

Dwarves vs. Vampire counts

The eyesight of dwarves is not renowned for its excellence, but even Sarin could not fail to see the masses of... bodies approaching. He termed them bodies because they were undead. They were bodies that had died, and been resurrected. Sarin did not wish to think about it much more. The fact was that there was a large undead force heading towards the hold, and, although it was still 8 hours away at best, he ought to raise the alarm. The blast from the horn made even Sarin jump. He wondered if the skeletons were close enough to hear it. He hoped not.

Within 20 minutes Sarin was standing beside the Thane, feeling his heart pumping like a war drum. He showed Azgrim what he could see. Immediately the forces of the hold were gathered. It was sparse; they had ten handguns, and barely enough black powder for them, maybe 25 crossbows, and a large supply of hammers and axes. They also had one cannon. The more problematic problem was they were a scant 30 fighting men in all. The Thane and Lord of the dwarven colony was a large dwarf by the name of Azgrim Bloodbeard, he turned and headed down the hold to the mines deep in thought. Thane Garaz Grimbeard was in this mine on a trip back to his home, and had brought 14 hammerers with him, and a Runesmith. This was fortunate for the colony, as Sarin had not included those in his headcount. Garaz called all the warriors to a meeting. "Right then. Harrumph. You have all heard of the force approaching, they look mean but their no more than mere goblins when it comes to it, trust me I know. I suggest we try to hold them till dawn before they reach the inner perimeter; I have a feeling this is but a mere Vampire coming home from his travels. I have seen a few men walking around with crossbows, round up as many as you can who can use them and anyone else who can fight. Do you have a cannon?" Azgrim Bloodbeard, Thane and Lord of the Hold of Nine Lives, nods enthusiastically, "Good get everyone round up and meet my guards at the Gate to the outer perimeter."

Two, all too short, hours later Garaz marched up to head of the column stretching from The Claws, as set of pointed buffs neatly enclosing the inner perimeter and passage to the North Trading Gate.

Sarin stood proudly holding his horn next to his Lord leading the unit, of course Azgrim's beard and reputation was not as long and distinguished as Garaz's but he was one of their own and had led them to this haven.

"We have some 50 shields, sir, of which 20 Cross-bows and also some of the richer, if that is a term for them, even have a few Thunderers. These Undead won't stand a chance, if I can be so bold." mechanically Magnus answered his Thane.

"You can't" Garaz curtly replied, and the column set off for Bald Hill.

Ascanius had not been having good nights recently, and was having problems with the bats causing unrest with the ghouls during the day, slowing the whole convoy down.

Sleeping all day in a coffin, and then driving the zombies and skeletons all night was proving slow, and he had not raised and scavenged as many as he had hoped. I really ought to introduce Ascanius before I go much further. Ascanius is a vampire. His full title is Ascanius the Vengeful, and he had revenge to get on a dwarf called Azgrim Bloodbeard who had tried to drive a stake through his heart once, but being a dwarf he was too short and missed, he was strong granted, but could only manage to render his liver into a bloody mess. The bleeding was sufficient to drain his power for a while and postponed his plans. His magical scouting the night before had revealed that he had tracked that pathetic Dwarf down to a new, small, unprepared hold and he wanted revenge. BLOOD!!!!

The basic rules, and the battlefield.

The battle is Dwarves against Vampire counts. The scenario is such that the Dwarves will have 1000 pts, and can deploy on a small hill, with a solid surrounding wall. The Vampire Counts will have 1500 pts, can deploy anywhere not within 18" of the wall. Due to the actual set up, this gave them good space on one side, and it was declared they could start effectively off the third table edge. Both sides are so determined to win, that neither side will ever flee. To win, the Vampire Counts must get 2 units of strength 7 or more within (7 models in at least) the walls at the end, if this doesn't happen; the Dwarves win (even if they are all destroyed). Due to this set up, it was decided the Vampires should set up first, and should also get the first turn.

(Also, this was a very friendly game, so you (the reader) must bear in mind rules are not always remembered, and sometimes we allow a bit of courtesy to make the battle fairer.)

Prior to the battle.

