

BLACK ΩMEGA SQUADRON

B5CCG UK NEWSLETTER

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VORLONS TAKE VORCON

SERGE LAVERGENE WINS B5CCG WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP



World Champion, Canadian
Serge Lavergene, looking
suitably chuffed

Canada's Serge LaVergene won the world championships at VORCON1 in Los Angeles, CA. He won with a Narn Vorlon deck after three grueling rounds, following elimination matches which were held the previous day.

Serge's strategy was based on a Narn control deck with heavy Vorlon influence. His strategy combined a build-up up the Vorlon's strength, while using cards to prevent other players from using either their events or conflicts.

Serge's opponents were Steve Green and Les Allen from Australia, Marcel Kopper of Germany, Mike Penberthy, the UK champion, Hayden Gittings, the Pan-European champion, and John Paiva, Pete Simpson, Kyle Bennick, Mike Jasperson, Anthony Oshmago, David Sisson, Paul Beaman, Kyle Sykora, and John and Johnna Golden, all from America.

A BIG shout to Hayden Giddens and Mike Penberthy who did the UK proud with 3rd and 6th place. Well done lads. At the same tournament, American Chris Brazfield won the World Sealed Deck Championship playing Centauri. Ω

Comment By Ranger Phil

NOTE - nothing Phil thinks is the opinion of anyone except himself!

One of my biggest worries when B5 came out, was that it was trying to make it big too soon. Trying to have a tournament set up from day one, rather than maturing into a tournament level game once all the niggling things like the scoring system were sorted out. I think after GenCon, still the largest ever tournaments in the world, that we are all familiar with the current scoring system.

It doesn't take any large amount of intelligence to realise that the current system is open to abuse. By abuse, I am referring to the way that the game was designed to make you play conflicts to win influence. Then half a dozen events come out that give you influence for brushing your teeth, and agendas that give you five points if you chose the right race; but an argument for another time.

No, abuse here comes in a couple of forms. First of all, there is the teaming aspect. For example, if you and your brother turn up to an event, you get to play humans, he gets to play Narns, then you know that should you win, you *never* give co-op (coop!) points to the Narn player. Furthermore, if you are playing a small tournament, you major three times, brother wins 2 games, second in the game he plays you, all 3 coop points will give him 28+28+28 = 84 points. (you get 30+30+30 = 90 points). The other Narn players in this setup will be on 81 points because you with hold your three. This does break down a little in bigger tournaments, but these happen once a blue moon.

Next up is the worst aspect I believe. The people that need to win so badly that they strike a turn one deal of getting everyone to twenty influence before attempting to get a winner. I have seen a situation in a tournament where one of these deals meant that a player that placed fourth in all 3 rounds advanced to the final over another who took a first, second and fourth. This is clearly wrong, but I guess the sweet smell of a Destined to Be justifies everything.

The immediate aftermath? - well Deluxe has altered enough cards to make winning the game within an hour difficult. It's still favouring the Vorlons far too heavily (look at the Just Suffer, and why does Vorlon stuff give destiny?). Great War will bring along a fifth position, plus factions; people will either need to bring a silly number of decks, and heaven help the sucker running the event

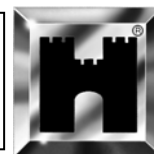
I think B5 is a great game; I just wish that Precedence had waited to get a more mature game before dashing onto the tournament scene. Until next time, Keep questioning! Ω



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Marks. Set. GO!

Starting hands for speed.

Getting a good start in any game can be essential to boosting your chances of winning. In the B5CCG, the innovative 'choose your starting hand' mechanic allows you to tune your start to lethal perfection. Here are some of the many starting strategies that you can use. One word of warning though These starts can leave you open to some equally abusive counter-starts!

Human

The Human player seems to have more options open, mainly due to the inclusion of John Sheridan and the ruling that characters are replaced Ready regardless of the status of the replaced character. Lets face it - something had to go right for the humans.....

The Sheridan Shuffle

Hand: Sheridan, Short Term Goals, a.n.other
Turn 1: Build, play Short Term Goals, Replace with Sheridan, build
Result: Start turn two with 7 influence!
Drawback: Can leave you short of characters and other options.
Play with Build Infrastructure to help with the sponsoring and promotion of future characters.

The Cheap Character Speed Start

Hand: Human agent, Build Infrastructure, Short Term Goals.
Turn 1: Build, sponsor Build Infrastructure, play Short Term Goals, sponsor Human Agent.
Turn 2: build, promote agent.
Result: Two IC characters and 7 influence on turn two (with a potential 10 by turn four.)

