

CONVERSIONS AT THE CHOP SHOP

by Warrior Prince

As I stated some time past when I jumped into the waters here, I'm a figure collector first, gamer second (and mind, I love games). Now, in Warhammer-type games, troops are lined up in ranks, marching out to deal death or die in an orderly fashion. Trained to act in unison, in formation, using practised techniques for fighting with someone immediately to your left and right (step, two, three, thrust, step, parry, thrust). So having rows of identically or near identically posed troops looks natural (although even here I like some variety).

In a skirmish game, on the other hand, you have groups of warriors fighting in loosely organised units, each man attacking and taking his enemy where he finds them in a free-wheeling melee. In this sort of situation, obsessed fellow that I am, I want my guys to be individuals. I distinctly DON'T want them looking alike. It may seem much ado about nothing but I feel that the little bit of extra effort and time really makes the army look that much more cool on the table. When I bought and occasionally played Necromunda (future skirmish game by what some here regard as the 'evil empire'), I took pains to modify any similar figures so that they all appeared as individuals.

Well, I've purchased my first Chronopia army, the Devout (enough with the booing and hissing from the bleachers). Got a great bargain, a nearby store was having a 40% off sale to make room for ordering the newest figures. So having already picked up the Swordsmen Musician and Leader, the Necromancer, and the Wailers (just because I thought they all looked so cool), I got one blister each of everything else currently released for \$47. Stroke of luck. Anyway, since in the unit packs you get two figures of two poses, I immediately started thinking about how I could make minor conversions to make all the figures unique. And because I intend to collect other armies eventually as well, I went through the books to see how they lent themselves to tweaking. So for anyone else interested in individualising their figures, I thought I would pass along some observations.

We're not talking about extensive chop and putty jobs here. Just some simple knife and glue work.

The only tools needed are a good hobby knife (X-acto) and super-glue or epoxy. Cuts can be made by pressing and rocking the knife blade with a liberal application of patience. If you have a fine hobby saw some of the cutting will go faster. But some of it, due to the angles and figure moldings, can only be done by a knife without chewing up a lot of detail on the figure. When gluing, the join in many cases will be sturdier if you pin the pieces together. For newbies to conversion work, you do this by drilling a small hole in each of the two pieces to be glued, cutting a small length of brass wire (available at most hobby stores) with wire cutters or the cutting part of most pliers, insert the brass wire into the holes and attach the two pieces with glue. In most cases some minor cutting and filing will disguise the cut-aways on the finished figures. In some cases you might want to apply and file a really small amount of modelling or two-part epoxy putty.

DEVOUT

The Cursed - On the more static of the two figures especially, it seemed that a more natural position would be to have the axe blade pointed out at the enemy. And on both, the axe head is so tantalisingly nearly free. With patience (the single most important trait/skill in working with miniatures), you can use a modelling knife, pressing and rocking the blade, and work the two heads free. Then simply rotate them to new positions. The blade is a big enough hunk of metal that having them in the new positions makes the figures sufficiently different.

Devout Followers - First the guy hefting the upraised blade (man, the strength in that arm), cut between the shoulder pad and the arm guard to the end of the arm guard. Then slowly (always slowly or you overstress the metal and it breaks) bend the arm and blade forward pivoting at the elbow. Sometimes cutting a shallow narrow wedge at the inside of the elbow can aid the bend. When the bend is finished, it will have likely closed over the cut, if not, just the tiniest dab of putty will do ya'. If you want even more variation you can cut and rotate the wrist a bit. Now the other guy. You know. The one saying, "Sword? What sword?". This one's a bit more ambitious. Again, with a good deal of patience, it is possible to cut and free the hand. Remove it and cut away the hilt of the sword. Using any suitable flat piece of plastic (you can buy styrene strips at most any hobby or model railroad store, 4mm x 1mm is about right and about \$1.50 for a mess of 'em), fashion a new sword blade and hilt. Attach it to the severed hand (how grisly) and reattach the hand in a rotated position so the sword is pointing out away from the figure. For those who dislike the hidden sword pose as much as I do, you can sand the cut on the hand at an angle to vary the attitude of the blade to make both figures different to a degree.

