

## CZS003: IS KINGMAKING UNSPORTSMANLIKE?

### ARE SPITE PLAYS PART OF COMMANDER?

#### KINGMAKING & SPITE PLAYS

#### KINGMAKING IS NOT OKAY

#### IS KINGMAKING UNFAIR?

#### IS KINGMAKING MEAN?

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- 1) UPKEEP STEP
  - 2) MAIN TOPIC
  - 3) TO THE LISTENERS
  - 4) CLEAN-UP PHASE
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*Today we're talking about an issue that has plagued multiplayer games forever: Kingmaking. In cEDH, it's against the social contract—as are all game actions not made with the intent of winning the game. In more casual Commander, kingmaking is a contentious topic. For some players, it's part of their Commander experience. For others, it's bad sportsmanship. BUT BEFORE WE GET INTO IT:*

**\*\*CARD KINGDOM\*\* \*\*ULTRAPRO #1\*\* \*\*PATREON: BRYCE MARRELLO\*\***

#### 2) MAIN TOPIC: KINGMAKING & SPITE PLAYS

##### WHAT IS KINGMAKING?

- Kingmaking is where the actions of one player, who for all intents and purposes cannot win the game, knowingly perform an action that dictates who will win the game.
- Here's a simplified kingmaking scenario. Let's say you know two of your opponents can combo off on their turns and win the game. You only have the interaction to stop one of them.
  - Do you spend your interaction to stop the first and lose to the second?
  - Do you not spend your interaction and lose to the first because you don't have a way to win yet?
  - Do you make a deal with the second combo player to not combo off in exchange for your interaction on the first?
- In other scenarios, kingmaking situations can arise from pretty much every type of Magic the Gathering interaction, especially ones that determine if a player can be knocked out - affecting life totals, having removal for blockers, ability to counterspell, etc.

##### CONCESSION AS KINGMAKING

- Let's say you're being attacked for lethal. All of their creatures have lifelink. You concede before damage is done to prevent that player from gaining all the life. Is that concession kingmaking?
  - If this happens earlier in the game, is it still possible to call it kingmaking?
- In this situation, is conceding against the social contract?

- Do your thoughts change if the player has an on board way to lose the game (drawing themselves out at instant speed, lightning bolting themselves in the face, etc.)?

### **GAME ACTIONS AS KINGMAKING**

- Let's say you're being attacked for lethal. You have a Swords to Plowshares, but removing one creature won't prevent you from dying. Is casting the Swords going to make a difference in the outcome of the game? Is blocking to kill the most things—but not enough to save yourself—kingmaking?
- In this situation, is taking action against the social contract?

### **UNAVOIDABLE KINGMAKING**

- Sometimes kingmaking is inevitable. There will be plenty of situations where the circumstances just ended in a way that a kingmaking decision is available. How do you deal with these moments?
  - Just play your game! Imagine as though the kingmaking decision didn't exist - do what you can to survive, maybe bluff if that's your style.

### **\*\*\*MIDROLL POINT\*\*\***

### **DIRECT VS INDIRECT KINGMAKING**

- A direct kingmaking play results in granting one specific player the victory
- An indirect kingmaking play is a player going for second place while also granting another player the victory
- Does surviving the second longest mean anything to you in Commander? Is it ok for a player to kingmake in order to go for second place?

### **ARCHENEMY AS KINGMAKING**

- An early-game archenemy can be tough to navigate as a table. Players expend resources in tandem to take down the king of the hill, but as a result might put themselves way behind.
- In this situation, is it against the social contract to ignore the archenemy to further your game plan?

### **GOOD SPORTSMANSHIP KINGMAKING?**

- Is there any kind of kingmaking that's "in the spirit of the game"?
- Example scenario: In a weekly playgroup, one player who has won a lot recently decides to end their game in a way that leaves them open for the next player to take them out and win the game. They do so because they want the other player to win, and don't mind giving this game up to make things more fun for the playgroup.
- In this situation, is trying to help others win against the social contract?

### **GAME MEMORY**

- This brings up the question of Game Memory, the idea that previous Commander games impact how players will play in future Commander games.
  - “You locked me out last game so I’m going to counter all your spells this game.”
  - “I remember your Yurlok deck was powerful so I’m going to target your Minn deck early.”
- Do you play with game memory? Do you expect your opponents to?

### WHAT ARE SPITE PLAYS?

- The Oxford Languages description is “*a desire to hurt, annoy, or offend someone.*”
- Spite plays are usually game actions made emotionally rather than strategically: Eye-for-an-eye removal spells or attacks.
- There are levels to spite - but the impact is most severe when it becomes more than just words
- There are 21 cards in Magic the Gathering that have “spite” or “spiteful” in their title. Can you think of one!?
  - Kaervek, the Spiteful; Spitemare; Spite of Mogis; Spiteful Visions (JLK special)

### ARE SPITE PLAYS OK?

- Many levels of “spite” from “wow actually spiteful” to “humorously spiteful”
- Seasoned playgroups might use spite as a storytelling device within their friends - especially those who have run D&D campaigns together
- When are spite plays not ok?
  - They make the environment hostile, dangerous, and/or unaccommodating.
  - Players are less likely to play due to the nature of the spite plays.
- Is there a difference between intrinsic spite plays vs. extrinsic spite plays?
  - Intrinsic, inside the game - attacking you because you attacked me
  - Extrinsic, outside the game - helping player X win the game because they’re new, a significant other, the other player ALWAYS wins, etc.

### TO SUM IT ALL UP

- Maybe the biggest theme of the episode, some easy golden rule type stuff that can make it all make sense.
- "The goal of playing a game is to win, but it is the goal that is important, not the winning." That's a quote from game creator, Reiner Knizia.
- Play like you want to be invited back. - Sheldon

### 3) TO THE LISTENERS

Have you found yourself in kingmaking situations? Were they easy decisions? Spite plays? What were some wild endgame setups that made everyone lose their mind?

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

### 4) CLEAN-UP STEP

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