

So I figured I'd try and write up my experience at the Portland, OR WKO on Sunday, November 6th. First of all, I have to thank Guardian Games for hosting an excellent event (and even staying 30 minutes past closing to let us finish!), and Sadat M. for being an excellent T0/Judge. We ended up having 25 participants, which I believe made it the largest WKO that weekend, and guaranteed us 4 Nationals Qualifications (so glad they round up!).

My schedule means I rarely get to actually go to local events, which is sad since there are places to play 3-4 times a week (shout-out to TFAW Milwaukie, Guardian Games, Rainy Day Games, and Dice Age Games!). So although there was a lot of playtesting and practicing going on, I wasn't able to participate. Maybe that was helpful, maybe not. I do know that I was expecting a lot of Vicious Struggle, and most likely a fair amount of Bard as well. I personally didn't want to bring either, I personally really like single-energy Lantern Ring teams. I've run a few Bolt-Ring teams before, with Iceman TCFW, but I felt that they don't have enough answers for VS. So I decided to go with Mask-Ring based on its performance at Nats/Worlds.

Here is the team I went with. I definitely had several discussions with TRP staff on what to add/take out, so I absolutely can't claim sole credit on this:

Morphing Jar: Canopic Jar x4
Elf Thief: Lesser Harper x4
Oracle: Master Investigator x2
Raven: AMZ x 3
Scarecrow: Legion of Doom x2
Lantern Ring: LOBI x2
Dormammu: Burning Ambition x2
Rip Hunter's Chalkboard x1
BAC: Polymorph, Blink-Transmutation

I waffled for a while about having PXG or not, and I came to the determination that Rip Hunter's Chalkboard would serve me better. VS and Bard would both (likely) be running their own PXG, and if not then my team is (mostly) cheap enough that I don't *need* it, especially with RHCBC to add to my Prep Area exactly what I wanted when I wanted it. Against VS, if I can get Oracle out fast enough I can shut it down pretty hard, especially with Elf Thiefs taking their energy. Most VS teams bring a force attack global ("taunt") of some kind, and Blink's Global takes care of that. It also helps against Bard teams attacking, and since Lantern Ring triggers on attacking, I can attack and then immediately pull back just to deal the damage. Raven protects my characters from Dwarf Wizard or any other targeting attacks, Scarecrow can delay an early Bard attack, and Dormammu protects me from Cloudkill or Prismatic Spray on a Bard team.

My initial strategy against VS was: Turn 1, use (their) Red Dragon

Global, my RHCBC Global, buy my Polymorph for 1, and save a Mask for (their) PXG. Alternatively I could field a Sidekick instead of a Mask if that's what I rolled, but I preferred the other (and ended up getting it most of the time when I needed it). Turn two, rolling 6 dice plus Polymorph, I could usually get 1 Sidekick, buy Oracle, and Poly her in while still having (hopefully) 1 Mask for PXG to maintain some ramp. I had playtested a little of T1 RHCBC and Elf Thief, T2 RHCBC Oracle, and getting her out T3. It didn't work quick enough against a speedy VS team, so I switched to Poly Oracle and had much better success.

My first match of the day was against Keith running a VS team. I didn't get his decklist, but it wasn't too bad. I got what I needed and took him out pretty easily. Whew!

My second match was against Rob D. Rob is a great guy that I've played with before at a few events, most recently at a Strahd RDW. He's only been playing for (I think) 6 months or so, but he's gotten very good. He studies a lot and does a lot of playtesting. He and Justin D. both brought the exact same team, because they had done extensive playtesting and felt that it had the best chance to win. Here's the teamlist:

BAC: Imprisoned, VS
Rip Hunter's Chalkboard
Human Torch: Flame On!
Professor X: Trainer
Luke Cage
Jinzo: Trap Destroyer
Parallax
Phoenix: Redd
Red Dragon

I don't remember the exact dice count, but honestly it didn't matter. The only character they bought to field really was Jinzo. With Imprisoned and Jinzo, they could really lock down just about any team and steal most of the threats they faced (Oracle, etc.). It was a great team, and it won every game it played with almost no difficulty – except mine :)

I was able to get my Oracle out fast enough to shut down the early VS win, and forced him to switch to Imprisoned to get my Oracle. The problem was, if he fielded a Sidekick I could just use his taunt Global to make it attack me and release my Oracle. This first game we played against each other, I don't think he noticed my Blink-Transmutation Global. I was able to keep Oracle out enough to keep his ramp slowed, while I loaded up on Morphing Jars and Elf Thiefs. Relatively quickly I RHCBC and got my Lantern Ring out, and then I just kept attacking whenever he didn't have a VS active. Winner: Me (for Rob's only loss in Swiss – according to him, the only team he even

struggled with at all).

