

HALFLING SECRETS (LRB 5.0)

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The new order is here. You might question whether a listed Tier 3 team has a reasonable chance of winning, but all you have to do is play Halflings. Some players will not consider that you could put up a good show, much less even have a remote chance of winning. Granted, each team has its strengths and weaknesses, but all teams are created equal when they are rolling well or poorly. The magic is in your ability to take your Halfling team to the fight: learn your Strengths, and take advantage of the Weaknesses of your opponent.

Starting Lineup

The hardest decision a Coach has to make is his Starting Lineup. I will try to help in making it easy for you to decide what to take. In LRB 5 (and 5++), you gather inducements based on the difference in Team Value (referred to as TV). This is very important, as the gold you have in your treasury is not factored in. If you start your team at less than 1 million TV (read as TV 100 by some, or TV 1000 by others, usually depending on the software used), then you may start the first game of your league with inducements. The main one will be the Master Chef, which you can hire for a mere 100,000 GP for one game, while non-Halfling coaches pay 300,000 GP -- your Primary inducement will be the Master Chef.

Let's look at a typical team build:

13 Halflings (30,000 GP ea.):	390,000 GP
2 Treemen (120,000 GP ea.):	240,000 GP
Apothecary (50,000 GP):	50,000 GP
4 Fan Factor (10,000 GP ea.):	40,000 GP
3 Re-Rolls (60,000 GP ea.):	180,000 GP
Enough unspent gold to induce a Master Chef:	100,000 GP
TOTAL	1 Million GP

Here are the problems I have with that build:

Apothecary: You don't need a tree surgeon right off -- your Treemen have an AV (armor value) of 10. "What if I get fouled?" you might ask. That is your fault for totally abandoning your treeman and allowing your opponent to get enough players on you with tackle zones to make a difference. "But he ganged up on me and knocked me down and gets a ton of tackle zones!" You do not HAVE to use Stand Firm -- let him push you! If he used **Block** on a 'both down,' you are in a world of hurt ... but he still has to make even more rolls and can get tossed on a foul. Besides, you only have a slim chance of getting hurt even if he breaks your armor. YOU DO NOT NEED A TREE SURGEON! And of course, Halflings are cheap, so let them die. Once your team gets skilled and you have some cash later in the season, then buy an apothecary (and you will have the extra cash).

Re-Rolls: You need as many as you can get, so buy four; later in the season, buy one or two more. YOU WILL USE THEM. By having more re-rolls, you will gladly burn them on things you might not have otherwise considered. Take Root with Loner, for example. "Darn, he's rooted... oh well what am I to do?" Burn a re-roll and move that Tree! Remember: one of things that will help is the Master Chef -- you have a chance of getting up to three more re-rolls. You also have a chance of gaining a re-roll during a kickoff. Do not be afraid to use a re-roll -- that is what they are there for. The more you have, the easier the decision.

Fan Factor: Fan Factor has little effect at the start of a season and/or in tournament play. It only increases your roll total during the FAME roll; that comes down to luck of the dice. If you have Fan Factor 7 and roll a 2, well, that is not so good. If you have Fan Factor 2 and roll a 12, you are doing okay. It is a roll of chance and as you win more games, you're Fan Factor will rise. Do not spend a lot of money here. You might also play in a league where Fan Factor starts off at 5 for free.

In summary: you do not have to get everything up front. It will come along as the season progresses.

I suggest something in line with this build:

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Skill Selection

The Halfling team is one of those that is strictly limited in skill selection. This makes selecting skills even more specialized. I will break this down into 4 sections: Halfling basic Agility skills, Halfling 'doubles' skills, Treeman basic Strength skills, and Treeman 'doubles' skills.

