

OFF THE PITCH

Featuring

THE CARNIVAL OF PAIN!!!

Welcome Blood Bowl fans to another installment of Off the Pitch with your favorite sports correspondent, Rob Fostas. As always Off the Pitch will scour the Old World to bring you the kind of history and background of a Blood Bowl squad that you just can't get anywhere else. My apologies to all of my fans as this installment sees an all new low for Off the Pitch as this edition focuses on a wretched little pack of goblins. I could be giving you great tales of illustrious teams such as Da 40 Miners or the Shamrock Shakes, but no I am telling the tale of a pack of stunty criminals. Let this be a lesson to be learned fans, don't get caught shagging the boss's wife during the Festival of Sigmar office party. You might just spend the next few weeks slogging through sewers and back alleys doing interviews with trolls as a penance.

I thought long and hard about writing this article in very small words and including lots of pictures to cater to any goblin readers out there but then realized goblin readers is a complete oxymoron. So my loyal readers, who can actually read, I have provided a rather amusing look at a goblin squad that has toured the blood bowl circuit for just over a year now. Originally known as the Carnival of Pain, they have skulked through the tournament scene under a variety of names for reasons I will get to later in the article. Like so many Blood Bowl franchises, if a hard look is put to them you can find all manner of corruption, questionable ethics and outright illegal activities. This reporter found all of that in spades when researching these green skinned stunty menaces.

The Carnival of Pain seems to have originated as a "unit" within the "army" of orcish warlord Ulrot Khen. The summer before last saw Ulrot's army camped outside the gates of the dwarvish city of Khar-Dhuzum. Unable to breach the tunnel networks leading into the city, Ulrot thought to besiege the dwarves from the surface entrance in a mountainous valley. It's questionable whether the orcs thought to coordinate the siege to include the underground network as the dwarves didn't seem very put out by the army camped outside their doorstep. After several weeks of the siege accomplishing nothing, and the dwarves simply using the massed orcs and goblins as occasional target practice, morale amongst the green skins was fairly low.

Enter Fat Willee, an obscenely obese goblin who happens to be missing his right eye, who commanded a mix bag of goblin fodder troops, trolls, and various other insane goblin war creations. Willee was rather smart for a goblin and recognized that Ulrot looked at his troops as pin cushions to absorb incoming fire from the dwarves as the orc shock troops made their assault if an when the gates were ever breached. It is my understanding from interviews conducted that Willee and a number of other goblins were none too happy about this prospect. Having a gang of trolls that were all fiercely loyal to him, Fat Willee staged a late night murder spree. He and his goblin cronies slit throats and stabbed backs until they had cut a path out of the camp while the rest of the army slept. Taking with them the trolls as a rear guard and as pack animals he was able to steal quite a haul in supplies as well as all the various crazy goblin war machines. Knowing that Ulrot would be out for blood when he

awoke, they snuck down out of the Worlds Edge mountains in to the Empire proper. The gamble seemed to work as Ulrot either didn't want to leave the dwarves an opening at his back or he didn't want to be seen as bringing an invading army into the Empire. Whichever was the reason, Ulrot kept his force in the pass and never pursued Willee and his gang of treacherous defectors.

The next few months were hard for this reporter to find anything concrete to link to the Willee and his gang though I was able to find numerous reports of attempted brigandry by goblinoids throughout various areas of the eastern Empire. Almost all of these were inept at best and put down quickly by either militia forces or proper Empire troops. It seems Willee's crew had fallen on rather hard times. Unable to return to the mountains for fear of Ulrot's wrath and being hunted by Empire soldiers, it was desperate straits for them. In interviews with One Eyed Billee, I learned that this is when Willee came up with the concept of posing as a touring goblin circus. According to Billee "Willee figured if wees gave dem hoomans someding to laff at maybe dey'd quit tryin to kill us". And so was born the Carnival of Pain.

