

BLACK ΩMEGA SQUADRON B5CCG UK NEWSLETTER

Limited Edition Black
Omega Squadron T-Shirts
now available - £6.50 each –
see your local Ranger for
details!

The Rangers

Rangers are volunteers who demonstrate the B5CCG and organise tournament and other game related events. Contact them by e-mail or phone

Phil Nicholls Sheffield
Goth@syspace.co.uk

Bruce Mason Cardiff
MasonB@cardiff.ac.uk
01222 344356.

Neil Gow Newcastle
neil.gow@newcastle.ac.uk

Lisa Abbott Manchester
abbottl6@cs.man.ac.uk
0973 149924 (mobile)
0161 256 1133 ext 832 3681

Andrew Sims Leeds
AndrewS@mortdieu.demon.co.uk

Mic Davy Portsmouth
mic@madmic.freereserve.co.uk

Mark Farbus Somerset
Mark@limara.demon.co.uk

Lisa Lyons Suffolk
kali@dial.pipex.com

Kris Aspinall, Leeds
csxka@scs.leeds.ac.uk

Steve Smith, Surrey
wormiespice@hotmail.com

Damien Ashton, Plymouth
saracen@saladin.demon.co.uk

Martyn Ransom, Milton Keynes
martyn.ransom@gecm.com

Richard Willis, Cardiff
Richard@babfive.freereserve.co.uk

Chris Slinn, Milton Keynes
Chris.slinn@virgin.net
01908 561453

Dave Bushe, Ireland
davejb@mail1.tinet.ie Ω

Black Omega Squadron #5 Triples '99

Published by the UK Rangers
Edited by Neil Gow
To advertise in contact Phil Nicholls at 0114
268 1656 or b5@syspace.co.

To contribute to, or comment on Black
Omega Squadron, contact Neil Gow on
0191 2570944 or neil.gow@ncl.ac.uk

All trademarks in this newsletter are used
without permission. No challenge or
infringement is implied or upheld. If you
want to get legal, contact us first.Ω

WELSH WIZARD *Penberthy Adds Welsh Crown to UK title*

Congratulations to Mike Penberthy on winning the first Welsh Championship. Mike adds this distinction to the one of being the UK Champion 98/99 and the second best Narn player in the world.

This was a highly competitive field featuring the first head to head match between Mike (UK Champion) and Hayden Gittings (Pan European Champion and World's Finalist). Mike was using an updated version of his trusty Narn military deck while Hayden had an experimental Minbari playing both sides deck. In general this looked like the highest ranked gathering of UK players since Gencon 98

All in all the Non-Aligned showed strongly, as expected, the Centauri and humans were rogered senseless although an Alliance of Races made an initial strong start with its use of Conscription it suffered when the player realised he had left Bester at home.

Only time will tell if Mike can help the Welsh team to victory in the UK Team Championships, or whether the wildly fluctuating national metagame will trip him up....Ω

ISN News

- Ω New Expansions have been announced to follow 'Psi-Corps' - The Third Age will cover the end of Series Four, whilst Alliances will cover Series Five
- Ω No word as yet about the proposed Crusade expansion and stand-alone, now that the series has been effectively shelved.
- Ω Delays continue to dog the game. The Masterpiece Collection has been put back until May and Psi Corp has been put back till April or May. No concrete word on the release date for the Strategy Guide either.
- Ω The War Without End will be a special two-player Vorlons vs Shadows introductory game. Look for it in September.
- Ω Psi-Corps goes a little Willy Wonka, with the inclusion of five 'golden tickets' that will win their finders major B5 related prizes - the top one being a trip to GenCon 99!
- Ω Page 53 has returned! The elusive missing page from the Great War rulebook has been found, and with a sticky back! Ask your local Ranger for a special sticker to slip onto your rulebook to make it complete.
- Ω Promo hunters were caught out by the recent spate of Psi-Corps releases. 'Join The Corps' was sneaked out in Sci-Fi Universe, a lightly distributed genre mag. Also released was 'A Meeting of Minds' in Inquest. Note, neither Spoo nor the near-mythic Exhaustion has been released yet.
- Ω Signed cards a go-go - from Psi Corp onwards, sets will have MULTIPLE signed cards, with an average of one of each card per case (yep, that's three signed per case.) Coming up are ...Bester, Byron and Zathras (PsiCorps), Dodger, G'Kar and Lennier (Third Age) and Anna Sheridan, Corwin and President Sheridan (Alliances)
- Ω Some blatant publicity.... Black Omega Squadron is not available on the internet. Winzipped Word 7.0 copies of the newsletter are archived at the following address. Hopefully, HTML and .txt copies will be arriving soon.
- Ω http://www.syspace.co.uk/~pnicholls/b5/black_omega.html

FOR BEYOND THE RIM... Comment on the B5CCG



Lets talk about fairplay shall we? Where would you expect to see fairplay? Down the pub? Maybe... At a tournament? Absolutely.

