

WARS: Nowhere to Hide Highlights & Decks

01



artwork by Paul Tobin



artwork by Joe Boulden

ALSO...

The latest from the Star Wars CCG Player's Committee and how to survive post-virtual #8



artwork by Kieran Yanner

PLUS...

cursed wraiths & roaming Uruks, ElecMan, //x2, Trek RPG archetypes, expanded lore, and Much More!

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**Publisher, Editor, Graphics
& Layout:** Joshua J. Radke

Contributors: Paul Abbamondi, Evan Barnett
Justin Beal, Kevin Brownell, Jonathan Bruser,
Richard Gaudio, Brian Mendus, Oren Meyer,
Adam Molnar, Jon Norris, Tim Simon,
Shawn Sullivan, Michael Wistrand

DECIPHER'S OFFICIAL WEB SITE:

[www.decipher.com]

dMag MAGAZINE WEB SITE:

[www.dgamer.red84.com]

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Every Journey has that First Step...

Welcome to the premier issue of *dGamer* - a publication dedicated to the world of Decipher gaming, and other related topics!

To help build circulation while keeping the costs associated with publishing to a bare minimum, *dGamer* will be an e-magazine to start off. The goal is to distribute *dGamer* like any other circulated magazine, a goal that you are already helping to achieve by reading this! The staff here at *dGamer* thanks you for your support in getting this publication off the ground. It will take time, but I have no doubts it will worth it.

So... Why this magazine? What exactly will *dGamer* be about?

Well, to quote one famous Spaniard swordsman: "Let me explain. No, there is too much. Let me sum up..."

Decipher has produced award-winning games for arguably the three top licences in the entertainment industry: *Star Trek*, *Star Wars*, and *The Lord of the Rings*. And now the company is on its way to creating its own niche in the science fiction industry. This magazine will be about those games (and others), the company that makes them, the stores that provide us our venues to get together, and the people who play and collect them.

In the issues to come, you can expect more decks by Master players, more cool departments, and exclusive interviews and spoilers. In fact, if you are a Master player, or a player with a high ranking and PSQ points, we would love to have you as a contributor!

So without further adieu, I leave you to the first issue of *dGamer*. We hope that the content here will entertain, inform, and maybe even make you that much better (in whatever way that may be).

Cya at the gaming tables!

Josh Radke
dGamer Squadron Commander
dgamer@red84.com

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Decipher has announced the following releases for 2005 for their *The Lord of the Rings* licence:



Black Rider

Release: March 2005

Bloodlines

Release: July 2005

War of the Ring Anthology

Release: August 2005

The Hunters (new block)

Release: November 2005



Paths of the Wise: The Guide to Magicians and Loremasters

Release: April 2005

(Note: a new RPG book will release about every eight weeks.)

The Journey Continues...



Don't let the lack of an original *Lord of the Rings* (LOTR) movie or DVD release get you down. For LOTR gamers, the adventure and the excitement continue! On March 18th comes *Black Rider*, the first expansion in Decipher's popular War of the Ring block for the LOTR TCG (which started with the release of *Shadows* last November).

Shadows introduced new keywords, Ring resistance, and a dynamic site path to the LOTR TCG, all of which were greatly received by the player community. *Shadows* and the War of the Ring block were designed as a way to reintroduce the card game to all players, even going so far as to mesh the Sauron, Raider, Isengard, Dunland, and Moria cultures into three new ones: Orc, Men, and Uruk-hai.



Black Rider will continue what *Shadows* started with new versions of old characters, along with characters who have yet to be featured at all and a handful of minions for the classic Sauron, Isengard, and Moria cultures. Faramir, Elrond, Éomer, Saruman, the Cave Troll of Moria, and the debut of the vile Mouth of Sauron are just some of the companions and minions players can look forward to adding to their decks. The set will also give new fear to the Nazgûl—like we don't fear them already—in the guise of such cards

as The Witch-king's Beast. Also, the actual card Black Rider, first available as a promo foil from the Black Rider tour in 2003, will finally be loosed on sanctioned tournaments.

To coincide with the theme of making the LOTR TCG easier to hop into, Decipher will be implementing a rotation schedule for the card game. Starting with *Black Rider*, the entire Fellowship of the Ring block will no longer be legal in sanctioned Standard tournaments. Decipher will be reprinting select cards (also starting with *Black Rider*) that are deemed necessary to the function of a culture or companion. The purpose of rotation is not only to help new players, but also makes game development easier. Furthermore, it keeps the game from having to escalate characters and mechanics into ridiculous levels.



Finally, contrary to popular belief, Decipher has not forgotten the *Lord of the Rings* roleplaying game. After a brief hiatus, the RPG is back on the production schedule starting with *Paths to the Wise: The Guide to Magicians and Loremasters* releasing in April. RPGers can then expect a new book about every eight weeks. ○

Decipher has announced the following releases for 2005 for their *Star Trek* licence:



Strange New Worlds

Release: April 2005

2nd Edition Anthology

Release: June 2005

To Boldly Go

Release: August 2005

Captain's Log

Release: December 2005

Clear Trekking!



“Year of the Player”: That is what Decipher is calling 2005. This statement could not be truer when relating to *Star Trek* CCG: Second Edition. This year *Star Trek* is getting 3 new full sets, and an Anthology set. In addition to that, right now is the best time to start playing 2E. Why?

Star Trek's second Reflections set has just released (December 2004) and (like all of Decipher's Reflections products) it is a great way for any player to get into one of their games. You get premium foils and other assorted cards to immediately help you start building a deck. But that was last year, let's talk about this year.

The next set to release in April is *Strange New Worlds*. This set will introduce the long awaited and heavily sought after, Ferengi as a full-fledged affiliation. You can expect many Rules of Acquisition to be quoted at tournaments with this long awaited introduction. Also introduced are some new Androids and Hologram associated cards, which will surely make their way onto the tournament scene.



So what's next? Why Second Edition's first Anthology product in June. It will have 18 of the most popular cards in foil with a “decidedly *Star Trek*” flavor to them. I cannot wait to see them!

Later in August we will see *To Boldly Go* which will unveil the latest *Star Trek* creation: The Enterprise universe. Your favorite Enterprise celebrities will become personnel, events, and interrupts. In addition to that we should see a new game mechanic that will “increase your deckbuilding and gameplay choices dramatically!”

Finally, at the end of the year (December 2005), we will get *Captain's Log*. In addition to supplementing our supply of commanders and ships (and their related cards), we will get a new reporting mechanic with the introduction of the *Voyager* ship and crew.

As you can see 2005 is an exciting year for *Star Trek* players, (including RPGers, who can expect an announcement regarding the future of the *Trek* RPG in the near future! - Ed.). With this new attention that Decipher is giving *Star Trek*, many more positive innovations are expected in the future. 🗣️

Decipher has announced the following releases for 2005 for *Wars*:



Nowhere to Hide

Release: January 7, 2005

Edge of a Sword

Release: May 2005

Motion of Mind

Release: September 2005

Eye of Insight

Release: January 2006

WARS on the Horizon



Decipher's first expansion for the Wars TCG is released: *Nowhere to Hide* (NTH). This issue will delve deeper into what player can expect from this first set, but suffice it to say that NTH does add dimension to all the cultures.

Before the end of 2004, Decipher announced their release schedule for 2005. All stages of development for *Edge of a Sword* are in full swing, with May circled on the D-calendar. Mavericks will be in the thick of the action (as usual), but the Shi are also looking to get some focused attention. And will one culture finally emerge in exclusive control of traginium-rich Ganymede?

Motion of Mind, the third expansion, will take a closer look at the kizen—a group of sentients from all the cultures with “gifts” and “talents” directly related to the Rift. All things point to a unified front among the kizen, but what will be their goal: individual power, galactic peace, or universal domination?

The final release will actually come in 2006. *Eye of Insight* will continue the story of the kizen. As this special group grows in power, old rivalries may need to fade if the new enemy is to be beaten. How will the battle lines be redrawn? Who is the real enemy?

Wars continues to add depth to its story and promises to be a saga you don't want to miss! And if the cards and the online short stories aren't enough to get you into this gripping adventure, what about jumping in and adding yourself to the fight? Well, apart from physically, fans of *Wars* will be able to take a more active part in the forming of the story! Starting this Spring, Decipher will be holding special “storyline” tournaments where the players will have the chance to actually shape the *Wars* story!



If this wasn't exciting enough, Decipher has announced a partnership with Mongoose Publishing to publish a Wars Roleplaying Game! The core book is scheduled for this Summer, with sneak peeks possibly starting as early as April. Players will have the opportunity to play as a character from any of the five factions. It is also strongly rumoured that stats for popular characters such as Horatio Hicks, Raving Red-Jane, Jack Wilgress, The Gambler, Starhawk, Kujiko Torako, and more!

United Kingdom-based Mongoose Publishing already has a prestigious line-up of licenced RPG products including *Babylon 5*, *Conan*, and *Judge Dredd*. “Decipher's Wars TCG has emerged as one of the most notable sci-fi properties of 2004, and we are delighted to be involved in extending this exciting and original game into tabletop roleplaying,” said Alexander Fennell, CEO of Mongoose Publishing, in a January press-release. 🐼

The Star Wars CCG Player's Committee has announced the following virtual card releases for 2005 for the Star Wars CCG:



Virtual Set #8 (Jabba's Palace)

Release: December 2004

Virtual Set #9 (unannounced)

Release: April 2005

Virtual Set #10 (Endor)

Release: August 2005

Virtual Set #11 (Death Star II)

Release: December 2005


Virtually Unstoppable



With Episode III, *Revenge of the Sith*, coming out in theatres later this Spring, the Star Wars CCG will be continuing with its virtual goodness within the movie that used to also carry "Revenge" in its title, *Return of the Jedi*. Players hope the PC can continue its momentum started in

Virtual Set #8, which included instant hits like Combat Readiness (V), Jabba's Sail Barge (V), and Drop (V).

State Championships are winding down and we hope to have a complete list of State Champions in time for the next issue. Meanwhile, get ready for the Regionals, which should be starting by the time the Naboo spring rains loom on the horizon.

Also, many players are unaware that Decipher does mail out Star Wars CCG tournament foils (from the original batch) for sanctioned tournaments sent in for official ranking. Be sure to encourage your tournament director to send in the results of your Star Wars CCG tournaments. Not only do you have the chance at some collectable SWCCG foils, but you will also earn Decipher "fan dollars" that can be spent on any other gaming products Decipher has available in their online store. 



Fans of *MegaMan* and *.hack//enemy* are eagerly awaiting news regarding the future of their card games. Rest assured that Decipher does have plans for both games, and must wait for the owners of the licences to give them the green light to announce future products.



In the mean time, and not to be lost in the shuffle of other important announcements the first two-player product for the MegaMan TCG releases on Friday, February 18th with the MegaMan TCG NetBattle Box. This special product is designed as an entry-level place for new players, but also contains enough value to entice current players.

- The MegaMan TCG NetBattle Box contains the following items:
- Two random 60-card starter decks from a previous MegaMan TCG set
- Two random 10-card booster packs from a previous MegaMan TCG set
- Two foil promos (MegaMan, CyberHero and Dish A Little Dirt) which have only previously been available through incentive programs
- Packaged in a visually striking MegaMan *NT Warrior*-themed "battle box"
- 12 foils are guaranteed in every MegaMan TCG NetBattle Box with a possibility of additional Ultra-rare and Super-rare foils in booster packs



The MegaMan TCG NetBattle Box will retail for \$24.99 USD. 

Decipher Vegas Open - Event Schedule

Friday – March 11th

- The Lord of the Rings TCG* Premier Series Qualifier
- 3:00pm
 - Top 8 without Premier Points earn Premier Points
 - Foil Úlairë Attëa, Second of the Nine for all participants

- The Lord of the Rings TCG* Black Rider Pre-Release
- 5:00pm
 - Foil The Witch-king's Fell Beast for all participants

- WARS TCG* \$10,000 Open Championship, Heat A
- 10:00am
 - Draft Format
 - Open to all players, Top 8 qualify for Sunday
 - Foil Jack Wilgress for all participants

- WARS TCG* Draft Tournament
- 4:00pm

Saturday – March 12th

- The Lord of the Rings TCG* Premier Series Event Day 1
- 10:00am
 - Open to all players with one active Premier Point
 - Top 16 Qualify for Day Two

- The Lord of the Rings TCG* Black Rider Pre-Release
- 5:00pm
 - Foil The Witch-king's Fell Beast for all participants

- WARS TCG* \$10,000 Open Championship, Heat B
- 10:00am
 - Draft Format
 - Open to all players, Top 8 qualify for Sunday finals
 - Foil Jack Wilgress for all participants

- WARS TCG* Draft Tournament
- 4:00pm

- WARS TCG* Premier Series Qualifier
- 2:00pm
 - Open to all players, Top 8 earn Premier Points
 - Foil Alnak Station/Hallway for all participants

Sunday – March 13th

- The Lord of the Rings TCG* Premier Series Event Two
- 10:00am
 - Open to Top 16 from PSE (from Day One)

- The Lord of the Rings TCG* World Cup Qualifier
- 12:00pm
 - Open to teams of three players
 - Top team qualifies for World Cup at Essen Spiel (Germany)

- WARS TCG* \$10,000 Open Championship Finals
- 10:00am
 - Draft Format
 - Open to Top 8 from Heat A and Top 8 from Heat B
 - Foil Jack Wilgress for all participants

- WARS TCG* Team Tournaments
- 12:00pm
 - Constructed Format

- Star Trek CCG Second Edition* Worlds Qualifier
- 12:00pm
 - Constructed Format
 - Winner earns a bye into the 2005 World Championship

On the Strip

Decipher will be holding their first ever official Decipher Open from March 11-13th of this year! All of Decipher's major games will be featured including *The Lord of the Rings*, *Star Trek*, and *Wars*. Player will have the opportunity to participate in a variety of events for those games, including Premiere Series Qualifiers and team tournaments for LOTR and Wars, *Black Rider* pre-releases, and a Star Trek TCG 2E World Championship Qualifier.

