

Gridiron Gazette :

Norscans

1 Kaldezeit 2521
Issue #11

Strap on your snowshoes as we're heading to the great white north and reviewing the long and bloody history of the Norscans and the Giants who they frequently played alongside.

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The most Thrud-like . . .

- By Skellig Queem

At 7'8" tall and 350lbs in weight, you can be forgiven for thinking that Thrud the Barbarian is some kind of Ogre. Sadly for Thrud, he lacks the mental agility that an Ogre enjoys!

Norscan society breeds a hardy folk. Life can be tough in the icy north, especially when you insist on wearing little more than yhetee underpants and helmets with suspiciously over-compensating horns on. The people of Norsca, already a society given to drink and wanton violence with a long history of coastal raiding, took to Blood Bowl like it was second nature. When the NAF finally settled on their divisional structure, the Norse made up 4 of the 40 teams present, arguably an over representation. They lack the glitz and glamour of other teams, playing a simple but brutal game as perfectly befits them.



Within this context many Norse teams have risen and fallen, we'll chart a number of them in this issue. However, the Norse produced one player who is worthy of a special mention. From the ranks of men (and women . . .

sorry Amazons) no matter what their origin, none compares to Norsca's favourite son. Even the Mighty Zug, human wrecking ball that he is, pales in the shadow of Thrud the Barbarian!

Thrud has not taken to the pitch for a number of years, indeed his whereabouts are quite unknown. The last sighting of him was in 2502 when he entered and won McMurty's Annual Hamster Eating Challenge. Great were the lamentations of the hamster population that day as the appetite of one man added them to the endangered species list.

Thrud was once described as having the strength of 20 men and the speed of a panther, he was the perfect physical human specimen. Alas the same commentator (bravely) added he had the brain of a garden snail, and it was this lack of smarts that in part made Thrud so popular with the fans. He had his own cult following in their "Thrud's Thrans" T-Shirts and replica horned helmets cheering him on. They liked nothing better than when Thrud got confused mid-game and switched sides, decimating both friend and foe alike. Only the most desperate coach would hire Thrud as he could, and frequently did, do more harm than good.

The Blood Bowling authorities in Albion and Lustria once tried to ban him from the game, claiming he was a weapon of mass destruction. The auld world authorities on the other hand feared the Thrud Thrans reaction (they could be every bit as unpredictable and violent) and so vetoed the ban. However, Thrud was to eventually vanish all of his own accord - nobody knows where or why. Reports of sightings persist on the south coast of Albion, but this is most likely little more than rumour.

The Blood Bowling world awaits, can Norsca produce another Thrud?

Remember the Cragspiders

There are lots of measuring sticks you can use to decide which is the greatest Blood Bowl team ever. One of them is to consider which teams have won the most majors. When you do this it can yield some surprising results. The top 3 will shock nobody . . . but 4th place however is a different story . . .

1st Reikland Reavers (26)

2nd Chaos All-Stars (18)

3rd Gouged Eye (16)

4th Arctic Cragspiders (13)

Everyone has heard of the Cragspiders, but few people will have realised just how good a cup team they have been for such an extended period.

They are a very unassuming outfit - very few big stars, no garlanded coaches and as they have been in decline since the mid-2480s, it's easy to forget how successful a team they were. The Cragspiders have relied on coordinated brutality through teamwork. It was unusual when they signed Chaos Warrior Wormhowl Greyscar for a number of seasons, normally they relied on their tribal resources rather than feeling the need to bring outside talent in.

Their real success came in in the Whiteskull Cup / Chaos Cup where they won it 4 times in the 2410s and again in the 2430s. Even later on they managed 2 wins in each of the 2470s and 2480s. Despite a Blood Bowl win in 2472, their real specialty were the shorter cup competitions where they could keep a team fit long enough to compete.

Their other notable accomplishment was to break the NAF decapitation record. Their new record for noggin' lopping is a ridiculous 26 after a gore-heavy match against the many headed Magralath Mutants (those 26 heads were ripped off just the Mutants starting 11 players!).

The once mighty Cragspiders, Blood Bowling greats fallen on hard times.

Management

The Valkyries Head Coach for most of their golden period from the '60's through to the early 90's was the legendary tactician Mad Jake McDeath. The grand old man of Norscan Blood Bowl, he was to shape the playing and managerial career of his eventual replacement.