The Carnival began touring the Empire providing a combination freak show and display of a number of creative ways to nearly kill goblins, usually including explosives, chainsaws and trolls. Though the circus was pretty much a failure it did succeed in allowing them to move about without towns arming themselves at the first sight of them. The circus itself provided very little income to the gang's coffers but the trade in illicit drugs the goblins brewed to various nefarious characters in each town became Willee's primary income stream. Enough so that he was actually able to purchase tents, wagons and rather garish outfits for the performers.

The circus was not limited in its criminal enterprises to just the sale of goblin concoctions. Willee had aspirations of creating a crew of high end burglars to pilfer the wealthy in the towns and cities they passed through. It wouldn't be fair to say the crew never got off the ground, though as a team of cat burglars they utterly failed. This reporter found numerous constabulary reports of property damage filed by citizens in cities as far apart as Marienburg and Kislev. In each case, the citizen claimed to have the manors of their estates damaged by goblins that had flown over the walls to come crashing against their homes. Even in the cases where there was a corpse to provide proof of the deed the cases were brushed off as being wild stories. I think it is readily apparent that Willee had the trolls trying to throw goblins through the upper story windows of these manors to rob them. One Eyed Billee refused to comment on this escapade other than to say that it was only goblins that had been flying through the air, its seems bribe money had flown as well to keep the local watch from pursuing any investigations into the circus.

With the cat burglary scheme failing and the coffers being run dry for bribes it seemed the circus would be bankrupt any day. The circus needed a new scheme to keep things afloat and if found with the meeting of Willee and a shady character named Montfalcon. Wanted by the Empire for a number of confidence games and underworld activities, Montfalcon was a charlatan and ex blood bowl coach of disreputable character. He and Fat Willee hit it off instantly. Montfalcon provided the circus with something it had been sorely lacking, a human front man for all its underhanded dealings as well as some brains for their schemes.

Montfalcon convinced Willee that he needed to turn the circus into a Blood Bowl team. "It wasn't hard to fill the greedy lil git's head with dreams of all the gold that could be made playing to packed stadiums," Montalcon said to this reporter. "The only problem we had was we were both broke and didn't have any cash to buy gear."

To get that cash Montfalcon hatched a plan that saw the circus setting up camp in the wilds near the troll moors in the north of the Empire. At that time the Empire was still paying substantial bounties for troll ears as proof that one had been slain. Montfalcon presented himself as a bounty hunter there to hunt trolls for the Empire. And conveniently the circus had a number of trolls amongst its residents.

“It took some convincing to get the big brutes to let us snip a few ears apiece but the darn things grow back right? I mean seriously, lot of fuss over nothing if you ask me. In the end though Willee got em in line and I got the ears.”

Though it would cause quite a few issues with Empire tax collectors later, Montfalcon was able to convert the troll ears into the cash needed to outfit a group of the circus performers to play blood bowl. The remaining cash they used to pay the entry fee into the renowned Underworld Cup as well as to hire the psychotic goblin star Fungus the Loon to give the squad a shred of legitimacy. Despite the hiring of the mercenary hall of fame fanatic, Willee and Montfalcon placed massive bets against their own team in the hopes of throwing the games and making out like bandits.

Their plan got off to an excellent start as the first match they drew turned out to be a bloodthirsty pack of Chaos Dwarves and their minotaur captain. Even better for the treacherous pair, both Fungus and their own fanatic managed to crash into each other in the opening moments of the match, sending both off to the ministrations of the team witch doctor, err apothecary. The Carnival went down in flames only to see their next draw be a team of drunken dwarves. Despite all attempts to coach them into their own deaths, the goblins somehow managed to push the dwarves to the brink. The match ended in a draw thanks to last second heroics from the dwarves. Though it wasn't a win, the tie gave the gits a swell of confidence and they went on to defeat their next two opponents to earn a spot in the championship match. Against all sanity the wretched little stunties pummeled much of their wood elven opponents into the turf to convincingly take the match. This earned them not only the Stunty Cup but also the prize of Tournament Champions. This reporter personally spoke with representatives from members of Nurgle, Khorne and Slann cults and was assured that not even one of the nine hells had frozen over after this occurrence. Well the fifth hell Asteloth was frozen, but its always that way so it didn't count.

