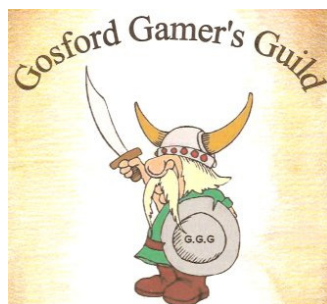




The Podhammer Guide to **Wood Elves**

Based on Podhammer Episodes 2 & 3
Recorded September 2007
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Overview

Wood Elves are one of the most effective armies on the Australian tournament scene at the moment. The army combines very fragile Elven units with incredibly tough tree spirit units. The army is not great for beginners as because it is so fragile it punishes you if you make a mistake. Most of the units in the army have no static combat resolution (ie. ranks or banners), and the army relies completely on shooting and maneuvering to win games.

To win with Wood Elves you must you must control the entire table by doing a combination of the following things:

- You need to use your shooting to force your opponent to advance and then eliminate his supporting units.
- You must use your fast units to threaten your opponent's flanks, and to redirect his units into vulnerable places.
- To destroy enemy units, you must charge multiple Wood Elf units into a single enemy to completely wipe it out.

Strengths

The Wood Elves main strength is their very strong shooting phase. Longbows have a 30" range, which is very helpful and it means you get another round of shooting whereas most armies won't. Glade Guard Longbows are Strength 4 at short range and so advancing on the Wood Elves is a very risky proposition for a lot of units. Things like the Hail of Doom Arrow and the Bow of Loren can really add up to a devastating shooting phase.

The other strength of the Wood Elves is their flexibility. Wood Elves have some of the best skirmishers in the game, such as Dryads and War Dancers. Combine that with very fast units like Wild Riders and Glade Riders and you have an army that can respond to threats quickly. They can move through forests, and have no move and shoot penalty. This all adds to their ability to be incredibly flexible and being able to move units to where they need to be to handle any threats the enemy throws at you.

Weaknesses

Wood Elves are vulnerable to shooting and magic. Even a D6 Magic Missile will do significant damage to most of your units. Wood Elves also lack a truly effective weapon to deal with high armour units like Knights with 1+ or 2+ save. The army is also vulnerable to small units like single heroes (eg Wolf form Vampires) that can get behind your archers and wipe your units out one at a time. The same goes for a dragon, anything that can move faster than you is going to cause problems for Wood Elves.

The biggest weakness is complete reliance on dice rolls to win combats. Unlike most armies they lack static combat resolution – very few units have the ability to have ranks and very few units have banners. This means that you are relying on doing lots of wounds to win combats.

You might expect to win a combat based on average dice rolls, but you can roll a lot of 1's and 2's and lose where if you had average rolls you would have won. However, no risk, no reward. Judge whether it's worth it to charge into that combat or if you should wait to bring up an additional support unit.

The following is a summary of the units available to Wood Elves, with recommended unit sizes and upgrades. Note that the comments on the units assume that you are playing games of 2000 – 2500 pts and may not be applicable to games of less than 2000 pts or more than 3000 pts.

Lords

Highborn

This character has high weapon skill and high ballistic skill, but is still only toughness 3 because he's an Elf. He has high initiative and high attacks and is the only way to get leadership 10 in the army. You should specialise him to be designed either for melee combat or ranged combat.

If he's designed for melee combat, consider a Wild Rider Kindred or War Dancer Kindred. The other Kindreds are not worth it as they put him away from units that can protect him, and takes his valuable leadership 10 away from the core of his army. In terms of magic items – take Annoyance of Netlings so he can only be hit on a 6 in challenges. This is a must as there really isn't any great armour or ward saves available for the Wood Elves. Most of the items that give you ward saves are situational and don't apply all the time. The Annoyance of Netlings is the best way to keep your character alive in combat.

If your Highborn is a Wardancer Kindred consider the Blades of Loec to reroll any failed rolls to wound. If he's a Wild Rider Kindred you can use the Spear of Twilight to get the killing blow ability. Otherwise he has enough attacks that even a simple magic weapon like Sword of Might can be effective.

However it is probably better to design your Highborn to be specialised for shooting. This is the preferable option as it allows you to take the combination of the Bow of Loren (shoot as many times as you have attacks) and Arcane Bodkin arrows (no armour saves). This gives you something that really can deal with knights with a 1+ save or 2+ save. This is important because there's not much else in the Wood Elf army that can deal with high armour opponents.

Mount options for the Highborn are good. If he is going to be in a unit of Eternal Guard or moving him between infantry units, put him on horseback. This gives him an improved armour save from being mounted but he can still join units.