Coaching the newly reformed Rampagers, McDeath had arranged what should have been a training game against the Moot Mighties. However, the Rampagers found themselves 5-0 at half time and Mad Jake got into 'one of those' rages he kept for special occasions. Sadly, this was one rage too many as mid-scream he dropped quite dead!

The Rampagers needed someone of the same ilk in charge. Answering the call, retired Blitzter 'Axeface' Manglesson entered management for the first time and soon stamped his own bloody brand on the game.

Trophy Cabinet

Blood Bowl (2463, 2474)

Dungeon Bowl (2494)

Orcidas Team of the Year (2487)

NFC Championship (2463, 2466, 2474, 2487)

Spike Magazine team most likely to cause mayhem (2488, 2498)

Vynheim Valkyries – Rampaging!

- By Dolf Ungerhaagen

What happens when a group of bored fishermen with nothing else to do, take up a violent sport? They only go on to form one greatest teams in the history of the game!

Stadium

The Valkyries play at Longship stadium - a pitch of solid pack ice surrounded by the remains of a large, ancient raiding ship. It can hold up to 62,004 fans but they need to be evenly spread around the stadium to prevent any sudden tips or movements in the ice! All Norse stadia are subject to mandatory safety checks after the melting pitch incident of 2436 but these tend to be ineffective as Stefan Helmhand found out.

History

2442 - The nights are long and mind-numbingly dull in the icy north. To break the monotony, the fishermen of Vynheim, forced into harbour by the ice, form a Blood Bowl team

2443 - Having destroyed every local team, the Valkyries turn professional and go in search of more challenging competition.

2463 - The Norscans reach their first Blood Bowl final in just over 20 years after their first game. For some unknown reason the NAF decided to play the Blood Bowl final outside of Altdorf and they bizarrely opted for the frozen north of Longship Stadium. The Valkyries made the final that year and enjoyed an enormous home field advantage. It also helped that the Reavers were misled as to the weather conditions and arrived with thin clothing and regular boots without spikes. In blizzard conditions they were hopelessly outmatched!

2464 - The Valkyries suffer a blow when star player Stefan Helmhand treads onto a thin part of the pitch and plunges through into the frigid depths to his icy cold doom

2474 - They reach the Blood Bowl final for the 3rd time in just over 10 years and this time face the Gouged Eye. Star Blitzter 'Axeface' Manglesson teach the Orcs a thing or two about blocking . . . headbutting . . . booting . . . and single-handedly takes 10 of the Eye's starting 11 Orcs out all by himself in a brutal massacre...

2489 - With the collapse of the NAF, the Valkyries get into financial difficulties. A money-spinning tour of Norsca by the Nurple's Rotters, which may have thrown them a lifeline, comes to nothing when the Rotters vanish while travelling over the icy tundra. The team owners and main sponsors, Skalgrimm & Holst, abandon the players and walk away from the team . . . or try to. The players in an act of revenge kidnap the executive board and burn down their fish factory. A huge ransom is paid, giving the team the funds to leave Norsca and go on the road.

The Valkyries become a pot-hunter team in the auld world, entering small competitions to try and win enough gold to keep themselves going. Officials from the RARG catch up with the Valkyries to investigate what happened to the Skalgrim & Holst board. However, there is a horrific 'training accident' and all of the officials are killed. In order to avoid a further investigation, the team voluntarily folds but are soon back in business under the new name of the Norsca Rampagers.

2494 - The Rampagers hit the big time by winning the Dungenobowl, proving to the Blood Bowling world they are a force to be reckoned with once more

The bigger they are . . .

- By Gerhardt Schtumpf

Giants have long had a close association with Norscan teams, living side by side in the unforgiving tundra. In a nod to this kinship, we review their impact on the pitch.

The Norse Premier league used to be home to a number of all Giant teams, including the Tjorwald Titans and the Bifrost Berserkers. This probably says more about the madness of the Norscans letting all Giant teams into their league than it does about the Giants themselves!

Giant only teams struggled for success as despite their size, they were easily outmaneuvered by smaller teams. The Tjorwald Titans held the record for the largest gate (38 feet wide by 90 feet tall - haha!) but there have been very few stand out performances actually on the pitch. Instead, Giants have enjoyed more success on the teams of other races where they can fulfill a specific role.

