

The Red Book of Westmarch: The Official Council of Elrond Newsletter

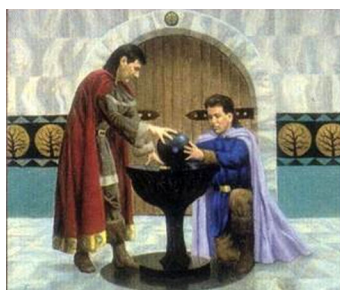
Issue 3
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For the *Middle-earth*
Collectible Card
Game Community



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THE FELLOWSHIP: COMMENTS FROM THE COE Prize Support by Mark Alfano, Chair CoE

Hello again, MECCG-ers. This is my last "Fellowship" article as the outgoing chairman from the 2006-7 session. This time around, I'd like to enumerate one of the many projects the newly revitalized CoE is engaged in: Prize Support.

Of course, the primary reason to play our great game is the simple joy of entering Tolkien's Middle Earth. But there are other reasons. One, for instance, is to tell a story. Another is to humiliate your friend (I mean, opponent...). But yet another is to win some nifty prizes. I myself can attest to this, having racked up two gold One Rings and a complete set of Spanish pro-

mos over the course of my MECCG career...

This article, however, is all about you, and in particular, your tournament organizers. As Wolfgang Penetsdorfer pointed out in his article that appeared in Issue 2 of the newsletter, there exists a diverse range of MECCG-related items floating around in the community. The CoE is now willing and prepared to offer some such items as prize support to tournament organizers. In particular, for national championships, we now have placed two huge maps of Tolkien's world in Europe, and two more in the USA. These will be shipped from tournament to tournament by the respective organizers of each. At

THOUGHTS ON THE PLAYING FIELD Innovative Decks in Tournaments by Mikko Vihtemäki

In top-level tournaments you often see certain decktypes from time to time. They are very solid, quite easy to play and fast decks that are extremely hard to stop with a general hazard strategy. These include the likes of Wolfiegast, Red Hills, and Mordor-shuffle, to name a few. The fact that you're almost guaranteed to run into these decks in tournaments sooner or later, makes it worthwhile to be prepared with a suitable hazard strategy, and most players are. The biggest advantage when playing against decks like these is that you know what your opponent

is going to do. Information is power. That combined with the proper anti-cards, you should be able to either slow your opponent down considerably, or in some cases even shut his deck down completely. That's why you shouldn't play any of these well-known decks, but rather come up with an original strategy of your own!

Innovative Gameplay

In all strategic games the element of surprise can play a major role. Innovative decks are a real headache for even the sharpest opponents,



...(FELLOWSHIP, continued)

last sighting the European ones were in Spain, and then at LURE, and from there the sky is the limit.

We also have a number of other items to offer. The attendees of North American championships know all about the cool new buttons featuring card art. These are now available to any tournament organizer who expects to have at least 10 participants in his event. The Swedes, the Finns, the Spanish, the Canadians, the Argentineans, and the Austrians have already received their first installment of buttons, and more are waiting as needed. From Finland, we also have stickers with the burning eye of Sauron on them. From Germany, there are the special promos.

All these and more can be yours. But, there are three catches. The first is that you have to ask at least one month before the tournament, to allow time for shipping. That's right, just ask. The second is that you need to be in a country with a CoE-recognized national council. Check out our website—www.councilofelrond.org—for exact info. And the third criterion is that you need to collect 1 dollar or euro (depending on where you are) from each player at the tourney and send that, via paypal, to Chris Cable (chscable@feinus.com), the newly elected treasurer of the CoE. Chris will hold any funds received and dispense them as the CoE sees fit for the funding of prize support for big tournaments. So really, the tiny fee is just helping to fund further prize support for yourselves and other players in the future.

If you have any questions about this program, please, by all means, contact us. I can always be reached at mark.alfano@gmail.com, and the contact information for all members of the CoE is available on our website.