Dwarves: Commanded by Garaz Grimbeard



Garaz Grimbeard



Garaz Grimbeard

"Well, this is going to be interesting. I have never found against vampire counts with my dwarves; I was an undead nut before the ale got me though, so I have experience on my side, lots. But the army list was tricky, he has mass troops of little kill or toughness, but he has hundreds and one mighty life-killer. So that puts dwarf in an all mighty God position, then comes the bombshell. I have 1000 pts against 1500. That's great I was looking for a mighty slaughter now I may have a struggle, especially if he only has to get 2 units of 7 over the wall. I don't like playing with substitutions [using one set of models to represent a different unit], it goes against the spirit of the game for me, and so I'll have to make do with what I have and my solid gold luck.

Right, twenty crossbows, hmm...to split or not to split? Well in combat they will probably be over-whelmed on their own, so lets keep them together if they are going to all be able to shoot. Next! Thunderers, 10 of them, (well 1 sub to make it legal, otherwise I have no army). No command group though probably best to avoid combat then. Next! My personal and favourite hero, good old Garaz Grimbeard, right runes, need runes because my opponent has higher weapon skill, toughness, and attacks, not to forget initiative.

Well to defend or to attack. He will no doubt charge me therefore Master rune of Gromril (+1 armour save), Grudge Rune (re-roll failed attacks), Rune of Striking (+1 WS). He's set now to make sure he can win combat. We'll take his old faithful retinue of 14 hammerers and command group. Next! Cannon, I am allowed 2 with my allowance left but I have only 1 model (Homemade!). Next! Now I am tight on points, what else do I need... oh yeah magic. A Runesmith with magic weapon, I am allowed 5 points over because of my opponent breaking one of his allowances. Well then I guess I'll have the

Rune of speed, Balance (can't let them hog all the magic) and Stone (magic armour ... wink wink, nudge nudge). Right Army sorted.

I find the main undead strengths are 1. Magic, 2. masses of troops 3. Vampire (oooh no, not a blood sucking monster!!). So I feel pretty confident, magic, not with us dwarves around, let alone a runesmith of balance around; masses, well crossbows, thunderers and a cannon should take care of them (Gyrocopter would top it off nicely but we sent Grunaz with orders for Ale, oh and reinforcements): and a vampire; well if Garaz lays his massive axe on him his head will roll.

Right let's go!"

Unit	Cost
Dwarven Thane: Garaz Grimbeard, with Grudge rune, Master rune of Gromril, rune of strikeing and wearing light armour	111
1 Runesmith with gromril armour, master rune of balance, rune of stone and rune of speed	138
14 Hammerers, heavy armour and great weapon	221
20 crossbowmen, shields, light armour and command group	285
10 thunderers, shields and light armour	150
1 Cannon	100
Total	1005

Vampire Counts (Vampire Counts): Commanded by Ascanius the Vengeful



Now, I know this is not a picture of Ascanius. That is simply because the only cameraman ever to get near enough to take a picture never returned. There is no known picture of Ascanius.

"Dwarves, this looks like the slow vs. the slow, but it should be good fun. His troops have high toughness, and are good in combat, *and* they are behind a wall. Vampire Counts generally have mainly mass troops, and against the dwarves I need to get as many of mine into combat, and against as few of his if I am to have any chance of winning. But I will also need some better troops. Based on this, I have chosen 43 skeletons, and 60 zombies for mass troops, 12 ghouls for the initial attack, and the Fell bats to do some damage to the probable cannon, before it goes to far. I have also taken some spirit hosts,

because you need magic armour to hurt them.

His deploying last was a big advantage. Original plan was to group the army in one place and attack to one single point in the Dwarf defence. This would result in the a large part of the Dwarf army being wasted covering sections of the wall which looked out onto empty battle field and could not fire upon my army. Seeing as you can only put one unit directly behind a wall. The Dwarf army would be wasted bunched up all in once space, or wasted spread out behind all the wall section with most of them having nothing to fire at.

As it turned out, there were only a couple of regiment units anyway so the plan backfired. Had my army been spread out and attacking from all sides, it would have been him who was in trouble, fighting a numerous front war with not enough troops to spread. This would result in the sides of the wall not covered being easy for me to walk up to and cross over with the troops from my army covering the empty section. I should have surrounded him and come at all angles. Fell bats, aimed at his cannon, because in my experience flyers excel in destroying the crews of war machines."