Headlining this game-packed weekend will be the Wars \$10,000 Open Championship! What makes this tournament unique—and accessible to all players—is that both heats and the finals will be completely in booster draft format. This means that the winner will truly be the most skilled player, not the one with best personal deck. All participants will also walk away with a Jack Wilgress foil!

The Wars TCG draft championship will not be the only place where players can get awesome prizes. Participants in the LOTR PSE or *Black Rider* pre-release tournaments will each receive (exclusive to the Vegas Open) a Pippin, Brave Decoy or The Witch-king's Beast, Fell Creature foil respectively. Players in the LOTR and Wars PSQ's will get Úlairë Attëa, Second of the Nine Riders and Alnak Station/Hallway foils (also respectively). And for the Star Trek 2E World Qualifier, Decipher will be giving out the last of its Necessary Evil inventory!



Between now and Vegas, players will have many opportunities to hone their booster draft skills in the many "Vegas Boot Camp" tournaments that your local dAgent or Tournament Director is scheduling right now. If you don't see a sealed tournament scheduled for your area, be sure to let your gaming store or TD know that you want one!

Decipher Declares 2005 "Year of the Player"

To coincide with this declaration, Decipher has made (or will be making) changes to the organized play system that players have been asking for. Some of these changes will affect all games, while others only specific games.



The first unilateral change is the sanctioning limit, which has dropped to six (6) players for all games (Star Wars CCG, Young Jedi, Jedi Knights, and Star Trek CCG 1E are already lower at four players). This change is to help players who may be part of a smaller player group to have a chance at the valuable foils, as well as to help grow their community in the long term.

For specific games, the time limit for sanctioned LOTR games has been increased to sixty (60) minutes; MegaMan players should be prepared for a "level reset". For LOTR, this change is linked to the new dynamic adventure path; for MegaMan, it is mostly to even the playing field for new players.

Flashpoint: Ganymede

Ganymede is the backdrop... Traginium is the catalyst... Control is the objective.

art by Christopher J. Anderson

A look at the newest WARS TCG expansion, *Nowhere to Hide*.

by Shawn M. Sullivan

With its gameplay that made the Star Wars CCG one of the greatest card games and a compelling sci-fi storyline, WARS TCG is one of the industry's hottest new card games since its debut with *Incursion* last Fall. Now comes the first expansion for Wars, *Nowhere to Hide*, brings some new keywords while expanding upon those and other strategies from the premier release.

The Earthers' space presence is bolstered with several new ships. *Shadowsurfer*, for example, is a capital which cannot be targeted by your opponent. Plus, Rogan Hallard, its "Captain", makes it immune to attrition. XeLabs Type IV fighter has the ability to send a ship back to its owner's hand. And *Pompeii*, causes activated abilities used during the battle to cost three more energy to use.

On the ground Dagger Lead is a rolling behemoth that can undamage another unit at the same site when it is inverted. The Earthers made out very well with the inclusion of many low energy cost kizen. These new kizen include:

- Sheria Coreg, who has the ability to move the top card of any reserve beneath that reserve...
- Chindon Relk, who adds +1 to your battle destiny for kizen at that location and each related site...
- CISyn Coordinators, who have the ability to look at the top card of any reserve...
- Remote Coordinator, with the ability to steal any of your opponents kizens just by paying energy equal to that kizen's tactics!



Captain – A new keyword found on ships that names a specific character. When that character is aboard the ship that names them as captain the ship and all the units aboard that ship are immune to attrition. This new ability gives space decks the much-needed staying power that not present in *Incursion*.



Inverter – A feature that was strong in Quay units and Maverick ships, and now all the factions are in on the fun. A unit or ship with the inverter keyword has the ability to “invert” or rotate 180 degrees when certain conditions are met. The conditions for the having the card invert can range anywhere from paying a specific amount of energy to drawing a specific number for battle destiny.

Joker Danniko is an inexpensive character that gains immunity to attrition and the ability to add +1 to energy drains when a weapon is deployed on her. Aris Thantos, allows you to look at the top X cards from your opponent’s reserve when you successfully drain at his location and put one of the them in your opponent’s lost pile, where X is equal the number of energy you drained. If you’re looking for a little destiny manipulation, with Cribber you can spend energy equal to the destiny value of a card a player just drew for destiny to cause them to draw another destiny.

In space, the Mavs now have Killer Cait Grimalkin, a strong pilot with the ability to cause your opponent to not draw battle destiny at a sector other than the one she is at. Another strong pilot, Battleaxe Boden, has the ability to move the ship she is aboard during your deploy phase. Do Not Push, is an asset that causes interrupts to cost an additional three energy to play. This is especially useful in keeping your opponent from playing that crucial Trumped.



Stockpile – A new keyword found on assets. When the criteria found on a stockpile asset are met your opponent must give up an energy that is stacked on top of the asset. Alone this may not seem like a big deal but there are many cards found in *Nowhere to Hide* that allow you to take advantage of having cards stacked on a stockpile asset. Each faction received one stockpile asset each with its own criteria that must be met to use its ability.

For the Gongen in battle, it’s often about their defense and reactions to what the opponent does. New ships and units reinforce this—like *Tachikaze*, a capital with the versatility to pump up the defense of one of your ships at the same sector and Zocho Interceptor is power +1 for each of the opponent’s ships. A new Nôbot, Hannya, starts out at 5 Power and 10 Defense (by its self respectable), but if you lose three energy it can be inverted to 10 Power and 5 Defense and then adds a destiny draw to your attrition.

The “Martians” benefit greatly from the new quickdraw ability. With two new characters, Tennaru Hari, a kizen with quickdraw 2 and who cannot be damaged while he has a weapon beneath him, and Takumi Shadow Warriors, a character with quickdraw 1 and the ability to have two weapons.

Also known for their exceptional energy retrieval abilities, the Gongen continue this tradition with cards like Combat Support T.S.V. (retrieve an energy when you deploy it with a bot or vehicle) and Unbidden Martyr (removes one of your kizen from the game and allows you to retrieve energy up the energy cost of that kizen).

Some of the best ground units still belong to the Mavericks.



Quickdraw – A new keyword found on units that adds a number of uniqueness dots to the activated abilities of any weapon beneath that unit equal to the number that follows the “Quickdraw” keyword. With weapons already being very useful in WARS TCG the ability to fire them more than once could mean the difference between having a long drawn out battle or clearing your opponents key units.

The Shi are getting some stronger ground units. The most notable addition is Dhanake-Tilak, who is power +1 for each of your Shi support icons. He also causes your opponent’s attrition to be –1 for each of those same icons. In space, the Shi continue to have some of strongest ships and pilots. Swiftwave Attacker is a decent ship that adds Piloting 2 to any pilot deployed on it. Ashmahi-Anant and Rantosh-Anant are two strong pilots—the former is a captain and the latter will slow your opponent down by causing them to lose two energy every time they deploy a ship to the same sector where they don’t have a ship.

A great new asset for the Seyal natives, Crippled, adds an additional Shi support icon to any card you play but in turn lowers each of your opponent’s units defense by 1. With the strength of so many weapons in this set, the new used interrupt, Cornered, will definitely see some play. It

causes your opponent's attrition in a battle to be -4 if you have a weapon under one of your units in the battle.


The arachnid-looking Quay have always been strong on the ground and that continues with Banak Ilnasit, a new Quay kizen with strong stats and the ability to damage your opponent's unit in a battle that you win. Other strong units include Clandestine Team, with the ability to move to any related site for free, and Ravagers, an inexpensive unit that gets stronger when you have a card stacked on your stockpile asset. In space the Quay received much needed infiltrator removal through *Karaktika*, a Quay life ship with the ability to force your opponent to dismiss a ship from the same sector.

With all the inverters that the Quay have the new interrupt, Attack Plan, comes in handy by allowing you to invert your inverter during your control phase. Another useful interrupt, Breaching, lets you destroy a unit on a ship that does not have piloting. Breaching is a great for removing pesky ground units (like Tavang-Damir) hiding on ships.

Nowhere to Hide includes some great new independent cards as well, including a cool new bot (one for each faction) that allows you to place a card from your hand of that faction to add a support icon of that faction to a location. An extra support icon and hand recycling—never underestimate the ability to recycle cards from your hand to your used pile.



No new expansion would be complete without new locations. Much like *Incursion* many of the new locations revolve around the battle for Ganymede. Each of the factions got at least one location that provides an ability useful to that faction. Two of the best are Ganymede/Orbital Expanse, a new sector for the Shi that causes all non-Shi ships to be tactics -1 and Ganymede/Captured Refinery, a new Quay site that allows you to make your opponent lose one energy for each inverted unit during your control phase. New encampments were also included. The encampments this time, unlike the ones from *Incursion*, are sector locations. With the new stockpile assets, Ganymede/Abandoned Mine, a site that adds +1 to energy drains there if you have cards stacked on a stockpile asset, is a very nice addition.

Nowhere to Hide is a great new expansion that really brings a lot to the table with great new gameplay and some much needed additions for each faction. Plus, with the strength and usability of the commons and uncommons, NTH adds a lot to the draft tournament format as well. 

Shawn is a veteran Decipher gamer. He is also the creator and manager of the popular Wars TCG site, www.essentialwars.com

MAVERICK

January 10th, 2010
photo by Dan Burns

starring
KIERAN YANNER

starring

KIERAN YANNER

Interview by Joshua J. Radke

Every sci-fi or fantasy licence has its resident artists: In Star Wars it is Ralph McQuarrie, Drew Struzan, Tsuneo Sanda, or Dave Dorman (to name four)... For The Lord of the Rings you have John Howe, Ted Nasmith, and the Hildebrandt brothers as favourites... if you love Spider-Man, then it rarely gets better than Spidey vets John Romita, Sr. and Todd MacFarlane... and in Wars, Kieran Yanner has easily solidified himself as one of the premiere artists in Decipher's first proprietary licence. Here now is an opportunity to meet this gifted young talent who took the time, between his busy art schedule and jam sessions with his band, to talk with us about being an artist, working for Decipher, and helping to give the Wars universe its visual identity.

When did you know you wanted to be an artist?

I used to sit down and draw with my brother when I was 7 or 8... I used to draw things before then, like cartoon characters.. Garfield - things like that. I suppose it was more when I hit 5th grade (age 10) is when I knew I really liked it and wanted to create lots of characters and worlds.

Did you have any formal training?

No, I left high school after year 10. Bad choice on my behalf, but hey its life. I' ve had many wondrous experiences and adventures because of it - good and bad.

How would you describe your Wars artwork to someone unfamiliar with the universe?

Glam goth gone wrong.

What books, movies, or other artists have inspired you?

Ohh.. well as for artists; Jim Lee began as my favorite, moving onto Whilce Portacio, Tony Diterlizzi, Brom, H.R. Giger, Frank Frazetta, Tim Bradstreet, Rembrandt, Justin Sweet, Mattias Snygg and Joshua James Shaw has been inspiring me of late also. Russell Mills has been an inspiration with expressionism in my work both commercial and non-commercial art.

Books.. sadly I rarely read.. I was a big collector of Uncanny X-men and X-men, until Marvel felt like redoing all its comics in an anime style.

As for movies, 70/80s sci fi' s and fantasy films I think impacted me the most. I' m not really a big movie buff, so recent films don' t get to me.. I go to see certain actors, not really the genre or the buzz around it. I never did like *Star Wars*, and the recent movies re-enforced that greatly.

Music wise, Nine Inch Nails / Trent Reznor, Bjork, Tori Amos, Marilyn Manson (older work) Billy Corgan and Robert Smith / The Cure.

What is your favorite culture to work with? Why?

The Maverick culture. I' ve copped a lot of flack over much of the art I' ve produced for them. I think it' s rather tame...

How was working on *Nowhere to Hide* different than *Incursion*?

Nowhere to Hide was more ' peppy' to me... the illustrations I produced felt more pulp than dark sci-fi.

What art technique(s) (e.g. acrylics, oils, watercolor, pencil) do you use to paint your *Wars* art?

Pencil, Prismacolor and digital.

Oils take too long to dry and acrylics will shift in color when dry.

Digital always has that undo option and when working in this environment its the way to go. I would love to be producing these cards in oils though.



What was your favorite piece of artwork you did from NTH? What was one of your favorite pieces of NTH art that you didn' t do?

I' d have to say the Venus Facility was my favorite I produced. Restricted Passage and Katuka by Sedone where my favorites that I didn' t do. It was a hard choice between those two, so I picked them both (grins)

You have a unique contribution to *Wars* in that you are also composing a music soundtrack. How did this opportunity come about? Which culture is your favorite musically? Which one is the biggest challenge?

