team started to play the way that Wood Elves are supposed to play. Despite being outnumbered and outplayed for the entire first half, something started to happen: I couldn't stop rolling 6s. My Wardancer (singular) dodged to the centre of an Orc cage, knocked out the ball carrier then gracefully leapt out of the cage to hand off to my surviving runner drawing the scores. Then next kick off he went and did it again! 2-1. By the end of the game my five players were running rings around their Greenskin foes and won 3-1, This wasn't due to any skill on my part or lack of on my opponent's. Personally I think the karma fairy was feeling guilty after abusing my team and with this final victory I felt vindicated and happy.

Overall I had a great time at my first ever tournament, and came a respectable 21st. I would like to thank each of my opponents who were awesome. Also I would like to note that having placed higher than either of my two colleagues in the office I do get bragging rights. This was my first tournament and definitely won't be my last.

*Next we have Harry's colleague, Gerwyn Walters*

### He of the legendary poor luck...

**Gerwyn:** There is nothing quite like a good game of Blood Bowl to get the pulse racing. The roar of the crowd, the highs of the touchdown celebrations and the lows of my players being stretchered off the pitch – all these things make Blood Bowl the greatest game to grace my gaming board since my parents introduced me to Snap! all those years ago. So when I was presented with the option of six games of Blood Bowl over one weekend, like the humble fool that I am I signed up instantly.

To those of you not in the know, the weekend of the 8-9th of May saw almost 200 gamers cram themselves into the confines of Warhammer World to compete for the biggest prize in the Blood Bowl calendar, The Blood Bowl Trophy itself!

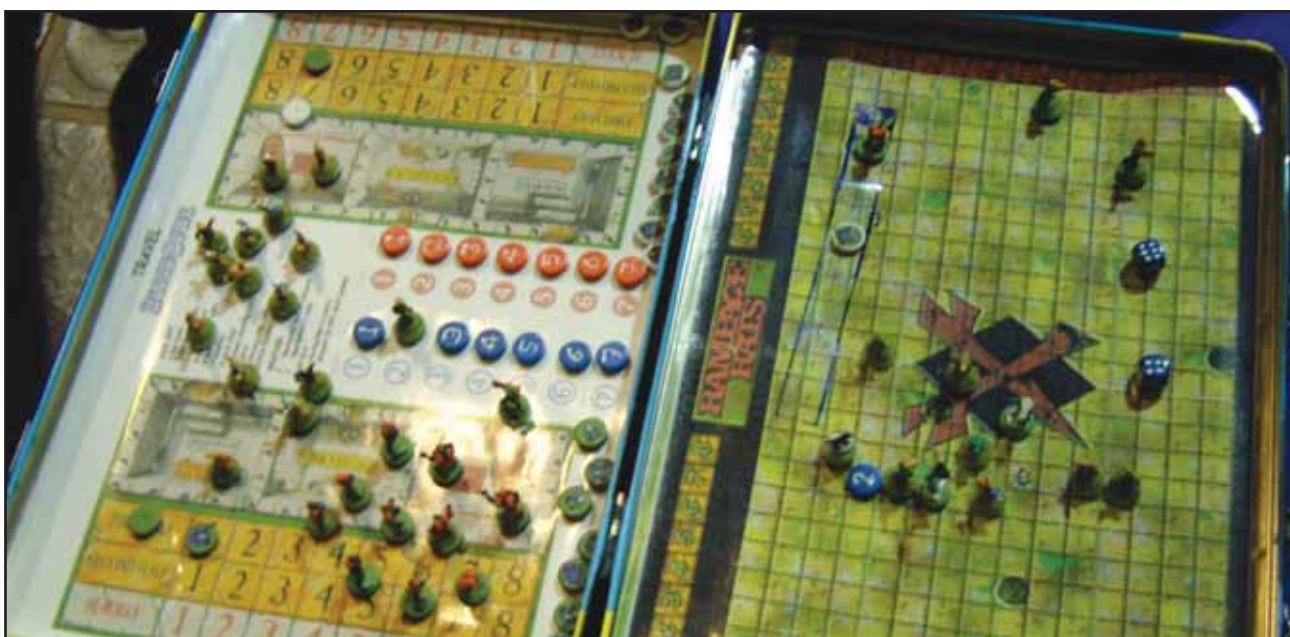
But before you can win a prize like this you have to have a team to play with. Rather than take one of my many different teams to this competition I decided to play something a bit different for the competition. Unlike other players who prefer to play Blood Bowl by pounding the opposition into the ground and then finally looking to pick up the ball I'm very firmly grounded in the idea that a team should be able to score while the opposition still has players on the field. Because of this I started looking at teams with throwing the ball or running it in mind.

