



Freeblades Faction Tactical Overviews as of Mar 23

Black Rose Bandits – They are an interesting mix of moderate speed, moderate armor and moderate shooting. What makes them special is their combination of finesse abilities. Always keep in mind the Elusive/Bladedancer/Sidestep options of the Duelist and Black Rose. These are the sneakiest tricks in your bag. Embrace them and drive your opponent crazy. The Highwayman is your heavy hitter with Two-Ended and Power Attack (which applies to both attacks). Use the Headhunter or Black Rose to start an engagement and then get the charging Highwayman in there as the closer. The Rustler works in a similar fashion, just not as well as a hero. The Poacher needs to deal a couple of wounds to the enemy prior to engagement. He is not quite good enough to shoot into combat reliably even with Marksman, so use Infiltrate to get into position to cover the battlefield and then work over the enemy as best you can. And never miss an opportunity to Moonmark with the Enchantress, it is just too much fun!

Black Thorn Bandits – In some respects, these may look like Black Rose Bandits, but there are several nuances that a player should be aware of. Bladedancer on the Leader is a potent weapon; learn its uses and it will serve you well. The Huskarl/Bounty Hunter combo gives the Black Thorn Bandits some durability that the Black Rose Bandits lack. The Bodyguard combined with another hero gives you some serious offensive combat power that can't be ignored. You have good mobile shooting in the Mercenary Crossbowman that can even up fights before they happen; he's also scary after the engagements begin. Multiple models with Thievery also help in Looting Spree and Treasure Hunt scenarios - let your opponent do the work and relieve them of the loot afterwards. You get all this with Illusion Magic in support: A Confusion spell to prevent a model from engaging, or Illusionary Terrain to reduce your opponent's maneuver options, can swing the balance of a combat. Illusionary Blades, Dazzle and Phantoms can all provide extra edge in melee. Dazzle can also nearly eliminate any shooting threat you may face.

Demons of Karelon – The Demons are, as you'd expect, a weird mix of capabilities. Some things are obvious. The Azalakar just wants to get stuck in. Send him into the heart of the opposing freeband and watch him wreak havoc. Be watchful of a single stout model that can keep him busy and not using his sweep attack while the foe concentrates on the rest of your demons. Also, bladedancers can give your leader fits. The Mokruhl is a unique caster, providing sorcery and the ability to hang in combat with some heroes but not being as able to counterspell and overcome others' counterspells. Support with your magic and then strike with him at the opportune moment. After these two you have a key decision to make. Go with one of the main styles the demons can provide or a crazy mix of abilities? Do you like fast? Plakhra/Alpha/Ventarx. Do you like crafty? Saryad/Dryad/Gadarl. Do you like pure combat? Skethar/Zakerlash. When it comes to followers, make sure you have a Borgat or two to get deeper into the encounter area early and two or more Skrot to take advantage of the Azalakar's Microgate talent.

Darkgrove Demons – The Darkgrove Demons are an offshoot of the Demons of Karelion and while they share some similarities there are some key differences. The entire force has Arboreal to take advantage of any woods terrain on the encounter area, and their faction rule even allows them to bring a bit of their own. The Karyad is the large centerpiece of the force; though she is a capable combatant she prefers to support with her spells from afar when possible. While the tree demons tend to be a bit lighter with respect to AV, every model in the force except the Karyad has access to Thorny Vines, which is a thrown ranged attack that can be used even if you run or charge. The Saryad and Dryad bring a significant control game to the table with their Beguile ability. The Ironbark are one of your main combat heroes hitting reasonably hard especially when they can pile on to trigger Opportune Strike. The Razorthorne brings the ability to make two or more attacks on most turns between her thrown weapon and Lash Attack. The Groveguard wants to prowl around the edges of the fight with Stealth until a good opportunity opens up to charge in with Pouncer to target a weakened or outnumbered enemy. For follower support the Wildwood Encroacher can get upfield quickly to secure objectives and is more durable than many followers due to its Dodge ability. Also don't forget to bring a Vining or two to take advantage of the Karyad's Vinespawn rule. One thing to note for this faction is that the Ironbark, Razorthorne, Groveguard, and Wildwood Encroacher are all variant statlines for the Saryad and Dryad models differentiated either by painting them differently, converting them, or both.