I' ve always wanted to write music for the games I' ve worked on. People tend to think it a waste of time. I' m just trying to stimulate another sense. Bring the audience further into the world. I love music, I feel its my greatest passion. The way I wanted to take the music, I couldn' t because tastes are emotional and melancholy on an extreme level. I know from comments of some of the listeners.. some would' ve liked that direction. But I can' t scare away customers with extreme

ideas. What I think is cool, isn't what every one else thinks is cool. Then again, it might be the coolest guy in the world, I don't like thinking like that. Its arrogant and that way of thought pisses me off. Thinking like that would also hold me back in life. Instead I like testing the waters with different ideas, seeing the audience's reaction. That's why I tried different styles with the music. I do the same with art.

What makes you want to contribute your art and music talent to the Wars universe?

Money. It's my job. I know you don't want to hear that, but hell that's what made Michelangelo paint (although for some reason people seem to think otherwise). That's what makes me paint. I have to pay the bills like everyone else.

Ehem.

Wars was also the first IP (that I know of) world that we developed and released. Having a chance to help create and

form that world was awesome. I sometimes wonder how it would've looked if I sometimes wonder how it would've looked if I'd visually designed everything myself and if people would've liked it or not. As I said above I prefer to work on the Mavericks, I feel akin to them - the ideas flow easier.

How have the fan reactions been to your art and music?

(laughs) Oh my, well supposedly I worship the devil and am sick pathetic individual that uses people's deformities for shock value. And to answer those accusations my beliefs don't insert themselves into my commercial work. My boyfriend is -very-Christian and doesn't believe I bed with Satan so I don't see why others do. And the siamese twin was a spur of the moment idea that seemed a logical choice. The Mavericks are severely effected by radiation. Chernobyl anyone? Has anyone seen the still born children

produce from that disaster? Two-way wasn't so pretty. But that goes for many of the Maverick characters. You wouldn't see that with the Earthers because they're like mass produced drones forced to look the same. Anyway! I thought I'd get that off my chest.

I've also had good positive comments. Thankfully those outweigh the negative. People like the edge I put into much of my work. I just need to learn where that edge is comfortable.

**Speaking of the fans, "Darth Gollum" from Decipher's messageboards asks:
Are there any of your illustrations that you prefer to look at in foil?**

Hmm, I've only seen the foils from *Incursion* and it would have to say Kujiko and Jossel Swin, as for other artists. I don't have any on hand to comment.

And "Neva_Kee" wants to know:

Do you use a photo or a person when drawing characters? How large are the original [art]? How long does it take (approximately) to paint an image?

I build many of my illustrations from collaged photos. I should hopefully have examples of how they are done on my website soon. The original pieces are about 7.5" x 5". It can take anywhere from an hour and a half to a couple days, depending on complexity. Although I use photography to begin with, there's a lot of overpainting that goes into the pieces.

What is it like to work with Decipher as an artist?

Oh horrible! Warren has me leashed to my desk, he beats me morning and night while Dan stands, watching joyfully at my slow decent into a...

Its great, I get a nice amount of leeway with concepts and ideas. The guys and gals in the art department are a joy to work with. I' m lucky to be doing what I love. But like every job it can become the "flipping burgers" routine. (Yes Dan, I said it again). I see many people getting riled up about getting work in the gaming industry. I think they' re in for a rude awakening when and if they make it in. I' ve worked for some horrible people and companies that survive of blood they suck from their employees. Decipher has done a lot for me. Both creatively and career wise. I won' t ever forget that. Do you think that that will get me a raise now?! (laughs) Just joking.

Are there any other projects (either with Decipher or outside of the company) that you' d like to talk about?

Well to be honest, freelancing burnt me out. I look back through the illustrations I' ve done over the past 5 years.. and I can see when and where the stress overwhelmed me. Black and white interior illustrations pay next to nothing. I have full time work now and don' t want or need to deal with that. Projects I do now are for self betterment or enjoyment.

And with that! I' m working with Mongoose Publishing with the Conan line. I have some big shoes to fill with artists that have worked on that license. I also have personal projects such as the expressionist art I' ve been producing and the band Pseudotron with the ' album' we are attempting. These are purely for self betterment.

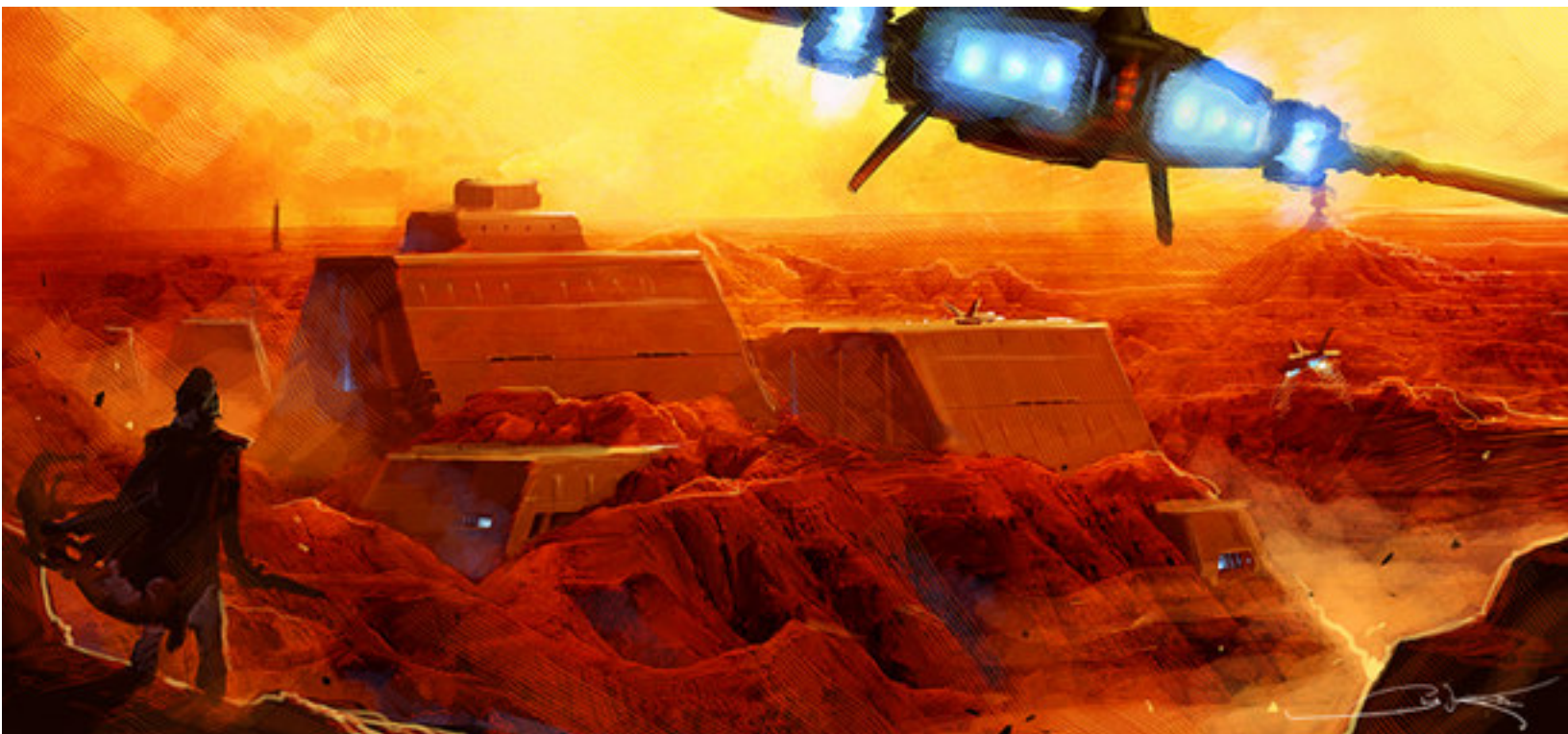
Do you have any final thoughts?

I would like to thank Mattias for the help and assistance he has given me over the past few months, my work with color and composition has improved greatly since I' ve known him. Working on Wars has been a blast, especially being able to work with such fine artists. Maybe one day we will see it on the big screen! As for my other work you can go to

www.kieranyanner.com

Very cool. Well, Thanks for your time, Kieran, and good luck with your future art endeavors and music!

Thanks for the interview :)





John Carpenter' sThey Live

by Jon M. Norris

It' s still kind of hard to make a *Nowhere to Hide* focused deck with the Shi since there just isn' t enough in the expansion for Shi. Mavericks got a lot more useful toys/characters out of the set.

I was initially going to design something cheesy and really not my usual type of deck, but I ended up coming back from that and taking on Dhanake as our lead. Doing that involves focusing on Shi icons. I initially had six Shi camps in the deck, but had to cut back as other elements became more and more focused. I wanted to make a Panacea Provider aspect of the deck as well, and it didn' t make it full on into the deck as I would have liked, but a future ground based Shi deck will be in the works better taking advantage of this.

Anyway, key points of the deck. Two Vestiges, if you get them both out, then after winning three battles anywhere you get two characters back at a much cheaper rate.

Target of Opportunity allows the Anant pilots add more Shi icons to make Dhanake more powerful. For the Glory of Seyal allows you to set up camp right next to your opponent' s drain location and force them to come to you if they want to drain.

I decided to go with both Traginium options, for Shi and Mavericks (which is the reason I used the Mavericks), so Widowmakers could help get cards onto the Shi asset if necessary.



Vidanar lets you get key pieces out of your deck when its convenient. Lots of Shi icons mean a lot of choices. Irma has a high defense, making her a good target for Vestiges (where she keeps leaving and re-entering play). You never want to bite on more than you can chew, but there are sufficient weapons that let you take the ground and hold off or fight in space. It really is a matter of going for the weak links and fighting hard wherever you can. 🐼

LOCATION (14)

- 1 Seyal / Light Side (Inc) (Starting Location)
- 1 Ganymede/Abandoned Mine (NTH)
- 1 Ganymede/Forward Base (Inc)
- 2 Ganymede/Frontier Camp (Inc)
- 3 Ganymede/Harvesting Camp (Inc)
- 1 Ganymede/Orbital Expanse (NTH)
- 1 Ganymede/Traginium Source (Inc)
- 2 Ganymede/Vantage Point (Inc)
- 1 Themis/Mobile Asteroid (Inc)
- 1 Vesta/Coveted Rock (Inc)

CHARACTER (14)

- 4 Anant Aeronaut (Inc)
- 3 Dhanake-Tilak (NTH)
- 1 Hailesh-Damir (Inc)
- 1 Irama-Vishal (Inc)
- 1 Panacea Provider (Inc)
- 1 Sumadar-Damir (Inc)
- 1 Tavang-Damir (Inc)
- 1 Tilak House Guard (NTH)
- 1 Vidanar (NTH)

SHIP (9)

- 1 Damir Quarrel (Inc)
- 4 Seyalshi Upholder (Inc)
- 2 Tilak Quarrel (Inc)
- 2 Widowmaker (NTH)

WEAPON (6)

- 2 Assailing Vatarma (Inc)
- 1 Clanton Grav Grenade (Inc)
- 2 Quarrel Energy Burst (Inc)
- 1 Vishal Vatarma (Inc)

ASSET (9)

- 1 Celebrated (Inc)
- 1 For the Glory of Seyal (Inc)
- 1 Indiscriminate Strike (Inc)
- 1 Target of Opportunity (NTH)
- 1 Traginium Harvest (NTH)
- 2 Traginium Stash (NTH)
- 2 Vestiges (Inc)

INTERRUPT (7)

- 1 Expansion (Inc)
- 1 Fifth Ace (Inc)
- 1 Introversion (Inc)
- 1 Traginium Heist (Inc)
- 2 Trumped (Inc)
- 1 Up the Sleeve (Inc)

ORDER (1)

- 1 Pursuit Just Behind (Inc)

Jon is a regular contributor to the Wars TCG fansite, www.essentialwars.com



A Joker In Black Jack

by Richard Gaudioso

What if the Joker was allowed in the game of Black Jack? It would not be much of a game now would it? Fortunately, in this game Joker Danniko along with Jack Wilgress and a supporting cast of Two-Way Berson, Battleaxe Boden and some funky cool-looking dude named Aris Thantos, makes it a lot more fun and interesting. With the likes of these guys there is a lot of “cheating” going on here, which includes stacking your deck with the Gambler, putting Ace up your sleeve and plenty of out of phase movement. And it is all legal. How about we make a Simple Wager and see who can win against all these cheaters?

You start off with Themis/Landing Pad and pull out your Maverick support locations with either Expansion or the handy Vantage Point. The Gongen support can come later when you are ready to move your operations to Ganymede or start raising hell in space. It is important to know that only one support icon is needed to run the Gongen cards in this deck. You can drop down “Two-Way” and some scrubs and you can encamp the landing pad to increase your drain.



This is where Aris Thantos comes in. The key here is to get a drain of exactly three at the landing pad and use his ability to look at the top three cards of your opponent's deck, one of which you choose to be lost. Just make note of the other two cards that are left over, more importantly, the TOTAL destiny of those two cards.

Now that you know what you are getting into, Simple Wager now becomes a sure thing. Since you are at the landing pad and can move to any site for two energy during the move phase, that card I believe will

allow you to move during the deploy phase. With this little combo, there will surely be *Nowhere to Hide* for your opponent.

As for defending yourself on the ground you have Jack's infamous 21 power backed up by The Gambler and Up the Sleeve to ensure your power total to reach that level. Then there is Joker Danniko who can either hold a site by herself or drain the heck out of your opponent and she can fight like hell. Of course as long as she has a weapon to use. The 3 Spassky Quickfires should come in handy. Kayu Gakkane is a great support character with good numbers and can be very effective during the early or late game.