Halfling basic Agility skills: These are the skills that you want to get, in close to this order: three guys with **Sidestep** for your front line (adding a fourth or fifth later to replace injured players); next, get a guy with **Jump Up** (more later) -- this is your thrown or attack player; one guy with **Sprint** (with a second Sprinter later) as a positional threat; two players with **Diving Catch**; 1 player with **Catch**; then 2 players with **Diving Tackle** (these guys will hang with the Treeman and follow him around, preventing opposing players from running away from him. *“What about Sneaky Git?”* Yeah right, are you daft? **ONLY** get Sneaky Git after you get a 'doubles' roll and get **Dirty Player!** *“But why?”* One of the strengths of the Halfling team is their cost/numbers ratio. You do not care who gets tossed when you foul, so that make that foul good anywhere on the table. **BUT**, if you specialize a fouler, you will tend to focus on setting up a foul for him and using his skills, forgetting about any Halfling being able to foul (*“Darn, I was gonna foul that guy but Stinky is way over there...”*). Without Dirty Player, Sneaky Git is all but useless.

Halfling 'doubles' skills: The first and foremost skill for a Halfling team is **Hail Mary Pass**. **Diving Catch** is already there, so the Hail Mary Pass allows the Halflings to clear the ball to anywhere on the field at a 2+, and if you are lucky, a Diving Catch player is there and you can catch the ball. The second most important skill is **Dirty Player**. Fouling is your game: get one or more good foulers who need not rely on assistance to break armor. If you do have assistance, it will only help you in removing the victim. The next 'doubles' has got to be **Dauntless**. *“Are you nuts?”* Have you ever seen a big guy stay far enough away from a weak player with Dauntless? This guy is a target and has a bulls-eye on him, and usually from more than one source ... which is exactly what you want. The more guys on him, the less on your other players! Besides, it is so much fun when you declare a blitz on his best guy or big guy. The next 'doubles' is **Kick**, which is quite clear why (ball control for the kickoff ... and on your turn, throw a Halfling)

Treeman basic skills: The Treemen are granted the Strength skills and there is little choice for them. First and foremost: **Break Tackle** -- no question, no hesitation. This allows the Treeman to either move away on a blitz or to break a cage. **Juggernaut** is next in line, as it allows you to prevent a 'both down' while YOU are blitzing and turns it into a push. Do you need **Multiple Block** or **Guard**? Later ... they are

not as important as you might think. That leaves **Grab** and **Piling On** ... if you can get that many SPPs, you decide.

Treeman double skills: There is no guessing here -- **Block** for both! There are a host of good 'doubles' choices: **Dodge, Leader, Tackle, Pro, Strip Ball, Frenzy** (my preferred choice, but ...) ... but the best choice for a second 'doubles' by a Treeman is **Sure Feet**. *"Now you have lost your mind for sure!!!"* Hear me out! A Treeman only has a MV of 2, but he can 'go for it' twice for a total of 4. You would hate for that bad boy to take a fall during a blitz, and you do not have to burn a re-roll. Just think: a 4-turn touchdown for a Treeman -- Treeman with the ball, Halfling cage ... yeah, come get the ball away from my ST 6 guy!

The Guts of the Game

Defense:

Unless you are playing a Tackle team, you want to start on defense. The reasoning behind this is to slow your opponent down and make them use 5-6 turns to score. That will prevent them from scoring on you twice in the first half (granted, this does not work on some teams, but it will work on most). The quicker you pick up this idea and accept, it the faster the next part will become a reality.

Remember when I advised you to take your first 3 basic skills as **Sidestep**? These are your three starting linemen. Unless the opponents have **Block** and/or **Tackle**, they need a 'pow' to take you down. Sidestep allows you to plug holes and take up important empty squares early in the drive. If you feel adventurous (although I do not advise this), you can sidestep next to another opponent on the line and tie him up, forcing him to either dodge or hit you. With 3 linemen having Sidestep, you can bug the sticky buns out of your opponent by tying up five or six of his players with only three of yours. Your basic opponent needs three players to get three dice against you, and on average he should only get a 'pow' every four or five hits against a Dodger. (again, unless he has Block/Tackle, you should remain standing most of the time. (Unless you have my luck, LOL!)

YOU SHOULD NOT KICK WITH TREEMEN ON THE LINE. The Treemen are far too versatile to have them tie up players on the line. They make great space-takers to slow your opponent down even if they Take Root. They can also move to a 'Fling and chuck that bad boy down the field like a grilled sausage in the bleachers. Treemen move four; YES, four! They have MV 2 and two GFIs -- do not be afraid to use them. *"What if Barky falls down and goes boom?"* Never fear, he has AV 10, and the look on your opponent's face when you blitz four squares with a Tree will show they're now wondering what else you are going to pull out of your snack basket. Remember, Halflings make great bombs, so do not be afraid to chuck them at your opponent, even if a few fail. With a little luck, you can land on one of your opponent's models (even better if it is the ball carrier), taking them down before you bounce away to (hopefully) land safe and sound. Then throw some salt over your shoulder and crack that armor.