Eclipse Sisterhood – The sisters rely on subtlety and deception for success. They cannot afford to stay in a prolonged duel and are most effective when choosing their combats carefully. To truly master this faction, one has to make best use of Elusive, Sidestep and Bladedancer. The Secret Sister's Enhanced Disguise talent also helps you pick the precise time to strike. The Suneater's Void Wall and Friction spells can break up an enemy advance. You'll also need to find a balance of ranged attacks that work for you. Manslayers who stay out of sight and support from afar, Nightwhispers racing to and fro about the encounter threatening every part of the opposing freeband or Izchaki Chasers who can follow up their ranged attacks with a hard hitting charge and slip out of combat when the opponent misses their return strike.

Falkaaran Adventurers – The Falkaaran freeband is a group of specialists, each with a specific role to play. You will need to choose your tasks and match ups carefully. The Bladeseeker is arguably one of the best swordsmen in the game, so don't be afraid to put him in harm's way. Send your Bladesister towards their heaviest armor to maximize Accurate Strike. Keep your Witchcat in reserve near the Forester... use him to threaten isolated followers, vulnerable casters and other lightly armored models. Ranged damage from the Fire Wizard and Forester should soften up the tougher combats. Read your spells carefully, there is a lot of utility in the list (Heat Stroke vs Die Hard models, Scorch vs high AV models for example); it's not all about Fireballs. There is also the option to take a Shadow Hunter caster and replicate a team built around demon hunting. His magic is support-based so a different play style than the offense oriented Fire Wizard. Taking the Shadow Hunter also provides the option to bring along a Jhenkar companion with some unique spirit demon based capabilities.

Grular Invaders – Overall the Grular are very fast, but are lightly armored. The Kor-Khan is a heavy hitter, but is less able to stand in the face of multiple heroes due to his single Parry. Use his Taunt talent to force the fight where your followers can help isolate a key enemy hero. The Impalers hit like a hammer, but can get into trouble if they fail their Hit and Run. Position them so they only have to deal with one hero if they get caught standing and their DEF 6 might save them. The Marauders are not superior melee fighters, so you must use their shooting to even up the fight. Do not ignore the role of the Warlock's Choke spell. The Marauders' lack of defensive talents while mounted means long melee engagements tend to work against them, so anything to speed up the fights works in your favor. Use your Marauders to bait charges and then break off or evade away. Delay them whenever you can as they are one of your more powerful weapons. After the initial charge, use a Krang to pile on to maximize his Flurry and look at splitting attacks with the Kor-Khan once the opponent's defense is down to 3 or so. Raiders are made to stay out of fights, tossing in javelins, until the moment comes that they have all the advantages. Then, charge in! It's all about using the speed of the force to maximize your local model advantage.

Haradelan Questers – Haradelans are seen as the most forgiving faction to play. While the knights are slower than many heroes in other freebands, they also possess solid fighting skills and heavy armor. You should have a solid plan at deployment, because their low speed makes it hard to adjust mid game. It is never bad advice for a Haradelan player to move as quickly as possible to the enemy regardless of situation. This prevents faster freebands from gathering loot, acquiring recon points or passing trials and running away before you can get to them. Subtle is not the Haradelan way! You do not mind getting stuck in an engagement as long as it is with the models you want pinned down. Remember that you do not shift positions quickly. It is ok to lean on your high AV to keep you alive and Shield Bash in most situations for the extra attack. Be aware of a crafty opponent baiting you into a charge away from where you want to be. Both the Muster Thresher and Militia Spearman provide great support for your knights, just be careful not to get them killed as you may need them to tip a combat in your favor. Use them in second round pile on instead of first round engagements. The Fist of Vidunar is nearly as good a fighter as some heroes and quite survivable w/ AV6. Push him into combat in support vs enemy followers and/or wounded heroes to help tip the balance there.

Kandoran Deathmasters – Relentless. Think of a slow moving but powerful wave and you'll have the basic idea of the Kandorans. They share some basic aspects with Haradel and the Kuzaarik: slow speed, high armor, resilience, lack of finesse. Krayech's Reapers, the Awakened and Bonethralls push slowly forward and take a long time to die... again. A horde of Shamblers can overwhelm enemy supports or serve as a wall protecting your caster. Building a more conventional band around the Levy Spearman can be interesting. They can win shooting exchanges despite their d6 RAR due to their high ranged DEF and can then wade in and support the heroes with their spears. The Wretch is your way out of trouble in the more mobile scenarios, running around looking for loot or keeping an eye on a far objective while your slower troops get engaged. Note what they can do with your Death Tokens and take that into account in your deployment. Necromancy is a mix of painful debuffs and the most summoning options in the game. If you spend any time on anything, be sure to look at the Deathshaper talent on your Jackal Priest. It could be a game saver!

