

CZ0542: LOTR Cards That Matter (In the 99)

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CLAP AND SLATE

- 1) INTRO JOSH & RACHEL

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Our coverage of Lord of the Rings: Tales of Middle-earth continues with the cards you need to know to fill your library. Of course we can't talk about all of the cards that could go in your deck, we can't even talk about all the good cards—of which there are many—but we will help you evaluate the trickier cards that you're most likely to see at your table. BUT FIRST...

****CARD KINGDOM** **ULTRAPRO #1** **PATREON: BRIAN HOOK****

- 2) MAIN TOPIC: **CARDS THAT MATTER (IN THE 99) FROM LORD OF THE RINGS**

CALL FOR AID

- a) Steal from the player with the best board to make reckless attacks on the other two.
-Can also shields-down them for the other players to attack (depending on seating)
- b) Steal from the player with the second best board to bring down the player who is ahead.
- c) Steal from the only remaining player and hope they have some stuff worth borrowing.

CLOSE COMPS

- Similar > Mob Rule; Insurrection;
- Like most of these effects, this is strongest in an aggressive meta.
 - Pretty bad when down to 1v1 whereas Mob Rule and Insurrection can still be good.

NOT, TECHNICALLY, BETRAYAL

- Not TECHNICALLY sacrificing
 - Minsc, Beloved Ranger; Transmogrify; Synthetic Destiny (Mass Polymorph);
 - Exchange control of stuff → Zedruu the Greathearted; Cultural Exchange;
 - Bounce to hand → Paradoxical Outcome;
 - Flicker back to “your control” → Ghostly Flicker, Day of the Dragon*;
 - FIGHT → Brawl; Setessan Tactics;
 - Exile until → Glorious Protector; Lumbering Battlement
 - Phase out → Teferi's Veil; Clever Concealment; Teferi's Protection
 - They will phase back in under your opponent's control on your next untap
 - Other weird stuff → Cunning Evasion, Whims of Fate (Great Aurora/Warp World nonbo)
- Not TECHNICALLY attacking you

- Saskia the Unyielding; Kediss, Emberclaw Familiar; Legion Loyalty; Mob Justice;
- Furystoke Giant; Lightning Volley

CAVERN-HOARD DRAGON

CLOSE COMPS

- *Obvious* > Dockside Extortionist
- *Other treasure dragons* > Ancient Copper Dragon; Atsushi, the Blazing Sky; Goldspan Dragon;
 - Less reliable than Goldspan or Atsushi
 - More effective than Ancient Copper Dragon

GAMEPLAY STATS

- Stats from last year (analyzing about 20 GK and XT games)
 - Average # of artifacts per player at the end of the 5th turn cycle = 1.6
 - Chance at least one player has 3 or more artifacts at end of 5th turn cycle = 42.1%

GIFTS OF GOLD

- Hard to control how good this card is, unless you're giving opponents artifacts...
 - Vazi, Keen Negotiator; Jolene, the Plunder Queen; Wernog, Rider's Chaplain; Rangle and Torbran;

QUESTION: **WHAT MANA COST AND CREATE HOW MANY TREASURE TO CONSIDER THIS GOOD?**

DAWN OF A NEW AGE

Note: You draw on end step and it sacrifices itself, it does not exile.

CLOSE COMPS

- Investigator's Journal; Mazemind Tome; Tome of Legends; Idol of Oblivion;
 - *On rate, Dawn of a New Age looks better than most of the above for the first few cards drawn. Quite a bit worse when deployed later in the game, and isn't very good turn 2 (cause you won't have enough creatures). So when are you supposed to play it?*
 - Compare to Phyrexian Arena; Black Market Connections

PROLIFERATE

- Norn's Choirmaster; Grateful Apparition; Atraxa, Praetors' Voice;

SUN TITAN *White is great at bringing small permanents back to the battlefield, and this is just that.*

- Sun Titan; Sevinne's Reclamation; Restoration of Eiganjo; Tayam, Luminous Enigma

QUESTION: **HOW MANY CREATURES DO YOU NEED TO CONTROL FOR THIS TO BE GOOD?**

ELVEN CHORUS

Wants high creature density and/or a lot of creatures on board.

