

Special Plays

By Chet Zeshonski

Blood Bowl coaches are always looking for new and innovative ways to win the next match. (OK, so "kick da udder guy real 'ard!" isn't really "new"...in fact, it's not very "innovative," either!) When they're not busy looking for new recruits or beating some sense into the team's Big Guy, they can often be found devising their newest Special Plays.

The rules in this section allow you to use Special Plays – also known as "gadget plays," "trick plays," or "dose dang annoying tings dose gits keep tryin'!" – in your matches. Special Plays may not always work, but when they do, they can often prove to be a turning point in a drive, or even a match!



USING SPECIAL PLAYS

The Special Plays listed below constitute a team's "Playbook." Before any game, a coach should select one Special Play and write it on the back of his team roster, a sandwich wrapper, whatever! Keep the play hidden from your opponent until the time comes to use it. Note that a coach may select only one Special Play per match.

Special Plays are tied to a team's training. To reflect this, a coach who wishes to use a Special Play must first turn in a Team Re-roll at the indicated time. This means that if you don't have a Team Re-roll handy this turn, either because you've used one already or have no more left for the half, then you cannot attempt your Special Play.

After turning in the Team Re-roll and declaring your Special Play, roll a d6. If you roll a 4 or more, then the Special Play works as described. If you roll a 3 or less, however, then your players haven't quite mastered the concept, and the Special Play fails entirely.

A Special Play may be attempted only once per match whether it works or not. Failure to execute a Special Play is not a turnover – although you might suffer one later in the turn if you were counting on the Special Play to work!

Finally, note that Big Guys can't use Team Re-rolls, so they can't use Special Plays, either!

★ ★ ★ Did you know...

Historians have long debated the origins of the "Special Play," but most agree that the specialized trainings began under Mite Marsh, head coach of the Lothlorien Rams. One day, as the story goes, Marsh surveyed his training camp roster and realized that the Rams players were both talented and smart – in fact, they were more athletic and intelligent than any team they had faced the previous season. Looking for an edge, Marsh decided that he would attempt to teach his charges a few advanced plays that would help put them over the top in the coming year.

Coach Marsh was daring and innovative, and his plays worked wonderfully. Before long, every head coach was out running players through the proverbial mill in an attempt to catch up to the Wood Elf coach's ingenuity. Marsh himself simply came up with more and more plays – in fact, the Rams have so many plays in their playbook that most of them have never made it into a game!

THE PLAYS

The available Special Plays and their descriptions appear below. Any team can use any of these Special Plays, and they work on a roll of 4 or more as described above.

Hide The Ball

Declare this Special Play just before taking an action with a player. The player pretends to throw the ball to a team-mate but holds on to it instead. For the rest of the turn, he does not have to make a dodge roll to leave a Tackle Zone.

Option Play

Declare this Special Play just before taking an action with one of your players. The player may take a Pass or Hand-off action, even if you have already taken such an action this turn (i.e., you may take a second Pass or Hand-off action this turn).

Blitzkrieg

Declare this Special Play just before taking an action with one of your players. The player may take a Blitz action, even if you have already taken such an action this turn (i.e., you may take a second Blitz action this turn).

Spike

Declare this Special Play just before taking a Foul action. Your player dives head-first at the victim, who is automatically injured (i.e., you do not have to make an armor roll for him). Your opponent must make an armor roll for your player, however. There is no Turnover unless the referee ejects the fouler, but the blatancy of this Special Play allows your opponent to add +1 to the Ref Roll to spot the foul.

Razzle Dazzle

Declare this Special Play at the beginning of your team turn. You have come up with a play so absolutely stunning we can't even begin to describe it! In fact, it's so stunning that the opposing team misses its next team turn as it gapes in awe! If you succeed at this Special Play, your opponent must move his turn marker one space ahead without doing anything else next turn. If you fail this Special Play, however, then the failure is so spectacular that your team suffers an automatic Turnover!

RACE-SPECIFIC SPECIAL PLAYS

It has to be said that the majority of Blood Bowl players were not quite as good or intelligent as the legendary Rams, so most of them were less than thrilled with the extra time spent working on Special Plays in practice. Such plays were very popular with coaches and fans alike almost from the onset, however, and it wasn't long before teams around the Old World were experimenting with new and crazy plays in an effort to one-up the next opponent.

