

Gridiron Gazette :

Wood Elfs

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Taking a different slant this month, the Gazette takes a flick through the NAF book of records to look at some of the outstanding performances

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Stadium

The Avengers home stadium is not for anyone scared of heights. It has been built on top of one of the ancient arboreals of Athelorn - the Great Tree of the Greenwood. Spectators sit in stands built in nearby trees with interlocking branches and are still surprisingly close to the action. Anyone being pushed off the pitch better be quick to grab onto something or it's a long way down!

Team Kit

Wood Elf teams are famous for being fastidious in their appearance, the Avengers are no different. During one away game against the Hobgoblin Team, it rained hard at half time. The pitch was awash with mud so 9 of the Avengers refused to play the 2nd half.

The bigger kit scandal however was around the Avengers changing their colour. It went from green and yellow to, controversially, yellow and green!



Athelorn Avengers – Assemble!

- By Dolf Ungerhaagen

History

2429 - Newly formed, the Avengers make their debut in the Elven Kingdoms league. The season starts brightly with a number of promising wins but then they come up against the Darkside Cowboys. A disaster of a game sees the Avengers concede the match after only 43 minutes as the Cowboys inflict career ending injuries on over half the team.

2470 - The Avengers sign the first ever Dryad to officially play Blood Bowl - Willow Rosebark.

2472 - When a spot opens up in the NAF premier league, the Avengers quickly take it. They find themselves placed in the NFC Central division, in the same group as their arch nemesis the Darkside Cowboys. The Dark Elfs encourage their fans to follow the Avengers from game to game, giving them a hard time. Their first year proves to be one they would rather forget after they are even beaten by the Greenfield Grasshuggers, who mysteriously (and coincidentally we're sure) have a squad of Dark Elf cheerleaders for the match!

2476 - Jordell Freshbreeze makes his debut for the Avengers and is instantly marked as the one to watch on the team.

2489 - After the collapse of the NAF, Jordell Freshbreeze leaves the Avengers, but the team hit the road and produce a series of promising results. Critics claim the turnaround in the team is because they can now choose to avoid the Cowboys where possible!

2491 - A terrible game against the Dwarf team the Firebrand Ingots sees the Avengers concede the most interceptions ever in a game. The shame! Later enquiries discover that the Ingots were using powerful magnets to attract the ball which had lumps of iron hidden inside. The RARG refuse to overturn the result so the Trees and Dryads of Athelorn take matters into their own hands . . . or branches . . . and blockade the Ingots stadium, forcing them to go bankrupt.

2493 - The great sporting jinx is finally broken! 64 years of straight losses against the Cowboys comes to an end as the Avengers manage a draw and to give the Cowboys a bloody nose at the same time. The small fortune they had spent on apothecaries, wizards and sports counsellors had finally paid off.

2496 - Amazingly the Avengers become the first Wood Elf team to reach the Blood Bowl final. Hiring the Cyclone, they overcome Da Deff Skwadd to win the Blood Bowl in a nail-biting game. Have they finally come of age? As we'll see, the answer sadly is no!

2497 - Confident of another victory in the Blood Bowl, players and fans alike are dismayed at the Avengers being knocked out in the early stages by the Wolfenburg Crypt-Stealers

2500 - Another early exit from the Blood Bowl, this time by the Bogenhafen Barons. Although clearly a team brimming with potential, the Avengers still struggle for consistency.



Jordell Freshbreeze – Star Focus

- By Gerhardt Schtumpf

The Cyclone is no stranger to grudges. As we'll see, he certainly appears in enough Dwarf books but also readily settles them himself. If you have anything bad to say about Jordell, expect to be called out on it

2476 - Jordell knows how to announce himself to the world. In his very first game against the Dwarf Giants he gave a Troll Slayer a glorious death, broke a pair of legs and an arm from two more Giant players and still found time to score! The Avengers still lost the game, but now they had someone to get excited about!

2485 - The officials are forced to overturn a match result against the Carcassonne Lancers after tree spirit incursions prompted them to re-examine the cabalvision replays. When watched in super slow-mo Jordell could be seen to score not once but twice. He was so fast no-one even saw it happen!