Despite the instant fame and publicity that came from a goblin squad winning a tournament, Willee and Montfalcon were in even worse straits. The prize money garnered from the taking the title didn't come close to covering the numerous bets the pair had made for the Carnival to lose badly. Bookies and their muscle came calling and the Carnival beat a hasty retreat up the tunnels back to the surface. The one upside was a flood of recruits that began pouring in from other goblin teams. Having heard of a goblin team that could actually win, droves of gobbos deserted the teams they had been playing for and swelled the ranks of the Carnival. It finally reached a point where the Carnival could have fielded four to five times if it had been necessary which gave them a vast pool of replacements to draw on as numerous goblins fell in each match.

Having again used their scheme of the troll ear bounty, Willee and Montfalcon were able to cover the bookies and go back to planning their next foray on to the Blood Bowl pitch. Unfortunately paying off the gambling debts had left the treasury flat broke with no funds to pay a tournament entry fee. The solution was the Brew City Blood Bath. The tournament organizers had allowed a Nurgle team entry but due to the spread of Nurgle's Rot, a human tomb fell apart and was unable to take the field. The Carnival of Pain was allowed to take their place as a proxy to fill out the necessary number of

teams but would be unable to earn any of the prize money. This suited the Carnival just fine as their owner and coach had learned their lesson from Underworld. This time they made bets for the team to win and the team obliged. Finishing the five game set with more than twenty casualties inflicted on their opponents, the Carnival finished with a three win, two loss record. Willee and Montfalcon were able to snatch up on their winning bets and the team was officially solvent for the first time.

Now feeling like a real Blood Bowl team, the goblin horde rolled into the Bash 4 Cash and came away with a 2-1 record and 2nd place overall for the tournament. Unfortunately for the Carnival their last match they faced a brute squad of Orcs containing several relatives of the warlord Ulrot. They remembered the goblin treachery during the siege and exacted a punishing revenge. Taking their winnings and limping out of town the Carnival headed off to the fabled Zlurpee Bowl, possibly the greatest tournament anywhere in the Old World. Right behind them were numerous Orcish bounty hunters seeking the price Ulrot had put on Fat Willee's head.

As a Blood Bowl fan, if you have never attended the Zlurpee Bowl then you are simply a rank amateur. The festivities leading up to the tournament rival anything seen in the Old World and the tournament itself features the finest teams from across the land. Unfortunately the Carnival of Pain wouldn't be able to revel in the fun just yet. On their journey south through the Empire trying to stay ahead of the bounty hunters the Carnival found itself beset by a battalion of Empire troops escorting a group of tax collectors. It seems they had caught wind of the goblin Blood Bowl owner who had been cutting off his own troll's ears to turn in for the Empire bounties. They and their soldiers were ready to hang Fat Willee from the rack to pay for his crimes. With some quick thinking Montfalcon pointed out that Fat Willee was in fact dead, having fallen to the Orc bounty hunters that had been scouring the land. This wasn't the Carnival of Pain the soldiers had found but Swea Pee's Extreme Wrasslers, an up and coming young goblin team on its way to Zlurpee Bowl to find fame and fortune. He then dragged forward a disgustingly obese goblin who happened to be missing an eye and introduced as One Eyed Billee the owner of SPEW. If they wanted their misappropriated funds, Montfalcon went on to add, they would have to find the Orc bounty hunters that had waylaid and killed poor Fat Willee. Properly mollified and channeling their anger on to the orcs, the tax collectors sped to the north with their troops in tow.