Before I could make this decision though, I would have to come up with a gimmick that would mark the team as different. In the past I have used things as divergent as a snazzy colour scheme (with my infamous Haethwood Harlequins) to the team sponsorship of my old CATAS Corsairs, so I would have to pull something particularly good out of out hat for this, my first major competition.

My saviour came in the form of a short northerner who just happens to be my boss. After a particularly busy day in the officer we all retired to Bugman's where he proceeded to pronounce his pint "The Best Bar None".







*Practise on the way to the tournament with this Travel Blood Bowl set. The figures are converted warmaster miniatures.*

My mind quickly ticked over and the team concept was born. The “Beighstbhar Nun” quickly took shape in my head and what better concept could you want? A totally converted team of Human nuns for the Blood Bowl. Just the ticket.

It took several long, hard weeks (nay months) to assemble the team. Some things worked (the players converted from the Sisters of Sigmar were a godsend) while some things didn't (a converted female Ogre). In the end the team finally took shape and with sleepy eyes I stared at my finished models, a bare three days before the event, fully forgetting that I still had to paint them!

Needless to say I arrived at the event with paint still drying on my models and a look of mild exhaustion on my face and quickly settled down to find my first opponent with one of the lovely free raspberry donuts that were being handed out in Bugman's clasped between my teeth. I settled down at table number 7 and stared longingly at the players seated at tables 1-5 who were playing on the absolutely beautiful rollout pitches that the staff from NAF brought with them. My opponent turned out to be a gentleman called Steven Hutton and we set about the most intense game of my life pitting his Skaven against my Humans. By the end of the first half my team was laying in the dirt, 3-1 down and it was with gritted teeth and a silent prayer I set up for the second half.

The game ended in the most dramatic way possible, all down to a single dice roll, a Long Bomb thrown at the maximum range of the template to a Lineman standing 6 squares away from the end zone. People gathered around to watch and I quietly picked up the dice, closing my eyes

as I rolled it. I do not think that there is a single person in the room who did not hear my cry of joy as the dice came up a 6 and my humble Lineman ran in to score the decisive Touchdown, drawing the game 4-4. With a laugh and a grin Steve and I retired into Bugman's to talk about the game and grab a drink. Game 1, and everybody was happy.

One of the strange things about the Blood Bowl is the way that skills and progression are handled in the tournament. Unlike conventional games, individual experience awards for players are ignored and at the end of each game a team's coach is allowed to award one player in his team with a skill (not traits) of his choice from the player's normal skill choices. This meant that I had a decision to make for which skill to purchase.

In the end I settled upon “Dump Off” for my Thrower much to the puzzlement of the other coaches in Bugman's. Mind you, there was method in my madness as Dump Off is one of these skills that you rarely see in competitive play but this rarity makes it one of the most tactically useful as opponents don't expect to encounter it. The idea was that Dump Off, combined with a willingness to place my Thrower in danger of being blitzed by the enemy, should prove to draw out the enemy blitz and thus give me some control over the game.

With this in mind I walk into my second match, this time against the Lizardmen of Edwin Thorley. Two Blitz results on the kick off table combined with some incredible back luck ended with the match going to the opposition 3-1. Two games and things were not off to the start that I was hoping for.