2489 - Reputation now earned, Jordell leaves the Avengers and becomes a freebooter. However, he frequently returns over the next 10 years to play for his original team

2491 - The Lightbringers are dismissive of the achievements of Jordell and so he challenges them to a game all by himself. They give in when he becomes the first professional to long bomb a pass to himself (this feat was also done at college level by Orion Spangletongue the Elf Union Blitzler).

2493 - Bo Galante called Jordell's hair 'Awful'. This resulted in a grudge match between the Avengers and the Fire Isle Phoenix's and an apologetic Galante getting a boot to the face!

Highly quotable

Jordell readily speaks to the media and has views on all kinds of things. One time when asked by a child what they must do to emulate their hero he said "One must walk the secret paths of Athel Loren, commune with nature itself and possess grace beyond the reach of all but the gods". How very Wood Elf of him.

Jeremiah Kool was to hear of this and dismissively respond that actually all Jordell did was "Spend all day looking in the mirror instead of bothering to get good!". Whether or not this is true, it highlights two of the great drivers for Jordell - his rivalry with Kool which then transferred to Hubris Rakarth when Kool retired, and vanity.

Long has Jordell been compared to the stars of his Dark Elf kin and it's a bitter pill for the sensational wardancer to swallow. You can read the stats however you like, but they tell you one thing . . . both Kool and Rakarth are the better players. It may be this that eats away at Jordell as he constantly looks to gain an edge on his great rivals. Sometimes this can even get quite petty, albeit expensive. Rumours persist that Jordell is trying to buy Orcidas outright just to stop a proposed sponsorship deal with the Cowboys going through!

In terms of his vanity, and maybe the reason why his stats don't stack up to his rivals, Jordell once said "It's not about the winning. It's about looking fabulous!". Perhaps he doesn't quite have his priorities right!

Rise of the Wardancer

Wood Elfs have a lot to thank Orcs for, the Severed Heads team in particular. Many years ago, the Athelorn Avengers played a match against the Severed Heads. It was common at this time for mystical dances to take place on the pitch at half time; lithe movements and precise steps were an act of worship to Loec, the Wood Elf god of mischief. The dancing was to inspire the team for the second half, to encourage them to greater feats. The Orcs soon grew bored of all the namby-pamby prancin' and stomped on the pitch to get the game started. The dancers dodged, ducked, dipped, dived and dodged some more as the flailing Orcs found themselves in a very one-sided fight. They struggled to land a single mailed fist and yet were slowly being beaten down themselves with a flurry of kicks and hand chops. A number of their best players left the field injured and the Heads conceded defeat. The Wardancers have been a permanent fixture on Wood Elf teams ever since!

The Oakglade Defenders took fielding Wardancers to the extreme - they had an entire team of them! Goblin team, the Moonshine Gitz had a cunning plan to deal with this. At half time (why is it always half time when these things happen?) they released a ball and chain fanatic into the Elf dressing room and locked the door. Even a Wardancer has no chance in such a confined space against a fanatic. It resulted in not just the team, but the entire stadium being destroyed but boy was it entertaining for the fans! Since then, Wood Elf teams have limited themselves to 2 Wardancers per outfit to preserve this most rare resource.

The Freshbreeze Family

Jordell's wardancing kinsman Aethiol Freshbreeze met a sticky end. He possessed the same skill and arrogance of Jordell but not the luck. Goading Bob Bifford he was to be stamped to death under the Ogres mighty boot and an unfortunate slip on the pitch. Serves him right!

Pine Crag Pioneers

The Pioneers stadium is in Wydioth, near where the mighty Athel Loren brushes the foothills of the Grey Mountains. This means the Pioneers play more Dwarf opposition than most Wood Elf teams would care to. It is likely this that has seen them develop their unusual style of play. The pugnacious Pioneers prefer to beat the opposition down and run through them rather than twirl and whirl around them in true Elf style. It's this that has made them popular on the southern Empire touring circuit.



Treetop Terrors

Like the Avengers, the Terrors built their stadium in the upper reaches of a great tree. It was a beautiful sight, but its beauty was to be fleeting. In the first home game played there, chainsaw looney Nasher Snotrun took issue with being sent off and so hacked down the tree holding the stadium aloft.