The Great Machine (with Alliance of Races)

Hand: The Great Machine, AoR, Upgraded Defences
Turn 1: Play Great Machine as a conflict, Ignore it. Sponsor AoR.
Result: Great Machine fails and B5 gains +3 influence.
Drawback: Oh yes, and you get pummelled by all the other players and lose horribly!

Non-Cheese Speed Start

Hand: Sheridan, The Great Machine and Emergency Military Aid.
Turn 1: Play TGM as a conflict. Build, replace Sinclair with Sheridan, support the conflict with diplomacy, use EMA for one point of military support. Conflict resolves, draw extra card.
Result: Sheridan out and humans with 8 influence!! Fast!

Non-Cheese Alliance of Races (honest....)

Hand: First Battle Fleet, Crusade, Military Buildup
Turn 1: Play Crusade as a conflict, sponsor MB and then 1st Battle Fleet. Support and win conflict. Repeat next turn.
Result: +1 B5 influence and a strategy that is unlikely to signal the hated AoR to too many players.
Drawback: Obviously you now need to draw AoR!

First turn Telepathic Scan

Hand: Talia Winters, Telepathic Scan, Muster Support.
Turn 1: Play Telepathic Scan as a conflict, sponsor Muster Support, Sponsor Talia, support and win conflict.
Result: Screw up the plans of one of the other players, if they are hoarding cards for a second turn strategy.
Drawback: Hmm, strong psi start? You'll win a game in March when Psi-Corp comes out 8)

Minbari

Turn Two Warleaders Fleet!

Hand: Moment of Beauty, Military Build Up, Warleader's Fleet.
Turn 1: Sponsor Military Build Up, build, play A Moment of Beauty
Turn 2: Using the extra influence, sponsor Warleader's Fleet
Result: A Human player with a severe potty emergency!

Variation uses Muster Support for a turn two Rathenn - lots of diplomacy!

Kick Ass Baldy Strategy

Hand: Draal, Seizing Advantage (deluxe), PPG Rifle
Note - whilst not a speed start, this is a wicked basis for a game.
Draal as power-giving, diplomatic assassin!

Narn

Speeding towards the Abyss!

Hand: Ko'Dath, Build Infrastructure, Quadrant 14
Turn 1: Sponsor Build Infrastructure, build, sponsor Ko'Dath
Turn 2: build, promote Ko'Dath
Result: double build to 8 influence on turn three, or play Q14 and rotate it.
Notes: This is , in my opinion, the purest speed start as it fits so well into a Narn War Deck.

Inner Circle Madness

Hand: Ko'Dath, Muster Support, Hour of the Wolf
Turn 1: Muster Support, Ko'Dath for 0, Hour of Wolf on G'Kar, promote Ko'Dath for 1
Result: TWO inner circle characters by the end of turn one.
Nothing much else, admittedly, but still!

Centauri

Options, Always Options (aka The Grinder)

Hand: Looking Ahead, Successful Manipulation, Managed Growth
Turn 1: Play Looking Ahead as a conflict, sponsor Managed Growth, support and win conflict, play Suc.Manip as an aftermath
Result: Londo on 6I with two cards and a superb card-filtering engine.
Drawback: Lower influence and possible problems with character numbers.

Centauri Gambit.

Hand: Vir, Prey on the Weak, Build Infrastructure
Turn 1: Sponsor Build Infrastructure, sponsor Vir, rotate Londo to Build, support conflict with Vir.
Result: Not only do you get +1 influence on turn 4 but you knock back everyone else.
Drawback: BEWARE this counterhand for the Minbari or Narn - A Good Bluff, Personal Enemies. You become screwed, big time! I'll let you figure it out....Ω

UK TOP TWENTY PLAYERS

Here they are - the elite of the elite. With the UK taking 3rd and 6th in the recent World Championships, B5 paves the way as the only CCG this country is even vaguely good at, internationally.....Ω

| | |
|-------------------|-----|
| Saffron Stanfield | 833 |
| Hayden Gittens | 810 |
| Andrew Davies | 800 |
| Iain MacDonald | 792 |
| Chunk | 788 |
| Matt Bawn | 750 |
| Wayne Lodge | 745 |
| Andy Toy | 733 |
| Steven Clegg | 733 |
| Paul Manning | 725 |
| Cliff Jenner | 717 |
| Mike Penberthy | 711 |
| Carl Skeen | 700 |
| Stephen Gold | 700 |
| Tim Holland | 700 |
| Tom Kassel | 686 |
| Antony Jones | 683 |
| Matthew Keefe | 683 |
| Mic Davy | 678 |
| Paul Davis | 675 |

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Hot Shots! *Tournament Level Decks*

Lisa Abbots Deluxe Human deck.