...(THOUGHTS ON THE PLAYING FIELD, continued)

since most of the time they won't know which hazards to hold on to and what to get from the sideboard. They can make educated guesses, but that's all. This allows you to play a relatively easy game, because you won't have to make a lot of hard choices. To put it another way, the longer your opponent is in the dark about your deck, the more likely he is to make mistakes, while you are more likely to avoid them. And at the end of the day, mistakes cost games. The less you make them, the more likely you are to win.

All of the now popular decks have of course been innovative at one point in time. Red Hills is a good example of a deck like this from the recent past. At first people couldn't really cope with the challenge Red Hills presented, due to its fresh strategy and seemingly untouchable companies. With time, players have come up with some good strategies against it, and playing Red Hills in a tournament these days is becoming a risk. If you happen to run into a good player who is well prepared, you are likely to lose.

New Kid on the Block

Coming up with great innovative decks that go on to dominate the playing field for some time is quite hard. However, you do not have to create a masterpiece like that to win a tournament. Your deck needs to be fresh only once! You can either take an existing decktype that doesn't see much play and improve it, or come up with a totally new one. I've done this in the last three big tournaments with great results: I won every game I played, finishing 2nd at Nordic Cup and winning at Finnish nationals and Lure of MeCCG. A valuable side-effect of playing innovative decks is that you freshen up the tournament scene, so in a way everybody wins!

When building an original deck, you should of course determine the main strategy of your deck first, and expand from there. As I mentioned in my tournament report published in the last Council of Elrond newsletter, I played a deck called On the Rocks at Nordic Cup. While it's certainly not the best deck I've made and somewhat lacks in efficiency, the surprising strategy allowed me to get the upper hand most of the time. The main idea was to squat at The Stones, Rebuild it and use Fireworks to untap it several times, making greater items quite easy to get. The other aspects of the deck were just complementary to this main strategy. So basically all you need is an idea, and you're half-way there!



How to Construct Your Anti-Minion Hazard Deck

By Joe Bisz

3-The Moon is Dead
2-Spells of the Barrow Wights
1-Seized by Terror
1-The Way is Shut
1-Faces of the Dead

2-An Unexpected Outpost
 1-Revealed to All Watchers
 1-Rolled Down to the Sea
 2-Heedless Revelry
 1-Adunaphel
 1-Daelomin at Home
 1-My Precious
 1-Mouth of Sauron
 1-Uvatha the Horseman
 3-Wisp of Pale Sheen
 3-Chill Douser
 2-Barrow Wight
 3-Stirring Bones

WANJA'S UNDEAD

Wanja breaks form from a pure Undead approach, adding more strong anti-minion staple cards instead of Undead-enhancing combos. This deck also targets the Underdeeps, opponent's faction-getting characters, and border-holds.

3-An Unexpected Outpost
 3-Foolish Words
 3-Heedless Revelry
 Revealed to All Watchers
 2-Twilight
 Doubled Vigilance
 2-Siege
 3-Chill Douser
 3-Wisp of Pale Sheen
 3-Stirring Bones
 My Precious
 2-Nameless Thing
 Mouth of Sauron
 Uvatha the Horseman
 Adunaphel

BEN SORENSEN'S ORCS

Ben's deck packs some nasty surprises, of note being the use of Buthrakaur/Umagaur to hit shadow-holds (usually as detainment, where the opponent thinks he's safe), but then you can follow that up with orc creatures which are non-keyed, and therefore kill. This trick is at its best when a Balrog player is moving to his Moria haven, and you play one of the troll bosses there (detainment), followed up by infinite orcs, kill! Since it's a Doors deck, you can also sideboard in some of the nasty, creative surprises Mark wrote about in Issue #1 against his own infamous Red Hills deck. Of course, you would need a resource strategy that doesn't require you holding onto lots of cards, or you'll never be able to get the hazard combos going.

Ben writes: Use Two or Three Tribes to play LOTS of orcs. Put Lieutenants on-guard beneath Doubled Vigilance. Your creatures are keyable to ruins and lairs as kill or can act as



some fairly good detainment.