Gurk Cloud-Scraper of the Asgard Ravens, had a brief but brutal career. Gurk was the tallest player to tread the astrogranite, large even for a giant, he was the height of 9 men. In his first game against the Greenfield Grasshuggers, Gurk struggled to see the small opposition he faced and accidentally trod on 'Huggers captain Jobo Hairyfeet (not to be confused with Jobo Hairyfoot . . . a common name with Halflings). The unfortunate 'fling was crushed flat in an instant. What was left of him was shoveled into a sack and buried two weeks later. Gurk was banned from playing by the NAF soon after the game - any player capable of such unwitting destruction was just too dangerous to have in the game, even one as deliberately violent as Blood Bowl.



Death from afar

Norscan stadiums tend to be on ice flows which means they can move around or unwittingly group together at times.

It was this grouping that was involved in the unfortunate death of a fan during one game of the Norse Challenge Cup in 2485.

Cloudegirth Mountainhips, punter for the Ice Giants, took the opening kick-off in the match against the Vynheim Valkyries. The kick flew through the thin, frigid air and vanished high out of the stadium. It travelled 406 yards in total, landing in a neighbouring stadium, killing a fan watching a totally different game!

Payment

Generally, giants aren't seen too much in the cities around the auld world and so they tend to be paid differently. If you don't tend to live in civilization what need have you of gold?

Thundershout Gristlegnasher, the former giant freebooter had an unusual form of payment. Gristlegnasher was paid in livestock (mostly cattle and sheep) to the tune of 10,000 gold crowns worth which he would eat.

Any team thinking they could short-change the star player giant soon regretted that decision. Gristlegnasher would munch any shortfall in payment from the team's fans watching the game so either way, he ate his fill!



Gristlebrook's Giant Emporium

When the NAF collapsed there were very few Giant teams left. The only one still active within a few months of the NAF closing were the ill-fated Bifrost Berserkers. They were tricked into visiting the Mountain of Mourn by Skorag Gristlebrook to take part in a fictitious competition.

There the Giants were enslaved by the Ogres and forced to play in manacles. This proved to be unsuccessful as even bound together, a team of giants makes quite a force to be reckoned with. They destroyed the stadium and killed hundreds of fans. Changing plans, Gristlebrook opted to open his now infamous emporium and hire out the slave giants individually to teams instead. A terrible enterprise whose business is depressingly brisk.

Home or Away

The Ravens have only toured Lustria once in their career and have vowed never to return. A lot of their gear is ice bound and it all melted in the Lustrian climate!

Sisters are doing it for themselves!

It speaks volumes that one of the golden eras of Ravens history was when the team weren't actually playing!

During the players strike of 2477, the Ravens first team refused to take to the field. With a crucial upcoming match against the Lowdown Rats scheduled, the management team were desperate and so threw the Valhalla Chorus, the Ravens cheerleader squad, onto the pitch instead.

The girls were a revelation! The match launched the career of Kari Coldsteel who was to leave afterwards to forge her own fame in the game. As one of the Rats said in a post-game interview "We don't mind geddin' a beatin' sumtimz, but does wimmin wuz danjerus!".

The Chorus went on to win five out of five games and yet somehow still managed to miss out on qualification for the Blood Bowl final. However, they achieved a greater acclaim in five games that the Ravens regular players had in many decades of playing.

Asgard Ravens – once were giants!

- By Rusty Hoelle

The Ravens are a team with a lot of promise, but they have always struggled to find success. Originally a team of Ice Giants, they transitioned over into becoming mostly a Norscan team in the 2460's but have still not grasped a winning formula as they rarely made it out of their NFC North division.

Rule Changers

The Ravens have been responsible for a couple of crucial rule changes the NAF forced on the game. Neither came from cheating, instead they took elements of the game to such extremes the NAF were forced to act.

The first came in 2459 and the outcome saw the size of a playing pitch standardised. Before then, teams could make their pitches any sized they wished and so a Ravens team (who were all Giants still at this time) took advantage of that. Their original stadium was so large, regular sized players couldn't see either end zone when stood in the middle. The Ravens' pitch was the only one that was affected by the curvature of the world itself! The NAF were forced to bring in new legislation as it was deemed a little unfair if teams on the pitch had to prepare for an arctic expedition just to score! After 2459, standardized pitch measurements came into play, making Ravens home games no longer a guaranteed win.