While Special Plays like "Blitzkrieg" and the "Option Play" have become tactical staples of Blood Bowl, it has to be said that racial tendencies frequently dictate the direction of Special Play experimentation. Most teams play to their own strengths in practice rather than branch out. High Elf coaches are not about to waste valuable practice time mucking around with messy, blocking-heavy plays, for example, while Goblin coaches – well, let's just say even your typical Goblin coach is smart enough to realize that no amount of practice time is going to make his team pull off any spectacular acrobatics.

Accordingly, most teams are capable of pulling off a specialist play or two that cater to their, erm, "unique" abilities. The most popular variants appear below, though there are undoubtedly more being practiced in secret as you read this!

Each Special Play listed here includes the race that popularized the play. A coach of such a team is allowed to choose this play to use during a match, and it will work on a roll of 4 or more as described above. Coaches of other races are allowed to select a play used by another race, but a lack of aptitude means they will need to roll a 6 instead of the usual 4 or more to make the play work.

**Whoooooops! (Orc)**

Orcs are a brutal race, and most Orc teams reflect this. This advantage is augmented, of course, by their propensity for covert cheating!

Declare this Special Play at the start of your team turn. Pick an opposing player who is standing in the Tackle Zone of one of your players. Your player sneakily trips the opposing player while the ref's attention is diverted. Place the opposing player prone and make an armor roll to see if he is injured using the normal rules. Your player may still take an action during this turn.

Sewer Map (Skaven)

Skaven have a well-deserved reputation for leaving no stone unturned (or sewer unsearched!) in their never-ending scramble for an advantage during a Blood Bowl match.

Declare this Special Play at any time during your own team turn. You have spent all week reviewing the plans for the sewer that runs beneath the stadium, and that knowledge pays off. You may move one player from your Reserves box to any empty square on the pitch. The player may not take an action on the turn he appears.

Training Regimen (Dark Elf)

Dark Elves train long and hard in the martial arts, and this dedication translates well to the pitch.

Declare this Special Play just before taking an action with a player. That player receives ST+1 or AG+1 (your choice) for the rest of this drive.

Intensive Training (Human)

Human teams are jacks-of-all-trades. Their special plays focus on keeping all options open, all the time!

Declare this Special Play just before taking an action with one of your players. The player may use any normal skill you choose for the rest of this drive (i.e., a Lineman may take any General skill, a Blitzzer may take any Strength or General Skill, etc.).

Heroic Effort (Dwarf)

Dwarfs have a stubborn knack of refusing to die – and, of course, refusing to take “no” for an answer!

Declare this Special Play just after you have rolled a Block. You may convert the result to “opponent knocked over,” no matter what was rolled on the dice or how many dice you rolled.

**I'll Get You! (High Elf)**

Taunting has long been a staple of pitch life, but the haughty High Elves have elevated this frequently crude behavior into art.

Declare this Special Play at the start of your team turn. One of your standing players has been winding up a (standing) adjacent opponent, who is so incensed that he blocks your player. Work out the block normally, but as this is illegal, the referee sends the opposing player off for the rest of the match! Note that if your player falls down as a result of the block, you suffer a turnover as normal.

Low Blow (Goblin)

Being very small, Goblins will go to great lengths to even up the odds on the field – even (or especially) if it gives them an excuse to cheat!

Declare this Special Play just before making a block (and only a block, not a Multiple Block, Secret Weapon attack, etc.) with one of your players. He kicks the opposing player very hard right where it hurts, and counts as having double Strength for the block.

Custard Pie (Halfling)

Halflings have a well-deserved reputation for culinary prowess. They often integrate this legendary ability into their cookbooks – err, “playbooks”!

Declare this Special Play just before taking an action with a player. The player thrusts a cleverly concealed custard pie into the face of an opposing player in an adjacent square. The flabbergasted opponent loses his Tackle Zone for the rest of the turn, and your player may proceed with his action as normal.

The Grasshopper (Wood Elf)

Wood Elf teams are the most graceful of all competitors on the pitch, and their very special plays have dazzled fans and foes alike ever since Coach Marsh first introduced his brilliant tactics to the Blood Bowl world.

Declare this Special Play at the beginning of your team turn. All of your players gain the Leap skill for this turn.

Bloodlust (Chaos)

To speak bluntly, Chaos teams don't really "practice" very much. Their specialized tactics are little more than simple extensions of their crazy nature – though it has to be said that such tactics can be devastatingly effective!

Declare this Special Play at the beginning of your team turn. The players on your team have whipped themselves into a psychotic frenzy - in fact, they **are** frenzied! Each player on the team gains the Frenzy trait for this turn.