If he's a Wild Rider he will need to either be on horseback or on a Great Stag. Horseback is probably the better option as the Great Stag isn't worth the extra points.

The Great Eagle is not recommended because it makes him vulnerable as he can't join units. This means that he becomes targetable by the enemy. You will need to spend a lot of resources (eg dispel scrolls) to keep him alive and this can make the rest of your army more vulnerable. Also if you use the speed and manoeuvrability of the Great Eagle then you are taking his leadership 10 away from the rest of the army.

The Forest Dragon is pretty good. You can give him a 3+ Ward Save that protects him and his mount until it fails. However, using the dragon to full effect does take the Highborn's leadership 10 away from the bulk of the army. Also, the cost of the dragon on top of the Highborn makes it an expensive unit that you need to be careful with. Jeff also feels that a dragon doesn't fit the theme of a dense dark forest, but if you want a dragon don't let that stop you.

The Highborn is really good in a unit of Eternal Guard. His presence makes the unit stubborn. Any enemy unit charging it will have to face the shooting from the Bow of Loren/Arcane Bodkins and then fight a unit that is a stubborn leadership 9 unit with a lord that's doing a lot of damage in close combat.

Of the three Lord choices available, the Highborn is the 2nd best choice. He's good but not the best Lord choice available.

Spellweaver

Previously a favourite lord choice of Jeff's, the Spellweaver has become less effective with the changes to magic introduced with 7th Edition. However, Wood Elves are very vulnerable to Magic Missiles and she does lend some great magic protection to the army.

If you frequently play against a lot of armies with a lot of magic, then the Spellweaver may be a good choice if you need magic defence. If you are going to take her then you should also take the Wand of Wych Elm (which allows any dispel attempt to be re-rolled). Also the Glamour Weave Kindred and unicorn upgrade are a must. The Unicorn provides Magic Resistance 2. With Magic Resistance 2 most opponents won't even bother to target her with spells. The Unicorn also provides movement 10", ie a 20" march, and is Immune to Psychology. Both the Spellweaver with Glamour Weave and the Unicorn have a 5+ ward save, and any shooting directed at her is randomised between the Spellweaver and the Unicorn, which gives her even more protection.

Play style with this character would be to place your free 6" forest near the middle of the table and place her in it so that she is near the centre of the table so as to use as much of her magic as possible. Her spells don't require line of sight, so use Tree Singing to move the forest around, and keep her well protected. However, because of the limitations of 7th Edition magic you're better off sticking with one of the other two Lord choices.

Treeman Ancient

This is the best lord choice. He's got everything – high strength, toughness and wounds. He's leadership 9 and stubborn. This guy's an unstoppable force. To make him even tougher, give him the Annoyance of Netlings to make him nearly invulnerable to enemy characters. Also give him the Cluster of Radiants to get an extra dispel dice in the enemy magic phase.

This character has a profound impact on the battle, even if he doesn't get into combat. The enemy will go out of his way to make sure that his characters are not in line of sight of (and hence chargeable by) the Treeman Ancient. You can control the battlefield with this guy's presence. Even without getting into combat the Treeman Ancient can earn his points back by dominating the battlefield. For example, your enemy might steer his heavy infantry away from the Treeman Ancient and you can then use other units to attack his rear.

For 375 points, including the Annoyance of Netlings and Cluster of Radiants, a Treeman Ancient is well worth it. Just remember that the Treeman Ancient takes up a Rare slot as well as a Lord slot.

Heroes

Noble

The Noble has a broad range of options and can take most of the kindreds. Typically you will focus on one of two options – shooting or close combat.

Alter Kindred (which gives him movement 9” and plus 1 attack) or mounted on an Eagle are worthwhile options and provide a very mobile character. Because these options are relatively cheap you can afford to expose him to danger.

One option is Alter Kindred with Hail of Doom Arrow and the Helm of the Hunt. The Hail of Doom Arrow is a one shot 3D6 Str 4 attack – get it out early so it won’t be wasted and then get into hand to hand. Once you’ve released the Hail of Doom Arrow, then the Helm of the Hunt gives +1 WS and +1 Attack on the round that you charge. If you equip him with a great weapon you will have 5 x S6 WS7 attacks on the charge. He is very vulnerable as he is only toughness 3 with a 5+ save so protect him from shooting or magical attacks and choose your combats carefully (eg use for flank charges).

A noble used as a BSB is great combo when used with a unit of Eternal Guard or backing up a Treeman. Don’t worry about magic banners, just worry about keeping him alive. The Stone of the Crystal Mere provides a 3+ ward save (until he fails it) for 30pts which leaves enough points left over for a Sword of Might.

