

Blood of Heroes Rules

The Inspiration

The Game called 'Blood of Heroes' hosted annually, usually in the Fall, by the Shire March of the Grimfells of Calontir is inspired, admittedly, by a very non-period source—a movie. The flick in question stars Rutger Hauer and Joan Chen and is about a post-apocalyptic society for which the primary entertainment is provided by wandering teams of 'juggers' playing a bushkazi-like game, which is nowhere named in the movie. But wait, you may say, this has nothing whatsoever to do with the Middle Ages, which is true. What is also true, however, is that the game is easily adapted to our foot combat, is incredibly fun, and has become a somewhat traditional event for our shire. Don't bring your court garb and delicate sensibilities to BoH, but rather bring something potently potable, a few friends, and a sense of adventure.

[Games not unlike BoH, which are period, do exist, so feel free to think of the game in that context if it makes you feel better. We are fully aware that some find basing an SCA event on such a foundation to be unacceptable. We understand and respect that point of view; this is a 'let-your-hair-down-and-just-go-with-it' event. While you might not find the ultimate in authenticity, you will find chivalry, camaraderie and fun in abundance.]

If you want to put together a team, renting the movie (it's a cheapie) is worthwhile both for entertainment value as well as for getting a sense of what it is all about. Also, as you watch, you will notice that some of the following rules are fairly loose interpretations. Some of this is the result of experience of running the Game over the years and some is the result of a huge stab in the dark at aspects that are not well explained in the movie.

The Object of the Game

The Object of the Game is to defeat (and thereby become) the League Team. This happens on a permanent basis as the League from the previous year will return to defend itself and also on a temporary basis as the League is beaten on the field and its place taken by a Challenger.

The Team

Each Team is comprised, on the field, of 5 juggers—though of course each team is **strongly** encouraged to have 2 to 4 alternates. Each jigger is assigned to a different position distinguished by allowed weapon systems and starting position on the field.

- *The Quick* is in many ways the most important position on the field. Armed with a non-thrusting single-sword of 24" or less, this is the only jigger which is allowed to touch the 'dog skull' and hence to score. (More on this later.) The Quick starts each point of the match inside the Circle, facing the opposing Quick in a duel, which usually starts things off.
- *The Drive and Backdrive* are the linebackers of the Team. Each is armed with a single 48" weapon (usually bastard sword or a short polearm) and is used either

offensively or defensively as the tactics dictate. These line up behind and at least 15' from the edge of the circle on either side.

- *The Slash* is the main offensive force of the Team. Armed with up to a 6' polearm, this jugger is positioned between the Drive and Backdrive directly behind the Quick, about 15' from the edge of the circle.
- *The Chain* is tasked with both defense of the goal and defense of the Quick. Some teams will emphasize one role over the other. The Chain is armed with up to a 9' spear and may begin each point anywhere within 9' of the goal.
- [Note on weapon systems: Any position besides the Quick can be armed with a single-sword of any length to accommodate fighters, which are not fully authorized. In no instance may any jugger carry a secondary weapon. It is also strongly recommended that the Quick have two full gauntlets in good repair and with good coverage rather than fighting with a basket-hilted sword.]

Scoring

Scoring is accomplished by the Quick placing the 'dog skull' on the opposing team's 'stake.' The dog skull is usually a foam and tape skull fashioned such that it can be grasped by a gauntleted hand and placed down upon the 'stake.' Experimentation has shown so far that a plastic traffic cone, somewhat disguised and secured in place with long tent stakes, provides a safe and reasonable 'stake.'

A note on the dog skull. As mentioned above, no jugger aside from the Quick can touch the dog skull in any way. Kicking, hitting with a weapon, headbutting, dying on, or otherwise interfering with the dog skull by any other player is subject to penalty.

The Field of Play

The game is played on a field from 50 to 150 yards long. In the center of the field is the Circle, usually marked with chalk, 18' in diameter. At either end of the field is a stake (one for each Team to guard). The width of the field is variable and usually flexible being limited only by the endurance of the juggers and the dictates of safety. As mentioned above, each Team starts with its Quick inside the Circle and the rest of the Team arrayed on their half of the field.

Playing the Game

Each period starts with the opposing Quicks facing off inside the Circle with the dog skull on the ground between them. The Quicks should be at least 6 feet apart, but at most still within the Circle. When the 'lay on' is called, the opposing teams engage each other. The Circle, however, is sacrosanct until it has been declared 'broken' by the Marshals.

The Circle is broken only if a Quick or the dog skull leaves it. This means that both Quicks can theoretically spend the entire point fighting inside the Circle if they wish. Violating the Circle is a serious penalty (penalties are discussed later).

Once one Quick or the other gains control of the dog skull he will attempt to make it to his opponents stake and score by placing the dog skull on it. Each point lasts one minute. (In the movie a point lasts "100 stones", but this far exceeds the endurance of even the most energetic fighter and one minute has proven to be a good compromise.) If, at the end of one minute, neither team has scored the time is called and the teams reassemble for the next point.

A match is a set of 3 points. A match is won by outscoring the opposing team. However, the burden of victory is placed upon the challenging team, the team which is currently representing The League need only manage a tie to retain it's status and stay on the field.

Maimin' and Killin'

In Blood of Heroes 'good' blows are not deemed to have killed an opponent, but rather to have incapacitated them for a brief period of time. The level of force for determining a good blow remains intact, and when a fighter receives a good blow that would disable a limb, they must fight without the benefit of that limb. However, when a juggler receives a 'killing' blow rather than dying he must fall to the ground and count loudly and slowly from 1 to 5. Once he has completed this 5-count, unless pinned (see below), he can rise and resume fighting. (For simplicity's sake, a fighter who is thus 'killed' also regains the use of any incapacitated limbs. Likewise, a fighter who has merely been maimed can always choose to fall, count to 5 and rise unwounded.)