The Resource Techs have a job on Ganymede to give you some extra energy boost this deck needs. They also work well as the second faction guy for the Core Shaft. You are going to need a pretty large surplus of energy to be effective. Boxer and Hamon of Ikazuchi are solid vehicles that can help mass-movement and can serve as fodder. Basically, you just want to drain.

Now onto space.

LOCATION (12)

- 1 Themis/Landing Pad (Inc) (Starting Location)
- 1 Arethusa/Remote Power Plant (NTH)
- 1 Europa/The Gambler's Hideaway (Inc)
- 3 Ganymede/Frontier Camp (Inc)
- 2 Ganymede/Pilgrims' Camp (Inc)
- 2 Ganymede/Vantage Point (Inc)
- 1 Last Chance/Outer Rim Station (NTH)
- 1 Titan/Raving Red's Refuge (Io)

CHARACTER (16)

- 2 Ace McCallister (Inc)
- 2 Aris Thantos (NTH)
- 1 Battleaxe Boden (NTH)
- 1 Cribber (NTH)
- 1 Jack Wilgress (Inc)
- 2 Joker Danniko (NTH)
- 1 Kayu Gekkane (NTH)
- 2 Resource Technician (Inc)
- 2 The Gambler (Inc)
- 2 "Two-Way" Berson (Inc)

VEHICLE (3)

- 2 Boxer (Inc)
- 1 Hamon of Ikazuchi (Inc)

SHIPS (14)

- 2 Hawk's Wing (Inc)
- 1 Jikoku (Inc)
- 3 Racing Sloop (Inc)
- 4 Tamon Fighter (Inc)
- 2 Vulture (Inc)
- 2 Zocho (Inc)

WEAPON (3)

- 3 Spassky Quickfire II (Inc)

INTERRUPT (10)

- 3 Expansion (Inc)
- 1 Faded (Inc)
- 4 Trumped (Inc)
- 2 Up the Sleeve (Inc)

ORDER (2)

- 2 Simple Wager (Inc)

The ships in this deck are built to establish a presence up there and wait to eventually ambush your opponent by either playing the Simple Wager/ Thantos combo or getting Battleaxe Boden on one of the transport capitals to perform those out of phase movements. The Racing Sloops and Death Dealers can do some serious damage along with the power of *Zocho* and the draining damage from Hawk' s Wing. You could even throw "TwoWay" Berson on one of those ships to enhance your drain too. The 1/0 sectors can serve as a hiding place if you need it. If you have to fight heavily in space, choose your battles wisely. The Sloops will be key along with patience and good destiny draws with The Gambler and Up the Sleeve. Battleaxe on any of the transport capitals with a fleet of ships can pound those who choose to spread out too thinly.

There is also an alternate configuration for this deck, which transforms it into an all ground affair. Basically you remove all the ships and Battle Axe and add a second Gongen support icon along with the following cards:

- 2 Junshi
- 1 Trumped
- 3 Energy Tap
- 2 Careless Cat
- 1 Expansion
- 2 Ganymede/Pilgrim' s Camp
- 1 Joker Danniko
- 1 Spasky Quickfire II

While this configuration may run smoother and more consistently, you do sacrifice space in the process. If space isn' t big in your area then this configuration will be the one for you. Just a couple of cards to note in this version:



- Careless Cat, she' s cheap, has Quickdraw and while armed, gives you two extra energy.
- Energy Tap is definitely the ticket to hold off big drains in space by retrieving a ton of energy when you drain. Since the card is played before the drain actually occurs, you have a chance to retrieve it. You can get a sizeable drain of six, including Thantos.
- Core Shaft + Encampment + Two-Way + Joker (with a gun)... Just Energy Tap it and you get 5 cards back. That is a 10 card swing in your favor. I could go as far as adding Fuel Theft, Ore Hound and Cartel Legate, but I hate putting all my bolts in one bucket.... It' s always good to stay flexible in play, the same goes for deck building. 🎲

Richard is a regular contributor to the Wars TCG fansite, www.essentialwars.com



Star Wars:CCG - The State of the Game

by Kevin W. Brownell

Though I have no microphone, no admiring crowd, and certainly not my own cadre of Secret Service agents, that won't stop me from delivering the first SW:CCG State of the Game address.

So, as the game reaches its tenth year, we have to ask where are we as gamers of the first license-based collectible card game? Well, I'm quite pleased to say that we're a lot better than most predicted after Decipher's license to utilize the *Star Wars* universe expired (and I mean "expired," not "lost" or "taken away;" it seems to be a common misconception that either Lucasfilm decided to pull the license away from Decipher, or that Decipher somehow did something to lose it, when in fact it was just a natural result of the expiration of a contract).

Shortly after the announcement of Lucasfilm's decision to sell its license to Wizards of the Coast, many players forecasted a bleak future for the game, using words that one might typically hear in a mortuary. The consensus seemed to be that the game required a regular influx of new cards to stay healthy, and a good number of players did not wait around to see if their predictions would come to fruition. Coincidentally, around the same time a number of other cards games were appearing on the market or were gaining in popularity. Lord of the Rings was gaining momentum and Star Trek tournaments were still extremely popular, for example. SW:CCG players who were on the fence about sticking with a game that was suddenly unsupported, especially those in college or younger with less available funds, opted to put their resources into these other games and sold off their Star Wars collections.

At the beginning, the Player's Committee (PC) did what it could to keep interest, though admittedly what it could actually accomplish was limited by the fact that the advocates were all volunteers, spread across the world with limited ability to interact outside of the internet. Moreover, unlike Decipher, the PC was not an income-generating machine and had virtually no funds with which to support the game. While the birth of virtual cards certainly helped the game stay afloat, the lack of local tournaments certainly dissuaded many from putting effort into maintaining competitive decks and keeping playing groups active. From approximately 2002-2003, we reached an all-time low in terms of the number of players who played regularly and maintained a presence on the SW:CCG discussion boards. Of course, there still was a small group of the most loyal players who on the PC's message boards acted as if nothing had changed. But generally we stopped seeing posts by many who had been frequent contributors.

However, strangely, as we got farther and farther away from the PC's inception, the game began to build momentum. In my opinion as a player and Advocate who has been observing the trends, this can be attributed to two distinct sources: the rise of more inspired virtual cards and the eventual settling of the championship circuit into an organized, recognized format.

As for the virtual cards, the first few sets were enough to make a few more cards useful, easing the stagnation of seeing the same decks day after day. However, at the beginning this wasn't enough to really bring the game back to players who had left because even though the decks were constructed a bit differently, they were the same *decktypes*. The design committee then made the inspired decision to start making cards that made new decktypes competitively viable. Having a few extra cards to put into decks is fun, but being able to pull out your collection to make something entirely new is what makes newer, corporate-supported games exciting. As the virtual sets progressed the design committee came closer and closer to being a true surrogate parent for Decipher. These cards made us feel the same way we did when we went to the local comic store and opened a new pack of a just-released expansion...all because we could make *new decks*.

Though some players have perceived mistakes along the way (*e.g.* walkers and speeders), one of the reasons we are still drawing in new players is the design committee's efforts to expand the sphere of playable, competitive decks. Each successive World Championship has seen a more diverse collage of decks played. And, as Yoda might say, drawing in new players, we are. One just need look at the discussion boards on the PC website and see the posts by players who have less than 50 posts to their name. For every veteran who has close to 1,000 posts, there is someone who has 2. And we're not just talking about payers here in the United States...the foreign presence has become an even stronger force (if you'll pardon the pun).

Secondly, our championship circuit has finally worked out all the kinks and settled into a respected, reliable routine where TDs can easily apply for and run championship level events. The tournament advocates have done a mighty job

bringing the tournament scene to where we are today, perhaps doing the single-most important good for the game. If there's a light at the end of the tunnel—a prize to shoot for—players keep going. The current championship circuit season appears to be progressing well, with Day 2 qualifiers being added to the list every day. With the addition of “consolation” and sealed-deck tournaments at Worlds, there is something for everyone, from the players who will qualify for Day 3 to the newer players who want nothing more than to play.

However, while we are at the game's highest point since the Theed Palace set was released, there is still work to be done. There are pockets around the world where the local community hasn't missed a beat...Minnesota has local tournaments on a weekly basis and the dedicated players in Wisconsin not only have their own locals, but are often willing to travel for tournaments. However, for every Minnesota there is a Chicago, a metropolis of 7,000,000 people where I am one of exactly TWO players.

As we capture the interest of more and more new players, the veterans among us have to step up and start running organized tournaments. Even if locals don't offer much in the way of prizes, more locals should be run simply so we can have fun playing. You can only play your best friend so many times before it gets stale. Therefore, I call on every established player to investigate the possibility of holding more local tournaments in areas where they are infrequent. This is already starting to happen, but it needs more fuel. If we can continue to increase the number of locals, I am confident that next year I'll be beaming when it's time for another State of the Game. 📡

Kevin is the Marketing & Player Relations Advocate on the Star Wars CCG Player's Committee Advocate Council. He frequents the official PC message boards as “CubsFan”. For more information on the Star Wars CCG Player's Committee, visit their official website at www.swccgpc.com



“Shaken, not Stirred” – The SWCCG Meta Post Virtual Set 8

By Tim Simon



Much praise has been given to Virtual Set 8 because of how it has “opened up the SWCCG playing field” so to speak; allowing for many kinds of diversity in terms of variety of decks. This is evident in the two new Starting Effects, Thrown Back (v) and Drop (v). Not only do they allow for the use of twelve Defensive Shields, (instead of the usual 10) but they also provided an interesting counter to decks that are based around pulling or downloading many cards from the Reserve Deck. Decks such as Imperial Occupation/Imperial Control (v) [also known as Walkers] or the new Carbon Chamber Testing were notorious for this habit. Also, the ability to play four shields instead of three gives players more options than they had before. There are downsides to using them however; for example, *only* Defensive Shields may be placed under the new Starting Effects. Decks such as Massassi Base Operations (MBO) or decks that like to use cards like Krayt Dragon Bones (v) will have to use the old standbys. Thrown Back (v) also provides some protection for the Mind What You Have Learned (MWYHL) objective by suspending the clause about pulling and downloading

whenever Yoda is on Dagobah. SWCCG players should keep these new Starting Effects in mind when building a new deck, in terms of how they will help (and possibly hurt) what the deck will try to accomplish.



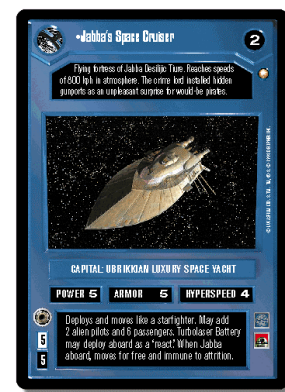
The Dark Side has seen several new strategies thanks to Virtual Set 8. Decks that revolve around Scum & Villainy, for example, have been given new reason to live. Jabba the Hutt (v), Hutt Bounty (v), Jabba's Sail Barge (v), and None Shall Pass (v) have all helped to make it difficult for the Rebels to infiltrate the Hutt's palace. The new Jabba is particularly notable for being able to pull Scum, and to allow all aliens with him to battle at double power. This creates the opportunity to set up incredible beatdowns; when combined with Hutt Bounty (v) (making a light character power=0) and Elis Helrot (moving a large group of aliens where the light player is not expecting a beatdown) can result in catastrophic battle damage for the light player. The new Starting Interrupt Twi'lek Advisor (v) should also be mentioned for its ability to pull such Effects as Hutt Bounty (v), Jabba's Influence (v), Power of the Hutt, No Escape, No Bargain, Ket Maliss (v), and Information Exchange (v). This allows for a great jump-start in an Agents of the Black Sun (AOBS) platform as well.

Perhaps no new dark deck has been as widely regarded as “The Maul Deck.” This deck uses the new Starting Interrupt Combat Readiness (v) to start the Tatooine system with Maul's Landing Site and Watto's Junkyard. Blaster Rack (v), I Will Find Them Quickly Master, and Combat Response ensure that Darth Maul will quickly get to the junkyard with his saber to drain for an impressive seven, while still maintaining a presence at the system. How does it arrive at seven? The Dark player places Expand the Empire on the Landing site to get +2 from If The Trace Was Correct; Maul gets another drain +2 from his lightsaber, and by running about three copies of Bantha Fodder to pull UroRRuR'R's Bantha (v) and UroRRuR'R'R (v) we get a total of +6 to the original drain of one. This deck becomes even more potent with Watto denying the light player any battle destiny, and with the virtual Tusken Raiders and Bantha subtracting from battle destiny and weapon destiny draws. Bane Malar (v) is also essential to keep the drains and drain bonuses from being canceled. To date The Maul Deck is responsible for winning three major “Open” tournament events, and just may win many more. Seldom has



a new dark deck found such overwhelming success, and seldom has a new dark deck caused so many players to double check the game text of Rogue Bantha. Some argue that this deck is starting to fade now as counters are discovered (Smoke Screen, a quick Ultimatum, Revolution, Leia's Blaster Rifle to name a few) but only time will tell.

Other new virtual cards for the dark side worth mentioning include J'Quille (v) and Jabba's Space Cruiser (v). The virtual Whiphid is able to punch right through the Hoth energy shield, making once popular light decks such as Echo Base Operations (EBO) and Local Uprising (v) a risky proposition. The direct damage caused for every character the light player has present is certainly an appreciated bonus. The Space Cruiser (v) has strengthened many a dark player's space package, with its ability to pull (for free) independent starships with pilots as a react. Players should note that either the Cruiser or Woof (v) can be revealed when using Alert My Star Destroyer (v) but that only Woof (v) may be revealed to pull the Cruiser using Combat Response.