Dark Eyes - Well the one guy needs no work at all (the one with the separate pieces for hands and weapons). The hands can simply be attached at different angles to make two different figures. On the other fellow it's fairly simple as well. Cut free the pommel of the right-hand sword, slide the knife blade up to the end of the glove on the same arm. Then on the left, cut between the shoulder pad and the arm guard, again to the end of the guard. Then just bend the two arms to a desired alternate position.

Greatsword Followers - Aaaarghh! Why did Target mold these guys with the arms so close to the body? There's not a lot you can do here without some major modelling. With a great deal of patience and care, you could cut the heads free and rotate them so the figures are looking in different directions. But it's a rather subtle change and not really enough to show up at a glance on tabletop. For me, not enough gain for the pain. I'm obsessed, but not that obsessed. If it ain't gonna show, I'm going to leave it alone.

Wailers - The figure with the sword held across the body is a lost cause. Changing him would be another major modelling job. On the alternate pose, it is just possible to cut the sword blade free. Rotate it 90 degrees so the edge is pointed out from the figure. With that big curve on the front of the blade it may be enough to make the change noticeable, especially if you bend/rotate the tail 45-90 degrees toward the rear.

Necromancer - (for those with big armies and two of them) - The original pose itself is a little awkward (try it for yourself). Changing it is simple, just bend his scrawny withered arm forward at the elbow pivoting the staff on its end by his foot. Looks less open. For even more variation, free the end of the staff from the foot and rotate the same arm at the elbow and point that staff at some unfortunate. The ragged cloth on his arm now looks as if it is being blown by some ill wind from the nether regions. Another touch would be to rotate the horn points forward on his head.

Warped Lord - Not a lot you can do here. The one arm is molded with the body, the elbow armour on the other is too thick and distinctive to bend up or down. About the only options are bending the arm in toward the body, cutting and rotating at the wrist, or rotating the staff head, with or without cutting (depending on how far you want to rotate it).

FIRSTBORN (easy)

Firstborn Knights (swordsmen and macemen) - Other than the obvious (weapons), these two types are virtually identical in the modelled details and do not copy each other's poses. Sooooo, take the duplicates from each pack, lop off their weapons, exchange and reattach the weapons and voila! Eight unique warrior poses.

Longbowmen - Guy taking a shot, about the only thing that I can think of that looks sensible would be to cut, rotate 90, and reattach the bow had. Shots can be taken with this style. On the other fellow, cutting the bow free from the knee and bending the arm in or up. But given the thickness of the arm, and with no flared glove or armoured guard to cover, your going to have to cut a wedge to bend that sucker. It's just so thick.

Crossbowmen - The shooter is a lost cause. Arms too close in to the body to bend. The other guy, though, free up the end of the bow from the shoulder pad and free up the stock of the bow from where it just touches the body. Then bend the arm forward along with the bow. Again, with the thickness of that arm (boy those firstborn are buff) I think its going to take cutting a wedge.

ELVES

Axemen - The guy holding the axe with two hands doesn't leave you with a lotta options, arms fused to the body. About the only thing you can do is to rotate the axe head 90 degrees so the blade is horizontal instead of vertical. But that goes against the curve of the axe shaft if you look for that sort of thing. The other guy shaking his fist, ooooh the possibilities. Again, you could just rotate the axe head. Once more, as in the cursed, these are big enough hunks of metal to stand out. You could cut the wedge on the axe arm between the end of the chainmail sleeve and the gauntlet, bend the arm down and close the gap bringing the axe to a new position. Or cut the wedge a bit differently and bend the arm forward at the elbow to close the gap. Cut the free arm at the edge of the shoulderpad, rotate so the hand is against the hip. And if your warband is big enough to support two axemasters, either rotate the axe blades 90 forward on one of them, or even simpler, attach the standard from the standard bearer to one of them and the back blades from that guy to the standard bearer (these two guys are identical in their details except for the blades and standard).