Starting hand: Sinclair, Sheridan, The Great Machine, Emergency Military Aid

Events: Declaration of War * 3, Level the Playing Field * 3, Sneak Attack * 3, Attack Formation * 3, Glitch * 3, Not Meant to be * 3

Fleets: Fleet of the line * 2, Colonial fleet * 1, Expeditionary fleet * 3, Second battle fleet * 2, Deep space fleet * 3, First battle fleet * 2, Utility fleet * 1, Support fleet * 3, Reserve fleet * 1

Agendas: Seizing advantage * 3, Total war * 3

Locations: Earth * 3

Conflicts: Limited strike * 3, Border raid * 3, Gunboat diplomacy * 3, Annex neutral world * 3, Coup de grace * 1

Enhancements: Preeminence * 1, Reeling from the blows * 1, Fleet support base * 1

Characters: Susan Ivanova * 1, Commander Ivanova * 1, Michael Garibaldi * 1, Frederick Lantz * 1, Stephen Franklin * 1, Marcus Cole * 1, General Hague * 1, Sandra Hiroshi * 1, General Franklin * 1, Sarah * 1, Warren Keffer * 1

This is basically a human military deck, which can go to war if necessary. First turn you initiate the great machine conflict. Everyone automatically assumes you're doing a human-b5 deck and hopefully rotates to build and ignores the conflict. You rotate Sinclair to build, leaving 2 free influence, then replace with Sheridan, who then supports the conflict. Spend the last 2 for 1 point of emergency military aid, thereby hopefully winning the conflict. Hey presto! 8 influence at the end of turn one, and 3 unspent which allows you to buy an extra card, to make up for using all your starting hand.

Now you basically build up to 10, hopefully getting a good fleet out, and another inner circle character, and possibly the homeworld for those extra points of influence. Then you start initiating the conflicts. If possible, pick on the Minbari, as your tensions are already high enough for Limited strikes. Hopefully, someone else will be playing military conflicts. Get out your seizing advantage so you can reuse their conflicts. Use Sheridan and seizing advantage to initiate 2 conflicts per round. If you play a conflict card in the conflict round, on your first action rotate Sheridan and pay 5 for seizing advantage to use someone else's conflict. Or, use seizing advantage during the conflict round, and then use Sheridan to initiate an additional conflict from your hand.

If no one else is playing military conflicts, you have to use the total war agenda and go to war. This should be quite easy to do against the minbari, as limited strikes and border raids should have put tensions up. If you feel like being nasty, play reeling from the blows so anyone losing your war conflict can't build next turn. Then coup de grace them when they get low enough!

Use support fleets to enhance other fleets, to make up for the weaker military of human fleets, in border raids. Use the attack formations to make the difference in limited strikes, gunboats and annexes. If someone's only got one fleet out in a border raid, use sneak attack to rotate that fleet!

Problems with this deck are playing against a minbari war deck, but you can still win with effort! You might want to add more characters, and possibly some secret strikes and hour of the wolfs to ready Sheridan and start even more conflicts!

Tournament Information

5th December - Bruce Mason - Basic Constructed
Starts 10.15am, Taff's Well Town Hall, Near Cardiff

5th December - Lisa Abbott - Basic Constructed
Starts 11.00am, Area 51, The Emporium, Manchester.

12th December - Phil Nicholls - Sealed deck
Starts 10.30am, Wargames Emporium, Sheffield

13th December - Neil Gow - Basic Constructed
Starts 12.00am, McNulty's Internet Café, Newcastle

13th December - Martyn Ransom - Basic Constructed
Starts 11.00am, Fanboy Comic, Milton Keynes

13th December - Kris Aspinall - Sealed Deck
Starts 11.00am, Travelling Man, Corn Exchange, Leeds

19th December - Phil Nicholls - Basic Constructed
Starts 11.00am, Wargames Emporium, Sheffield

9th January - Martyn Ransom - Basic Constructed
Starts 11.00am, Fanboy Comic, Milton Keynes

16th January - Lisa Abbott - Basic Constructed
Starts 11.00am, Area 51, The Emporium, Manchester.

More tournament information on Vorlon Space
<http://www.geocities.com/TimesSquare/Labyrinth/7743/Events.HTML>

'Luxing it Up!