The new Starting Interrupt Careful Planning (v) has allowed for countless new deck designs. One popular idea is a kind of “non-hyperdrive.” This deck often starts the Tatooine: City Outskirts, and Watto’s Junkyard along with the Tatooine System. It plays much like a Throne Room Mains (TRM) platform, but takes advantage of the ability to start Effects like I Feel The Conflict and Credits Will Do Fine. This gives it some of the strengths of the hugely unpopular objective The Hyperdrive Generator’s Gone (THGG) but gets rid of all of its weaknesses by having an infinite character base. Constantly stacking cards on those Effects will certainly help to slowly diminish the dark player’s Life Force.



Speaking of THGG, the new Krayt Dragon Howl (along with the new Obi-Wan) cause some players to believe that that objective is now playable. Although few THGG decks have been seen thus far in major events, the advantages of starting with a main character on the table performing a force drain of at least two (with an extra damage of one) are unmistakable. And this is not to say that Krayt Dragon Howl (v) only aids THGG; it could certainly help Watch Your Step (WYS) or some other kind of non-objective Tatooine deck as well (Tosche Station anyone?).

Perhaps NO deck thus far has been the recipient of such criticism as Agents in the Court (AIRC) post-Virtual Set 8. Whether you consider it “broken,” “very strong,” or “just a piece of junk” one would be foolish to overlook its strengths.



Perhaps never before has one virtual set benefited one specific decktype. The new Yarna d'al' Gargan (v) allows you to pull additional Tatooine locations, protects aliens from creatures, and keeps your objective from ever flipping back to the 0 side. It is also significant that the objective ensures that Yarna (v) will never leave the table. Bargaining Table (v) allows the light player to pull many key aliens, with the intent of setting up Ellors Madak (v). This is where the true power is. All your force drains and battle destinies are +2, and your opponent's battle destinies are -2. By spreading out on Tatooine, it is not uncommon to be able to deal ten damage from drains alone on turn three or four. If this was all that AIRC could do, few would be calling for it to be weakened. The true strength of the deck perhaps, is its ability to prevent itself from beatdowns.

Most AIRC players will start Wokling (v) to pull Tusken Breath Mask (v), place that on the Audience Chamber, and then put out Bo Shuda. It should also be noted that Breath Mask (v) can strengthen many other decks as well such as Quiet Mining Colony or perhaps Hidden Base. Tusken Breath Mask (v) gives you +7 ability at locations once you flip the objective, and you have a cushion of seven battle damage. Bo Shuda prevents the dark player from ever battling in an attempt to cancel Breath Mask (v) in AIRC. This cushion is not often even needed however, when other factors are considered. Usually the light player will get an extra destiny to add to total power (from the objective), Yerka Mig (v) adds three to the total power, and many of the aliens do little things on their own to add to their power; not to mention the potential bonuses of Uh-oh (v). Bargaining Table (v) also provides significant forfeit bonuses to the aliens. On top of all of this, the retrieval from Yerka (v) and Uh-oh (v) make it difficult for the dark player to simply ignore the AIRC player. This same retrieval ensures that aliens that are lost can come back quickly. To date, AIRC has not performed near the top in major tournaments, but that may change as more players feel brave enough to play this controversial new decktype.



And finally, the light side has been given another new Starting Interrupt to add to its arsenal. Although The Signal (v) also has not seen much play to date, its potential to aid several non-dominant decks should not be ignored. Perhaps no decktype benefits more from it than Mind What You Have Learned. The MWYHL player has the choice of starting with Effects such as Honor of the Jedi, Projection of a Skywalker, Wars Not Make One Great, The Way of Things, Brisky Morning Munchen, Don't Do That Again, and Your Insight Serves You Well. These Effects retain all of the strengths of MWYHL and open up new possibilities. Few would argue that MWYHL is currently the best light deck choice right now, but who knows what it may become.

It's been a few years now since SWCCG has been out of print, and the efforts of the Player's Committee have thus far been successful in keeping the game fresh and exciting to play. Virtual

Set 8 is a picture-perfect example of this; it encourages players to go back through their collection to build that next great deck. As long as virtual sets continue to “shake” the meta and keep the game fun to play, SWCCG may just make it for another ten years.....or more. 🍷



Night of the Roaming Dead

by Oren Meyer

Let's face it: there are a lot of strategies in the *Lord of the Rings* TCG. So many, in fact, that many of them are seldom used, except by either the very skilled or the slightly braindead (I fall under the latter). But sometimes, deck types get completely overlooked because they don't seem to be very powerful or effective. There can be some surprises lurking in those unplayed cards, though; you just have to look hard enough.

Ring-bearer:

Isildur, Bearer of Heirlooms
The One Ring, The Ring of Rings

Adventure Path:

Crag of Emyr Muil (0)
Expanding Marshland (1)
Neekerbrecker's Bog (1)
Slag Mounds (1)
Flats of Rohan (2)
Helm's Gate (2)
Moria Stairway (2)
North Undeep (3)
Trollshaw Forest (3)

Free Peoples (33):

2 Oathbreaker (both starting)
4 Aragorn, Driven by Need
3 King of the Dead, Oathbreaker
2 Sleepless Dead
1 Shadow Host
1 Cursed of Erech
1 Narsil, Blade of the Faithful
1 Anduril, Flame of the West
1 The Shards of Narsil
4 Sapling of the White Tree
2 Spectral Sword
2 The Highest Quality
3 Banner of the White Tree
4 Swept Away
2 Stronger and More Terrible

Shadow (33):

4 Advance Captain
3 Advance Marauder
3 Advance Regular
2 Advance Scout
4 Orc Assassin
3 Orc Ambusher
4 Shagrat, Captain of Cirith Ungol
3 Cirith Ungol Guard
2 Cirith Ungol Sentry
3 Uruk Axe
1 Flames Within
1 Rank and File

The Army of the Dead first came above ground (bad pun) in Siege of Gondor, packing a punch with their enduring ability and some mean companions, but making the Free Peoples player pay a hefty cost with threats. They were slightly resurrected (bad pun #2) in Mount Doom, but the two companions they received were, shall we say, less than good. As such, there are relatively few Gondor Wraith decks running around these days, which is a shame, considering how cool they were in *Return of the King*. With a few choice additions, however, a Wraith deck would be most viable.

The Wraiths need Aragorn as quickly as possible. Once he's out, you should have no inhibitions playing all the Wraiths you can since you can remove all the threats in the regroup phase. Swept Away stops your Wraiths from dying and Saplings can save Aragorn, as well as boost Isildur with Narsil. I included Stronger and More Terrible to give some more threat removal, just in case things start to get out of control. The Highest Quality is an event that Wraiths will love: make themselves stronger while making minions weaker. Banner of the White Tree can provide defense and boosting, while the Spectral Sword can save one of your Wraiths in a desperate situation.

Advance Captain and his cronies caught everyone by surprise when Mount Doom came out. Now Sauron minions who were roaming, which was normally a bad thing, could get all sorts of mean bonuses. Unfortunately, their relatively low strength and lack of options caused them to be largely ignored. Another group of minions that never received much deck time was the gang of Cirith Ungol Uruk-hai, led by Shagrat. Again, low strength and numbers caused their downfall. I will now suggest the unthinkable: combine them! "Are you mad?" some of you may ask. Well...yes. But I do know that an Advance Captain before site 6 will make any of the Cirith Ungol Uruks damage +2. And with a few small trackers reducing the roaming penalty instead of the site number, you can unleash a torrent of nastiness upon the Free Peoples player.

Roaming Sauron is meant to destroy everything quickly. The trackers help everything get out cheap at the beginning so the Advance Captain can show up with

Shagrat in tow. Uruk Axes can boost anybody, especially Uruk-hai, and the conditions give powerful boosts to help your minions smash. After site 6 is when you want to play the Advance Scout, so he can make everybody roaming and, therefore, ugly. The Marauder boosts, the Regular makes fierce, and the other Cirith Ungol Uruks are just big and cheap. ○

Oren is a sophomore English major at Wright State University, and has been playing Lord of the Rings since the release of Mines of Moria.





Out of all of the horror movies produced, a lot of them deal with close encounters with creatures known only as ghosts, tormented souls who harassed the living. Another fiendish type is the undead, nothing but a rotting corpse with a hunger for only one thing: human flesh. When you bring these two monstrosities together, what do you get? Put aside your first thoughts of Resident Evil and you can find a horrifyingly effective .Hack//Enemy deck.

Ghosts and The Undead

All of the ghost and undead monster type cards focus on one thing: wearing down your opponent. Whether it be wounding a PC, or putting cards on top of your deck to draw for destiny, these creatures can certainly give you the upper hand. Also note that this deck may not have any flashy monsters, like Macha or Corebenik. Instead, it draws dark monsters from the first set (*Contagion*), and a few from some of the newer sets in order to obliterate your opponent's defenses. And with the release of newer sets, the monsters and PCs have only become bigger and better.



PC Strategy

Player Character cards are very important in this deck in several ways. They provide adequate defense against your opponent's monsters, and more importantly, they aid your strategy (and other cards) through their game text. For example, Sora 2.0 is an excellent PC to pull out early in the game. Playing one of your more expendable PCs to sacrifice for him is well worth it, especially in the beginning phases of the game, because every time your opponent avoids an attack you can wound a PC, making it easier to score monsters later on. Oborozukiyo is not only another great PC; he is one of the most useful cards in this deck. Whenever you play him, you may wound a healthy PC, letting you wear down your opponent before you attack with your monsters. Play him right and you can take out a strong PC quickly, especially when played in conjunction with PC wounding monsters. Kite 2.0 is another useful element in the deck. Whenever you draw destiny for him, you can look at the top three cards of your deck and rearrange them, letting you "save" certain cards you want to use them later. This is especially helpful if he is your only PC, or the second PC you have in play, because it lets you have at least 1

card in the top 3 cards of your deck that is not used for destiny. And, based on your opponent's monster strategy, you should play your PCs accordingly. If he builds up a swarm, you will want to have only one or 2 PCs out to limit the amount of monsters he can score. If he plays mostly solo monsters backed with a few weak portal-dwellers then it would be best to have 2 or 3 PCs out.

Monster Strategy

There are at least a couple of strategies to playing your monsters effectively. One is to keep storable monsters in your portal and swarm your opponent late in the game. To begin this strategy, you want to get out your Deathhead and Odoro drain monsters early on, to get darkness spots (Ectoplasms are very good for this purpose too). After you get a good collection of monsters in your portal, you can bring out a few stronger solo monsters, such as Pumpkin Head or Halloween in order to try to flush out some of their actions. However, be careful about how many solo monsters you play, because it is best to save at least one for the end of the game to lead your swarm of monsters. After you have exhausted most of your deck, bring out one strong monster to attack and pull out all of your portal-dwellers. After your opponent assigns the initial attackers, try to assign fighters as evenly as possible. Be sure to try to include at least one Franken and *at least* two monsters with the "Wound a PC" reward per fight. Depending on the amount of battles you win, you can score a multitude of monsters. If you win your first fight (You should, since you will be drawing a fair amount of destiny thanks to Franken, plus have a large swarm attacking at once.) score any one of the monsters *except* one with the "Wound a PC" reward. Next, use the rewards as you like, and spend the two or more "Wound a PC" rewards killing off one of the other

PCs (10)

4 Oborozukiyo 2.0
3 Sora 2.0
3 Kite 2.0

Items (8)

4 Anshou
2 Sora's Blades
2 Kite's Bracelet

Monsters (38)

4 Odoro
4 Deathhead
4 Ectoplasm
4 Shining Eyes
4 Franken
4 Skull Hero
4 Head Hunt Lair
4 Head Hunter
2 Nomadic Bones
2 Halloween
2 Pumpkin Head



combatants (Aim for killing one of them first, then kill a second, if you can). If you manage to kill off a PC or two, you can score all of the monsters in that fight (That can be scored for victory points) which will probably win you the game, and you can use their rewards. Playing Oborozukiyo 2.0 before you begin a battle is very helpful as well, since it brings down the amount of “Wound a PC” rewards necessary to kill off a PC. An alternate strategy would be to bring out solo monsters with a few portal dwellers early on, and score quickly with small swarms, as compared to a huge one at the end.

Defeat Strategy

Depending on the strategy there are a few things that can defeat a deck like this. If he plans to throw one huge swarm at you (You’ll be able to tell because he will have a large mass of monsters in his portal) keep only one PC out and keep it healthy. It really should not matter what level the PC is, since it would lose anyways. If you can keep one out though, it will bring the amount of monsters they can score down to one. An Axewall type deck would be very effective against this deck as well, as long as PCs are kept healthy. If he tries to throw out solo monsters, counter by having 3 strong PCs in play. 🌸

Evan is a long-time fan of the .Hack//Enemy franchise and a veteran .hack gamer.