Spearmen - You can't really do anything with the guy bracing. The other guy, though, if you cut the spear free from the top of the head, and cut the arms at the edge of the chain mail sleeves, rotate the whole thing down toward the front of his body to the desired position and reattach. But if you go much beyond 45 degrees, this starts to look unnatural (try mimicking the pose paying especial attention to your hands as they'd be positioned on a spear you were thrusting with). Much beyond 45 and you will need to cut away the spear shaft, separate the spear head, cut the hands at the end of the gloves. Rotate the hands 180, use a length of brass wire for a new spear shaft (drilling a hole through the hands) and reattach the spearhead. Then it looks natural (again, try the pose yourself).

Archers - The guy taking a shot, again maybe rotating the bow hand with the bow for a horizontal shot position. The guy holding the bow in front of his body, what, are you mad?

Militiamen - Can't see anything to do that makes enough of a difference. Rotating the weapon heads doesn't seem like it would change the direction of a significant amount of metal to really stand out as a difference.

Keepers of the Flame - The figure with the blade across the body, the arms are too much a part of the body molding to do anything without major modelling. The other figure presents several possibilities. Free the pommel and crossguards of the sword from the knee and shoulderpad, respectively. Simplest is to bend the

arm forward at the elbow, bringing the sword perpendicular to the figure. Or cut the sword arm at the glove edge and rotate forward. Or cut a wedge along the upper half of the glove edge and bend the sword arm upward to close the gap, changing the attitude of the sword.

Dragon Clan Slaves - Only seen the one pose. Cut straight down from the shoulderpad into the weapon arm and rotate forward. Or wedge cut and bend the weapon arm forward at the elbow. Or wedge cut the elbow out entirely and bend the arm down to close the gap making the arm go straight out. Or some combination of the three.

Swordsmen - Just the usual bending of the swordarm forward or cutting at the elbow and rotating the sword arm forward.

Lotus Eater - Cut a wedge out between the wrist and that first bump of the corrugated arm guard. Reposition the sword and hand to a more upright position. Then cut along the edge of the sleeve and rotate the arm forward. He's now swiping sideways or guarding against a low blow. If you want to try something more, cut and file away the staff. Cut behind the wrist and rotate the hand so a staff would be more straight up and down. Now cut at the edge of the sleeve and rotate so that a staff would be running low and front to back rather than up or down, pointing out somewhere to the front of the figure. Drill a hole in the hand, use a cut piece of brass wire and attach the appropriate staff head to the wire.

DWARVES:

(the only pictures I've seen show only one pose of the unit packs)
Vulture Legion Gauntlet - The usual weapon arm bend or cut and rotate stuff. But if you have a hobby saw, cut the bugger right across that stomach seam and rotate the whole torso.

Vulture Mallet Warriors - No ideas on this guy.

Vulture Legion Swordsmen - (page 70, LOTR) Only thing I can see is cutting arm at edge of chainmail and rotating weapon forward. If you want to go the extra mile, cut the arm at the edge of the shoulder armour, shave off an angle before reattaching the arm so the plane of the sword changes from the rest of the body and maybe rotate a bit as well.

Dark Star Warrior - Cut the ball and chain free from the shaft and reposition to a new angle, up, back, sideways, whatever. If you're real detail oriented, make a new hoop of wire to attach to the shaft after passing it through a hole drilled in the end of the chain. I'm just obsessed enough to do that sort of thing. (I once strung a harp on a 25mm figure.)

Dark Tusk Legion Gauntlet - Cut the non-weapon arm at the edge of the shoulder pad and rotate to the desired position.

Dark Axe Warriors - Cut and rotate the axe head. Again, this is a significant hunk of metal and it will stand out.

Blood Bone Legion Clansmen - Uh, I don't think so.

Blood Bone Axeman - (page 175, main) The old reliable cut and rotate of the axe head. If you're ambitious, cut a wedge along the line of the shoulder pad down on the front of the figure and bend the arm forward, pivoting on the butt of the axe. Combined with the axe head cut and rotate it should make a significantly different figure. (Page 70, LOTR) Bend at elbow, pivoting on butt of axe shaft.