3-An Unexpected Outpost
 3-Doubled Vigilance
 3-Hobgoblins
 3-Orc-lieutenant
 3-Orc-warriors
 3-Uruk-lieutenant
 3-Minions Stir
 3-Two or Three Tribes Present
 1-Redoubled Force
 3-Doors of Night
 Revealed to All Watchers
 Mouth of Sauron
 Many Sorrows Befall
 Little Snuffler (nice efficient creature to stop cancellers)
 Buthrakaur the Green
 Umagaur the Pale

Individual Hazards Necessary Against ALL Minion Decks

In my personal opinion, these are hazards that simply *must* go in the hazard portion of your deck (unless you have an unusual strategy!), given the state of the playing field at the moment. As Galadriel reads this over my shoulder, she tells me that there is a chance things might get better in the future, and not to lose hope...

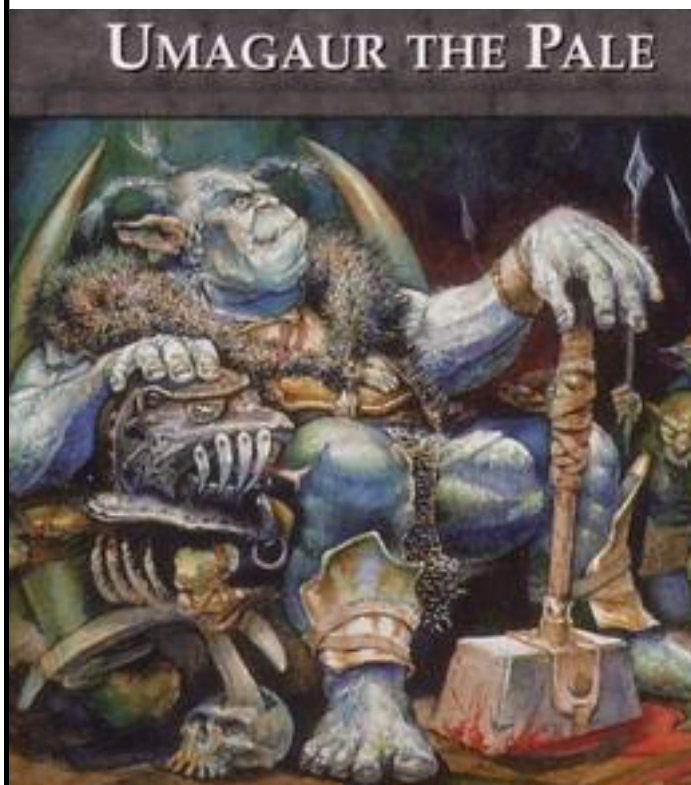
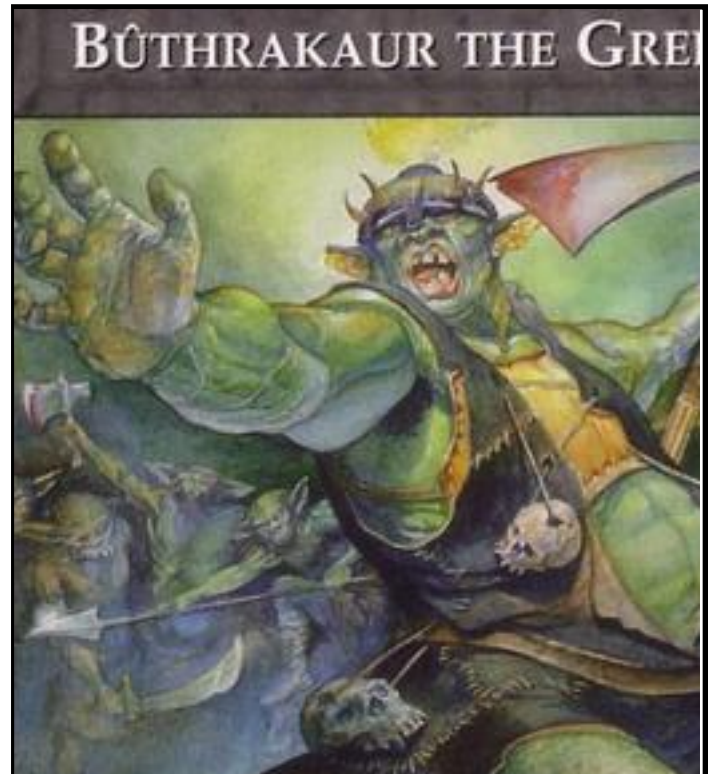
Power Built By Waiting (too many hazard-limit reducing minion decks)
 Unabated in Malice (strong against dragon-country and hazard-limit-reducer decks)
 Baduila