PCs (11)

4 Sieg 2.0
4 Marlo
3 BiG 2.0

Items (10)

4 Komura
2 Phoenix' s Fire
2 Fireman's Coat
2 Firedrake Mail

Actions (4)

4 Ruem Spiral

Fields (3)

3 Raging, Passionate, Melody

Grunties (3)

3 Rocker Grunty

Monsters (29)

4 King Snakoid
2 Hell Hound
4 Sled Dog
3 Doberman Pack
2 Ark Prince
4 Skate Rat Ark
4 Red Wyrn
2 Dragon Puppy
4 Maical Goblin

stocking Fireman' s Coat. The +1 strength aids against Heavy Axemen, plus it' s an early Fire spot. Adding one or two Firedrake Mail is helpful - stacking 4 isn' t dMistral 5, but it' s free and safe. Finally, Newt Necklace gets listed as "possible", as in almost any deck nowadays. The fact that it plays off Komura is just a bonus.

Actions and Events: When I tested against Blue Crush, I had no actions. Now, I need to consider 7-9 strength monsters and try to block Gorre, while my PCs only reach 7. Of the available actions, I like Ruem Spiral best. I' d prefer Fire, but the only Fire action requires another hidden card sacrifice to get double destiny, totally against Card Advantage. The multiple monster +4 will help against Darkness and Gomora. The number of actions varies; a couple months ago I ran five, but with Phoenix Fire three or four should be enough. I want Girl in White to recover weapons, but have no space.

Field and Grunty: Rocker Grunty is obvious. The field is a little trickier. At some points this deck has played no fields, instead relying on pulling monsters. Now, Cursed Despaired Paradise and Tested Quicksilver Valkyrie are common, making three (or even four) necessary.

Non-storable Monsters: Previously, a Fire deck had to mix and match various species. Now, lots of decks focus on Hounds or Demons. I think that' s a mistake, because by combining species, I can increase speed. Plus, with Marlo I want to maximize my storable count. When there were no fields, I used eight monsters that sprung the portal. Now, I' ll cut that to six. Because I plan on multiple species, I need to use monsters that pull all Fire, not specialized ones like Sled Dog King. My favorite choice is the King - King Snakoid. The play requirement is very moderate. I run Hell Hound over Inferno, to have more ways to threaten hidden cards and because

One of my favorite concepts is Blademasters and Fire. This article works on the basic concept and first draft. Next time, I' ll talk about playtesting and metagaming.

To build a tournament quality deck, I need to know the top opposition, so I browsed the message boards. Thankfully, Marlo 2.0 had just been banned, destroying the horrible Drain-O, along with Aykon' s Wounding Drain. Kite' s Bracelet makes Twin Blade / Darkness a more likely consideration. The power of Piros and Subaru make Heavy Axemen very strong; its win condition is generally Gorre, accompanied by Squidbods and Deadly Presents and Easter Rocks. Closely related, though very different in win condition, is Heavy Axeman / Gomora. I rounded out my meta list with a couple other decent decks, "Crazy PC" and Heavy Blade / Earth sacrifice. With this in mind, I started paging through card lists. For this deck, I' m going to start with defense, then move onto the attack. Blademaster / Fire wins through card advantage, getting bonus card plays and destroying my opponent' s key cards, and so my choices focus on speed and tempo.

PCs: As a standard deck, I will play 10-12 PCs to defend and have bodies for items. Sieg 2.0 is obvious. Bonus card plays are wonderful, he' s 2 strength, and the toplay cost involves no plays for my opponent. Original Marlo is also automatic. Beyond that, there are several choices. BiG 2.0 has terrible destiny, but a low to-play cost and an extra fire spot. Balmung 2.0 has a nice ability, but the to-play cost might be difficult. There' s not much room for Water in a Fire deck. Ginkan 2.0 gets me an item, but I give my opponent a play in return; the Silver Knight also has a bonus strength but bad destiny. One might even splash Mistral 2.0, with awesome picture, great destiny, and an ability to exploit through Sieg. Because I want a fast start, I go for the extra Fire via BiG.

Items: Four Komura, of course. The new Phoenix Fire is also great - I can play it directly late, destroying the opponent' s hidden cards if needed. Debatably, I' m also



Squidbod and Deadly Present have an unfortunate way of removing my discard pile.



Storables: Cards vary greatly in strength, requirements, and destiny. Nevertheless, Sled Dog is an absolute four-of. In this deck, four fire should arrive quickly. It destroys a monster, effectively making it two points; there should be enough fire to return, preferably Komura. Another Hound, the new Doberman Pack, is spectacular. Return one of my opponent' s hidden cards gains a tempo, making this card immediately playable; monster destruction is a bonus. I might need the Hell Doberman for more destruction; we' ll see. The new Hades Hound has nice strength and potential, but the indirect play is often inappropriate.

I also look at Demons and Lizards. In this high-PC environment, I can count on healthy PCs, so I can run Demons. Also, I need some Lizards; Red Wyrms work well. Dragon Puppy doesn' t have a point, so I won' t run many, but it does combo extremely well with King Snakoid. Finally, I fill the last four spots with perhaps the best first-turn play in the game, Magical Goblin. It doesn' t combo with anything, but a 4 destiny card draw does well.

Here' s my draft of the deck. Next time, I' ll talk about playtesting and adjusting this build, and the importance of good deck titles. 🌟



Sometimes the simplest strategies are the best. This ElecMan deck is a testament to that rule. The plan of attack... is to attack.

The deck is truly based around two of cards from the brand new Grave set, Heatguts and Bighammer3. The unique thing about these two new cards is that they add to your blast destiny before you blast and effect all the times you blast each turn. The Bighammer3 is a battlechip that adds a +4 destiny to each time you blast this turn. When played under the proper setup, and with a bit of luck, you can easily blast 2 or 3 times in one turn. Heatguts is a red resource that increases your blast destiny once for each other red resource in play. When you get it set up for a bonus of +2 you can simply blast each turn your way to victory, and if your opponent is likewise playing a red deck it can get even higher if they keep their red resources in play.

This deck is obsessively focused on its strategy, if you can call it that. More or less every card in the deck is in there to deal damage to the opponent as soon as it's drawn. Every chip is fairly easy to play and gives you a little power to boot (with Elecman's ability). The chips themselves are very cost effective. Even the 0 power combo oriented chip, Metoers1, is not at all useless when played at low power. The Meteors1 will power you up to allow for the next chip, which will power you up to the max for another big chip and a blast. The next turn you'll return two of those chips to your hand to be played later. Playing the Bighammer3 will immediately power up to pay for the blasting you'll do, so you'll keep yourself at a respectable level.

This deck resists most kinds of control fairly well. Resource destruction is negated in a large way by the fact that most of your resources can be spent early and often if that's your opponent's strategy. Of course the Heatguts itself is a big source of damage each turn, and your opponent will try to deal with it quickly if they can. If they try to burn your power then you're going to do just fine considering how well ElecMan maintains his power. Hand disruption will slow you down, but not to any great level, since you're going to be playing everything as soon as you get it anyway.

Most ElecMan decks have green resources and events to shore up his hand when being aggressive runs you out of steam. His power gauge is the easiest resource to spend to fill your hand back up, but this deck has no green. Instead card advantage comes in the Grave Prerelease promo card Heatguts Activate. Rather than using green to discard your power to draw cards, this card turns the cards in your power gauge into cards in hand. Elecman will be at 3 power almost the whole game. When time comes to use the Heatguts Activate you should be able to get the full effect possible from it.

The truth is, unfortunately, that ElecMan, Fully Charged doesn't win on his own. He relies on his 1 blast and powering up abilities to carry him. Each turn you will take damage, there's no getting around that. Your only strategy is to do more than they do. This is somewhat difficult considering the levels of disruption and 3/3/0 and 3/2/4 NetNavis that are floating around most metagames.

Tips on playing this deck:

1) Don't power up after playing a chip if you don't have to. Powering up takes two cards off your deck. The deck runs just fine on 3 power, and saving 8 energy over the course of the game might make a difference.



Netnavi

1 - ElecMan, Fully Charged (PU)

Red Resources

3 - Heatguts (Grv)
3 - Envious Evil (Grv)
3 - Usual Policy (Grv)
3 - Fire It Up (PU)
4 - Vulgear (GP)
3 - Gutsman, Full Out Battler (Grv)
2 - Open the Door (GP)

Yellow Resources

4 - Double Zap (PU)
2 - Cyber Warrior (PU)
3 - Roll of Thunder (GP)

Red Events

3 - Wrap It Up (Grv)
1 - Unbelievable (GP)
2 - Heatguts Activate (Pro)
3 - Disaster Strikes (PU)

Yellow Events

2 - Double Power (Lvl)

Battlechips

4 - Meteors1 (Grv)
3 - Boomer1 (GP)
4 - Bighammer3 (Grv)
3 - Laserblast (PU)
4 - Hi-Cannon (GP)

2) Disruption is almost non-existent in this deck. A Cyber Warrior is only as good as the resource it destroys, so get the most out of them. The same is true for the Unbelievable.

3) You don' t have to wait for the "perfect" time to use one of the combos. If you use Meteors1 and just have one other chip in hand, maybe it' s the right time even if not the best time. If you have the Bighammer3 and can only blast once, it could be worth it. So don' t be afraid to deal damage this turn.

The last word on this deck is that it' s a fun way to bring back a NetNavi that' s been a long time out of the limelight. The new blast modifiers are some of the best, but hardest to employ cards in the game. Why not pair the best blaster with the best blast cards? This deck isn' t for everyone, but if you' re looking for a way to play that' s not control you might consider checking it out. Sometimes finesse and cunning are your best weapons. Sometimes there' s just no substitute for brute strength and ignorance. 🎲





Bold Leaders and Cunning Backstabbers

New Archetypes for Star Trek RPG

By Brian K. Mendus

Often times, a Narrator's biggest problem is coming up with new characters to use in their games. The archetypes provided in the back of the Narrator's Guide are great for one shot characters, but often times you need a Reg Barclay or Enrique Muniz rather than an Ensign McKnight or Nurse Jabarra.

The following are more detailed character archetypes for recurring characters. The stats are provided at different advancement levels (5, 10, 15 and 20 advancements) to give you better selection for the type of challenge (or assistance) your particular game requires.

Once you've chosen the level of advancement, you'll need to choose a species and apply it's attribute adjustments and species abilities. If this causes attribute modifiers to increase, apply the difference to the reactions as if the attributes were changed from the beginning. For instance, if by choosing Cardassian for the archetype, the character's Perception raises enough to increase it's modifier, check to see if the Quickness and/or Savvy will increase as well. Also, note that these are strictly professional archetypes. To flesh out the characters, if you so desire, simply select a Personal Development package and add an extra advancement to flesh it out (as long as you use the picks on the Personal Development skills, they shouldn't affect the character's professional skill level, merely flesh out his background).

Starship Command Officer

The starship command officer archetype has many uses, from populating background characters on a starship to providing foes to encounter. This particular officer is in the command branch, representing away team leaders or captains of ships.

Starting Attributes: Str 8 (+1), Agl 7, Vit 6, Int 10 (+2), Per 8 (+1), Pre* 11 (+2)

Order: Starship Officer

Elite Order: Command Officer

Reactions, Health, Courage and Renown

Advancements	Quick	Savvy	Stam	Will*	Health	Courage	Renown
5	+2	+2	+1	+3	7	3	3
10	+2	+3	+2	+4	7	4	6
15	+2	+3	+2	+5	8	4	8
20	+2	+4	+2	+5	8	5	10

Skills & Traits:

5 Advancements

Skills: Administration +4, Computer Use (Retrieve) +2, Ranged Combat: Energy Weapons +3, Knowledge: Choose One +2, Negotiate +2, Persuade +2, Repair +2, Survival (choose) +1, System Operation (Command, Choose other) +4, Tactics (Space) +4, Unarmed Combat: Choose +2

Edges: Bold, Promotion (Lieutenant) 2

Flaws: Rival (Choose)

Professional Abilities: Commanding Presence, Starship Duty (Command), Starship Protocol

At this point, the officer could be a bridge officer, serving as a tactical or flight control officer (or whatever you choose for the second system operation specialization). He (or she) shows a lot of promise, though, as he has already risen in the ranks to become a lieutenant (or equivalent). Success has it's price, as he has also gained a rival within his organization (or even his ship!).

10 Advancements

Skills: Administration (Starship) +4, Computer Use (Retrieve) +3, Ranged Combat: Energy Weapons (Choose) +3, Knowledge: Choose One +3, Negotiate +3, Persuade +3, Repair +2, Survival (choose) +2, System Operation (Command, Choose other) +4, Tactics (Space) +4, Unarmed Combat: Choose +3

Edges: Bold, Command, Promotion (Lieutenant Commander) 3

Flaws: Rival (Choose)

Professional Abilities: Commanding Presence, Starship Duty (Command), Starship Protocol

Rising to the rank of Lieutenant Commander, the officer has become a Department Head and possibly second officer of the ship. If he continues at this rate, his shot at the big chair won't be too far off.

15 Advancements

Raise Pre to 12* (+3)

Skills: Administration (Starship) +5, Computer Use (Retrieve) +3, Ranged Combat: Energy Weapons (Choose) +3, Knowledge: Choose One +3, Negotiate +3, Persuade +4, Repair +2, Survival (choose) +2, System Operation (Command, Choose other) +5, Tactics (Space, Choose other) +5, Unarmed Combat: Choose +3

Edges: Bold, Command, Confident, Promotion (Commander) 4

Flaws: Rival (Choose) 2

Professional Abilities: Commanding Presence, Starship Duty (Command), Starship Protocol, Universal Renown

As first officer of his ship, the officer is now second only to his Captain. He heads most away missions, and is the officer in command when the captain is absent. But his increased responsibilities have caused him to butt heads with his rival more often.