Unit	Cost
Vampire Thrall: Ascanius the Vengeful, Barded Nightmare, full plate armour. Blood dragon, with Red Fury and Master strike	147
Necromancer, Lvl 2, with power stone	125
22 Skeletons, light armour, spears, command group	267
21 Skeletons, light armour, command	235
60 Zombies, standard and musician	375
12 Ghouls	96
1 Bat swarm	60
6 Fell bats	120
1 Spirit host base	65
Total	1490

Deployment

Vampire Counts

Right, I have to get as much into combat with as little of his. I have therefore deployed strong on one side of the table, with the spirit hosts and the bats on the other. I will charge with everything, and how it goes will depend on how he deploys, and how things progress.

Dwarves

Setting up. I have the hill, the wall, *and* he deploys first so even better. Interesting deployment, but that's where he shows his lack of knowledge about dwarves. I did the obvious thing, cover the walls and got ready for unleashing a rain of death (death???? they're already dead). I have Garaz to cover the cannon from his predictable vampire bats and a runesmith to cover the ghosts (whatever happened to ghosts haunting old houses?).

HAHA BRING IT ON YOU DEAD...Not quite dead ermm...things?



Pre-Battle preamble



Magic spells:

Vampire Counts L2

Necromancer drew: 1.

Invocation of Nehek - Raise
1D/2D/3D Skeletons or

Zombies.

2.

Hellish Vigour - Allows
Vampire Counts to fight first in
combat, and
re-roll missed
hits roll.

Vampire Counts Have
deployed first and will start
first as the attacking force.

The Actual Battle

Vampire Counts Turn 1

Live-like mass ambles towards waiting Defenders.

Necromancer miscasts Invocation of Nehek, stunning the necromancer and stopping him casting anymore this turn.

Dwarf Turn 1



Cannon sends a glorious warning shot, which the Thrall survived thanks to his unnerved mount. The dwarven rain of death, slow to find its targets, only dispatches 2 ghouls by gunpowder and another by a well-aimed bolt in the eye.

Vampire Counts Turn 2

The horde amasses before the shining armour of the sturdy dwarves.

Five skeletons emerge in front of the wall to the dismay of the thunderers.

The vampire bats make a dash for the cannon crew and meet Garaz there. They are successfully held off only testing their chain mail once, and even felled one. Garaz fells one for himself. Another 2 just disintegrate and fall from the sky landing in a cloud of black dust.



Dwarf Turn 2



Once more, more restless, the Dwarves open fire and once again a ghoul falls from a well placed bolt. In a fit of nerves the thunderers send the skeletons back to the ground they came from.

Vampire Counts Turn 3

Foam dripping teeth glittering in a mist of foulness, the ghouls charge the thunderers behind the wall. The bat swarm swarms all over the open flank of the crossbows, while the zombies make a brisk stumble into the crossbows. Hellish vigour is dispelled and a mysterious purple haze oozes out of the ears of the dwarven runesmith, as he faces the spirit host slowly floating towards him. Fierce fighting ensues, 3 zombies left in a colourful and messy pulp, 2 thunderers clawed by poisoned teeth and fall armour rendered useless, the wall handed over to the Ghouls. The remaining fell bats fall, clearing the cloudless night above the cannon.



Dwarven Turn 3



The Runesmith, by now very bored, charges the spirits in a fury, and takes a wound off it with his runic axe. On the other side of the hill, the fierce slaughter continues, 2 zombies fall to axes and the bats swarm is finally swatted. 2 more thunderers fall turning green before they hit the floor, the ghouls were tougher than they looked.

Vampire Counts Turn 4

The skeletons fall over the wall into the crossbows and the thick of it. The Thrall charges the cannon as the crew decide they have something better to do. The spirits howl the loss of another kin. The new arrived skeletons are greeted with flashing steel and relentless hacking, as two fall, closely followed by a zombie. The ghouls and thunderers drew equal luck losing a “man” each.



Dwarven Turn 4



An eerie silence came over the battlefield, followed by the runesmith calling "I think they're dead!". As the Hammerers move towards closing the gap about to be formed, the crossbows only finished off another 4 zombies and one just fell over and never got back up. The ghouls continue clawing their way though the thunderers leaving 2 more thunderers dead. The crew rally and warily discuss the safety issues concerning returning to their prized machine with the Thrall standing a mere horse stride away.

Vampire Counts Turn 5

Ascanius desperately looking for Azgrim Bloodbeard to unleash his revenge, spots a high-ranking beard in front of him and cautiously moves near him to investigate. The necromancer in the meanwhile casts Hellish Vigour, which is dispelled by the Runesmith, seen with every inch of his body smouldering but otherwise unharmed. 2 skeletons and 5 zombies fall to the swift axes of the crossbows in turn losing one of their own. Three more zombies die as the magic link weakens yet further. The ghouls and thunderers draw one for one but the combat is less and less equal and it's only a matter of time for the Thunderers.