Individual Hazards Against Minions: Other Favorites to Mix-and-match

Gandalf the White Rider
 Lady of the Golden Wood
 Master of the House
 The Witch King (annoying if they play Ancient Black Axe)
 My Precious
 Golodhros (can really irritate Mordor decks) (at least for sideboard)
 Itangast Ahunt (at least for sideboard)
 Balrog of Moria (good instant sideboard card vs. Balrog)
 Monstrosity of Diverse Shape (if using Landroval; add one Wargs too)
 Landroval (probably the most efficient high prowess creature)
 Sellswords Between Charters
 Ice-Drake
 Arthadan Rangers (hits squatter site Hollin) (at least for sideboard)
 Covetous Thoughts (even one is nice. With Balance of Things, it can cause CCs of at

least eight once someone plays a greater item!)
 Doubled Vigilance (at least for sideboard)
 Redoubled Force (at least for sideboard)
 Tiding of Bold Spies (lovely with Unabated, or Redoubled)
 Seized by Terror (at least for sideboard)
 Webs of Fear and Treachery (if you don't use faction-helper cards like Muster, this card is amazing)
 Darkness Made by Malice (if you play a Spawn deck—very strong against solo Balrog company)
 Many Sorrows Befall (at least for sideboard)
 Waiting Shadow (at least for sideboard)
 Darkness Under Tree (sideboard ONLY)
 Unhappy Blows (sideboard ONLY)
 Fled into Darkness (sideboard ONLY)
 --Also, use CREATURES that hit the areas your deck travels in, in case opponent chases you!--

That's it for hazard suggestions. Keep in mind that Maias/Elves aren't going to hurt Red Hills or Mordor Shuffle, but Orcs/Undead will. Mark recommends considering "split hazard strategies" which can be extremely effective "as long as they're paired with a FAST resource strategy, so that you can always draw just the hazards you need (for instance, 9 huge drakes + 3 redoubled force/3 troll purse/3 heedless is surprisingly effective)."
 Good luck stomping out your minion opponent's flame!





ERODO-IN-THe-MIRROR: THOUGHtS ON THe PLAYING FIELD

Designing a Deck With the Virtual Cards

By Joe Bisz (Lead Designer of Virtual Cards)

Virtual Set #1 is now available on GCCG, but it's still being playtested, which means the Design Committee hasn't finalized the card texts yet. Still, a lot of people are having a lot of fun trying out really cool, never-seen-before deck strategies. Since the Virtual Cards were designed not only to expand the game, but to "fix" old decks that had too many weaknesses, you should dust-off your notes for decks you once invented then discarded, and identify if any of these new cards would be just what the doctor ordered. As one of the two lead designers, I'm going walk you through the majority of the cards now and give you my input on how to best utilize them. You should also see co-designer Mark's comments on some card-combo possibilities for these cards in Issue #1. If you're coming to Worlds 2007, be sure to bring a Virtual Format deck, because we'll be running a side tournament with some really big prizes for the winners!

If the concept of the Virtual Cards is still new to you, or you're wondering what we're envisioning for the future of these cards, read the sticky-posts in the Council of Elrond's "Virtual Cards Showcase" forum.

ANCIENT STAIR (V)

Pretty straightforward here. Dedicated Under-deeps decks used to have the problem of wasting a whole turn to dip down into the darkness, but not any more.

ANDUIN RIVER (V)

I haven't heard any playtesting reports on this card yet. It's a most unusual card, designed to give a deck which needs just the right cards in hand at the end of the game a way to set up that hand, albeit in a rather complicated way that requires the cooperation of one of your companies! King Under the Mountain comes to mind, as well as the various Aragorn II combos, and final turn plays for tricky Fallen Wizard deck. Oh, and I'm sorry, did I hear someone say... One Ring?

