

Tactica Mortis or Dead Hard

Putting together one single zombie is easy (2 arms, 2 feet, body, head, black candles, the right incantations) – putting together a whole undead army is hard work! Knowing that, Natl has recently asked me to scribble down my thoughts about the undead hordes for this very STS issue ... I will first have a closer look at the different units a vc army offers, and then go for the 2 ways of squeezing them into one army list.

General overview – Troops:

So, at first, let's have a look at the troops your army could include ... they will be different from the units any other army may field (well, with the possible exception of Khemri ...): all of them come with a bunch of special rules – most of them are unbreakable, every single model causes fear (or even worse) and they will never fail a panic test. They have to rely on these special rules – because, simply said, their stats suck.

So, if you do want to lead a dead hard army from hell, keep in mind: Undead core units have lower stats than every unit your opponent is about to field. Plus, they're way more expensive. So, if using mainly core units, you will fight an enemy, who fields more – and better – troops than you. That won't work in most cases.

Fortunately, things get better with elite/rare choices: Black Knights, Banshees, Fell Bats etc. are finally units that can be used in Battle! So, when designing an army whose goal should be to win, you should focus on filling all your special/elite slots with dead hard stuff.

Leading the way – Undead characters:

Vampire lord: The mightiest vampires you can get – superhuman stats, bloodline abilities, magic equipment, maybe mounted on a nightmare or a zombie dragon? However, a creature thus deadly has its price – never field one when playing with 2000 points or below. Always go for the extra magic level!



Vampire count: A moderately mighty vampire. Very nice stats and a lvl1 necromancer (or even lvl 2, if you wish). A great choice to lead Black Knights, don't waste the close combat potential of this model!

Vampire thrall: Hmm ... if you feel your skeletons could need a little bit more power, here's your

choice. A stylish way to field more than one vampire, but in my opinion, necromancers are the better hero choices. Maybe take one as BSB.

Master Necromancers: Wohoo ... prepare for one of the most deadly magicks in the world of warhammer! Upgrade to lvl 4, maybe take an extra spell and go for the magic phase! Undead lore comes with spells that – even in my opinion ☺ - are way too good. Summoning, moving, attack first & reroll failed attacks, curse of the years – you can't be wrong with that kind of magic. Of course, trying out death lore can be fun too – reduce your enemy's LD by 3, attack him with lahmian vampires and start shouting at him with banshees ... nasty ... But beware: Always keep him out of combat ...



Necromancers: Vampire count armies have to rely on magic, so always have 1 or 2 (or more) necromancers ready). Go for the extra level, equip them with dispel scrolls/energy stones and some nice unholy artifacts! Hide them in difficult terrain or units, never let them walk along the battlefield alone!

Wight Lords

Nice, a Battle Standard Bearer with Death Blow - ability - If not used as BSB ALWAYS equip him with the sword of kings ... death blow on a 5+ is too good not to try.

Wraith

Okay, he is Ethereal, causes Terror and carries a 2-handed scythe but 90 points just seems a way too expensive. Have to admit, I never used him:



Rotten corpses - Core Units:

Skeletons: For 8 points, you get a model whose stats are worse than the ones of a goblin. While they are one of the most stylish troops, I personally think that they're too slow and too expensive. If you feel the urge of fielding a unit of them, equip them with whatever you can get, use them to guard your necromancers on foot and start summoning!



Zombies: Same as for skeletons, maybe even worse. You do “only” get 3 gobbos for 1 walking corpse that always attacks last. Field them in strigoi/necrarch armies ... else leave them at the graveyard. But always have a box or 2 ready for the magic phase ...



Ghouls: Things are getting better! Toughness 4 and skirmish rules mean that archers will not be able to kill them too quickly! Plus, they are “Alive!” and still cause fear! Troops that may march! Poison! → Always field at least one unit of them! But – don’t attack anything with good armor saves (or should I say any? ☺) ... great way to annoy/threaten light troops, but don’t overestimate them.



Bats: Hm. Flying does sound good, however, the range is limited to 10”. I have to admit I’ve never tried them, but I think that 60 points is just too much – Vampire counts do not need to field blocking units, they summon them!

Dire Wolves: My favourites! Fast (18” charge range ... who said only High Elves can do that?) and deadly when attacking troops with low armour! Head for the flanks, attack light troops and try to get rid of some of these nasty enemy warmachines!



Tough guys - Special Units:

Wights: In my opinion, the toughest infantry ever. Enemy models will fear it’s “death blow” ability, the unit itself will never fall back. Toughness 4, maximum armour save of 3+ for a total of 13 points? Definitely a must.



Black Knights: Same as wights, but mounted on nightmares! THE unit to break almost any enemy! Try using them without barding from time to time – those extra 2” are a nasty surprise for your enemies ...



Fell Bats: Now here comes a great way to deal with enemy warmachines! A fear-causing, flying 2-wound regiment for 20 points a



model – you should field at least one regiment of them if expecting warmachines. Also a great way to deny march moves!

Spirit hosts: Can’t be wounded without magic weapons - a brilliant unit, if you don’t want to fight a specific regiment right now. Never underestimate their ability to walk through unpassable terrain, but watch out for magic weapons (oh and ... don’t go for fights you will lose in the first round due to battle results ...)



Expensive & Specialised - Rare Units:

Banshee: Same as spirit hosts, but more vulnerable and specialised. Can be highly effective if combined with death lore spells (-3 LD) and, maybe, one or two lahmian vampires.



Black Coach: One hit with S7 or above may kill the undead chariot, so: Love it or leave it. I always try to field a black coach, even at tourneys with lots of attending dwarves/imperial armies. A chariot that may move in your magic phase (Danse macabre) is just too good. Your enemy will concentrate on the coach, until it is smashed to pieces – if he succeeds, you’ve bought some extra time for your cavalry to rush in. If he fails – way to go!

Tactica: The 2 ways of fielding VC armies

In the VC army book, you’ll find a tactics article covering the main issue of undead tactica: Use *fear!* All you have to do is to win a combat – the enemy will flee if you outnumber him.

The tricky thing is, what units should be put in a vc army to win combats?

The first way to field a Vampire Counts army is simple: Use whatever you like, take lots of infantry, some vampires & necromancers and end up with a stylish – yet slow & hard-to-play army

While hordes of infantry may look good at pictures & photographs, they won’t win a battle for you. And just fielding ~4 magic levels will mean you won’t dominate any magic phase. So, if you’re looking for an army list to compete in tourneys ...

Troops: Field fast troops. Infantry is used to block, not to march around and charge the enemy. Take dire wolves and ghouls as core choices, black knights/fell bats as elite. Upgrade your knights

with magic banners (hit on 3+, or 5+ save against missiles), maybe put a vampire/wight lord into the regiments, and then – attack!

Magic support: Highly essential! Never go to war with less than 10 energy dice (@2000 pts) and some bound spells! Summon new regiments, make your black knights march across the battlefield, curse your enemy's main regiment!

Deployment: Here's the problem: To be mobile, you have to concentrate your troops around your general. But – don't deploy everything in the middle of the table where any unit of your enemy

can shoot you. I always try to go for one flank and concentrate all of my hard troops there.

During Battle: Above all, patience is needed – one step at a time! Commanding an army designed for combat doesn't mean you have to charge everything in range. Especially when facing supreme firepower – use cover, approach slowly, reinforce your troops by summoning – and then, when the right time has come, attack!

Keep on summoning!
Bernhard