Wolf Legion Gauntlet - Cut the arm at the edge of the shoulder pad and rotate a lot toward front of the body.

BLACKBLOODS

Orc Assault Warriors - As for the guy standing at attention, I don't see much you can do. With the other guy, maybe sever the hand at the wrist and rotate the weapon toward his shield side. They are not the most animated poses in the world.

Orc Swordsmen - The guy with the weapon pointing straight up is a problem, arm molded right onto the body. I haven't actually held the figure so I can't tell from the picture if his waist is as thick as it is wide. If so, (and you really need a saw here) you might cut across the waist and rotate his torso. But I don't know that it would change the direction of enough of the figure. I mean the sword is still pointing straight up and with the arms so close to the body I don't know that it's going to stand out on the tabletop. I think it falls into the too much pain for too little gain category. There are a few possibilities with the other fellow, though. The old reliable cut off at the glove edge and rotate the weapon hand. Wedge cut at the top of the elbow and bend the arm up to close the gap, thus raising the sword. Or wedge cut the inside of the elbow joint or at the shoulder and bend the arm forward.

Orc Caravan Guards - Again the cut at the wrist or elbow and rotating the weapon in a new direction. Possible wedge cut and bend at the top of the elbow (just to the bulge of the fabric fold) and raise the weapon.

Goblin Swordmaster - For the guy with the two swords held at the same angle you will sacrifice a small bit of his cloak. File away the pommel(s) of the swords. You can replace them later with a slice of plastic rod or a small ball of putty. Cut the hand (the left hand is the more promising) free, sever it and rotate the weapon forward. The left hand has a bit more cloak around it, cutting that one probably means a little repair work with putty to cover the damage to the cloak. On the other figure there are a couple of possibilities. On the left arm, cut the pommel free from the cloak (again pressing and rocking the blade between the pommel and cloak). Then either bend the arm at the elbow forward, or cut at the wrist or elbow and rotate forward or back. On the right arm, get rid of the crescent on the helmet, thus freeing the sword. Then either cut and rotate the wrist/elbow or wedge cut and bend the elbow at the edge of the shoulder guard.

Goblin Crimson Blades - Not a chance.

Ogre Heavy Infantry - Here's a big hunk o' metal. Yeah, the usual cut and rotate at the wrist or elbow. Or narrow wedge cut the inside/forward part of the elbow and bend to close the gap. That blade is a big enough hunk of metal that any change in direction/orientation is going to show.

STYGIAN

Stygian Swordsmen - The weapons on these two are so much a part of the molded body there isn't much you can do. Bending the tails to a new position, to one side or the other is an obvious possibility. On the fellow with the curved sickle-blade you might be able to bend the head up a bit, pressing down on the crest at the same time you press up on the chin. I don't think you can rotate the head, the blade is just to close to the jaw line, it would become distorted. On the other guy there seems to be a bit more clearance from the weapon, you might be able to rotate the head to look in a new direction, cocked off to one side a bit. Have to first make sure the head and crest are cut free of the blade and back.

Stygian Spearman - Wedge cut and bend the head to one side or the other, bend the tail, cut and rotate the spearhead.

Stygian Priestess - A few distinct possibilities. Cut the sword blade and the pommel free of the body, remove them and reverse, i.e.: have the sword cross the body going up and to the right. A bit more drastic, again cut the sword and pommel free, cut off the head of the staff, cut and file away the staff entirely. Transfer the sword blade and pommel to the former staff hand, sword upraised. Drill a hole through the former sword hand, use a cut length of brass wire for a new staff and attach the disk to the new staff running up and to the right of the figure. Finally, you could give her Highness a twist where the body leaves the ground to have her face a bit differently.

Great Warrior - Not a lot here, pretty much limited to twisting the tail to a new position and rotating the weapon head. But that's a lot of metal changing orientation and should stand out.

Guardian - On the upper set of arms, the usual bending or cut and rotating. You can also cut off both ends of the flail and swap them to change his grip.

And that's all I have to say about that. Hope it's helpful or of interest to other fanatics like myself.