Bil Bali Archers – aiming high

- By Rusty Hoelle

Wood Elfs travel great distances to play in the Elven Kingdoms League, but all of their teams are firmly rooted in Athel Loren Forest. The red and yellow Archers on the other hand are one of the few teams to leave the green glades and base elsewhere.

If you are going to leave the rural paradise of Athel Loren, then the sunny climate of northern Estalia seems like a pretty decent alternative. Warm all year around, stunning coastal views, great food, and wine in abundance, what's not to like? What drove them there we aren't sure, perhaps it was a bid to stop playing second fiddle to the Avengers?

The Archers have created a very vocal, local following of fans who have readily adopted the Wood Elfs to the area with open arms. It's a clever choice of location as well for the Archers, it allows them to play not only in Estalia and to reach the Spike! Magazine trophy easily each year (it's also played in Estralia) but is a relatively short ship journey away from Albion. Therefore, the Archers are one of the very few Old World teams who regularly play in the misty, shrouded isles, currently they are in the Skull North Albion division. They get to experience all of the weird and wonderful rules those from Albion have adopted such as an emphasis on kicking the ball!

Laurelorn Paladins – risky rosters!

The mystery of quite why the NAF only allowed so few Wood Elf team into their premier competition when lesser teams frequently had more, remains unsolved. What's left of the Church of the NAF aren't saying. Arguably the Paladins should also have been included, but their unusual team make up meant there was constant friction with the authorities.

Treemen, as we'll find out later on in the issue, don't mix well with fire. In 2466 the Paladins' Treeman was lost in what's been described as a terrible kindling accident. A chance encounter then saw them sign the unlikely figure of Zolcath the Zoa. This brought their game much needed, manoeuvrable muscle which Wood Elf teams tend to lack. Zolcath cuts something of a mercurial figure and couldn't be relied upon to be present in every game, so the team needed to consider how best to consistently add more brute force to the team. This led the Paladins to ponder the question . . . what's better than one Treeman on a Wood Elf team? The answer proved strangely simple, two Treemen!

This move was decried in the Elven Kingdoms League where the Paladins played most of the Blood Bowl and the NAF took an interest as well. The team were forced into frequent legal battles with the NAF over them breaking the laid down rostering regulations. These wranglings had two likely impacts. The first was the constant focus on off-field distractions meant results slipped on the pitch, the second is more implied. . .

In 2468 the Elfheim Eagles were formed, partly from a Wood Elf team. However, with Valen Swift as their captain, they were initially primarily a High Elf team. The NAF were to realise they only had one true Wood Elf team in the highest echelons of the game - the Everbold Unicorns. By 2472 a space became available, and the NAF decided to fill it with a Wood Elf team. Potentially the Paladins could have been contenders, but it was the Avengers who were given the spot. If the Paladins had been more conventional in their roster, would they have got the nod instead? Perhaps if they had followed the rules, it would be the Avengers who remained just a minor touring side and we'd be talking about the Paladins as Blood Bowl winners and the premier Wood Elf team now. Who knows!

Putting the wood in Wood Elfs!

- By Lastiges Weisschen

Athel Forest Treemen must look enviously at their Altern Forest cousins who always play in pairs. As we'll see, there's safety in numbers!

Being a Treeman on a Wood Elf team is a thankless task. Your job is to create a hole on the line of scrimmage and hold as many of the opposition up as you can while every single one of your teammates vanishes up in the pitch in the blink of an eye. Unlike on Halfling teams, there's no-one there to protect your back. Treemen are tough, but when left to fend alone sheer numbers can be enough to pull them down and then all kinds of terrible things can happen.