20 Advancements

Skills: Administration (Starship) +5, Computer Use (Retrieve) +3, Ranged Combat: Energy Weapons (Choose) +3, Knowledge: Choose One +4, Negotiate +4, Persuade +5, Repair +2, Survival (choose) +3, System Operation (Command, Choose other) +6, Tactics (Space, Choose other) +6, Unarmed Combat: Choose +3

Edges: Bold, Command 2, Confident, Promotion (Captain) 5, Resolute

Flaws: Rival (Choose) 2

Professional Abilities: Command, Commanding Presence, Starship Duty (Command), Starship Protocol, Universal Renown

Finally, the officer has ascended to the rank of Captain, with a ship of his own. He's the one in charge, making the attempts at diplomacy (cowboy or not), strategizing in battle against alien commanders, and, of course, seducing the green women.

Intelligence Agent

Romulan spies are everywhere. For that matter, so are Cardassian spies. And Founder saboteurs and surgically altered Klingons. From the Romulan Tal Shiar to the Cardassian Obsidian Order, pretty much every major power in the galaxy has an intelligence division to gather data on enemy plans as well as sabotage operations and even eliminate certain “problematic” individuals.

Starting Attributes: Str 6, Agl 8* (+1), Vit 7, Int 10 (+2), Per 11 (+2), Pre 8 (+1)

Order: Rogue

Reactions, Health, Courage and Renown

Advancements	Quick*	Savvy	Stam	Will	Health	Courage	Renown
5	+2	+2	+1	+2	7	3	2
10	+2	+3	+1	+3	7	3	4
15	+2	+3	+1	+3	7	4	5
20	+2	+4	+2	+5 [†]	7	4	7

[†]+2 from Unyielding Edge

Skills & Traits:

5 Advancements

Skills: Computer Use +4, Conceal (Cache) +3, Forgery +2, Impersonate +5, Inquire (Fraternize) +3, Investigate +3, Observe (Choose) +3, Ranged Combat: Choose +3, Stealth (Choose) +4

Edges: Alert, Confident

Professional Abilities: Con Artist

Though at this point a freelance agent, the agent is an ambitious young rogue. Perhaps a career criminal who’s caught the eye of an intelligence recruiter or someone the local black market knows can get the goods on a competitor.

10 Advancements

Add Elite Order: Spy

Skills: Computer Use +4, Conceal (Cache) +3, Forgery +3, Impersonate +5, Inquire (Fraternize) +4, Investigate +3, Observe (Choose) +4, Ranged Combat: Choose +2, Stealth (Choose) +4

Edges: Alert, Confident, Contacts (Choose Spy Organization; Administration), Everyman

Professional Abilities: Con Artist, Gather Intelligence

Now officially a member of an intelligence agency, the agent specializes in surveillance and information gathering. It’s possible he could be a deep plant, relaying troop movements during the Dominion War, or maybe an Andorian “ambassador” to Vulcan, sneaking High Command secrets back to Andoria via seemingly innocuous holiday greeting messages.

15 Advancements

Raise Per to 12 (+3)

Skills: Computer Use (Encryption, Invasion) +4, Conceal (Cache) +3, Forgery +3, Impersonate +5, Inquire (Fraternize) +4, Investigate +6, Observe (Choose) +4, Ranged Combat: Choose +4, Stealth (Choose) +5

Edges: Alert, Confident, Contacts (Choose other organization; Choose skill), Contacts (Choose Spy Organization; Administration), Everyman

Flaws: Enemy (Choose)

Professional Abilities: Computer Invasion, Con Artist, Gather Intelligence

Suited to be an agent saboteur, this character could be stationed on Romulus, sabotaging the weather control system in preparation for an operation. Alternatively, he might be a Klingon agent on board a Federation space station, disabling it's defenses for an assault by hordes of Klingon warriors.


20 Advancements

Skills: Computer Use (Encryption, Invasion) +4, Conceal (Cache) +3, Forgery +6, Impersonate +6, Inquire (Fast Talk, Fraternize) +5, Investigate +6, Observe (Choose) +4, Ranged Combat: Choose +4, Stealth (Choose) +5

Edges: Alert, Confident, Contacts (Choose other organization; Choose skill), Contacts (Choose Spy Organization; Administration), Everyman, Excellent Metabolism, High Pain Threshold, Unyielding

Flaws: Enemy (Choose)

Professional Abilities: Computer Invasion, Con Artist, Gain Access, Gather Intelligence

A high-ranking Intelligence Agent, this spy represents an adjutant to Starfleet, or a “spy master” for a smaller power (such as the First Federation or the Tzenkethi). Conditioned to resist torture and chemical attempts to “loosen his tongue”, this agent travels frequently, and is someone the crew of a starship could meet several times over a tour of duty... 



Solving the Dilemma of Dilemmas

By Justin Beal

So you have just discovered Star Trek Second Edition, but you cannot afford to get into another card game. You read about all these great decks online and all you see are expensive rares, and you cannot afford that type of game.

Well, I am here today to debunk that theory for Star Trek dilemma pile construction. Basically most of the rare dilemmas in Star Trek are "niche" dilemmas. What I mean, is that they are focused on a specific concept, like killing lots of personnel, or capture, or starship damage markers. But those are just icing on the cake, and are not necessary. All you need to make a solid foundation for your dilemma pile is some commons and uncommons, and those you can find easily enough in packs (or from a local dAgent or retailer). So without further ado, here are my top 10 non-rare dilemmas:

10. Traitor Exposed - Traitor Exposed could read: "Kill a Treachery personnel, unless they have cunning 6", because 70% of the time that is exactly what the dilemma does. By wording it the other way, it gives your opponent hope that their personnel will live, and that is very rare. Unaided, most Treachery personnel (113 out of 127) will be killed



9. Temptation - Temptation is not the easiest dilemma to play, but if you use it correctly, you should get 2 stops. Keep in mind that it is not guaranteed to hit and takes more observation to remember how much Treachery and Honor is out there. Even so, it is a solid dilemma for any occasion.

8. A Klingon Matter - A Klingon Matter works best following some stoppers so that the second half of the requirement doesn't trigger. If the dilemma triggers, you have to randomly select a personnel of Strength < 7. So against Klingons, Dominion, and other affiliations that have the ability to boost their attributes, this is not as good a dilemma. However, against most decks this is a 3 cost kill and bounce.

7. Harsh Conditions - There is not much to say about Harsh Conditions. Denying your opponent one (or more) skills, may not seem like a lot, but it can set up some devastating combos. For example, using this with Rogue Borg Ambush (naming Intelligence) and unless they have a hand weapon, they are stopped. So all you have to decide what skill to name based on the dilemmas that you drew that time around.

6. Murder Investigation - This dilemma is not a guaranteed hit, but if it does hit it is an impact to be reckoned with. Murder Investigation is one of the best for the sheer number of personnel that have Security in the game, you are bound to pick at least one.

5. Center of Attention - Until *Call to Arms* came out, this was my favorite dilemma. Hand Weapons are not nearly as popular as you might think they should be (with the notable exception of a Bat' leths). 3 Security is not much, but remember this is a wall so you should already have filtered some personnel out. If you stop them then you get to choose a personnel with Treachery to be killed as a bonus.



4. **Racial Tension** - With Racial Tensions, race enters the picture and this can be quite the hindrance to many affiliations. Federation and Bajoran were hit the worst. The Cardassians need support from other affiliations in order to really work well, so they get hurt as well, same for the Romulans with their 4 races. This is the single most common dilemma used for Machinations as it costs zero (can be played even if you draw no dilemmas) and has a good probability of triggering.

3. **Picking Up The Pieces** - Let me present you with some numbers here. 150 out of 457 personnel in this game have either Geology or Programming. The only downside of this card is that since it is a planet dilemma, your opponent can more easily limit the number of Geology/Programming personnel that face planet missions. However, such a small draw back is worth the advantages of this dilemma.

2. **Rogue Borg Ambush** - There were some good cards to come out of *Call to Arms*, but this card is the only one that affects all decks. Even if you have Intelligence or a hand weapon the requirements are very high and tough to get past. I cannot say enough about this dilemma. As long as you have filtered out 2-3 people before facing it you should have no problems stopping your opponent with this dilemma.

1. **Guess Who's Coming to Dinner / Back Room Dealings** These two dilemmas almost universally replaced another starter only dilemma (Pinned Down) when they came out. For the average cost of 2, these dual dilemmas offer the same benefit as pinned down, and the added benefit that you could end up killing someone. Now, Diplomacy and Treachery are not really that hard to find, but even if all you get is a stop, then these dilemmas would be just as good as Pinned Down.



So you see the list, and now you want me to show you how these cards work together, right? There are some of these cards that are only in *Necessary Evil* and it may be hard for you to find those dilemmas. I will note what you can do to replace those dilemmas if you cannot find them. Well, here you go a sample (minimal) dilemma pile that can work with any deck:

Space: (3)

1 Command Decisions (Prem)

2 Magnetic Field Disruptions (Prem)

Planet: (5)

1 A Klingon Matter (Eng)

1 Harsh Conditions (NE, add another Picking Up the Pieces)

1 Picking Up the Pieces (Eng)

2 Rogue Borg Ambush (CtA)

Dual: (12)

2 Back Room Dealings (NE, Can be replaced with Pinned Down)

1 Center of Attention (Prem)

2 Guess Who's Coming to Dinner (NE, Can be replaced with Pinned Down)

2 Murder Investigation (CtA)

2 Racial Tension (Eng)

1 Temptation (Prem)

2 Traitor Exposed (Eng)



As you get more rare dilemmas in your collection, you can add and replace ones in this sample dilemma pile. Cards like Personal Duty, Gomtuu Shock Wave, and In Training would make great additions. I hope you enjoyed this article, and remember Star Trek is a great game, with lots of strategy, and very cheap and easy to get into. 🖱️

Justin is a veteran Star Trek TCG player (ranking in the Top 20 in the World) and active contributor for the game at DGMA.com



Logging in to The World of .hack//ENEMY

By Jonathan Bruser

.hack//ENEMY is the TCG portraying events in “The World,” the massively multiplayer online role playing game (MMORPG) that is the foundation of the .hack franchise. Like any RPG, “The World” contains player characters (PCs) that must fight monsters to achieve victory. Only in this card game, you win by attacking your opponent’s PCs with your monsters, just as your PCs must defend against your opponent’s monsters. A .hack//ENEMY deck contains 60 cards, made up of two basic halves: the monster half (offense), and the PC half (defense).

For the monster half, a good first choice would be Goblins, which have been a mainstay in .hack//ENEMY since the game was born. Goblins fall into three basic categories: storable monsters with no “to play” requirements, storable monsters that require you to sacrifice other goblins, and non-storable monsters (most, if not all of which require you to sacrifice other goblins). Using a 30-card monster side, we’ll want to use 15-20 of the first type of goblins, about 10 of the second type, and the remaining slots with the third type.



The Earth goblins tend to have rewards that either destroy items (Goblin, Metal Goblin, Gremlin, etc.) or play goblins back to your portal from your discard pile (Hobgoblin, Cannibal, etc.), while Fire goblins tend to have rewards that let you draw cards (Magical Goblin, Goblin Wiz, Ogre, etc.). The Lighting goblins deal with using rewards in unique ways, but they’re not best for a first deck. Goblins with “Gang” in the title are essentially bigger versions of their non-gang cousins. The most crucial goblins are the ones that bring back monsters from the discard pile, as those will replenish your portal after you swarm to begin building up for a new attack.

Some rares to look for would be Goblin Night, which can tag team with other goblins against a single PC, Gob Machine, which can score monsters directly from your portal without having to fight, and Albert and Martina, which are each worth two victory points instead of one. If you want to play with goblins, you’ll want to get packs from Contagion and Isolation (of the rares

listed above, all are from Contagion except for Gob Machine, which is from *Isolation*). For a more advanced Goblin deck later on, there are some cards in Distortion that, while complicated for a beginner, can be very effective if used well.

If you want to try your hand at another kind of swarm deck, you could try Aliens (*Isolation*) or Gomora (*Distortion*). Aliens use monsters’ rewards from the discard pile (as well as playing them back from there to the portal); while gomora tend to make one big all-or-nothing attack that can let them score every monster from every fight, not just one monster per fight. Those decks are a little more complicated than goblins, but once you get a good feel for the game, you might want to try them, especially since they come in the same packs as some of your goblins.

The PCs in .hack//ENEMY are divided into six different classes (Wavemasters, Twin Blades, Long Arms, Blademasters, Heavy Blades, and Heavy Axemen). It is generally good to have only one class of PCs in your deck. This is mainly because weapons only play on certain classes of PCs, and you’re far more likely to be able to play a weapon if the right PC is in play. Each PC class has its own general features that make it unique. Wavemasters benefit from healthy PCs, Twin Blades wound themselves for good effects, Long Arms get rewards for winning fights, Heavy Blades get strength bonuses under certain conditions, Heavy Axemen have the highest strength, and Blademasters do a little bit of everything.

The simplest class of PC to understand, and thus the best choice for a beginner, would definitely be Heavy Axemen. Generally, you’ll want to run about 3-4 copies of 3-4 different PCs in a deck. For Heavy Axemen, Piros, Crest, Nekoski 2.0, and Subaru 1.0 are a good start. Though none of these are rare, they are scattered across first five sets (except *Isolation*). Some good X-tra rare Axemen are Piros 2.0 (*Isolation*) and Subaru 2.0 (*Epidemic*).