The other kindreds are not that effective. The Scout or Waywatcher Kindred are not that effective in getting your character behind enemy lines. If you do want to do that, then the Alter Kindred with its movement 9” is probably more effective.

A Noble with the Wild Rider Kindred is effective but the Wild Riders are already effective without a character accompanying them.

The War Dancer hero can be very good, especially combined with the Moonstone of the Hidden Ways. Using this you can effectively teleport the character and the unit he is in from one forest to another one, ideally inside your opponent’s deployment zone.

In general with Nobles, take all the armour upgrades that you can (some Kindreds don’t allow armour), so light armour (if you can take it) and a shield (if you can take it). Use a great weapon if on foot or a spear if mounted.

Spellsinger

Regardless of your style of play you will want at least one Spellsinger for magic defence. You will use your Spellsinger to carry dispel scrolls and add a dispel dice.

If you are taking more than one Spellsinger, its got to be on the basis of the extra magic defence. The Athel Loren Magic is just not very offensive. Most of the time you are better off taking more combat characters.

Branchwraith

Not a very good combat character and not a very good spell caster.

It's hard to get full benefit from this unit. If you don't take the Wizard upgrade option you might as well take a Noble instead. However, if you do take the Wizard upgrade you will either waste his combat ability (protecting him to act as a spell caster) or his magical ability (if he gets killed or run down in close combat).

Core

Glade Guard

These guys are the thin green backbone of a Wood Elf army. They are a must in every Wood Elf army, unless you are going for a pure forest spirit army.

Glade Guard are one of the best shooting units in the game. They have a range of 30", which means they will outrange most opposing shooting units. They have a good ballistic skill. They have no move and shoot penalty, so with 30" range and a 5" move the Glade Guard can be considered to have an effective range of 35". At short range (under 15") the Glade Guard Longbows are strength 4, making it risky for your opponent to advance on the Glade Guard. .

You should use Glade Guard to bait your opponent. Use them to take out support units like shooting units or fast cavalry early in the game. Use your range advantage when taking on his shooting units. Eliminate your opponent's manoeuvrability and force him to start advancing on your Glade Guard. Retreat and keep shooting and lead the enemy into charge range of your units. If necessary flee from your opponent's charges. You should have led your opponent to a position where they can be flank charged by your Dryads or War Dancers.

Use the minimum size unit with musician upgrade. You won't want to use ranks as this will reduce your shooting. Glade Guard are useless in combat so don't give them a banner as that will just be 100 victory points to your opponent.

Glade Riders

Glade Riders function very similar to Glade Guard other than being mounted and being fast cavalry. They are a mobile shooting platform. Use them to advance up flanks and shoot the supporting units. They are not great for flank attacks as only Str 3, T3 and a 6+ save. You'll probably find that they give away more combat resolution than they generate because of the wounds that they would suffer.

Use a minimum size unit (5 or 6 models) with a musician upgrade to help them rally after fleeing.

Dryads

Dryads are one of the best skirmisher units in the game. They have high strength, high toughness, two attacks, are immune to psychology and have a 5+ ward save against nonmagical attacks. You can use them as a screen for your more vulnerable units.

Use the minimum size unit of 8, any more is wasted. Eight models is big enough to take a few casualties but still be unit strength 5 to take away rank bonuses with a flank attack. Being skirmishers they don't get rank bonuses so if you attack a unit from the front there's not much

benefit in having more models than will form up in one rank.

Use the Dryads in setting up your traps. Set up combination charges with other units of Dryads or other hard hitting units.

There are advantages and disadvantages of having a champion. There's the advantage of the extra attack from the champion or the ability to issue a challenge on the opposing hero to soak up the extra attacks. The disadvantage with a champion is that if you are attacking a mage, he will challenge your champion so as to reduce the number of models that can attack his mage. Upgrade to a champion if you have spare points in the army.

Special / Core

Eternal Guard

Eternal Guard are a Core unit if your army is lead by a Highborn, otherwise the unit is a Special choice.

The Eternal Guard are the only unit in the army that can get rank bonus in a meaningful way. They become stubborn if accompanied by a Noble or Highborn. If you are going to take Eternal Guard you should take a Noble or Highborn with them at all times.

The Eternal Guard have a high weapon skill but low strength. Their best use is to take advantage of their Stubborn ability to act as an anvil unit for your strategy. As long as the Highborn or Noble is alive you can expect the unit to hold up the most deadly of your opponent's charges even if there are only a few models left (though be aware that if you lose combat and are outnumbered by fear causing opponents that you will autobreak). The biggest trick is keeping the Noble or Highborn alive so as to retain the stubborn ability.