CLOSE COMPS

- *Top of Library* > Realmwalker; Augur of Autumn; Vivien, Monsters' Advocate; Vizier of the Menagerie;
- *Creatures to Mana* > Cryptolith Rite; Inga and Esika; Ashaya, Soul of the Wild; Citanul Hierophants, Earthcraft;

TOP OF THE LIBRARY, TO YA

- *Help you push past lands* > Oracle of Mul Daya; Courser of Kruphix;
- *Payoffs for top of library casting* > Vega, the Watcher; Keeper of Secrets; Sage of the Beyond;

QUESTION: **HOW MANY CREATURES SHOULD BE IN YOUR DECK TO CONSIDER PLAYING THIS?**

GALADHRIM AMBUSH

CLOSE COMPS

- Arachnogenesis
 - Non-elf is a lot worse than non-Spider (you're more likely to be attacked/blocked by elves)
 - 4 mana is a lot more than 3 mana
 - You can hold this until after blocks
 - Counts ALL attacking creatures
 - Arachnogenesis is a defensive spell, where Ambush can be used Aggressively
- *Other Fogs* > Blessed Respite; Constant Mists; Obscuring Haze; Tangle;
- *Other Tokens when Attacking* > Flurry of Wings; Rabble Rousing;

WHO WANTS IT?

- Elves or maybe aggressive token decks
 - Seems pretty bad in non-elf decks. Archnogenesis doesn't even see much play anymore.

HORN OF THE MARK

NOTE: *If you attack three players with 2+ creatures each, this triggers three times.*

- Don't need to trigger it multiple times for it to be good. Just need to consistently trigger once.

CLOSE COMPS

- Chivalric Alliance (3%); Military Intelligence (1%); Firemane Commando (2%);
 - Note: All of these cards see very little play.

ON THE MARK

When is this playable?

- Low CMC Partner Commanders: Yoshimaru + Rograkh; etc.
- How many creatures do you need? 20 is 1 in 5.
 - *I guess if creature count is low, you probably aren't consistently attacking with 2.*

DOUBLE IT UP

- Isshin, Two Heavens as One; Wulfgar of Icewind Dale;

QUESTION: **WILL THIS CARD SEE MORE PLAY THAN ITS COMPS?**

LAST MARCH OF THE ENTS

Can cast cards that were already in your hand before. Can't be countered but they can remove your largest creature in response (be careful to have multiple creatures!)

CLOSE COMPS

- Rishkar's Expertise; Selvala's Stampede; Myojin of Life's Web + Card Draw; Majestic Genesis;
 - *Kind of* > Eureka; Hypergenesis

BEEG COMMANDERS

- Multani, Maro-Sorcerer; Arixmethes, Slumbering Isle; Ghalta and Mavren; Zopandrel, Hunger Dominus; Gorm the Great; Fangorn, Tree Shepherd;
- Ashaya, Soul of the Wild; Abomination of Llanowar;

GIVE IT FLASH

You *really* want to give this flash.

- Vedalken Orrery; Alchemist's Refuge; Borne Upon a Wind; Leyline of Anticipation (duh!)

LOTHO, CORRUPT SHIRRIFF

Pays you back in mana over two to three turns, especially if you cast this as your first spell of the turn.

CLOSE COMPS

- Monologue Tax
 - Includes you, but easier to kill
 - One mana cheaper, but two colors
- *I don't like Monologue Tax all that much... so why do I like this?*
 - 2 mana is a lot less than 3. See: All Mana Rocks.

WHO WANTS IT?

- Dihada, Binder of Wills; Tivit, Seller of Secrets; Jan Jansen, Chaos Crafter; Jodah the Unifier; Thalisse Reverent Medium; Ratadrabik of Urborg
- Anywhere next to Magda, Brazen Outlaw;
- Academy Manufactor seems like a pretty good signpost.

MIRKWOOD BATS

Remember creating a token isn't the same as becoming a token. This doesn't work with Volo, Guide to Monsters type effects.

CLOSE COMPS

- This does twice as much as our favorite aristocrats (for twice the mana but still)
 - Blood Artist; Zulaport Cutthroat; Nadier's Nightblade; Elan Kor, Sadistic Pilgrim; Mayhem Devil; Ayara, First of Lothwain;
- Reminds me of Syr Konrad, the Grim or Dreadhound

YEP, IT'S GOOD

- Only two cards that say "whenever you create a token"
 - Shout out to Rosie Cotton of South Lane who is also super powerful
 - Academy Manufactor again. Dockside wheeeee.

MITHRIL COAT

CLOSE COMPS

- Darksteel Plate; Hammer of Nazahn; Bladed Battle-Fan
- Swiftfoot Boots; Lightning Greaves
 - If your commander is the type to eat removal, it's not better than boots or greaves
 - If your commander is expensive and tends to die in board wipes or has to attack to trigger, now we're talking.

- It only snaps onto legendary creatures. Casting and equipping this for 3 feels expensive and slow.
- 3 is just a lot to hold up for protection. Unless your deck has a lot of other instant speed stuff to do, boots or greaves are gonna be much better most of the time.