Crack the Whip (Chaos Dwarf)

Chaos Dwarfs are very difficult taskmasters – and that's just the players! Chaos Dwarf coaches long ago learned that players can do just about anything with the proper, erm, "motivation"!

Declare this Special Play just before taking an action with one of your players. The player may take two actions this turn. These actions must be taken one right after another.

The Wall (Undead)

Undead are not the best offensive team out there, but wily Necromancers long ago learned how to take advantage of the team's strengths to make definite, deadly defensive stands.

Declare this Special Play at the end of your team turn (i.e., you may not take any further action after declaring this Special Play). Your players go into a stiff defensive posture - which is pretty easy, given that they're dead! For the next opposing team turn, treat all of your players as if they have the Stand Firm trait.

Get 'Em, Lads! (Norse)

Not all Norse players are raving lunatics – it just seems that way! Actually, most Norse have learned both how to harness their rage and how to loose it at an advantageous moment.

Declare this Special Play at the start of your team turn. Your team has been practicing hard at "getting its game face on." You may add +1 ST for every player on your team this turn.

The Old Switcheroo (Amazon)

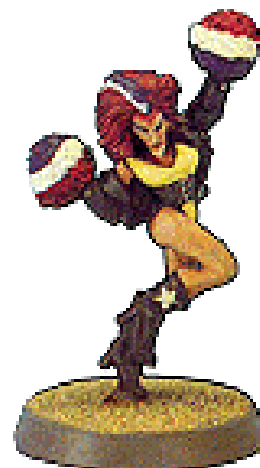
In the jungles of Lustria, Amazon warriors practice stealth and subterfuge as they hunt their prey. These camouflaging tactics are especially useful on the field of Nuffle, and can often catch an unsuspecting opponent unaware.

Declare this Special Play at the start of your team turn. Two of your players have cunningly swapped jerseys, and only now do they reveal themselves! You may switch the positions of any two players on the field. Note that the players may assume a new state (standing, prone, etc.) as a result of the move, and that the ball will always stay in its original square. If you switch a prone Catcher with a ball-handling Blitzer, for example, then the Catcher will now be standing in the Blitzer's old square with the ball, while the Blitzer will be prone in the Catcher's old square.

Sotek's Hammer (Lizardman)

Lizardman coaches are often forced to work overtime to mesh the actions of plodding Saurus and darting Skinks. On occasion, this effort pays off handsomely, allowing them to unleash a devastating harmony of destruction on the unwary!

Declare this Special Play just before taking an action with one of your players. Your players have been coordinating this effort all week, and only now do they sock it to their opponents! You may block two players just as if the blocking player has the Multiple Block skill. Furthermore, all assisting players are allowed to add their full ST scores to the block rather than +1 for each player!



CUSTOM PLAYS

Of course, the Special Plays listed in this article represent only the tip of a very large iceberg. Many of them were pulled from the old Third Edition cards, but quite a few are newer creations. As you might guess, then, there's no reason you can't go out there and design your own such plays! Just be sure to get the permission of your opponent before the game.

If you have a Special Play that would make a great addition to this system, why not write to us and clue us in? Just remember to design something that can be used by all teams, rather than one in particular. To give an example, this was my first shot at a Special Play for the Lizardman team:

The Slingshot (Lizardman)

Declare this Special Play just before taking an action with a Saurus. The Saurus runs up to a nearby Skink and slings him into the air with the help of another Saurus. You may pass the Skink just as if the first Saurus has the Throw Team-Mate racial characteristic, but only if there is another Saurus also standing next to the Skink to lend an assist (so this is not an action for the second Saurus).

Looks keen, right? A pair of Saurus hurls a Skink into the air and sends him flying. It seems natural enough: Skinks are Stunty and Lizardmen don't have a normal Throw Team-Mate option.

Unfortunately, I had no way to "transfer" the rules to another team without some very clumsy exceptions, so I had to start from scratch. The result is Sotek's Hammer, which captures the idea of "cooperation" without making the Special Play racially restrictive.

Finally, you can customize the Special Play rules to fit the flavor of your league. If your coaches really like this sort of thing, for example, you could waive the one-per-game rule and allow a coach to take one Special Play per half. Or maybe you'd like to accentuate the extra coaching that occurs in the play-offs, so you allow each coach to choose two Special Plays in a semi-final game and three in a tournament final. Perhaps your coaches are even crazy enough to insist on an open system wherein you can run a Special Play every turn! Just remember that you'll need to make a few concessions – a game in which every team tried to run Razzle Dazzle at every opportunity would quickly get out of hand!