To prove this point, you only need to look at the successful (and by successful we mean alive) Longbark brothers of the Paladins. They were grown from clippings taken from one of the greatest Treemen of all time, Longbark Earthroot. Unusually, Earthroot felt more kinship with the High Elfs and so was one of the rare individuals of the wood folk to play for the Galadrieth Gladiators until his untimely death by fire. To survive and thrive, Treemen work best in pairs. For those singular Treemen on Wood Elf teams however, the mortality rate is alarmingly high as these cases prove -

- *Barkbellow of the Loren Leapers was on top form. In his second to last game he had permanently killed King Orik the Mummy from the Weevil Dead and he carried on that murderous intent against the Hochland Harbringers when he slew one of their catchers. The 'bringers however had a keg of Durgrund's Hellfire beer on hand and having liberally doused Barkbellow with it they struck a match*
- *Greybark Twistyroots is still among the living. Alas his teammate on the Bil Bali Archers, Filbren isn't. He was squashed flat when Twistyroots was toppled over by the Bluchen Berserkers and fell on him!*
- *Willow Truebranch of the Ashglade Swifts is the only Treeman Thrower in the history of the game. Standing so tall he was able to project the ball further than any Elf could actually throw it. While on a playing tour of Bretonnia he fell asleep in the forest of Gisoreux where a squire cut him down to make a bow. Poor Willow was only 78 years old, virtually a child still in tree terms. Interestingly, the bows he was turned into could shoot arrows further than any other in the kingdom!*
- *Oakwrist Mosstree actually died of natural causes - rare for a Blood Bowler. He succumbed to Dutch Elm disease- what a strange name!*

Elmer Blackroot is alive due to his one saving grace - he's terrible at Blood Bowl! He used to have a flock of ravens roosting in his upper branches. Elmer's job was to sit in the middle of the pitch and have the ravens steal any ball in the air or peck anyone who crossed the scrimmage line. The Ostland Comets put paid to this by hiring a brigade of Hochland Long Rifle to shoot the ravens down. Elmer's team promptly lost 4-0 and Elmer was fired (well, not set on fire . . . you know what we mean).

All eyes are currently on Maple Highgrove, the new freebooting sensation who debuted with the Greenglade Rooters. Maple has played all over the Old World and not just for Wood Elf teams. It's perhaps the partnering with slower teams who don't leave him behind part of what explains Maple's longevity in the game. Let's hope he stays on the road and doesn't permanently put his roots down with a Wood Elf team!

Yellowbirch Slybranch

Long considered dead, fans were shocked in 2493 when he made his comeback! The tree planted in the newly renovated Eagle Nest Stadium turned out to be a slumbering Yellowbirch, asleep for 32 years!

Clearwater Everglade

In the early 2490s Clearwater was the next hot property in the Wood Elf passing game. He made a name for himself on the Loren Forest College team for his pinpoint accurate passes. One of his training tricks was to take bets for 100 gold crowns on him hitting a bird from 100 yards. He never missed once and graduated with no student debts at all!

Where is he now? He turned pro but despite all of the promise, failed to make the grade for the high-profile teams. It just goes to show Blood Bowl is just about talent but attitude!

Esys Grassglider

Ah sweet Esys, how we miss her in the game. Seeking to break the stereotype of Wood Elfs being weedy, she sought out the toughest opposition on the pitch. She bit off more than she could chew when launching herself at two trolls . . . but ironically, she wasn't more than they could chew! Esys was apparently very tasty!

Tom Ashfield

Tom has an unwanted claim to fame. He was the last ever player killed in the last ever AFC v NFC end of season clash in 2488. His death was at the hands of none other than Zug himself.

Arnoth Quill-tree

Nobody likes a show off. This Wardancer was stamped to death by the Warhammerers after getting a little too carried away in a victory dance after scoring a touchdown. Serves him right!

Elfs in the Open Era

- By Pierce d'Organ

The Open Era of Blood Bowl if anything has increased the excitement around the game. It's thrown open the doors of the majors to all and allowed plucky newcomers to make an impact. It's also given motivation for the bitterest of rivals to play together

As we have already seen in this issue and in the earlier Dark Elf one, the various Elf factions do not mix well at all. The rivalries between the great stars of the game remains fierce. Yet, despite that, it is now possible to see Dark Elf teams play with Glorial Summerbloom on the roster or shockingly a Wood Elf team call upon the might of Hubris Rakarth. Why? What on earth happened to allow these old enemies to find common cause?