Not anymore – or at least, not if you want to take advantage of the new sideboarding rules. Sideboards are a legacy from the big daddy of all CCGS, Magic, and in that game they work. In Magic (for those that don't know) you play a best of three system and sideboard after the first and second games. Having played the first game you have a decent idea of what the other player is packing and can plan accordingly.

Of course, this doesn't happen in B5. The entire point of tournament play is that you shouldn't face an opponent again until the final. So how on Earth can you make an informed sideboarding judgement?

1. Get a nice Vorlon Enhancement...
2. Base all your decisions on the starting ambassador.
3. Scout.

Scouting – be it by listening to the other players, or even worse, hanging around watching other people's games, is a heinous activity. It disadvantages the other players (because they don't have the chance to scout back), it can put them off their game, and in the worst cases it can let other players in on that players strategy – or be a cover for out and out cheating. If this seems far fetched, ask any Magic tournament player for a scouting story...?

Scouting is cheating. It gives one player an unfair advantage over another from outside gameplay. It benefits speed decks over slow decks. It causes friction at tournaments and yet we have a sideboard system that encourages it.

B5 is a friendly, fun game compared with the highly competitive atmosphere of Magic. It is yet to be seen whether players abuse scouting like this. I hope they don't. Ω



Sideboard? Isn't that my Gran's cabinet?

Sideboarding is a term born, like so many things in the wacky world of CCGs, from Magic. A sideboard is an extra 20 cards that supplement your main deck. Between games you swap cards from and to your sideboard on a ONE for ONE basis.

The point of a sideboard is to allow you to tune your deck in mid-tournament, thus giving you a better chance of beating your opponents.

How do I do it?

Sideboarding happens after Ambassadors have been played but before play starts. Essentially that means you only have your intuition and the information on the starting ambassador to play with. Of course, certain Ambassadors give certain hints. Vlur/Nhar (the Pak'mara starting ambassador) would signal a probable Chosen of God deck. Lord Refa would not complement a Centauri Shadow Deck as much as Londo. Similarly, anyone playing WMClark is unlikely to be playing with Vorlon Marks.

Starting marks also allow you to sideboard effectively. Anyone in WMClarks faction is vulnerable to The Just Suffer. Looking at Delenns Vorlon mark can add another option. Of course, you can only go so far with this strategy - after that it's down to second guessing and learning the Metagame.

Metagaming - knowing your opponent!

Another word for getting to know the game in your area. Getting a handle on the decks that people you will face play and putting cards in your sideboard accordingly. If you have a Shadow heavy playgroup, you can second guess them. Similarly, a heavy military area like Newcastle can be treated differently. Metagaming is a fine theory, and can be effective, but don't get too worried about it - just as you can build a rogue deck, so can your opponents!

How to Sideboard - slowly and carefully.

When you decide to change cards be very careful. Know beforehand which cards you'll put in against a specific deck - and which ones you'll take out! Be careful not to make so many changes that your deck loses consistency. Sideboarding is an artform - honest - you'll learn from experience what works and what doesn't. The trick is thinking long and hard about how you do it!

Reinforcements

The most simple sideboard is one that bolsters a certain part of your deck. Playing against three War decks? Add more fleets etc. This is the basis of all sideboarding decisions - what cards do I have that will help me more than the ones I already have in my deck.

Home Factions

Many of the cards in the Home Factions starter are essentially sideboard cards. If you think you may be going to face your opposite number, it might be as well to carry a few of them so that you can exploit the home factions dynamic.

What Cards Should I Use?

Spoilers, Sandbaggers and Switches

These are just some of the examples of cards you could use. There are a plethora of other strategies at your disposal - experiment with what you like best. Of course, many of these cards can be used in your main deck from the start of the tournament, rather than the sideboard - it's all a matter of personal preference.

Spoilers - cards that exploit strategies

These cards will help take down certain strategies -

- Babylon Five Influence** - Attack B5, B5 Unrest
- Trade Pacts** - Commerce Raiding
- Soul Hunters** - Free the Souls
- Doom Marks** - It Will Be His Undoing
- Centauri Shadow** - Urza Jaddo plus Seductive Arguments
- Human War** - Triluminary
- Media Decks** - Suppress the Media
- Human Home Faction** - The Just Suffer
- Low influence 'mark' decks** - Coup de Grace
- Shadow decks** - Consumed by Shadows
- Vorlon Decks** - Stasis, Ulkesh Kosh, Death of Kosh
- Not Meant to Be** - Vorlon Universe
- Non-Aligned Decks** - Plague
- Shadow War** - First One Involvement

Sandbaggers - stalling cards

These are cards that slow down another players rush to win. when you have an idea of how they win, they can be deadly