Dwarfen Turn 5



Garaz and his bodyguard charge Ascanius, as Garaz's inherited weapon starts to glow. The grudge rune screaming out "DEATH TO ASCANIUS!!!". The combat ends in a draw with neither side scoring on each other in the sparkling foray of arms and blade. Another crossbow falls in return for 4 more zombies and a skeleton disintegrates back to Mother Nature. The Ghouls finish off the last standing Thunderer in a lump of blood, bile and bubbles.

Vampire Counts Turn 6

As the sun's rays are now lining the hills on the horizon Garaz falls under a mighty and dishonourable blow from Ascanius, (He rolled <4+ on four attacks and was given a courtesy roll to make things more interesting). The crossbows in the meanwhile remove another zombie while the ghouls and skeletons swarm the walls once occupied by dwarves.



Dwarven Turn 6

The roar of the cannon was heard for the second time in the battle as damp had hindered the lighting of the gunpowder or forced it to misfire on a few precious occasions already. The shot takes out 3 zombies and takes a wound of the Necromancer.

The sight of their Thane lying in an inert lump on the floor inspired a fury of retaliation from his bodyguards finishing off Ascanius (by combat resolution) not before losing 2 more of their own. Garaz was given as much attention as could be spared in the situation, whilst Acanius and his mount disappeared in a black opaque mist and flowed off towards the horizon.

The effect of Ascanius' demise was a breath of relief to the dwarfs as 10 zombies and 5 skeletons just fell apart before their eyes.

Vampire Counts Turn 7



Dawn ready to break through any second, as the zombies and skeletons continue their onslaught and slow advance up the hill. More dissolve as the dark magic thins. The ghouls charge the Hammers, leaving one seething on the floor. In reply the Hammers takedown 3 ghouls and the others just crumble. 5 skeletons on the flank of the crossbows also dissolve as well as 7 zombies. The dwarven axes take one more skeleton down and another disappears.

Dwarven Turn 7

The Hammerers charge the skeletons in a bid to stop them holding the wall and take 3 skeletons for their one loss, another two disappears skeletons disappear. The crossbows finish of the zombies and the skeletons as the emerging sun slowly dissolves the remaining undead.



Battle Summary



From left to right: Oscar, our trusty helper, Ascanius the Vengeful, Garaz Grimbeard. (I, Lord of the Tournament, your editor, am behind the camera)

Draw: As although the Vampire counts had fulfilled the objective according to the scenario, they barely managed it and there was little left to justify any actual victory.

Casualties



Dwarven

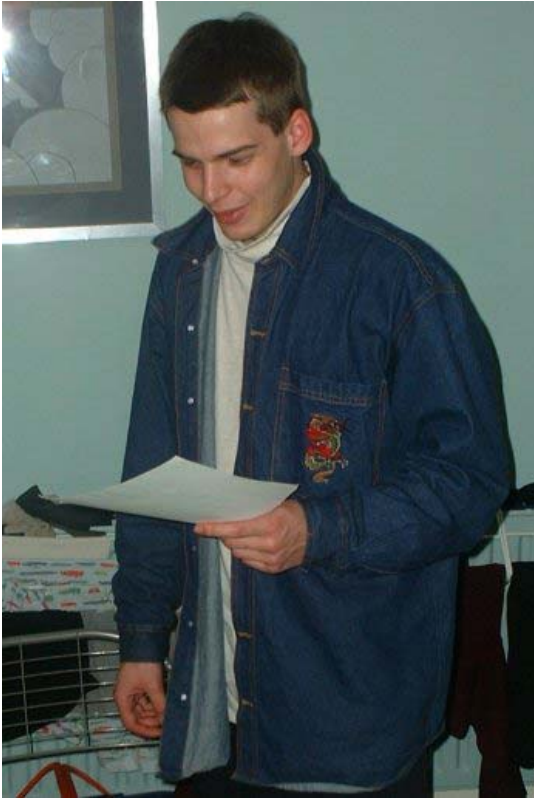
1 Thane
4 Hammerers
4 Crossbows

Vampire Counts

1 Thrall
51 Zombies
37 Skeletons
12 Ghouls
1 Spirit Host

Commander's Thoughts on the Battle

Dwarven take on things



Ohh! Look! I had a battle plan!