The answer in part rests in the qualities that all Elfs share - arrogance and superiority. With the collapse of the NAF, the focus fell firmly onto the minor leagues and they gained a new importance. Fans of any of the Elf factions maintained the same old rivalries when they play each other in the Elven Kingdoms league. However, as the league itself grew in prominence and the teams took part in tournaments outside the league, a notion grew that those teams also represented in a strange way the Elven Kingdoms league. If any team was going to win the Luccini Open or the Hargendorf Cup, then the fans and players alike wanted it to be an Elven Kingdoms team. Old rivalries would still exist if two different Elf teams played in the Konigswald Classic, but when just one remained then all Elf support would coalesce around them.

This sense of pride that first and foremost an Elf should win everything took hold. Players looked past racial rivalries if it were to further prove to the world the dominance of Elf kind. Hubris Rakarth would always prefer to see a Dark Elf team win the Ostland Open, but if there were none in the competition, then he would settle for helping a wood elf team to victory.

What does this all prove? Something that Roze-El himself realised all those years ago when he first read the sacred scrolls. Sport, Blood Bowl in particular, has the amazing ability to bring everyone together, no matter what divides them.



Beauty and the Beast

Glorial Summerbloom

It remains a mystery as to quite why the lady Summerbloom plays Blood Bowl. She avows all violence (although we have seen her throw a few sharp looking blocks when pressed) but finds beauty in the arc of a perfectly thrown pass.

Glorial is a peerless passer of the game. Few expect her lithe frame to be able to generate the power on the ball that she can. She has an instinct for the passing game few can equal. So attuned is she that cabalvision replays that have been able to capture her face beneath the swirling, blonde torrent of hair, has found she frequently passes with her eyes closed!

Curnoth Darkwold

Curnoth found his place in the game in the mid 80's to the early 90's, however he has been absent for a number of years now. The antithesis of Glorial, Curnoth is a creature of the Wild Hunt who revels in the violence and bloodshed found on the pitch. He plays purely for the thrills and danger of the game.

His extreme nature makes him stand apart from most elfs . . . partly because he smells so bad, they rarely go near him. There is nothing refined about Curnoth, he would never be accused of being a dandy. Instead, he is a raw, un-avowed and heartless force of primal nature.

Sprites, Dryads & Zoats

For those of you wondering where all of the weird and wonderful creatures commonly found on Wood Elf teams are, patience. They will all be in an Odd Balls issue for the less common races.

Who's Who the bough and branch of Wood Elfs.

The following are all players who at some stage of their career have played on Wood Elf teams

Wardancers

Name	Team	Status
Aethiol Freshbreeze	Unknown	Dead - killed by Bob Bifford
Arnoth Quill-Tree	Oakglade Defenders	Dead - Gang fouled to death by the Dwarf Warhammerers
Curnoth Darkwold	Bil Bali Archers	Alive
Jordell "The Cyclone" Freshbreeze	** Freebooter **	Alive
Noraen Dornvale	Athelorn Avengers	Alive



Throwers

Name	Team	Status
Clearwater Evergalde	Loren Forest College	Alive
Filbren Surefeet	Bil Bali Archers	Dead - crushed when a treeman fell on him
Gloriel Summerbloom	Laurelorn Paladins	Alive
Jem Goldstar	Athelorn Avengers	Retired
Thornmane	Athelorn Avengers	Alive



Catchers

Name	Team	Status
Edrael Warwren	Athelorn Avengers	Alive
Larvandrel	** Freebooter **	Alive
Luarn Proudbow	** Freebooter **	Alive



Linemen

Name	Team	Status
Aurora Silverleaf	Athelorn Avengers	Alive
Cathdrien Waterfall	Athelorn Avengers & Elfheim Eagles	Alive
Celion Roverstone	Athelorn Avengers	Alive
Daeseth Fairbloom	Athelorn Avengers	Alive
Esys Grassglider	Laurelorn Paladins	Dead - Eaten by 2 Trolls
Issas Springblossom	Athelorn Avengers	Alive
Morwyn Slendelimb	Athelorn Avengers	Alive
Tom Ashfield	Athelorn Avengers	Dead - killed by the Mighty Zug