- Factional Inertia** - slows down an agenda's power
- No Alternative** - Punishes high unrest by freezing an agenda. Useful against 'soft' starting agendas like Military Build-up and Muster Support.
- Obstacles to Victory** - Halves power from an agenda. Better on 'fixed' gain agendas like Rise of the Republic.
- Reservations** - Blanks agendas that allow mark purging like Forced Evolution and Order Above All.
- Prove Your Worth** - Cheap way of slowing Chosen of God and stopping event based cheese like Short Term Goals
- Test of Merit** - Excellent way of stalling 'mark' decks like Forced Evolution, Order Above All and Alliance of Races. Expensive, but worth it.
- Held Back** - Can cause nightmares for a player with high unrest and no major agenda.
- Information Overload** - Penalises decks that draw lots of cards.
- To Stand Alone** - Faction enhancement that stops Power wins. Lethal against high unrest decks.
- We Are Not Impressed** - Global version of To Stand Alone. Removable, but so good it should be in your deck anyway!

Switcheroo! - which deck am I playing?

When You've got some more experience with sideboards, you can try this tactical move. Chances are you'll have played the people in the final once before, and they'll know your deck. Have 20 cards that completely change your deck - changing Alliance of Races to Diplomacy, or Vorlon Mark to Minbari War etc. Your opponents will sideboard against your old deck and have lots of useless cards in their new deck! Ω

FANBOY CARDS

CCG & Trading Cards

Specialising in the most popular CCG's including Babylon 5, Magic : TG, Star Wars and Star Trek.

As regular players and collectors of the Babylon 5 CCG, we have all the Babylon 5 expansions covered including The Great War. Booster boxes and single cards available at competitive prices

We also have many of the "hard to get" B5 promo and signed cards including: Destined To Be, For The Future, Past Victories, Suppress The Media, Blessings, signed Prime Minister Mollari, signed Mr Morden and more.

Fanboy can also supply trading cards comics, merchandise, CD's, videos and other Sci-Fi collectibles.

Visit our shop at : **75-77 Newport Road
New Bradwell
Milton Keynes
Bucks, MK13 0AH**

Or call us on : **01908 316917**

Email :

andyhall@enterprise.net

Website : www.fanboycards.com

We accept most major credit cards and mail order



Chosen of Cheese

Non Aligned (Pak'mara) Intrigue Nightmare

Starting Hand - Vlur/Nhar (ambassador), Kalika Qwal'mizra , Chosen of God, Conscription, Aggressive Action

Characters - Lhim/Dram x3, Luhf/Syhf x3, Nhuk/Vrek x3

Locations and Ships - Military Outpost x3, Babylon 5 Fighters x3, Command Ship x3, Zhabar

Enhancements - We Are Not Impressed x2

Conflicts - Aggressive Action x2, Prey on the Weak x3, Na'Ka'Leen Feeder x2, Attacking Pawns x3, Test their Mettle x3, Kidnapping x3

Events - Carpe Diem, Not Meant to Be x3, Meditation x3, Different Perspectives x3, Security Override x3, Taunts and Games x3, Glitch x2, Conscription x2

First Turn: Conscription as first action, then build and sponsor CoG - End of turn 5 inf.

Second Turn: As long as your conscripted character didn't get bounced by T&G's, initiate AA. If the other players decide they can't beat you in it & they do other actions then you only need to support the AA with your supporting character and do a double build. End of turn max 9 inf

Third turn: Initiate AA again. Build with your non-Pak IC character and support the AA with your other 2 characters. End of turn max 12 inf.

Turn Four Onwards : After that use the AP, NF, Kidnappings and T&G's to keep other players big characters to a minimum. Only sponsor fleets or military outposts when needed. If all goes reasonably well this deck should win within 7-8 turnsΩ

MELTING THE CHEESE

Trying to deal with Chosen of God

If the deck listed above is making you sweat, it's probably because you've been steamrollered by a variant at some time or another. The Pak'mara / Chosen of God deck is making as much of a stir now as Speed Vorlon or Doom did months ago. In true Black Omega style, here are some suggestions on how to beat it.....maybe!

DIPLOMACY! - OK, lets stop acting like children here. Why is it that when Alliance of Races hits the table, everyone is ready to pound the hapless human to dust, and yet those smelly Paks seem to make everyone forget that they can be beaten. Yes, you might lose a character or two, but that's the price you have to pay. Working together against the Aggressive Actions is one of the most sure-fire ways of slowing the machine down.

POUND IT! - Hit these decks where they have the least defence - the Military. Whilst a dedicated NA Military deck is very strong, they don't have the legs to keep up as a splash. A CoC deck may find itself on the wrong end of a very painful hiding if two players are Border Raiding or War Conflicting at the same time. One military assault may slow it down, but two will cause it real problems.