In 2482 the Blood Bowl community witnessed probably the most famous game of all time - the destruction of the Greenfield Grasshuggers. The Ravens fielded a team of just Giants and Norscan Berserkers, but even they must have been surprised by the resulting death toll of 743 'Hugger players! Post-game inquests were extremely critical of the Halflings management and the team folded soon afterwards. Although a game of violence, this was a level never seen before and the authorities were truly horrified. As a consequence of 2482, the NAF limited all teams to 16 players maximum (are you listening Snotling teams . . . 16!) so all future bloodletting will have an acceptable ceiling. It is also worth noting that as a result of this game, Treemen played in greater numbers on Halfling teams to try and protect their little wards, so even the bloodiest massacre can have a silver lining of sorts.

Battle for Slamford Bridge

With the collapse of the NAF, the Ravens struggled to survive. They had never won a major and so didn't have any significant reserve funds to fall back on. Most Norse teams at this time either became Pot-Hunters or gave up Blood Bowl completely and went back to raiding and pillaging (for some teams it was pretty much the same thing!). The Ravens fell into the latter category but were outmaneuvered and unable to use their typical hit and run tactics at the Battle for Slamford Bridge. Most of the team were killed and the remnants withdrew to Norsca to lick their wounds.

A dark stranger appeared one night with a bulging gold purse and a promise of future glory on the pitch. The Ravens were inspired once more! They mugged the stranger, took the gold, got very drunk and then decided to re-form and start playing again!

The Ravens are back in Blood Bowl . . . when you see their Longship pull up, it's anyone's guess if they have arrived for a game or to raid your warehouses and carry off plunder!

The Ice Cannons of Blood Bowl

- By Pierce d'Organ

"You only let the red rage take a hold of you during battle or during lunch!" - Ivar the Boneless, Norse Blitzter.

There is no middle ground with Norscan players and teams, they are the ultimate ice cannons. When they take to the pitch, they either cause utter mayhem and destruction or, armoured with little more than insane bravery and halitosis, they are on the receiving end of it.

As covered on page 2, the Arctic Cragspiders hold the record for the most decapitations during a game. However, a Norse team is also on the receiving end of a related record. Choppy, the chainsaw belonging to goblin looney Nobbla Blackwort, has lopped off more heads than any other chainsaw - this includes 14 players from the Icecastle Wolves during one match in 2501.

Evil Knut was one of the most celebrated Asgard Ravens players due to his uncanny ability to set off traps on a pitch and walk away without hurting so much a hair on his head (or his beard . . . or his chest). Between 2469 and 2474 he played in 40 games and set off 113 different traps, setting a NAF record. His luck eventually ran out when the Ravens played the Dwarf Warhammerers in a game where the belligerent dwarfs decided enough was enough. They mined half of their own stadium and waited for Evil Knut to do his pre-game walkabout to set off any nasty surprises. The resulting explosion destroyed the

Warhammerers stadium and killed 7 of their own players - but it was worth it!

Every record the Norse hold is tinged with tragedy. Take star Valkyries receiver Stefan Helmhand, who for a number of years held the record for longest uninterrupted possession of the ball. In a 2464 game against the Bluebay Crammers he fell through the frozen Norscan pitch into the frigid sea and froze in a 2 feet thick block of ice. By the time he was chipped out the ice and the ball was retrieved, he had been in possession for 4 months, 6 days and 11 hours! That wasn't even the end of Helmhand's playing career, Tomolandry signed him up for the Champions of Death after he had defrosted!



What Wotans?

Unquestionably in the early days of Blood Bowl, the Norse teams were a dominant force. The Wuppertal Wotans particular brand of frenzied violence took other teams by surprise early on as they won the Whiteskull Challenge Cup in 2421 and 2429 and were also runners up in 2396.

However, they were to be largely eclipsed by the much more successful Arctic Cragspiders and fell away from prominence until a resurgence in the 2480s. Their return to form after nearly 60 years was sadly short lived.

Just before a crucial Blood Bowl play-off game against the Chaos All-Stars, the entire team were struck by individual bolts of lightning in another of those highly unlikely accidents that seems to plague the great game. Even the coach who was home in bed was killed by lightning!