My third round was my first against a non-VS team. It was, of course, Bard. Not Bard Blitz or Buzzsaw, but a much slower Bard/Hulk control team. This was against Tom B. - another great guy who runs the events at TFAW Milkwaukie, and is an awesome presence on the Dice Masters PDX Facebook group. He's also a very solid player, he came in second at the last Portland WKO in a very tight battle. This team didn't have PXG, which definitely slowed both of us down, and made me realize that my team really doesn't have any answer to Hulk. Oops.

Fortunately, getting Oracle out quickly meant that it was much harder for him to use any Globals, and Oracle's defense is just high enough that it (usually) takes multiple Hulk pings to take her out. I did end up purchasing Raven this game since he had Kryptonite, and due to some very helpful rolls on my part and some less helpful rolls on his part, I was able to pull out the win. 3-0 now.

My fourth round was against Tom's son, Dylan. He's a younger guy, but an awesome competitor. He always brings very solid teams, and plays them very well. His team was similar to his dad's, a Bard/Hulk control team, but he also used Constantine: Hellblazer very well to keep my Elf Thiefs from attacking and taking his energy. I didn't even mind the losing their text, but it was very annoying not being able to field them for free after the first one! He also got out Ronin: Between Employers fairly quickly, which let him absorb one Lantern Ring damage packet each turn, and I couldn't stabilize fast enough. He also used Polymorph (which we both brought) offensively against me, swapping my Oracle out for an Elf Thief in my Used Pile. Cleared my board with Hulk and swung in with Bard and others to kill me. Even the masks I was holding for Blink's Global weren't enough. 3-1. One more round, if I win then I'm definitely in Top 8, if not then I have to hope my SOS holds.

We are now to the fifth and final round of Swiss. By this point only 14 people are still playing, and several of them are already mathematically "out" and just playing to finish (everyone else is doing Rainbow Draft side events). My matchup is against Sean P., who I haven't played against a whole lot (and, BTW, who had an awesome custom mat - life counter on top and dice on top of the cards instead of beside). He was also running a Lantern Ring team, but instead of Mask or Bolt, he went Fist/Swarm/Grodd:

BAC: Anger Issues, Resurrection

Kobold: Greater Humanoid

Goblin: Lesser Humanoid

Stirge: Greater Beast

Lantern Ring: LOBI

Captain America: Super Soldier

Venom: Angelo Fortunado

Gorilla Grodd: Force of Mind

Ring: Epic Gear

So again another PXG-less match, but he made very good use of my RHC. Also with both Kobold and Goblin having Swarm, let him get a decent amount of dice out, and both Grodd and Venom boosting his characters (and Venom also keeping my board much clearer than I would like). Oracle kept him from Chalkboarding *too* much, or using his Ring Global, but since he didn't rely on PXG it didn't hurt as much as I'd like. I had nothing that could get rid of Venom, so I had very few characters I could field without immediately dying. While that helped with my ramp, it didn't help me get people out that could deal some Lantern Ring damage. When he finally got his Lantern Ring out, I was done. 3-2 in Swiss.

So (obviously) I ended up making it into the Top 8, but in 7th place. Justin D. went 5-0 with his and Rob's VS-Jinzo-Imprisoned team, and Rob went 4-1 getting 3rd seed. Tom B. went to the very end against Ty N. and his Bat-Family team, taking it all the way to turns and ending up with the only draw of the entire day (which was very much NOT an intentional draw :P). That put Ty into the Top 8 and kept Tom out. Chris M. also made Top 8 with a Hulk/Tsarina team, Dave T. made it with a clever Mr. Mxyptlk anti-VS team, Sean's Fist Ring team obviously, and Dylan's Hulk Bard team took second seed.

Lunch Break!

At this point, I'm happy to have made Top 8. I got the two BAC foil cards, including the alt art Front Line, which is about all I could expect.