PCs alone won't do the trick, however. They need items to help them out. Heavy Axemen weapons are unique in that they give one more strength than weapons for other PCs. If you also skip level 1 weapons and go straight to level 2, your PCs will be even stronger. This can be done with the weapons Earth Axe and Water Axe. Each one has a risk to it, however. Earth Axe can be bounced right back to your hand if your opponent plays a weapon, while Water Axe returns each of your scored monsters to your hand unless you spot 4 different elements. From there, a good level 3 weapon would be Darkness Axe. When you get to rare level 4 weapons, try Yeah Piros (*Isolation*) and Subaru's Axe (*Breakout*). For armor, Plate Armor is a solid defense that also cycles your hand.

Actions are another card type that can help your PCs, mostly by adding strength when flipped from being hidden (face-down), and most of them aren't rare. A good start would be 3-4 copies each of Gan Break

(*Isolation*), and Juka Tempest (*Breakout*).

One of the most important things to consider when building a deck is the average destiny numbers of your cards. While higher destinies are always better, Goblins have average destinies, while Heavy Axemen have lower destinies. Destiny is very important, but for now just worry about getting a good feel for the game. Afterwards, you can tinker with your deck to improve its destiny.

Just like "The World," there is far more to .hack//ENEMY than may seem apparent at first. Layers upon layers of strategy await in this game. Hopefully this article will serve as a good first step. Ride fast on the path, eliminate all seek to thwart you, and become your opponent's worst //ENEMY! 🌸



Jonathan has been playing .hack//ENEMY since it first released. He has been published three times in his high school's literary magazine, and he has been a member of that magazine's staff for three years as well.

Dig Deeper into the History behind your Cards

Frenzied Attack

By Paul Abbamondi

One of my favorite cards from Shadows is, in fact, a Shadow card. To be more specific, it is the “Red Wrath” of the Gollum culture, where the power-driven Stinker is at the end of his sane train; Frenzied Attack.

The aspect that I love most about this card though is held within its lore. It comes from a pivotal moment in both the book and movie version; Gollum truly emerges as the foul creature he is and conks Samwise Gamgee over the head with a large rock. At this point, Gollum wants one thing and one thing only – the Ring of Power.

The lore on the Shadows uncommon is actually only part of the conversation that Gollum has amongst himself. Here is the full text from Chapter III of Book 6: Mount Doom of what occurred on the slopes of that fiery mountain:

A sudden weight smote him [Sam] and he crashed forward, tearing the backs of his hands that still clasped his master's. Then he knew what had happened, for above him as he lay he heard a hated voice.

‘Wicked masster!’ it hissed. ‘Wicked masster cheats us; cheats Sméagol, gollum. He musn’t go that way. He musn’t hurt Preciouss. Give it to Sméagol, yess, give it to us! Give it to us!’

Gollum obviously begins his assault on the Halfings with venting out his anger towards his “wicked masster” who everyone now knows is Frodo Baggins. In Chapter VI of Book 4: The Forbidden Pool, Frodo leads Sméagol away from the sacred pool of water where that fishing creature would have surely met its unsatisfying end at arrow-point. When Sméagol realizes that he has been deceived, the hatred inside begins to build as seen here:

Gollum crawled along close to the brink for a little way, snuffling and suspicious. Presently he stopped and raised his head. ‘Something’s there!’ he said. ‘Not a hobbit.’ Suddenly he turned back. A green light was flickering in his bulging eyes. ‘Masster, masster!’ he hissed. ‘Wicked! Tricky! False!’ He spat and stretched out his long arms with white snapping fingers.

The lore upon this card was a real surprise to read in the books because at this point, the reader really had no idea of what happened to Sméagol by the time they reached Mount Doom. The focus was on both Frodo and Sam as they got closer and closer to their final destination. To suddenly have Sam knocked down and to read Gollum’s almost war declaration was an astonishing piece of literature to experience. I wish that Decipher used the picture of Gollum throwing the rock at Sam though, since it would have made the connection between the lore and card even stronger. ○

Paul is a senior and journalism major preparing to graduate from Rowan University. He has been playing Lord of the Rings TCG since the release of Fellowship block.



Death Squadron

By Joshua J. Radke

After their shocking defeat at the Battle of Yavin, it was obvious to The Emperor that he would need to bring the full might of his military forces to bear on the Rebel Alliance if he was to crush their rebellion. One of those options was the mighty Death Squadron. Assigned to his agent, Darth Vader, the Death Squadron was comprised of Sith master's flagship—the massive *Super-class* Star Destroyer, *Executor* (a gift to Vader from Palpatine)—and five *Imperial-class* Star Destroyers. By itself, this massive force could take on anything Alliance Fleet Command could ever hope to throw at it, perhaps the entire Rebel fleet itself. Combined, these six Imperial ships housed thousands of TIE-class fighters, immense firepower, elite officers, and a contingent of the Imperial Army for ground assault.

For several years, it has long been a mystery as to exactly which five Star Destroyers served with this squadron of destruction. Of no doubt were the ImpStars *Devastator*, *Avenger*, and *Tyrant*. If you will remember, the *Devastator* was Lord Vader's first flagship, used to capture Princess Leia's consular ship, *Tantive IV*, over the desert world of Tatooine. Several ImpStars are known to have occupied the remaining slots, but the only one so far confirmed is the *Vengeance*. It isn't impossible that at one time both ships or even others may have been in the Death Squadron.

After the Battle of Hoth three of the Death Squadron Imperial Star Destroyers were badly damaged, one critically, while trying to capture the elusive *Millennium Falcon*. It is still not known which Star Destroyers replaced those three, but the *Stalker* is another ImpStar commonly believed to have been with the squadron during its existence.

Whatever the case may be, it is not a rumor as to who its commanders were. The first Death Squad command fell upon Admiral Griff. Griff was a competent officer who oversaw the construction of Vader's *Executor* and later the blockade of the remaining Rebel forces on Yavin 4. Unfortunately (or maybe fortunately), he wasn't in command of the squadron very long as a miscalculated hyperspace jump landed him and his ship too close to the *Executor*. Both ship and Admiral were tragically lost. The next commander of the Squadron was Admiral Ozzel—a promotion that was more political than anything else. When Ozzel proved himself to be as unworthy as most thought, the Squadron was given over to a young officer who had already earned much respect amongst many of his peers, Captain Piett. Though Piett ultimately became the Squadron's last commander, Piett was the only Death Squadron commander allowed the honor to die in combat when he became a victim of the quickly unraveling Empire at the climactic Battle of Endor.

Many Rebels will tell you that the mere sight of Darth Vader's Death Squadron entering a sector was enough for them to surrender. The Death Squadron remains a paralyzing example of the sheer power the Empire possessed. 🖡



Omnigame

by Michael Wistrand

The secondary game: Factors besides the cards that affect the outcome of the game.

These include the subtle hints your opponent gives to what cards are in their hand and in their deck. How fatigue, stress, doubt, confusion, adrenaline, confidence, and other factors that affect how you make decisions. The secondary game, to a lesser degree, consists of the ways you inspire fatigue, confusion, doubt, fear, and frustration in your opponents, and how to resist your opponent's head games.

When just starting out, players are often taught about the primary game. The cards, their effects, when to play them, and how are among the first things discussed when players begin with their first trading card games. What is rarely spoken of at all, even among the most experienced gamers, is what's going on around the cards. I decided to write this article to help out new players and to give them a glimpse into what they're doing. Knowing more than your opponent is often times the deciding factor in games. Therefore, being able to get knowledge from your opponent that they're trying to hide can be vital.

Most of the people who have read the first version of this have commented that after playing for years on end they had never even thought about how they give away their position.

Of course these are just suggestions and nothing I say in this article is going to be 100% right 100% of the time. This subject is one of the more difficult to teach in text, so of course putting these lessons to actual use will be the next step in learning. Above all else each player is different. We all must learn to adapt.

The basics of how to read your opponent

1) Your opponent's demeanour: You have all had times where you needed one specific card and didn't draw it, or seen something you needed be discarded after their attack. How did you react to that? If you pounded your deck or sulked then your opponent knows that you're in a weaker position. Likewise if your opponent draws a card and then pumps his fist or breathes a relieved sigh then you know he's got some kind of answer. Less experienced players don't know how to, or that it's a good idea to try to hide these responses.

Common tells: Breathing, an opponent's breathing slows when they're more relaxed and becomes more ragged and heavy when they're frustrated. Their hands: when a player is about to make a move, or has a really good "trap" set their adrenaline increases and their hands begin to shake, when they're in a weak position their hands will typically lay on the table as if he's got less energy. Also pay attention to their posture. When a player's position is weak, they'll look tired and lean back, rest on the table or on their elbows. When a player is stronger they'll be more energized, lean forward towards you, or sit up straighter.

2) Your opponent's cards in hand. Many card games have cards you can play early, and cards you can't play just yet, or cards that are different by type or color. It's a habit that some players have to reorganize the cards they've drawn based on these factors. If you pay attention to how they hold their cards, and how they look at them you can get an idea of their hand. You also have to pay attention to where the cards are when they are played, to see if your predictions are correct or need to change.

Common tells: A player will usually reorganize the cards he or she can't play just yet to the "back" of their hand, you can tell how fast they'll play or try to guess when they'll be able to play some cards by this. The second most common way to organize is by color. If they organize their opening hand, then there turn play a card of one faction or color from the front of their hand, and a card of a different color from the back then you can tell how they've organized their junk. When they draw a card they'll put it in on the side of the appropriate color, so if you watch carefully you can see what kind of cards are coming up. A little aside to this, if they have a heavily one-color deck, the splashed color will almost always be

in back. The third most common is by type. Resources that can't be played except just after they've drawn are usually in the back. With chips and events in the front so that they can put cards that aren't upcoming "options" out of the way.

3) Where they look. What you learn from card games, how you derive the situations, and all the information is written. You have to use your eyes to know what's happening. As such you can tell by what your opponent chooses to stare at, and how often they read the same card what they know and what they don't know. Knowing where they're looking is the best indicator of how focused they are on the game. If they don't need to devote all their concentration, depending on the player, they're either in control and there's nothing you can do, or they've got nothing and there's nothing they can do. Whenever you have a decision to make, your opponent will try to anticipate/weigh the consequences of whatever choice. For example whenever I have some kind of removal, I look at my opponent, he looks at his hand, then his face up cards, and I can tell which one he is most likely hoping to keep, and I try to destroy the one "my opponent" thinks is the best target. The same can be applied to cards that discard "random" cards from my opponent's hand. Some players don't bother reshuffling their hands and just extend them towards you to pick. If they glance at a card then they probably wish to keep that card, or they can try to trick you by taking a longer look at something they're trying to get you to choose. A better idea would be to shuffle them without looking at them, and then fan them out to your opponent without looking, therefore offering your opponent even less chance to tell what you had or want to keep.

Common tells: If your opponent is reading the text box on your cards then you can tell they don't have a clear understanding of what you're going to do, they're trying to get some clues from your play area what your next move will be and they're planning how to respond and counter your next plays. This is also true if you notice your opponent looking at you. A player who's not in control of the match will be more likely to look at his or her own cards than yours. If they keep reading the same card over and over then they're trying to convince themselves whether or not to use it, or how to use it. You can watch for little clues when they read the title of a card to see if it's one word, or if it's a long name. When they're reading the text box of a card whether it's got a lot of text or just a few words. Different cards within a game are printed differently. For example some cards may be oriented to be read lengthwise so the player will have to tilt the card (or their head) to read it. Some games have some information written down the side or across the bottom of the card that they have to reorganize their hand to read. Knowing what types of cards are in each deck, it's easier to guess what types of cards they're reading. Of course these tips are only helpful if you understand what the likely abilities of their deck are.

4) Talking to yourself: We've all counted resources or power or twilight or destiny or PC's or used energy or strength or personnel with archaeology or whatever. We all have added up how much damage this card will do when combined with this other card. We all decided that a few seconds after drawing a discard ability, that it might be important to ask how many cards are in your opponent's hand. These are classic blunders in gaming. You should probably know ahead of time what the situation is, but if the game is more complex it'll drive you crazy trying to keep it all together. Try not to make it obvious. Try to ask these questions regularly rather than when you actually can make use of these stats.

Common tells: These are pretty obvious. Your opponent uses his fingers to count up to something, then counts down for each point of defense you have. Also they'll point at cards as they're thinking of using them. If they can't play everything in their hands then they'll try to figure out which card combinations can be played. Subtle hints, and not so subtle, give away what is in their hand. Most cards in any game are better played in a certain order than others. When you're watching him debate with himself or use his hands or neck like an imaginary balance beam, try to think what he's going to do. If you can only stop one of their actions, it's better to know if they're planning more for later. Lastly sometimes their silent contemplation isn't silent, this is great because they sometimes literally tell you out loud what their combo is, and they'll also tell you what the counters are to it. I mean that they'll ask themselves "what if he uses _____ right afterwards?" then they shrug and you know that it might ruin their plans.

There is more going on in games than is just what you can see on the table. Every game has three interactive relationships. The interaction between cards I control and the cards my opponent controls, the interaction between a player and the cards in play, and the interaction between the players with each other. Ignoring two of these three factors is a great way to fall behind. Learning more about a game is sometimes less about the game than you think. So when you see two people playing a game from across the room, even if you don't know what game they're playing, you can still learn about who's winning from watching the players themselves.

Don't stop learning.