The Wotans folded after this, and their place was taken in the AFC north division by the Icecastle Wolves.

Where are the Werebears?

The Kishargo Werebears never recovered from one of the longest games in Blood Bowl history.

In 2471 they played a bloody game against the Darkside Cowboys. Neither team was prepared to give any ground as they eventually battled out a 2-2 draw. The game itself lasted 19 days however as each team wore the other down, bit by bit, broken bone by broken bone, strangled life by strangled life. History never recorded how many players died that day, just that every player from both teams ended up dead in a mutual wipe out!

The Cowboys had the resources to recover. In their rebuilding they hired a player called Jeremiah Kool who would change the game utterly. The Werebears were not so lucky and never played again.

It's Official! Galak Starscraper

- By Lastiges Weisschen

There are some legendary figures in the game who have done it all and Galak Starscraper literally stands head and shoulders above all of them.

Galak's playing career was as brief as his little 'Scrapper brother (see Gurk on page 4). After retiring early, he still wanted to be part of the game and so he headed out into the desert of the dark continent to go hunting. It took a whole herd of zebra and a needle and thread made from a knight's lance and thick rope, to stitch together a truly gargantuan referees striped jersey.

Galak became the first ever Giant referee and although he looks the part, that's about as far as it goes. His understanding of the rules is limited, but that never seemed like an issue during his playing days. The fans however love him and his on-field antics.

The one thing he does have is a sense of fair play - Galak hates seeing any player ganged up on. When he sees this happening, Galak has been known to wade into the fray and right a few wrongs. This tends to be very brief and very bloody! Breaking up infringements has led Galak to be the very first referee to make it into the top 10 kills/maims table for a season!

While the NAF were in charge there were a couple of attempts at removing Galak's refereeing jersey. They eventually gave up on this after anyone sent to investigate poor refereeing incidents ended up pancaked and unable to file a report.

The cabalvision wizards decided to make use of Galak's height and employed him as part of their short lived 'Eye in the Sky' experiment. A wizard sat on his shoulders and broadcast a bird's eye view of the game back to the masses at home. Initially it seemed to be a success as fans enjoyed watching the game from a different angle - it meant none of the action was missed from such a high perspective. However, it ended during a particularly close and exciting game. The wizard took a tumble from Galak's shoulder and fell in the thick of the action, cruelly impaled on a Halfling players spiked, colander helmet.

No other wizards volunteered to take his place on such a high and unstable platform and so the 'Eye in the Sky' is no more!



Ranulf "Red" Hokuli

Ranulf is something of a pin-up amongst referees, a poster boy of the RARG. He is heroically tall, has long red flowing hair which cascades over his broad shoulders, deep eyes . . . the kind of eyes you could get lost in . . . where was I?

A charismatic leader both on and off the field, it's easy to see why his Norscan tribe or the captains of the Blood Bowl teams he is refereeing hang on his every word. It's that voice you see . . . it's deep and booming and yet has almost a caramel edge to it, he could smother me from head to toe in that voice . . . errrr . . .

On the pitch Ranulf has a reputation for being an honest and fair referee. Like many Norscans, his honour is hugely important to him, so much so that a bribe would need to be really big in order for him to even consider taking it. When he does players and fans alike forgive "Red" pretty quickly.

However, he's not one to take chances as anything could happen on a Blood Bowl pitch. After all, the life span of an average referee is just 2 games before they are killed or bribed enough that they can retire. Not that we're saying Ranulf is average . . . goodness no . . . those powerful thighs make him anything but average . . .

So . . . for his own protection he carries his battleaxe on the field in case anyone argues a call with him. I would never do that . . . I would just follow orders!

Who's Who the Norscan Ioin cloth list

The following are players or members of staff who at some stage of their careers have played on Norscan teams.