Treemen

Name	Team	Status
Barkbellow	Loren Leapers	<i>Dead</i> - set on fire
Elmer Blackroot	Unknown	Alive
Greybark Twistyroots	Bil Bali Archers	Alive
Hickoryswitch Longbark	Deepwood Falcons	Alive
Longbark Brothers (2 of them)	Laurelorn Paladins	Alive
Maple Highgrove	Greenglade Rooters	Alive
Oakwrist Mosstree	Unknown	<i>Dead</i> - killed by Dutch Elm disease
Willow Truebranch	Ash Glade Swifts	Alive
Yellowbirch Slybranch	Unknown	Alive



Other Races

Name	Race	Team	Status
Swiftvine Glimmershard	Forest Sprite	** Freebooter **	Alive
Willow Rosebark	Dryad	** Freebooter **	Alive
Sharproot Straightbranch	Dryad	** Freebooter **	Alive
Zolcath the Zoat	Zoat	** Freebooter **	Alive



Staff

The below are Wood Elfs who have worked on any team. Please note, this includes a number of people marked simply as 'Elf' as their exact heritage is unknown.

Name	Race	Position	Team	Status
Aed Hothriss	Wood Elf	Head Coach	Athelron Avengers	Alive
Caesyn Dyn-Athron	Wood Elf	Team Owner	Athelorn Avengers	Alive
Dr Pill	Elf	Apothecary	Bad Bay Hackers	Alive
Kaleb Windtalker	Elf	Apothecary	Unknown	Alive
Olsen Merlin	Elf	Wizard	Bad Bay Hackers	<i>Dead</i> - killed by the F.A. Cup

Wood Elf cheerleaders tend to be made up of forest folk and other strange faerie creatures. As well as inspiring the team to great heights and whipping up the crowd into a frenzy, they are attentive healers who help get the players fixed up and back on the pitch.



Officials

Name	Race	Position	Status
<i>Whyte</i>	<i>Elf</i>	<i>Game Wizard</i>	<i>Alive</i>



Other 'famous' Elfs

Name	Race	Position	Status
<i>Alyssa Avalos</i>	<i>Elf</i>	<i>Pitchside Reporter</i>	<i>Alive</i>
<i>Elora</i>	<i>Wood Elf</i>	<i>An Elf maid</i>	<i>Alive</i>
<i>L Ron Elfman</i>	<i>Wood Elf</i>	<i>Spike! Journal Guest Editor</i>	<i>Alive</i>
<i>Mon Jotsun</i>	<i>Elf</i>	<i>BBC Commentator</i>	<i>Alive</i>
<i>Valen Tyne</i>	<i>Elf</i>	<i>Loved crazed Elf</i>	<i>Alive</i>



Wood Elf teams

<i>Arranoc Drakes</i>	<i>Deepwood Falcons</i>	<i>Loren Leapers</i>
<i>Ash Glade Swifts</i>	<i>Everbold Paladins</i>	<i>Oakglade Defenders</i>
<i>Athelorn Avengers</i>	<i>Foresters</i>	<i>Pine Crag Pioneers</i>
<i>Bil Bali Archers</i>	<i>Laurelorn Paladins</i>	<i>Treetop Terrors</i>



Looking ahead

In the next issue, the Gazette sails away to far off and exotic Lustria. Lets hope it goes better than the last expedition of Spike journalists there - but that's another story. We'll be asking such questions as . . .

- *Which team has signed more corporate sponsorships than any other?*
- *What's the point in Sotek Bowl? We'll give you a clue . . . it's a dagger!*
- *Can Skinks swim?*



Picture courtesy of Knut_Rockie

Final Fact

Blood Bowl tournaments rarely take place in Athel Loren forest . . . or so we're told. The Wood Elfs are a secretive bunch and don't like to let other races into their forest home. Therefore any sporting events held there are almost always won by a Wood Elf team because nobody else knows its happening or knows how to find their way in (or out again). Some teams do try and rumours persist of paths and tracks littered with remains of players and fans alike, lost in the great woods.

There are also stories of the Wood Elfs trying out their own variant of Blood Bowl, played on the back of great eagles. However, leaping between birds to intercept the ball or make a tackle became so hazardous, it soon lost popularity.