Koronnan Moonsworn – The Koronnans focus on teamwork over and above any other freeband in the game. The Koronnans bring something truly unique in freeband construction as the only force able to field two casters in a single freeband, however they pay for that privilege by having one fewer slot for more martial heroes. One of the keys to playing Koronna will be how you take advantage of having two casters to control and delay opponents while empowering your own models. Moons Magic does not offer any direct damage, but it does have several control spells as well as protective spells and summoning for both casters. The Moons Priest and Moons Priestess are somewhat more capable combatants than the typical caster and have the ability to project spells for each other, extending their area of influence on the battlefield. Continuing the theme of paired models, thanks to Teammate the Bladebrother and Bladesister are able to fight in support of each other, and they can even trade places in combat to shield a wounded partner using Replace. The Blackspears with their high MAR and AV provides staying power for the force and Protector can be used to protect more vulnerable allies. The Koronnen's Shadow is another enabler in force using Flurry to further lower an enemy's defense when piling on. With the Shadow, make sure you activate Weaponeer early and choose a weapon ability for her - remember that this weapon ability lasts until changed. Using these synergies to your best advantage will allow a Koronnans force to truly become more than the sum of their parts.

Kuzaarik Forgers – On the surface, you may think they are similar to Haradel, but there are many subtleties to be aware of. Consider accepting charges with the Hinterguard so you have the option to Sweep Attack should he push a follower or two into contact. The Forge Warden with 4 LPs and AV6 is a serious tar pit with a punch. Initial deployment is crucial due to your low Speed, March and your Ambushing Field Agent give you some options to adjust reasonably well. Use the terrain creating abilities of the Kryomancer to shape the battlefield in your favor. Ice Magic also gives you the ability to mess with Die Hard and Dodgy models to help turn combats. Wayblockers are one of the better melee followers in the game and can be a nasty follow up to initial engagement. The Grenadier is your opportunist. Should your opponent bunch up, see if you can make him pay the price. Snipe at low armor casters or followers. But remember, you will do *way* more damage with direct fire... don't be afraid to move him to get shots. Lastly, try to keep your Quarrelers stationary when possible in order to maximize spike potential with multiple shots.

Mershael Corsairs – Thanks to hakanite armor, the Mershael combine quickness with a reasonable amount of protection. They also have a number of multi-role models. The key to employing them is to make good decisions about which role each model is filling at any given time. For example, the Reaver's Kindred is a decent archer, but is also an excellent hand to hand fighter. The trick is determining the right time to switch from an archer role to a warrior role. Also with the RK, note that you can take a charge, make a ranged reaction attack and often still go first in melee with your quick strike Taumari. Given the maneuverability of the freeband, working the enemy into that charge instead of always maneuvering yourself takes some discipline on your part! Similar things are true with the Takar Hunter and Lookout. They can alternately be missile troops, scout/hunters or infighters. Choosing when to be which is the art of being Mershael. That multi-role nature comes with another challenge besides choosing when to be what. There are opposing models out there that specialize who will be better at their role than you are at any one of yours. Also note that, with the exception of the Shaikan, none of the heroes has more than one defensive talent use. Quick will help you with being ganged up on by followers, but watch out for attacks by multiple enemies or enemies with multiple attacks. That Shaikan is an exception to all these observations, he is good at everything! Take some time to think through how you will use his Agile Charge. Finally, spend a moment looking over both the Illusionist and Mender spell lists. Both are solid, but play entirely differently. We suggest picking the one that best fits your play style, but picking which model you like better is also always good!

Ravenblade Mercenaries – The Ravenblades are a little bit of everything as befits a mercenary company that draws from all over Faeron. The Ravenblade Lieutenant and Ravenblade Soldiers can both take a hit and do damage in return - with their Parry(2) don't be afraid to use Shield Bash to make two attacks if your enemy cannot make more than one or two attacks. For casters, you may choose between the more offensive Fire Wizard or the more defensive Fist of Vidunar. Both offer excellent support to the force - while the Wizard projects a bit more power directly onto the field, the Fist supports his allies and can step into a fight in a pinch with his high AV and decent MAR. For the remaining hero slots the Ravenblades have a diverse line up with the Mizrakai, Stag Warrior, Takar Hunter, and Truthseeker providing the melee forces while the Stalker and Nightwhisper provide ranged support. One thing to bear in mind is that with the exception of the Ravenblade Soldier, you can only have one of each hero rather than the normal two. This results in a diverse playstyle due to the mix of heroes. It is taking the unique capabilities like the Stag Warrior's healing, Truthseeker's incredible defense, the Mizrakai's ability to repeat charges, the speed of the Takar Hunter, the Nightwhisper's elusiveness, and the Stalker's uncanny shooting and applying each ability at the right place at the right time that will be your challenge. When it comes together, the Ravenblades function like a well oiled machine that can answer just about any problem your opponent can throw at you.