THE MOST POWERFUL NEW CARD IN THE WHOLE SET?

COMING UP

We have a lot more cards to talk about including the card that will (almost certainly) go down as the best in the Lord of the Rings set. Yes, better than Mirkwood Bats...BUT FIRST:

MIDROLL POINT

We're back. And it's time to talk about the most powerful card in the set:

ORCISH BOWMASTERS

Don't forget the ETB. Even if your opponents never draw an extra card, this is STILL two 1/1s and 1 damage to anything at instant speed - for 2 mana!

WHEELIE GOOD

- This card is at its most powerful with wheels
 - Bowmasters + Wheel of Fortune deals 21 damage to any target and makes a 21/21
 - Kill someone with Peer into the Abyss
- *Other comparisons* > Sheoldred, the Apocalypse; Kederekt Parasite; Underworld Dreams; Fate Unraveler;

HOW GOOD IS IT REALLY?

Ok, but what about outside of wheel decks?

- But it also goes in aristocrat/sac decks
 - Sac Outlet + Blood Artist, Impact Tremors; or just Goblin Bombardment;
- It's also outrageous in pinger decks.
 - Ob Nixilis, Captive Kingpin; Tor Wauki the Younger;
- Give it lifelink? Or deathtouch? Or infect?
- Also has this sort of Ophiomancer effect where you get to make chump blockers all day long...
- It's absurdly good. Genuinely, confusingly good.
 - Should have cost at least 4 mana. Why does it have an EtB? Why does it have flash? Why does it say any target and not just opponents? Why does it do direct damage at all? The whole thing just seems like a mistake.
 - *Rachel: I would like to go on the record and say I hate this card.*

QUESTION: DOES THIS CARD GO IN ANY BLACK DECK OR DO YOU NEED SOME SYNERGY?

PALANTIR OF ORTHANC

CLOSE COMPS

- Combustible Gearhulk; Protection Racket; Sin Prodder

SELF MILL

- You put this in decks that want to use their graveyards in addition to having cards in their hand
 - Muldrotha, the Gravetide; The Beamtown Bullies; Sefris of the Hidden Ways;
 - Ratchet, Field Medic; Feldon of the Third Path;
 - Red and white graveyard decks love this! Mill in their colors!

PROLIFERATE?

- Is this any good with proliferate?
- Is there any circumstance where you would play this if you aren't playing a graveyard deck?

Compare to Phyrexian Arena (which is somewhat lackluster these days). What if it read 3 mana for Scry 2 + Draw every turn? How good is that?

PIPPIN, GUARD OF THE CITADEL

PIPPIN OF RUNES

- *Compare to* > Mother of Runes; Giver of Runes
- Cannot protect itself outside of the ward
- Gets around the colorless identity problem of Mother
- Better evasion than Mother or Giver of Runes.
- *Do you run this over either one of those cards?*

REPRIEVE

REDONE REMAND

- Remand
 - Also kind of Narset's Reversal; Unsubstantiate; Venser, Shaper Savant;
 - In 11,230 decks of the possible 1,289,811 decks
- Bad against free spells (outside of pitch spells like Force of Will)
- Can "save" your spells from counters or other rough responses
- *When are Remand spells best?*
 - Big tap out spells
 - Held interaction (that costs mana) - counterspell, heroic intervention, etc
 - "Can't be countered"

WHITE COUNTERSPELLS

Does being in white change the evaluation significantly?

QUESTION: How would you rank it in comparison to:

- Mana Tithe is in 26,272 decks of the possible 1,182,738
- Rebuff the Wicked is 24,909 decks
- Lapse of Certainty is in 12,618 decks

SAIL INTO THE WEST

Instant

- *Return* > 2 cards from graveyard to hand. Exile spell.
- *Embark* > Each player may Wheel of Fortune

- *Rounds up to Embark*
 - *You have to convince two opponents to Return, you only have to convince one to wheel*

REINVENT THE WHEEL?

- Not a good wheel for forcing draws or milling people out, obviously
 - like Orcish Bowmasters/Smothering Tithe
- But a good wheel if you're just trying to draw cards
- You have to be in a deck that wants things in its graveyard, that way you're happy with either outcome.

SPITEFUL BANDITRY

- *A small board wipe. Cleans up value creatures and tokens with 5-6 mana*
- *7-mana gets many things off the board*
- *Will only make one treasure off the wipe.*

CLOSE COMPS

- Gadrak, the Crown-Scourge; Mahadi, Emporium Master; Revel in Riches; Life Insurance; Undercity Scrounger;
 - *JLK: I don't view this primarily as a treasure creator. It's a board wipe with upside. To me the comparison is Meathook Massacre.*

RELIABLE TREASURES?