“Now that was intense. I thought I was going to lose that, just purely on the rules of the objectives. I think it was sensible to call it a draw as I had nearly everything left and he had virtually nothing but completed the objective, another turn and his whole army would have been history.

That was good; I am very pleased with that though a couple of huge mistakes on my part cost me an outright victory. Firstly I think the Vampire Counts commander did well considering his extremely poor deployment, I think a little research would have easily won him the battle as there was no way I was going to be able to defend that whole wall. Spreading myself out to thinly would have cost me very dear with his huge numbers and I was very stretched for points to cover my aims.

Firstly my Thunderers, oh dear, if there ever was a book of blunders which should be avenged this one ought to be at the top of the list. I wrote on my army list, "NO H TO H!" under it and what did I do, not only did I get them in the thick of things but against his toughest units, those damned Ghouls. I should have left those 5 skeletons to charge me so I'd save another turn instead of shooting them. But more importantly I should have had the Hammerers there and not worried so much about his General. Big mistake. The other one was those goddamn "out of pure courtesy re-rolls". Here's a tip, never give a vampire any courtesy he'll just use it to kill your general (To tell you the truth my Vampire Lord would have done the same.) Though I have a quibble as there have been many in the battle, but shouldn't I have won the combat resolution at the end of the first round? That was another thing that annoys me is that we both missed rules and specials which can make such a huge difference in a battle and the worst bit is remembering after the turn you should have just remembered. Oh well...

Good points, here there were many. My experience of Undead paid off really well. He used no magic (except 5 skeletons and a dodgy other little thing...) He won very little combat and his vampire did almost no damage (courtesy roll...courtesy roll...). Another thing I almost forgot to mention, as with Dwarves it isn't very worrying was his fear causing though it didn't really apply in this battle (I thought I'd remind all of you out

there he intend to play against Undead) What was very disappointing though was my cannon, well the first turn nearly decided it, that was my bad luck for the game (but unfortunately not his good luck) I thought it would do a lot more damage then again there was a new rule about Undead marching near their General which I didn't find out about before I read his army book before the battle, either way I felt that they weren't a threat as deployed as they were.

The General, My Lord Grimbeard, performed as valiantly as expected and although didn't really get a chance to prove to everyone he was the general-killer he is in his heart (Orc warboss, Elven prince, paladin...) his men made sure such disrespect and lack of honour was acted upon. Thank Valaya his Rune of Glomril took the great brunt away from the attack and only knocked him to the ground unconscious and very badly bruised, he is still recovering but I can reassure my fellow Dwarven kinsmen that he is now hobbling around and drinking as much as he ever did. "... But the bats, ha ha ha, so predictable and I showed them, they'll think twice before they send bats near me again, there 12 of them huge things, (gulp, gulp, gulp...) with big snarling teeth..." (That's enough Garaz let me finish writing this and you can tell me all about them again.) Sorry, where was I? Yes so overall I was pretty pleased, good stout steel and strong ale stood up to the dark sickly stuff and their cursed marrow. Another grudge settled, though only a minor one, still a victory for the light and brute strength. Hurrah!!”

Vampire Counts thoughts



Ascanius, the victory snatched from his hand by common consensus

(His thoughts on his battle plan.)

"My Necromancer was positioned in the best place possible, somewhere dark and dingy, he certainly wouldn't reach in hand to hand. This was great because the spells I was using did not require line of sight. The bad news was, he had taken measures to ensure I didn't achieve anything from the magic phase. He crippled the magic; one of the Vampire counts main assets.

Fell bats, aimed at his cannon, because in my experience flyers excel in destroying the crews of war machines. How wrong could I be, I hate dwarves.

On the rare occasion that a spell did work, the dead I raised, I successfully used as a shield for the rest of the army, which saved the lives of some ghouls allowing more to reach combat.

The other intended shield was my trusty bat swarm.

I had hoped the spirit host would cause

some kind of trouble, but again poor planning resulted in a swift demise. I do despise the way Dwarves are so good in combat and have nasty little techniques to stop the enemy using their magic just because they are jealous that they don't have their own.

If you counted up the models over the wall (as per the original scenario) you will find 6 Ghouls (Not enough) 8 Skeletons, and 7 Zombies, which should have given me the victory, but it was snatched from me because they all decided that practically that was no victory at all, hence the Draw. I am not pleased."

LOTT