Blitzers / Berserkers

Name	Team	Status
<i>Gregor Lukash</i>	<i>Vynheim Valkyries</i>	<i>Retired</i>
<i>Ivar the Boneless</i>	<i>Unknown</i>	<i>Alive</i>
<i>Magnus "Axeface" Manglesson</i>	<i>Vynheim Valkyries</i>	<i>Retired</i>
<i>Stefan Spearstaff</i>	<i>Vynheim Valkyries</i>	<i>Retired</i>
<i>Stengard Wolfbeck</i>	<i>Bluchen Berserkers</i>	<i>Alive</i>
<i>Thrud the Barbarian</i>	<i>** Freebooter **</i>	<i>Alive</i>
<i>Wolfhowl Blackscar</i>	<i>** Freebooter **</i>	<i>Alive</i>



Ulfwerenar

Name	Team	Status
<i>Fang</i>	<i>** Freebooter **</i>	<i>Alive</i>
<i>Gruk the Bear</i>	<i>Unknown</i>	<i>Alive</i>
<i>Ulrik Wuulfson</i>	<i>Unknown</i>	<i>Alive</i>



Catchers

Name	Team	Status
<i>Vinny Valhalla</i>	<i>** Freebooter **</i>	<i>Alive</i>



Yheteo

Name	Team	Status
<i>Icepelt Hammerblow</i>	<i>** Freebooter **</i>	<i>Alive</i>



Lineman

Name	Team	Status
Evil Knut	Asgard Ravens	Dead - stepped on a mine
Kari Coldsteel	Asgard Ravens	Retired
Sigurd Tropfentor	Bluchen Berserkers	Alive - plays as a kicker



Other Races

The below are players from other races who through some strange twist of fate, ended up playing for a Norscab team.

Name	Position	Team	Status
Wormhowl Greyscar	Chaos Warrior	Arctic Cragspiders	Alive



Staff

The below are Norscans who have worked on any team.

Name	Position	Team	Status
Kari Coldsteel	Cheerleader	Asgard Ravens	Alive
Mad Jake McDead	Head Coach	Vynheim Valkyries	Dead - died in an apopleptic fit
Magnus Manglesson	Head Coach	Norsca Rampagers	Alive
Skralgrimm & Holst Associates	Team Owner	Vynheim Valkyries	Alive - no longer the owners
Valhalla Chorus	Cheerleading squad	Asgard Ravens	Alive



Officials

Name	Position	Status
Galak Starscraper	Referee	Alive
Ranulf "Red" Hokuli	Referee	Alive



Giants

Name	Team	Status
Cloudgirth Mountainhips	Ice Giants	Alive
Galak Starscraper	Unknown	Retired
Gurk Cloud-Scraper	Asgard Ravens	Banned
'Slim' Thom	Black Mountain Marauders	Alive
Thundershout Gristlegnasher	** Freebooter **	Alive



Other 'famous' Norscans

Name	Position	Status
<i>Hylde Anfingrimm</i>	<i>Wife of Anfingrimm</i>	<i>Alive</i>
<i>Sora Ofllrsdottir</i>	<i>Linewoman for Middenplatz Manglers</i>	<i>Alive</i>



Norscan Teams

<i>Arctic Cragspiders</i>	<i>Kishargo Werebears</i>	<i>Vannheim Valkyries</i>
<i>Asgard Ravens</i>	<i>Midgard Marauders</i>	<i>Vynheim Valkyries #</i>
<i>Bluchen Berserkers</i>	<i>Thorvald Thunderers</i>	<i>Wuppertal Wotans</i>
<i>Icecastle Wolves</i>		

The Vynheim Valkyries became the Norsca Rampagers.



Giant Teams

<i>Asgard Ravens #</i>	<i>Ice Giants</i>	<i>No Hawk Jets</i>
<i>Bifrost Berserkers</i>	<i>Ice Lords</i>	<i>Tjorwald Titans</i>

The Ravens became a Norse team but started out as Giants



Looking ahead

In issue 12 of the Gridiron Gazette we'll be taking a walk on the wild side as we examine (from a very safe distance) everyones favourite warped wonders - The Chaos Renegades. We'll be asking questions like

- *Is the Chaos All-Stars against the NAF the greatest sporting rivalry of all time?*
- *Is there anyone who is a true rival for Morg?*
- *Will the Evil Gits ever make up their minds on what and who they are?*
- *Which of the All-Stars is so evil he even cheats at Fan-Scary Football?*



Final Fact!

Fang, the freebooting Ulfewerenar had remarkable control over his abilitieshe was able to shape shift between his human and his Were form at will. On occasion he would play an entire match in human form and never transform once. So crucial was he to his teams success, that he never won a game in human form. Rumours persisted that Fang was frequently the subject of bribes from the other team to not change mid-match . . . but these rumours were never proven.