- *Treasure side is best when you can reliably kill a creature an opponent controls a turn.*
 - Mogis, God of Slaughter; Sheoldred, Whispering One; Rite of the Raging Storm; Archfiend of Depravity;
 - Edict effects → Merciless Executioner, Fleshbag Mauler, etc

Your Commander needs to either 1) Not need to be cast early in the game or 2) Have 3+ toughness or 3) be a planeswalker

Top 100 Creatures:

2 TOUGHNESS = 40 (Didn't count things like E-Witness, STEve, Dockside, etc)

3 TOUGHNESS = 53

Top 100 Commanders:

2 TOUGHNESS = 17

3 TOUGHNESS = 37

according to EDHREC.com

QUESTION: How good is this as a board wipe that hits little things and just chills in play and makes you 2-3 treasures over a few turns?

STING, THE GLINTING DAGGER

The most powerful thing about this card is the fact that it's colorless and gives an untap every turn. This is the kind of card that certain decks have been waiting for for AGES.

CLOSE COMPS

- White Plume Adventurer; Drumbellower; Seedborn Muse;
- Freed from the Real; Pemmin's Aura; Thornbite Staff;

STING-BEARERS

- *Commanders* > Ghoullcaller Gisa; Arcanis the Omnipotent; Selvala, Explorer Returned; Heartless Hidetsugu; Fain, the Broker; Atla Palani, Nest Tender; Captain Sisay;

SUBJUGATE THE HOBBITS

Steal all the little stuff! (except Commanders. Boo!)

CLOSE COMPS

- Clone Legion; Expropriate; Mass Manipulation;

HOW IMPACTFUL?

- There's a lot of relevant things to steal, but they're more value pieces than game winners
 - Mana Dorks; Esper Sentinel; Blood Artists; Dryad of the Ilysian Grove; Mother of Runes; Champion of Lambholt; Professional Face Breaker; Academy Manufactor; Orcish Bowmasters; Faerie Mastermind;
- *Game winning scenarios* > Scute Swarms; ALL TOKENS; (Still have to dodge a board wipe)
- As Commander speeds up, necessarily people are playing more and more low mana value stuff.
- 7 mana is still a lot for something this conditional (not stealing Commanders is big).
 - Compare to Insurrection.

TAUNT FROM THE RAMPART

CLOSE COMPS

- Compare to > Disrupt Decorum; Bothersome Quasit; Akroma's Will;
 - Disrupt Decorum - You don't want to be the first player goaded
 - Taunt from the Rampart - You don't want to be the last player goaded
 - *This still has some utility as a Falter effect when it's down to 1v1*

QUESTION: If you have the choice between the two, which do you run? Or do you run both?

THE ONE RING

- *Protection from everything means* > No damage, no curse, no target
 - Each player mills, each player discards, each player wheels, loses life - STILL HAPPENS
 - Have to CAST in order to get the effect

RETURN TO HAND

- Drafna, Founder of Lat-Nam; Ingenuity Engine; Hurkyl's Recall; Rebuild;

FLASH

- Heliody, the Radiant Dawn; Raff Capachen, Ship's Mage; Gandalf the White; Liberator, Urza's Battlehopper

EVERYTHING, FOREVER

- *If you're crazy* > Magosi, the Waterveil; Chronatog Totem;

Ok now let's talk about the rest of the text. The drawing cards (and losing life) stuff:

DRAW EFFICIENCY

The math here is actually pretty good. If you untap with it once, you've gotten 3 cards for 4 mana. At the 2nd untap it's 6 cards. Then after that it's insane.

PROLIFERATE (post upkeep)

- Yawgmoth, Thran Physician; Flux Channeler; Evolution Sage, Norn's Choirmaster;

QUESTION: Is this playable without any synergies? Just as a card draw effect that has some incidental protection tied to it?

3) **TO THE LISTENERS**

What do you think about this set? Are you excited about it? What new cards slot in perfectly to your existing commander decks?

****CARD KINGDOM #2** **ULTRA PRO #2****

4) CLEAN-UP STEP

Big thanks to our amazing team here at The Command Zone! **Eric Lem, Megan Yip, Damen Lenz; Arthur Meadowcroft; Ladee Danger; Manson Leung; Josh Murphy; Jake Boss; Jordan Pridgen; Sam Waldow; Gaurav Gulati; Jamie Block; Mitch Trafford; Evan Limberger; Gabriel Pozos; Craig Blanchette; and Jimmy Wong.**