The preferred unit size of 15 – 20 with full command. They can take a magic banner, and the War Banner is a good option if you've not used it elsewhere in your army.

A good combination is to have the Eternal Guard with a Noble that is the Battle Standard Bearer. The BSB allows you re-roll of your break tests, which combined with being stubborn on leadership 9 makes the unit very reliable.

The Eternal Guard fighting style gives them a high volume of attacks, albeit at relatively low strength. This high number of attacks means that the unit can be used offensively against weak infantry units, as well as defensively against the opponent's more powerful units. The models are the same points cost as Glade Guard, which makes them pretty good value for what you get.

Special

Wardancers

These guys are a great skirmishing unit. Very fragile but can be very destructive. They rely on their dances to do their damage and to keep them alive if they make a mistake.

The offensive dances are Whirl of Death (killing blow) and Storm of Blades (extra attack). Use the killing blow dance when fighting characters or other models with multiple wounds and against knights or models with a lot of armour. In most other situations the extra attack is the way to go.

The other two dances are defensive, and can be used to save them if they get into trouble. Wardancers are immune to psychology and so they cannot flee from charges. If you get charged use either the Woven Mist (always strike first but lose one attack) or Shadows Coil (4+ ward save). In nearly any situation where you are on the defensive the 4+ ward save is the best choice.

The models are expensive, so small units are the key. The recommended unit size is 7 – 8 models so as to get a full frontage of attacks against enemy units. Use the musician upgrade. A champion can be a benefit or a negative in the same way it is for the Dryads, but for only an extra 4 points over the cost of the champion upgrade you can get an additional Wardancer instead.

War Hawk Riders

War Hawk Riders are probably the weakest of special choices. They are expensive so only use a unit of 3 or 4. The best use for this unit is for attacking weak characters or mages in the front rank of your opponent's units. As such the Champion upgrade is not worth it. They only have a 6+ save so they are very vulnerable.

Other than mage hunting, anything a war hawk rider can do, a glade rider unit can do for less points and does not take up a special slot.

The other special choices are so much better.

Wild Riders

This unit has great models and awesome rules. They are a great fast cavalry unit. They have a weapon skill equivalent to elite combat units in most other armies. They are strength 4 and armed with spears so are strength 5 on the charge. They have light armour and a mount so have an armour save of 5+. They are forest spirits and so get a 5+ ward save against nonmagical attacks, magic resistance 1 and are Immune to Psychology. They generate fear on the charge, and when in combat on turns they didn't charge they get +1 attack.

They are a feared unit. Use the units speed and manoeuvrability to get on the flanks of the enemy and threaten his units as he comes towards you.

The preferred unit size is minimum size. Use full command. They can take a magic banner, and the War Banner works well. Jeff has always used two units in his army.

Tree Kin

Tree Kin are a monster sized unit, similar to Minotaur or Ogres. Compared to units such as Ogres, this unit is more defensive rather than offensive. They are toughness 5, with a 4+ save and a 5+ ward save so can absorb a lot of damage. They are strength 5 with 3 attacks so can dish out damage as well.

You can use these guys as an anvil type unit to hold an attacking enemy in place while you charge them in the flank with your war dancers or wild riders. Unit size of 3 or 4 models without any upgrades are preferred.

Rare

Waywatchers

Very expensive for what you get. Their Lethal Shot ability gives them killing blow at close range is nice, but their shooting is still only strength 3. They are toughness 3 with no armour or ward save and will die very easily. Use minimum size unit with no upgrades. The other rare choices are so much better.

Treeman

If you have a Treeman Ancient don't take a second Treeman or you will raise a lot of eyebrows (most opponents think that two Treeman is over the top). If you don't have a Treeman Ancient then having a standard Treeman is almost a standard choice for a Wood Elf army.

The Treeman has a lower leadership than the Treeman Ancient, but is still stubborn and has the same stats as the Treeman Ancient. You can't take Forest Spites and so can't give him the Annoyance of Netlings, which means that he can be vulnerable to challenges from enemy characters.

His impact on the battle can be profound. Your opponents will go out of his way to avoid him, so use this to your advantage. If he does get into combat, his 5 strength 6 attacks will make a dent in any unit. This is a great choice.

Great Eagle

These guys are great. At 50 points they are very cheap. They have reasonable statistics, so they can be used as a support unit in combat or to take out a mage.

Their main use is charge redirection. Fly out in front of an enemy unit and turn at an angle. When your opponent charges you, you flee and your opponent should have made a failed charge that leaves his flank exposed to one of your units. If he doesn't charge the Eagle you get another round of shooting at that unit. Every army should have a Great Eagle.