An Analysis of Extra Deployment Decks - How to Start Up a Swarm Deck

A. Introduction

Over the course of playing BTCCG over the past 8 years, I have seen the gamut of deck types. Most conventional decks will pack missions and mechs together with optional command cards that exploit the use of these missions. Other types of decks that I have seen are subterfuge based, direct damage based, and Knockout decks (those that will weather most slugfest oriented decks, and wind up knocking out the other deck. But ever since Counter Strike came out, extra deployment has become the most favorite "Base Theme" that I have made.

B. Why Extra Deployment?

In the early ages of BTCCG, most decks would have only two deployments for each turn (except for Kurita decks packing Theodore Kurita, as well as decks packing enhancements like Ferro Fibrous Armor). Needless to say, BTCCG is one of those games where numeric advantage is the key to victory. Often enough, this advantage would be achieved by destroying more of the opponents mechs, whilst preventing the destruction of your own mechs. When the favor turns to you, it's just a matter of using your numeric superiority to take bites off your opponents stockpile.

The problem with this process is that this more often than not only begins to happen during the mid to end game. And depending on the style of play of the opponent, and the power cards that they are packing, control becomes an issue. It was from this realization propelled me to make several decks whose foundation is that of the extra deployment. The objective of the extra deployment: TO ACHIEVE NUMERICAL SUPERIORITY AT THE START OF THE GAME.

To give everyone an idea here are examples of cards that allow for an extra deployment:

MECHS:

1) Spider (1st Ed - Generic)

2) Spider (CS and CE - Generic)

3) Thorn (CS and CE - Comstar)

4) Flea (Mercs)

5) Hussar (1st Ed)

6) Hollander (Steiner)

7) Charger (Liao)

VEHICLES:

1) Cyrano

2) Bulldog (LRM variant)

3) Galleon

4) Saladin

5) Nightshade

RESOURCES:

1) War Funds

2) Strip Mining Operarion

ENHANCEMENTS:

1) Most Mech enhancements

2) Jade Monkey

3) All vehicle enhancements

4) Some terrain enhancements

COMMAND CARDS:

1) Mech Hangar

2) Theodore Kurita

I suggest that you look at the fine print on some of these cards just to be sure about the additional deployment.

C. The Other Side of the Coin

At this point, some of you may already be thinking along the lines of extra deployment leading to the loss of a person's hand (or cards in hand), which ultimately leads to either tactical inferiority when your opponent can see that you can only play with the cards deployed on the battlefield. Quite correct. As such, it also becomes necessary for an extra deployment deck to pack cards that give you the ability to DRAW FROM THE STOCKPILE. If you can sustain your draw, and sustain your additional deployment, then you can more or less achieve numerical superiority versus your opponent (given that he does not have the same ability as yours).

Unlike cards that provide additional deployment, cards that allow for additional draws are much fewer. Most notable among these are as follows:

1) Hidden reserves

2) Dropship site

3) Open Supply lines

These three cards will give you the edge in terms of additional draw, and should be treated as basic card drawing machines. However, it should be noted that having all three sets of cards may not be advisable in a deck. Choose one type (depending on your asset combinations) and complement it with other card drawers that have other abilities. This is discussed in the next section.

D. Flipping Heads AND Tails

There are 2-in-1 cards that give the ability of the additional deployment as well as the additional draw. These "power utilities" can help change the tide of battle in dire times, or apply the coup de grace to an already hobbled opponent. Some of these cards are affiliation dependent, thus limited, but I will list them in any case:

1) Command Circuit - depending on your luck, a roll of 3-5 will give you one additional draw and one additional deployment. An extremely lucky roll of 6 gives you the chance to draw three cards and make three additional deployments. Be warned though: rolling a 1 or 2 destroys the circuit. Take note that you also need to allocate 1 resource point to be able to use the ability.

2) Teachings of the Unfinished book - most would scoff at this card, but building a Davion deck which uses missions in tandem with extra deployment should think otherwise. This card "does not count as a deployment", is free, gives you and additional draw, and finally gives you +2 initiative UNTIL YOUR NEXT TURN. Getting all these perks should give your opponent a moment of pause.

3) Ferro Fibrous Upgrade & Armor - both cards are free if you have their asset requirement (Logistics and assembly respectively). Both will also allow 1 additional card draw, and both are not counted as deployments. The only difference with the two is that the FFA will give you a permanent additional 1 armor point, while the FFU prevents 3 points of damage for one turn. While the former seems to be better, I actually prefer the latter. I will explain at length in another section of this article.

There are other cards that have dual abilities such as these. Make use of them and exploit your advantage.

E. Deck Construction

If you pay close attention to the cards mentioned above, you will notice that the asset mainly used for a deck using additional deployment as a base is LOGISTICS. A few cards will require politics, but most of the ones listed above require "L" as your main asset. As such, it is necessary to have plenty of Logistics in your deck (6 to 7 are ideal).

It is in this respect that additional deployment decks are mainly Inner Sphere decks. It would be advisable to pack mechs that have generic constructions costs only in order to compensate for the loss of other assets in play. Combining mechs and vehicles is more or less a staple in this respect primarily because these are cheap, as well as providing additional deployment.

This points to the reason why I favor FFU versus FFA. FFU prevents damage therefore lengthening the life of your vehicles. Additional armor won't do squat for your vehicle if you roll a 5 or 6.

The other components of the deck are actually very much dependent on how else you want to play. You may want to put up fodder, and use direct damage on the pile. Or you can try single attack per unit, gnawing at your opponent with each attack. In this respect, the rest of the cards you pack will greatly depend on your style. The additional deployment is the base of your deck, and can potentially be the only theme. It is up to you how to improvise and deal your own coup de grace.

F. Starting on the first few turns

I have had the pleasure of deploying my entire hand (of 6 to 7 cards) on my first turn. Always deploy cards that provide the addtional deployment first. The last card you to place is the one card that does not provide any deployment. If for example your hand consisted of the following cards:

2 Logistics

1 Strip Mining operation

1 Spider

1 Hidden reserves

1 galleon

One way to do this is to deploy the spider, then the galleon, then the strip mining operation and then the logistics. The first three give you one additional deployment each. The last, which is logistics, can pay for the strip mining operation, which in turn can be allocated to either the spider or galleon. On your next turn, if you get cards that provide additional deployment, you do the same process. If not, you can always play the hidden reserves to draw additional cards that will hopefully give you access to more cards that provide the additional deployment.

G. Disclaimer

This deck construction process is not a sure fire guarantee that you will win all the time. No deck can make that claim to fame. However, it can be fun to see how your opponent will look at you when you deploy twice to thrice the number of cards that he can play. I will say that it can be a stable base for some other killer themes, but can be a theme all to its own.

If you guys read this far, please write me your feedback. I have an idea (actually a deck) that takes the additional deployment to Clan Space.