Is Deluxe the end of Cheese?

Having seen the number of broken, unclear or abusable cards in Premier, Precedence did the honourable thing and reworded a huge swathe of cards for the new, jazzy Deluxe edition. They flag up 10 cards as being 'major' changes. We'll look at them first and then some more minor, but still crucial changes.

AS IT WAS MEANT TO BE - officially becomes a Major Agenda and targets certain cards from your discard pile rather than all cards in play. It also builds in a power gainer for destiny marked characters. Gaining a major victory with this could be difficult as you would need a lot of characters with Destiny marks!

CARPE DIEM - limited to one play per player per game, this guts the repeat event strategy that powers may exploding cheese decks. Trade Windfall, Short term Goals and For the Common Good all suffer here. Still an essential card in every deck, though!

DISAFFECTED (RACE) - Becomes Multiple instead of Limited which will allow more than one player to pursue a Disaffected strategy in a game. Also links well with the Defector Revealed promo card.

HIGHER CALLING - Brought into line with other power-for-marks agendas, in a two-for-one ratio. This slows a destiny mark deck down considerably, including the Doom conversion via Martyr strategy.

JOHN SHERIDAN - Probably the biggest change, removing the abusive double mark generation that powered so many decks. The two for one ability, whilst limited is still useful, and the new additional conflict power is really useful. Scary!

MAINTAIN THE PEACE - The compulsory 20 Military sponsoring barrier will slow any MtP down considerably. Maybe the best bet is a Minbari-MtP deck using the Turn Two Warleader start?

SEIZING ADVANTAGE - Another major change that just begs to have a deck built around it!. Rather than focusing on the Doom=Power side of the card, they have kept the recycling old conflicts function - which is really useful for a military deck - and added a power for neutralised characters part. TuPari? Lovell? Draal? Where do you want to start? OK, you rack up the Doom marks, but it's still a cool deck concept.

SLEEPING Z'HA'DUM, LOVELL and PSI ATTACK - Long standing errata finally gets to the cards!

Some other changes that may well have some major impact are

DEFENSE IN DEPTH - On the plus side, this is one of a number of cards (incl. **KHA'MAK** and **COMMERCE RAIDING**) that increases *INFLUENCE RATING* rather than *INFLUENCE* and is thus immune to Zathras (U). On the bad side (for DiD players) you now gain influence for each location of your race you control, vastly reducing the number of available locations.

MARCUS COLE - finally a Ranger, although the new picture does look as if he's been spending too long under the sun-lamp. Hopefully Great War will strengthen a Ranger strategy.

NEWS OF GALACTIC IMPORT - can only be played every other turn, thus slowing the Maintain the Peace deck down somewhat.

TRADE WINDFALL - not only costs much more, but now only garners you +1 influence max. due to the new State of Free Trade situation, instead of multiples for each Trade Pact. Exploding Cheese just got very mouldy!

WIND SWORDS - no longer rotates to apply, giving Minbari War and Military decks a big boost. Oh yes, did I mention that the cost reduction is now 2?!

BORDER RAID - whilst no big rules changes, the card text has tried to make it as plain as possible just who and what can participate in this conflict. A few less rulings maybe?

ALLIANCE, NEUTRALITY TREATY, NON-AGGRESSION PACT, TRADE PACT - all share the common ' in a state of XXXXX' mechanic that prohibits players playing these cards in multiples against the same opponent.

So what does it all mean? Some of the more abusive decks have been severely hampered by these changes (although something tells me that there will be new 'cheese' coming from some of the changes....) and thus to win the game you are going to have to play more aggressively, start using conflicts and interacting with the other players. In my opinion, this can only be a good thing. As to whether I'm right? We'll just have to wait and see Ω

Declaration of War!!

It'll be here by Christmas - or heads will roll!

Precedence have confirmed that Great War has been approved by Warner Bros. and has gone to the printers. Boosters should arrive in the UK before Christmas. News of the new cards is beginning to leak out slowly - Great War will be getting a thorough analysis in Black Omega Squadron#4

Precedence have also announced the release of a B5 Masterpiece Collection which will have , amongst other things, 12 ultra rare gold bordered B5CCG cards akin to the Fajo Collection for STTNGCCG. Be warned though - this product is liable to have a £50+ price tag and the cards are not going to be legal for official tournaments.

The Strategy Guide will now include Great War and is scheduled for the spring, as is the next expansion, Psi Corps (due in March...) There have also been reports of a Third Age expansion, a Crusade expansion and a Crusade stand-alone game.Ω



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