The BIGGEST part of Halfling defense is the screen. Dodge everyone away but your Sidesteppers, who are tying up players. (Do not dodge your Trees, of course, as they should be able to knock the player out of his uniform -- and yes, I know they need **Break Tackle** to dodge first) Create a screen and move back one or two squares a turn. Your opponent only gets one blitz a turn. So if he takes out a guy, plug the hole and adjust your screen. Blitz back with a tree. DO NOT BE AFRAID TO SUICIDE-BLITZ THE BALL CARRIER WITH A HALFLING! You will have re-rolls and with some luck, you can knock the ball carrier down. You dodge into a cage on a 3, so dodge in the screen and slap that pigskin like you mean it.

With average rolls, you will hold your opponent off for 5-6 turns. IF you get lucky, you can take the ball away and run like it was breakfast time. On defense, keep away from your opponent -- block his path and keep him guessing. Be aggressive with the Treemen; do not get discouraged if one or both root, as you can still chuck Halflings. Do not be afraid to do a last-minute blitz on the ball carrier to slow him down some more. Passive-aggressive is the name of the game on defense.

Offense:

On offense, it is far different than your D game. Flat-out aggression and calculated risk will win the game. This is the time that will either make you or break you; the dice will determine if you win or lose. Remember when I told you to kick the ball at the start of the game if you had the choice? Why might that be? Hmm ...

THE ONE-TURN TOUCHDOWN! You have an even chance to score in one turn. So if you go last, you can tie or win the game with average luck. Pick up the ball on 3+, hand off on 3+, fling on anything but a 1, land on 4+ (hopefully with a re-roll); you might or might not have a dodge to make (with a skill re-roll) on a 3+ ... then 0-2, Go For and SCORE!!!! Try it. you will like it. You do not have to score in one turn and sometimes you cannot (ball bounce, player too far away to hand off, etc.).

Fling a Halfling at your opponent's backfield. "*Without the ball on one guy standing there as they are separated, did you miss mid-day snack?*" YES I say, as 1 of 3 things will happen: 1) he splats; 2) he lands on another player; 3) he lands safe and sound... and 2 out of 3 ain't bad. If he survives the throw, he is now a potential catcher of the ball. Also, your opponent should have to blitz him instead of someone else, and hopefully making a bigger hole in his defense. Remember **Diving Catch**? It is your friend; get a player in position to use it.

Halflings have an Agility of 3, just like most everyone else. Use it ... pass, catch, handoff ... do not become afraid to use your player options just because you are Halflings -- ESPECIALLY in league play. Everyone you can get should try to get a completion to add to the MVP. If possible, do not wait for that guy to get the MVP. Get a completion first so you can instantly skill up when he gets the MVP.

Want to hold the ball? Give it to a Treeman and cage him with Halflings (surround him first in case he fails the 5-6 roll to take the handoff). Cook your opponent's head by marching the Tree (cage) down field four paces at a time, or two if you want to play it safe. Run a screen with your other Treeman. It will be downright humiliating if your Treeman gets a touchdown.

SUMMARY

The trick to Halflings is high-stakes offensive play, balanced by methodical defense. HAVE FUN, they are a great team to play, and they will teach you the art of playing Blood Bowl. In a good season with average, you should bust the 30% rate and with practice, you can get much closer to the 50% mark. Lady Luck is your curse and blessing. You have to make a few extra dice rolls and when they work you are the Buffet Gourmet, although when the dice are down, you are the lowly dishwasher. Keep your spirits high and belly full, and enjoy the game for what it is. PS: FOUL! It is your friend and a balancer against tougher opponents. (I don't give a rotten tomato if your league frowns on fouling, tell them to get over it and stop whining as you can barely break the Orcs' AV of 9, while your KO and Injured boxes are full.)