Having dodged the authorities for a time, this began the Carnival's habit of changing their team name on a regular basis to keep down their notoriety. That and constantly keeping a look out for Empire tax collectors and Ulrot's hit squads.

So the heroes of our tale finally reached the Zlurpee Bowl. Let me amend that. The backstabbing, lying, little cheats slunk into the Zlurpee Bowl tournament grounds looking over their shoulders the whole way.

Zlurpee got underway and the Carnival, now known as SPEW, came out of the gates swinging as they hammered an Underworld Creeper team for 8 casualties on their way to a round one victory. Don't feel bad for those Creepers though as they went on to place overall which the Carnival never managed to do. Their success was short lived though as SPEW went on to draw their next five consecutive games, finishing the Zlurpee Bowl with one win and five ties. Though they did play for the Stunty Cup in the final round they were unable to secure a victory against the halfings and watched their opponent crowned in their stead. The goblins did manage to garner the prize for Most Casualties, injuring a staggering 27 opponents in the 6 games played. This also saw the first

tournament they managed to finish undefeated. I must honestly admit that it offends my sensibilities to have to state that this pack of wretches managed not to lose a match.

Trying to dodge all the various parties trying to take a piece of their collective hides kept the Carnival busy for the remainder of the summer and into early fall. The Carnival didn't make a tournament appearance again until they came out of hiding to participate in the Ghouls Night Out. Held in the northern wastes, the tourney was a general collection of all the various evil races coming together for a festival of bloodshed and mayhem. The representatives of the Amazons in attendance showed they could fit right in with everyone else by causing just as much bloodshed and mayhem as all the others.

The Carnival's return turned out to be a triumphant return as the goblins smashed, slashed and bombed their way through the opposition to finish with a stunning three wins and one draw for a second tournament champion title as well as a second undefeated tourney. The tourney also saw them sporting new uniforms as Montfalcon and Billee finally coughed up the funds from the treasury to put some real gear on the evil little gits.

All of their success finally went to their heads when the gobs headed back underground to return to the Underworld Cup. Returning to defend their title, they walked into a tourney with a target painted on their foreheads. Again drawing a team of Chaos Dwarves in round one they fought a vicious battle that ended in a draw. That may have been the high point of that day as the Chaos Dwarves went on to be crowned champion while the gobs limped away with a record of one win, two ties and a loss. The Carnival again could only muster a draw when faced with a Halfling opponent and took a beating from the revamped squad of wood elves they had hammered so hard the year before. The only highlight being a chance to defeat another squad of orcs which gave them the victory they needed to retain the Stunty Cup crown.

Since Underworld the rumors have been flying fast and furious about the future of the Carnival of Pain. "Getting too damn hard to outrun all these damn bounty hunters on our tails I say," Montfalcon was quoted as saying as he left the Underworld stadium, "Time to get the hell outa dodge if you ask me." One Eyed Billee, when asked by this reporter if the team was going underground again replied "undagrownd? Just came up, why go back?" Whether officially retired with their spoils or just hiding out, reliable sources state both Billee and Montfalcon were seen boarding a ship for Armorica with many of the Carnival team members.

And that brings the tale of the Carnival of Pain to a close. This would normally be where I would give a quick run down of the various key players on the team but as the Carnival tends to see most of its players killed or maimed on a regular basis I decided that it was just beyond me to try to figure out just who was officially on the squad on any given time. I would also normally give a quick moment to those past players that have fallen on the pitch but again, with how many goblins die in a single match I could write until my fingers bleed and still not list them all. And lastly, my apologies to you all for the lack of artwork in this edition's article. Though several attempts were made to get the team together for photos, it seems that trolls don't react well to flash photography. I simply gave up after the third photographer went flying in several directions at once.

So watch for the next edition of Off the Pitch where I will bringing you in depth background on another of your favorite Blood Bowl teams. For the love of Sigmar I hope to be out of the squig house and back on to reporting about real teams.