*Blood Bowl on ice. One of the many unusual boards we found for the event.*

With the second game out of the way I sat down to look at the performance of my team. Dump Off had worked well for what I had planned for it although the tendency for my Thrower to not throw an accurate pass resulted in the Catcher who stood with him having to make several rolls to pick up the ball. With this in mind my second skill choice was Sure Hands on my Catcher.

The final game of day one saw me slipping further down the rankings and having to struggle to squeeze myself into the lower tables. If there is one piece of advice I would give to any tournament player it is to go on a diet for a few weeks before the competition. This should make things a lot easier as those with ample bodies (also known as "gamer" sized) can find things a little bit difficult squeezing into the tight lanes between the tables.

Needless to say I fought my way through the throng to meet my next opponent, a Spaniard by the name of Javi Garcia. What followed was one of the most surreal games of Blood Bowl I have ever played as much of the game was resolved by mime as neither Javi's English or my Spanish was that good. Unfortunately one of the English words that Javi did know was "Interception" and this led what otherwise would have been a 2-2 draw to be a 3-1 victory in my opponent's favour.

End of day one and things were certainly not going as planned. I could tell that I would not win any prizes this year and with that in mind I slipped into Bugman's to make the most of the night.

The next morning I reached the hall running late, having decided that the human body does actually require some sleep. I found my opponent, Ron Battran sitting waiting for me. Ron is the manager of the Games Workshop store in Chelmsford and one of the friendliest people I have ever met. The game started off badly for me with both of

Ron's Treemen showing up for the first half of the match, but after this the game passed backwards and forwards. Resigned to the knowledge that the Blood Bowl was out of my reach, I sat back and enjoyed the game, eventually scoring in the last turn to bring the score to a respectable 2-2.

Argh! Four games without a victory was not good and this bad spell of luck continued into the next game.

The fifth game started as it was due to go on, with the weather turning against me. The game was played in sweltering heat and this proved to

take five players from my team in one drive. The remaining 6 players put up a brave defence for the five turns this drive lasted, but in the end there was little they could do to prevent the Dark Elves from pounding them into the pitch before finally stepping into the end zone.

But this game was not all bad. In the second half the Nuns of Beighstbhar rallied to come within a hair's breath of levelling the game 2-2. Unfortunately, yet again Nuffle turned against me as the agile Elves managed to pluck the ball from the air, their interception stealing any chance of a Human comeback and sealing the game 3-1.

As I shuffled from Bugman's to the gaming hall to find my final opponent I found that I was down to play the Khemri team coached by Phillip Honatidis. I had been very lucky throughout the competition in that I had not played any "power" teams, and the four Mummies on Phillip's front line showed early in the game why they were to be feared. With several of my players "reclining" in various parts of the dug out I had to struggle to hold up the Khemri team while trying to score myself. In the end my last game was typical of my luck through the entire tournament with me taking four turns with a combined time of less than a minute.

Oh well, that's the way the dice roll; in this case with a plethora of 1s and 2s. There is a saying that in Blood Bowl there are 2 opponents, the other team's coach and the dice. In this case I lost to both with Phillip taking a well-deserved victory. All that was left was to pop into the bar and watch the final match on the big screen.

All in all an enjoyable competition, if not a successful one and I would recommend it to any hard core Blood Bowl player. Don't worry though, next year that Trophy will be mine.





*Meanwhile, whilst these brave coaches were risking life and limb in the gaming floor, our chief ref was lounging by the pool with his cool drink, being fanned by nubile... wait a sec...*

## **I've got my eye on ALL of you!**

**Dave:** It was during an interview for House-Rulez magazine at Games Workshop HQ when I was asked by Jake Thornton to be Chief Referee at this year's Blood Bowl, and my first reactions were surprise followed quickly by excitement and just a little bit of pride – after all, Games Workshop and the guys whose games I'd played for donkey's years were asking ME to help out at one of their biggest events! It wasn't until the drive home that I first realised I had volunteered for something without fully understanding what was expected of me, and the pride & excitement quickly began to mingle with feelings of trepidation...