AGGITATE! - NA Unrest starts at 2 and a first turn Conscription will put it past the magic three mark. If you can manage to work it up further, slap down Held Back and then watch as the Smelly People look for that Major Agenda! There are plenty of other Unrest cards around that can make life pretty horrid for the Pak. This might not stop them outright, but it will slow them down and these decks are notorious for running out of steam.

AGGREGATE! - Look at the way the deck flourishes - Chosen of God's ability doubling and influence boost, replaying Aggressive Action and gaining influence through Zhabar (some versions also include Further Gains for yet more pain) Lets deal with these - Prove Your Worth neutralises the CoG influence gain, Zhabar and Further Gains - all in one card! Marked Out makes the second, non-Pak character a participant, thus negating CoGs influence boost. You Are Not Ready can take out the Aggressive Action, and Confusion in Chaos can force a loss if the conflict is losing at the time.

MANIPULATE! - Don't be afraid to use LTPF on an opponents huge character, save those NMTBs for crucial events (like Conscription, Different Perspectives and Glitch) If they do get off a Conscription, Taunts and Games it! Use Purple Files to allow Minister Durano to weigh into a Pak' Brawl! And above all, if there is anyway you can get it past (Late Secret Strike...), Forced Impairment CoG!

OK - these suggestions are not guarantee that you and your group will deal with Chosen of God. The deck is massively strong and takes the joint efforts of two or more players to take it down - but don't believe the hype! It's not unbeatable and with a little forethought you can beat it!

Great War Errata

Fixing *some* of the broken cards.....

Dust - Add the following sentence at the beginning of the text: "Target a character you control." - *Stops the card killing other peoples characters. Not how it was designed to be played.*

Tualakh Vit'lokh - In the first sentence, replace "sponsored" with "put into play". Replace second sentence with "Tualakh Vit'lokh's other printed abilities become zero."

Consultants - Replace 1st sentence with "You may play Limited, non-Unique character cards as contingencies to this group." In the last sentence, replace "At the end of the turn" with "At the end of the Resolution Round" - *Consultants was being used with the Non-Aligned Aide/Captain to abuse their abilities.*

Day of the Dead - Replace 1st sentence with "All players may return to play one character from their discard pile into their supporting row." - *"place" has been changed to "return to play" so that you cannot just discard a character and then bring it into play for free.*

Sheridan Reborn - Fourth sentence should begin "Rotate Sheridan Reborn....."

Non-Aligned Aide/Agent/Captain - Replace "permanently lose 1 XXX to" with "reduce this character's printed XXX by one to" -

Tournaments

(Editor's Note - Just a few tournaments noted here this time. Check with your local Ranger if they haven't got one listed!)

10/04/99	Constructed Deck Taffs Wells, nr Cardiff	Bruce Mason
11/04/99	Constructed Deck Fanboy Comics, Milton Keynes	Chris Slinn
24/04/99	Sealed Deck Lears Bargain Books, Newport	Richard Willis
25/04/99	Constructed Deck McNultys Internet Café, Newcastle	Neil Gow
16/05/99	Constructed Deck Taffs Wells, nr Cardiff	Bruce Mason
16/05/99	Constructed Deck Fanboy Comics, Milton Keynes	Martyn Ransom
23/05/99	Constructed Deck McNultys Internet Café, Newcastle	Neil Gow

NEXT ISSUE - The aftermath from Triples, (very) basic deck construction in The Grey Council and hopefully (all extremities crossed - Psi Corps! Take care till thenΩ

Hidden Agendas

Just what is winning tournaments?

A recent census by Carl Skreen, rankings supremo and honorary UK Player showed what the top agendas for each of the four original races has been. Bear in mind that Non-Aligned is not included and the full impact of Great War is still to be felt. It still makes fascinating reading!

CENTAURI (304 wins)

Rise of the Republic	163
Forced Evolution	39
Growth in Chaos	39
Knowledge is Power	22
Infiltrate and Exploit	9
Support of the Mighty	7
Order Above All	6
Seizing Advantage	5
Higher Calling	4
Defense in Depth	3

NARN (294 wins)

Revenge	140
Never Again	67
Seizing Advantage	16
Maintain the Peace	13
None	11
Power Politics	8
Order Above All	8
Forced Evolution	7
Support of the Mighty	6
Build Infrastructure	3

MINBARI (278 wins)

Support of the Mighty	67
Order Above All	59
Servants of Order	31
Power Politics	30
Finish the War	16
none	14
Forced Evolution	8
The Hope of Peace	8
Build Infrastructure	5
A Rising Power	5

HUMAN (238 wins)

Alliance of Races	62
Forced Evolution	37
Order Above All	24
Higher Calling	22
Seizing Advantage	20
Support of the Mighty	19
Power Politics	8
Human Defense in Depth	8
Human Peace in our Time	6
Human none	5