

UP GO THE HEADS

A GAME ABOUT FOOTBALL

“A fun game about the funny old game of football. Written in 24-hours to satisfy the needs of the Compulsion charity auction bidders, UGTH is a hard-tackling game of diving and scoring. Whoooooof! He really hit that one.”

1-1, we're in the final minute of extra time.

Penalties await these two teams.

McNicol goes to take the corner, this is it, it's now or never for Scotland.

Even the goalkeeper is up for the corner. The ball swings in...

GOALLLLLLL

The 'keeper has scored. I don't believe it. Scotland have won the World Cup with the last kick of the game.

Ron Robertson, the Scotland number 1 has won it!

Amazing!

UGTH is a game about heroes and villains. Footballers with skill, and ego, but also either destined to be revered as Gods or damned as What-Could-Have-Beens. And remember the scandals: the wives, girlfriends, drugs, betting shops, gangsters, bad tackles, and swearing on kids' TV. And the goals. The saves. The trophies.

In UGTH each player has a character (PC). In the course of play each player will also play supporting characters for the other PCs.

Each PC is defined by 4 attributes.

EGO - A PC's self-belief and mental toughness. Attitude and arrogance all rolled into one. Think of this as every wild story you've ever heard about dressing room dramas and training ground bust ups. When you fall out with the boss, who goes? You or him?

HUBRIS - Opposed to EGO this is the force that damns a footballer when they use their EGO. Think of this as karma coming to bite the rampant overpaid egotists in the ass.

TALENT - A PC's footballing ability. How good they are with their feet, their head and their all round footballing skill. Think of this as how a football magazine might rate the top 10 talents in the country.

EXPECTATION - Opposed to TALENT this is the weight of investment that others place in the footballer. England expects, sometimes too much. Think of this as their transfer value and number of posters and sticker albums.

In the course of the game these attributes will rise. When the



Hubris or Expectation of one of the PCs reaches a limit then the game will enter its final turn. After which it ends. The players then describe the outcomes for their PCs.

I arbitrarily set this limit to be equal to 7 for test play. Perhaps a 'round number' like 10 will work out better (or a footballing number like 11). Playtesting will reveal for sure.

The game uses dice. I recommend six sided dice, but if you prefer you can use ones that are more football-shaped such as d20s.

The game is played in turns. On your turn you are the acting character and to tell the story of your PC you play out a scene. The other players portray supporting characters in that scene. They may also introduce their own characters, in a supporting way, under certain circumstances.

These scenes allow you to increase your EGO or TALENT. They may also increase your HUBRIS or EXPECTATION.

In the scene the player of the acting character will be rolling dice based on their EGO or TALENT. The player to their left will be rolling dice based on the acting character's HUBRIS or EXPECTATION (depending on whether EGO or TALENT was chosen by the player of the acting character).

Any other player can help either side by 'betting' up to 1 die from one of their attributes temporarily. This has two effects. (i) Their own PC is now involved in the scene somehow -- say playing in the same match or featured in the same magazine or online poll. (ii) If they side they back wins they gain an extra die for their next turn. If they lose then they are short of the die they 'bet' for their next turn (of course they may choose to use another attribute instead that isn't short of the die, that's their call).

PLAY

Sit around a table or a similar arrangement. Keep seated in the same order during play.

Create your characters. They'll need...

NAME : something like Roy Rockette or Steve Stonesplitter.

TEAM: pick a real team or make one up.

NATIONALITY: pick a Nationality that you represent, if it's Ireland then its likely you were born elsewhere.

HOW I WANT TO BE REMEMBERED: a dream, a hope that you'd like to be known for.

DEMONS: something that is going to be your epitaph if it all goes wrong: crooked? drunk? cheater? headbutt an opponent in your final game and lose the World Cup?

TROPHIES: note down the trophies you win in play here. You start with none.

Note down your Attributes

EGO:

HUBRIS:

TALENT:

EXPECTATION:

They all start at 1.

Allocate an extra three points between EGO and TALENT.

Now...

Ask the player to your left to give you 1 point in either HUBRIS or EXPECTATION

Ask the player to your right to give you 1 point in either HUBRIS or EXPECTATION

You are ready to start. Pick someone. They go first.

They choose a scene and frame it. Other players contribute, and can 'bet' dice on the scene to help themselves in upcoming scenes, or not.

SCENES

-MATCH scene (either league, cup or international)

-GOSSIP scene (getting married or drunk, interview with the media, releasing a song or perfume, arguing with the boss)

-TRAINING scene (going to training camp, getting fit, working on free kicks or shot-stopping all day, practice games)

The acting PC chooses which attribute they want to use: EGO or TALENT. For matches this can be either, for GOSSIP scenes it is EGO, for TRAINING scenes it is TALENT.

This is how they will try to get a positive outcome (e.g. a cup run, a hat-trick in a losing match that brings them to the attention of a bigger club? Or a pop star for a wife, etc.) They get to roll a number of dice equal to this attribute.

The player to their left picks up a number of dice equal to the acting PC's HUBRIS or EXPECTATION (depending on whether it was EGO or TALENT that the acting PC picked)

Now other players can pick a side to help and 'bet' a die.

When everyone has picked a side the dice are rolled and added together. The losing side gets to narrate what they are trying to achieve, and the winning side then turns this around to their desired outcome.

If the acting PC wins by more than 5 then their EGO or TALENT increases by 1.

If the acting PC wins by less than 5 then their EGO or TALENT increases by 1, but so does either HUBRIS or EXPECTATION (acting player chooses which)

If the acting PC loses then the player to their left chooses either HUBRIS or EXPECTATION to increase for the acting PC.

Other players can gain an extra die if they bet on the correct side. Yes, winning dice "stack" so you can keep betting until you decide to use the dice on one of your turns.

If a 'bet' die comes up as 1 then there should be a bad 'cross' on that player's next scene. They screwed up and the PC they bet on is involved in their next scene somehow.

If a 'bet' die comes up as the maximum (6 or 20 or whatever) then a 'good' cross happens on that player's next scene. They have been positively affected by the player they bet on (even if they lost the test overall despite the maximum).

Then on to the next player's turn.

And so on.

When someone hits 7 for an attribute then end the game. (Note: not 7 dice available by betting. It's the actual attribute hitting 7.) Everyone completes one turn after the PC hits 7. When that has been done everyone wraps up with an epilogue.

That's it.

Done.

-Gregor Hutton

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Written because of a bid at the Compulsion Charity Auction 2006. Just in time for Compulsion 2007, in 24 hours. Well, considerably less actually.

For Harvey.

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