Over the coming months I tried to keep the fact I was refereeing a secret although inevitably I did let it slip to a few people, most notably to Paul Stacey who masterminded the production of the superb TalkBloodBowl shirts. Brian St. James, Chief Referee at the first Blood Bowl, assured me it was an easy job and that I'd have a fun time doing it and this went a long way towards easing the fears I'd had.

Being taken out on the night before the event for a delightful meal with Jervis, Jake, Andy and a number of other 'distinguished guests' was a superb surprise and a great way to start the weekend. As well as discussing the forthcoming event, we also chatted about numerous other ideas and projects, all of which sound extremely exciting – my silence was bought with a number of free drinks however, so don't bother trying to get any secrets out of me! The tournament began with a quick introduction of the NAF staff members, myself included, and my announcement that I'd be their Chief Ref for the weekend predictably drew a mixture of groans and jeers from the waiting players. Pretty much what I expected knowing the crowd from TalkBloodBowl! With that, the first game began and the tournament was underway. It was good to have a chance to wander around the hall at my leisure, talking to friends and checking out some of the great teams on display. Although there were a greater number of rules queries than I had expected, the vast majority were fairly straightforward rule clarifications and everyone accepted the decisions in good humour even if they were against their own team. Lunchtime revealed yet more perks of the job, with free drinks all weekend and the ability to jump the queue to get my much-needed Space Marine snack! Lunchtime was disrupted somewhat with a particularly troublesome issue raised by one of the players, although thankfully the issue was resolved to the

satisfaction of all concerned and it proved to be the only low point of the entire weekend. Game 2 began in earnest after lunch and the rest of the day seemed to fly by in a blur!

Sunday morning saw me start the second day with an epic hangover, courtesy of Bugman's and Rock City, and I wasn't the only one who made full use of the free bottles of water Games Workshop provided. There were noticeably fewer rules queries from Game 4 onwards, probably because the pressure was off for the majority of players. This allowed me the opportunity to chat with Andy, Jake, Brian & the rest of the events team, and I also found the time for a quick 'behind-the-scenes' tour of the Warhammer World museum and a fascinating peek into parts of the main Studio. The end of Game 4 saw the line-up of teams eligible for the Best Painted award, and I was given the chance to peruse them at leisure, taking a huge number of pictures at the same time! The standard this year was phenomenal although the prize was rightfully won by Oriol Colls Hinesrosa's outstanding Lizardmen team (including his great Slann Head Coach!).

Game 6 saw Hans-Peter Earwaker and Cris Schmitt take their places in the final. Having met both guys before at other tourneys (and having been beaten by Hans-Peter) I knew the final was going to be a close-fought match, and the guys didn't disappoint. The match was simply one of the best games of Blood Bowl I've watched, and had everything from desperate long passes, vicious blocking wars and the obligatory star blitzer dying on a Go-For-It roll! This was another point where my role as Ref paid dividends; while the rest of the crowd watched via Cabalvision link in Bugman's I was up there on the stage watching it in person! Eventually, after a last gasp Touchdown in extra time, Hans-Peter won the match and claimed the title for this year.

Overall I had an excellent time at this year's Blood Bowl tournament. Not only did it give me plenty of time to catch up with the friends I've made on the tournament scene it gave me the chance to see the tournament from a perspective that few others will ever see. Although I did occasionally miss playing, being Chief Referee for such a prestigious event was a 'once-in-a-lifetime' opportunity and I'm very pleased I was given the chance to do it.

### **Authors**

*Marc Harrington and Gerwyn Walters participated in the Blood Bowl. Marc and Gerwyn are some of the Hobby Specialists you'll talk to on the phone if you ring GW Direct. Both are currently playing in the BBB head Office league being run by Jervis. Dave Candlish was Head Ref.*

### **Further Information**

*Tickets for this years show are expected to sell out fast as in previous years. Give UK Direct Sales guys a call to find out when they go on sale.*

### **More BB**

*Turn to page 16 for fouling advice*

### **Website**

*[www.BloodBowl.com](http://www.BloodBowl.com)*