A fighter rising to fight cannot be struck until he has at least gained his knees and is in a position to defend him. On the other hand a fighter who consistently attempts to rise in a fashion that takes unfair advantage of this courtesy will likely be penalized. A rising fighter, of course, cannot attack.

There is one notable exception: a fighter who falls on a 'stake' is dead, must move immediately and cannot rise until the point is finished.

Pinning

A felled opponent can be prevented by rising from the ground, even after the 5-count has been performed, by the process of pinning. To pin, one must place their weapon prominently across the body of the pinned fighter and inform them forcefully and repeatedly at regular intervals that they are pinned. ("Mi'lord/Mi'lady, you are pinned." every few seconds or so.) A discernable amount of pressure should be applied with the pinning weapon so that the pinned fighter can 'feel' when the pin is broken and they are free to rise and reenter combat.

A fighter can only pin one person at a time and while they may switch from pinning one fighter to another and while teammates may transfer a pin freely between each other, a single fighter cannot pin another fighter twice on the same 'kill' unless the pin was transferred to a teammate between the two pins. (Effectively, since pinning simulates grappling and holding the person down, it is impossible to try to keep two or more fighters pinned at the same time by rapidly switching off between them or by draping a long weapon across multiple fallen foes.) Illegal or unscrupulous pinning attempts will be penalized.

Engagement

As Calontir does not have killing from behind, the only circumstances in which you may strike or kill another fighter is when you have full acknowledgement. However, the fluid nature of the game, where you often have a fighter actively evading a fighter of whose presence they are fully aware (which on the melee field would be at best cowardly and at worst unchivalrous) requires a liberal interpretation of the rules of engagement. Thus a fighter is assumed to be engaged with any other fighter of which his is, or reasonably should be, aware. In almost all circumstances this applies predominantly to a Quick making a dash for the goal. Every team should take extra care that their Quick is a person who can put the fun of the game ahead of personal glory and who is willing to assume (in the absence of censure from the marshals) that the blow which just struck was in fact thrown by a fighter with whom he was fully engaged. Contrarily, it is the duty of every fighter to keep the safety of every other fighter foremost when deciding whether to strike or not. While this game can push the envelope of intensity it should never be pushed so far as to become unchivalrous or vicious.

Penalties

For the last three years we have instituted a scoring and player penalty system as a mechanism for control. There are essentially three degrees of penalty usually assessed: a scoring penalty, a personal penalty and a team penalty. Scoring penalties are assessed when a jugger commits a breach of the rules of the game. Examples would be a non-Quick touching the dog skull, a minor infraction that clearly and directly prevented the other team from scoring, illegally breaking the circle, etc. The usual penalty in this case is to grant the currently contested point to the opposing team.

Personal penalties are assessed when the conduct of one individual exceeds, in the judgment of the marshals, the boundaries of safety. Since everyone on the field is a noble and worthy fighter we have chosen to attribute excesses and oversights to heat, adrenaline and fatigue. Therefore any fighter who is assessed a personal penalty will be asked to sit in a specially designated area for a certain number of points, under the watchful eye of the gentle Ladies of the shire, for a number of points or matches.

Team penalties are essentially the same as personal penalties, with the notable exception that they are assessed for the most flagrant and excessive breaches of conduct. In the event of a team penalty, not only will the fighter be thrown 'in the box' for

one or more points or matches, but the team will not be allowed to replace that fighter until his penalty has been met to the satisfaction of the marshals.

If you are running your own practices or events using this game (or any other sport-like pseudo-combat game like) we would strongly recommend frequent use of penalties. If it is used freely then there is less stigma attached and can be used to ease any potential tensions that can arise from such a heavily competitive and physical activity. We are not talking 'court of chivalry level' breaches here, but rather any time some intervention is needed.

Marshaling

The game works best with three marshals. The lead marshal monitors the center of the field and the Circle. The other two will follow the action on either side of the field and tend to switch off following the running to one goal or the other. One or more constables may be required to monitor portions of the field uncomfortably close to the populace. Also very active marshaling is called for by this game and only very experienced and assertive marshals should be used. Unlike a tournament or conventional melee, judgment calls about the force of blows, presence or lack of engagement, as well as the rules of the game will be made several times during the day and must be made in a confident and authoritative manner. Indecisive or passive marshaling will soon see the situation spiraling out of control.

Commemorative Rules

Some juggers from past Blood of Heroes events have so distinguished themselves as to receive special recognition in the form of their own personal rule or rules clarification:

The Tomeeki Rule

"Under no circumstances may a juggler pin or attempt to pin more than one fallen opponent."

The Kirk Rule

"Using the populace as terrain is strictly forbidden."

The Fernando Rule

"Using passing motorists as terrain is likewise strictly forbidden."

The Kalos Rule

"You cannot strike a fallen foe until he has risen at least to his knees."

The Kalos Rule #2

"If you score on the other team's goal *they* get the point."

The Cathyn Rule

“Hip-throws and foot-sweeps are right out!”

The Roderick Rule

“You can be penalized for being so deadly that you frighten the marshals.”

The JoeAngus Rule

“Any rule broken by the Marshal in Charge will be assessed double the usual penalty.”

The Lycurgus Rule

“No blocking with the dog skull.”

The Hereward Rule

“Intentional tripping will be penalized more brutally than it is in hockey.”

The Furguol Rule

“If you get pushed/maneuvered into the circle before it is broken, it is STILL the other team’s point.”