Guide to Building A Reliable Deck

 Category: Decks

Whether you are building a deck for casual play or to withstand the fiery, unrelenting crucible of a tournament, you will want a deck you can rely on. This means getting the cards you need when you need them. So this is a crucial rule of deck construction. You need to draw the cards you need when you need them, not before and not after.

Some simple math will give us a good idea of how to build a reliable Wolf deck. Here's a possible deck design for reliability. Afterwards I'll explain the formula used and then present an alternative design. I have earmarked certain groups of cards with a turn number. This is when you should normally have at least one copy in your hand.

Symmetric Wolf deck

12 A

12 T (one of each on turn 1)

6 Dasher Primes

6 Fenris Cs (at least one of these two mechs on turn 1)

6 Man o War Primes

6 Fenris Bs (at least one of these two mechs on turn 1)

Natasha Kerensky

Evantha Fetladrahal (don't rely on these at all)

5 Pushing The Envelopes

5 Forged Mission Orders (turn 1, or turn 3 or 4 if you get particular)

Total 60 cards, universe rules.

This works out fairly well from a reliability standpoint. The mechs all take A or T, and you will have these two resources in your hand early in the game. There are 12 2-cost mechs, so you will have early defence and attacking power. There are 12 5-cost mechs with heavier firepower, giving you force after the early turns go by. Also, since you will have one of these early in the game, you get the choice of putting 2 counters on a big mech on your second turn instead of buying a Fenris C or Dasher. Then you can finish the bad boy and get the jump on somebody who has a weaker start. As for missions, you don't need to worry about having most missions in your hand on turn 1 or 2, since your big attacks will come a turn or two later. Just put in enough to have a good supply when you need them. This deck packs a large ratio in case the Dashers hit resistance or the Fenris Cs need firepower.

Don't rely on unique cards. Take them out of your deck and replace them with something during testing. This is so your deck can win without them, and you don't get overconfident of your deck. In other words, Bjorn ain't always coming out, so assume he's not. Then when you find cards you don't need during testing (did you draw too many of a certain mission you don't need 6 of?), then you should replace them with the uniques.

Here is an alternative Symmetric Wolf Deck, which is based on the original template, but uses 3 assets well distributed, with some more potential for surprising the opponent. I'll explain the changes below, then provide some rules of thumb for types of cards.

Alternative Symmetric Wolf Deck

8 A

6 M

8 T

2 Black Market Connections

4 Dasher Primes

4 Jenner IICs

6 Phantom Primes

6 Phantom Bs

6 Phantom As

Natasha Kerensky

Evantha Fetladrahal

4 Forged Mission Orders

4 Pushing The Envelopes

60 cards, universe rules, etc.

First of all, there are many fewer Assemblies and Tactics in this deck. This deck is designed to run on as few of certain cards as possible. Assembly is important, but an early Munitions can pick up some slack. This deck is designed around drawing at least one Assembly by turn 2. This is reasonable, since it allows me to get a Dasher Prime out on turn 2 even if I go first.

Most of the mechs are workable on 2 assets, not really needing all 3. The Phantom A is the exception. But there are only 6 of it in here. Paying 5 for a Phantom B isn't as bad as it sounds if you get hosed. The 3-cost Jenner IICs only require Munitions, taking the edge off an early Assembly shortage. And the 2 Black Market Connections can help you get a resource from your scrapheap if you get desperately hosed.

The "straight to patrol" nature of the mechs allows for some surprise, especially if you play a Phantom Prime and all of a sudden your mechs take 1 more damage to kill. But the deck still practices symmetry. As for mission cards, the deck only packs eight. This is because it really doesn't need them in the early turns, and can often recycle them late in the game with the Black Market Connections. You don't need a good attacking mission on turn one, right?

Here are some rules of thumb for various card types and how many to include in a deck. Since you'll have fewer cards if you go first (reducing your chances at drawing a card), I'll assume you go first.

If you need a card on turn 1, you'll need 10 copies of it in your deck (or if it's non-support, then 6 of it and 4 copies of a similar card). I should note that most decks don't need anything on turn 1 besides a support card, making things simpler. After all, you only get one deployment. By turn 2, you need 8 copies (includign similar cards) By turn 3, only 6 copies, bringing you in range of those cards you just couldn't find anything similar to. And of course, if it's unique, you would need to draw most of your deck to have an above-average chance. In most games, without a Black Market Connections, you won't get your most killer unique.

And in order to get 1 resource card a turn for 4 turns straight, you'll need 20 0-cost support cards in your deck. This is why most people pack 20 basic supports and then some non-standards like Black Market Connections.

And if you have the time, look up "Deck Symmetry" in the archived posts and you'll find some nifty posts by Madcat and others on how to make your deck more potent by using, literally, all the resources at your disposal.

Remember, the decks I posted above are not-quite tournament quality. To become winning decks, they'd need some individual flare and a dash of originality to match your play style. But the 24 resource, 24 mechs, 12 "other" setup has become a good starting point for many of the decks AlphaXers are using to dominate tournaments.

Hope this has been helpful

Outlaw