Shakrim Wavestalkers – The Shakrim are a mixed force, with interlocking capabilities that can be very dangerous if used in the right combinations. The Steel Fang is ideal for wading into multiple enemies and making them pay. She has excellent defenses and a sweep attack. The Shellback is also good for standing in a fight, though with only one attack. He is the quintessential tank. The Viperon is basically snakeform light cavalry and should be used to pick off enemies at the fringes of the fight. The Headhunter's role is vengeance! Your caster is a vicious attacker, with the exception of the Wall of Water which serves to corral your foes. The Tilik is a fast annoyance, but can't pick up items. Your Spitter can be quite a problem for your opponent with his venomous attacks, but must get close in to use its ranged attack.

Traazorite Crusaders – The Traazorites represent the most military of the freebands. They are not known for subtlety, they came here to conquer and impose their will. You are not here to dance around to play hide and seek, you are here to smash. Bladebrothers and Packmasters form a solid core. Velozar Knights and Daklos Ravagers chase down whatever tries to get away. And those legionnaires! You have the best follower in the game, put him to good use. Concerned that he only has one life point? Try the Conviction spell on your lead legionnaire. Your opponents will want to make it a game of hide and seek. Don't let them. You also are not the strongest at ranged combat, do not stay in a long range duel – get stuck in!

Trilian Seekers – Generally believed to be the trickiest faction to master. Your models are either highly skilled, are dual purpose (meaning both ranged and melee options), or both, so they are more expensive. This means that you are likely out-numbered. Typically Trilian freebands focus on either bows or javelins. Defender-based freebands bring the more accurate ranged attacks and the Veteran Defender is a solid melee fighter. A Tree Runner/Searcher based freeband provides more long-ranged shooting and less risk to your followers, as well as the Scout talent. Especially with a Searcher, you will want to use your shooting to even up the fight before melee engagement. Wanderers provide both a ranged capability and melee support but do not help with scouting and are average at both. Once the fight does start, don't be shy about pushing your followers into melee for support, preferably in a "pile on" situation with your heroes to try to end the fights more quickly and move on. While your moderate armor and good defense means your Enforcers, Mist Dancer and Starseeker are formidable weapons, if they get stuck in drawn out combats, an opponent's other models will get numbers on your other models. Use your Treespeaker to keep your key heroes healed and throw an animal swarm into the mix to prevent being outnumbered at an important moment.

Urdaggar Tribes of Ruin – While not quite as fast overall as their fellow Urdaggar, the Tribes of Ruin more than make up for that lack in hitting power. They are led by the Dark Herald, whose magic excels at weakening opponents through the use of Miasma, Grasping Murk, or Inevitable Fate. She can also increase the hitting power of her allies or even heal them. Just be careful - many of her most powerful effects require Death Tokens which do not start in the encounter area. Fortunately her Carrion Harvest talent assists in getting those tokens to drop. The Tribes of Ruin lack long ranged attacks, instead relying on throwing weapons to soften the enemy as they close with them. Once engaged, they can do as much or more damage than any other faction, but they need to overwhelm opponents quickly as their somewhat lower armor makes them vulnerable to a single bad die roll in a protracted engagement. The Predator, particularly when paired with one or more War Jackals, is good at quickly defeating opponents. The Tangler specializes in keeping opponents off balance and assisting in quick takedowns. Finally, the Tribes of Ruin are unique in having a two life point follower with the Thralls. While the Thralls are generally poor they provide two critical benefits. First, they can hold an objective and potentially require the opponent to commit more forces than they would like to dislodge them. Second, they provide a cheap source of Death Tokens as each life point lost on the Thralls has the possibility to produce a Death Token.

Urdaggar Tribes of Valor – Almost as fast as Grular and as fast with the correct use of the Battlecry talent, it is important to use your speed to choose combats you can win quickly. All of your melee fighters hit hard but have little to no armor and are vulnerable to split attacks. Battlecry is also more than just extra movement, it can change facing and pull your models around crucial corners and allow for unexpected charges. The Hunter/Night Hunter combo means you are one of the Scout-heavy factions. Use this edge in deployment to get your troops where you need them. Work over an opponent's lighter armor troops with arrows to make the eventual melee combat go more in your favor. Mystic Dance and Bear's Growl can really turn the tide of combat and Hard to Kill can allow your Unproven to tie up one of their heroes for a round until help can arrive. The key is to overwhelm your opponents in combats quickly. If you are entering into multiple one-on-one combats, you are likely doing it wrong.