

Last November, at two different WizKids Opens, in a sea of teams focusing on Half-Elf Bard, two players saw great success with Lantern Ring: Limited Only By Imagination. Paul Kushnir won his WKO at Guardian Games in Portland, OR. Charlie Cates won his WKO in Columbia, SC. Below is Paul's write up of his experience.

Last November, I was lucky enough to have a WizKids Open held at my Friendly Local Game Store - Guardian Games in Portland, OR. The first time I went to a WKO, it was just for the participation prizes and Side Events, and the second time I made the Top 4 of the main event. Most recently, I wanted to overcome the field, but I knew that locally I would face tough opponents. My personal goal was just to make Top 8. There was one very obvious choice: Build a team around the Half-Elf Bard: Master Lords' Alliance from the Faerûn Under Siege Starter Set. Thematically appropriate for a Bard, he strengthens your entire team, and he's easily one of the most powerful cards in the game right now. But for me personally, he feels almost too easy, and I wanted to try something a bit more challenging and more in line with my own playstyle. I decided to build my team around the Lantern Ring: Limited Only By Imagination from DC Comics Dice Masters: War of Light.

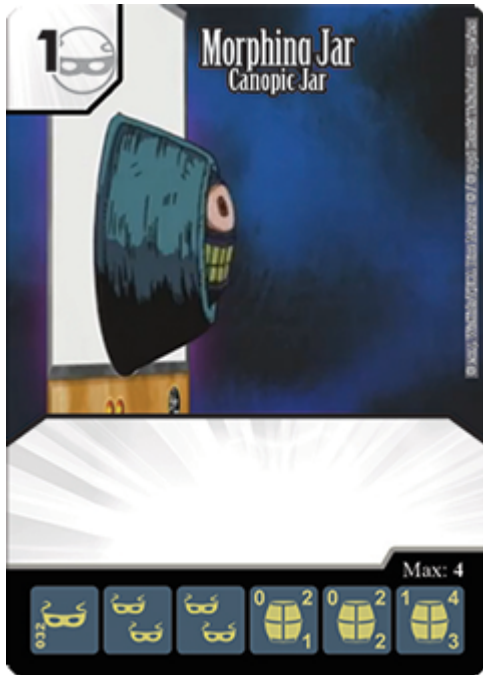
First, Lantern Ring:



Like Bard, Lantern Ring is thematically appropriate and buffs your entire team. It allows your characters to take the energy that represents them and channel it toward your opponent. In game mechanic terms, it allows your characters to deal direct damage based on their own energy type. One of the things that I like about Dice Masters is that the characters you purchase using specific energy will then provide that same type of energy if you don't roll them on a character face. This can lead to some interesting decisions - if I buy a bunch of cheap Shield characters but then roll them all on energy faces, I will have a lot of energy to spend but I can't buy an expensive Fist character. Since I often have difficulty with this, I like to build "single-energy" teams. It can be risky if I don't roll any of that energy on my first few turns,

but once I get going I can almost always count on having the right type of energy to buy my characters. The Lantern Ring really works well with this strategy, because both characters and energy that you roll build on each other. For this event, I went with a Mask/Ring team.

Morphing Jar is perhaps the most economical way to take advantage of what I've described on a Mask/Ring team:



With only 8 slots available on a team (plus the two Basic Action Cards), team-building is crucial. Every card in the game has at least one "counter" to negate it, but with limited space you have to choose carefully what cards you are going to bring. I suspected that the two biggest threats I was going to face were the previously mentioned Half-Elf Bard, and a Global/Basic Action team based around the Vicious Struggle Basic Action Card. In addition to bringing specific cards to counter them, I also had to make sure I brought cards to help me win. Each and every card on my team was carefully chosen, usually serving multiple purposes depending on what threats I would be facing. One of the things I focused on was making sure all my cards were affordable in the game - only 1 card on my team cost more than 4. So even if I only rolled the 4 dice I drew on any given turn, I would still have plenty of options to get.

This next bundle of cards all gave me control options to slow the game down and win, when Guillermo was talking about his World Championship winning team, he called these cards "The Control Pack":



One of the keys to doing well in a tournament setting is practice. In a game based entirely on dice, you will naturally have a lot of randomness to deal with. While there are some ways to mitigate the randomness a little bit, sometimes you just can't roll what you want. Actually getting your cards and dice out and playing will enable you to experience those bad rolls before your tournament, and know what your options are. I am very fortunate to have a spouse who will play the game with me, and who helped me by playing different teams against me for practice. By practicing, I was able to figure out which cards worked best in different situations, and the best way to play out certain rolls.

These were two control cards that furthered bolstered the ones I was already playing, and solved some of the problems I encountered through practice:



Due to the prevalence of Elf Thief, being able to ramp on early turns – and on my own turn, was very valuable, so I made sure to include Rip Hunter’s Chalkboard for it’s powerful Global Ability:



Finally to round out my team, were two Basic Action Cards. Blink – Transmutation, and Polymorph. For players who were familiar with the Polymorph Control team that won WKO Salt Lake City, it helps get your control options out faster. The same is true here, and the teams it would end up being most

effective against often had Global Abilities that let me discount it and purchase it on my first turn. Polymorph would be less strong in other matchups – I could simply ignore the die and not purchase it. Thanks to Raven, my opponents couldn't turn it against me as a removal option. Blink – Transmutation was a tool for me to play defensively by either keeping my attackers around while they dealt damage with Lantern Ring, or by removing my opponent's attackers so they couldn't kill me.



At the tournament itself, I saw a lot of what I expected: Vicious Struggle teams and Half-Elf Bard teams. I was glad that some other people decided to buck the trend as well; I saw at least one other Lantern Ring-based team, using Fists and the Swarm mechanic instead of Masks like I did. There was also a well-played team using the Batman Family from the World's Finest set. The main "team to beat", however, was a Vicious Struggle variant using the Imprisoned Basic Action Card and Jinzo: Trap Destroyer from the Yu-Gi-Oh set. A couple of the more competitive players had built that team together, and they were both nearly undefeated all day.

Based on the number of players we had show up, we played 5 rounds of Swiss before making the cut to Top 8. I was able to win my first three games, but then lost the last two. I wasn't even sure that would be good enough to make the cut, but I ended up seeded in the 7th place spot. My first opponent in the Top 8 was actually someone who had beaten me in Swiss, so I figured I'd be taking my prize cards and leaving soon. However, one of the advantages of playing opponents again is that you've seen their team and strategy before, and hopefully you can learn from the earlier game(s) and can do better on the rematch. This was my situation, and I was able to beat the Bard team I lost to earlier.

Moving on to Top 4 I faced the Vicious Struggle/Imprisoned/Jinzo build discussed earlier, against a player who hadn't yet lost all day. It was a tough couple battles, but my team was flexible enough and strong enough to overcome it. Afterwards, my opponent cleared away his team and the next competitor put down...the exact same team. I was facing the other player who had worked on this build. Thankfully, I was able to use the lessons I had learned facing this team already, as well as some good luck, to take home the championship.

So what can we take away from this? Well, it is possible to beat Half-Elf Bard, but it's definitely not the easy route. Playing a rogue deck never is! I'm proud of my team, and thankful for the help I had designing and playtesting it, but it's definitely not unbeatable. My success came from good dice rolling, good adaptability, and a team that happened to be particularly well-suited to facing off against the strongest team at my event. Had I faced one of the other teams that won their WKO's, or had my Swiss matches gone slightly differently, it could have ended very differently. Another factor was that my event took place just before the First Turn rule change. I feel I could have still been successful, but it wasn't something I had spent time playtesting.