ANDURIL(V)

Designed for straight-hero decks that don't actually turn into "Indiana Jones"-style decks, but rather rely on breaking into small auto-attack sites. You can travel to only two information sites, plus one trip back to haven Rivendell, and get rewarded with 7 marshalling points—and the most powerful weapon in the game!

ALERT THE FOLK(V)

Any takers to make one of these decks? Bard and Brand can thin out your play deck or discard pile and take any items that your main tank company is racking up, not too far away in Dragon Country. Wonderful in combo with REBUILD THE TOWN (V), since your characters at Lake-town or Dale will untap from Alert once you play an item at a Dragon's Lair, and using Rebuild, they can then effectively "fish out" any needed resources from your deck to help a third company (or to keep in hand for next turn).

ALLIANCE OF FREE PEOPLES (V)

The number-one most talked about, most controversial, most-hated and most-loved card in the set, hands down! Keep an eye on the boards; it's text keeps changing and we might pull it from the first set to allow more time for playtesting and a greater focus on the other introduced cards.

ENT-DRAUGHTS (V)

It's so annoying that Celeborn can't tell Galadriel what to do, and Arwen can't just put on some pretty jewelry (re: Emerald of Doriath) and lure Aragorn into being her submissive, isn't it? It seems their Direct Influence is begging to be pumped up. (Yikes, I hope Galadriel never uses that complaint on Celeborn.) Well, if you're willing to spend some time at Wellinghall, you can construct the most efficient, perfectly-controlled and docile companies Middle-earth has ever seen... I'm sure Sauron would be jealous!

FAIR-TRAVELS IN DARK DOMAINS (V)

Remember, you don't necessarily have to be looting treasures from dark regions to use this card! If your company is already well-protected from dangerous creatures, you can simply "dip" through Carn Dum on the way to somewhere else, or touch one of the evil Mordor regions on your way to yell and scream at the Easterlings to join you. Since it's a long-event, a really efficient use of this card would be to have multiple companies darting through dark-domains (spying just for a moment on what Sauron is up to!), although that would be quite an unusual deck, and could get quite frustrating for your opponent if all he's got is drakes and Dragon-At-Homes.

FATE OF THE ITHIL-STONE (V)

The second most talked-about card we've made! Make a Sauron opponent pay for all that hand-size and general influ-

selves once observed in the Wizards Player Guide in a review of the site Barad-dur: “there seems to be no rational reason to visit Barad-dur.” True no longer! If you don’t mind subjecting your poor company to what can turn out to be, turn after turn, the most harrowing experience of their (often very short) lives (Nazgul pumped up by Nazgul Are Abroad (V), Seized by Terror, Undead and Orc Rain, did I mention Seized by Terror??), this can be a wonderful deck to play. What is interesting too is that, except for gathering increasing amounts of corruption, your company is most fragile only in the early turns. But as they prove themselves at the lesser sites, they grow quite menacing towards the automatic-attacks and even versus Nazgul themselves, which prepares them to make the most dangerous trip of all: to the throne of Sauron himself. Tower Raided’s miscellaneous marshalling points is safer for you than item corruption, provided that someone in your company lives on to the end. Suggestions to try: Since you need to move away from a tapped dark-hold to get its Tower points, have a plan for your company’s last turn that doesn’t involve tapping Tower: like storing Rescue-Prisoners, or getting a big man faction in the area. Against Minions, time a trip to Cirith Ungol and Barad-dur when he’s squatting a character there, and attack! That will be his last ride on the Mordor merry-go-round. Hazards to Watch Out For: Did I mention Seized? This card really ruins your day by sending a character back to a site affected by Tower, thus preventing that site from being discarded and giving you points. Of course, you can always move away next turn, but that means a delay in netting more prowess bonuses.

WONDROUS MAPS (V)

The second big problem with fully dedicated hero Underdeeps decks was their lack of card draw. Seems hardly fair, given the danger these sites can pose for even a well-seasoned company of warriors! Now Wondrous Maps gives you the option of a classic extra-draw strategy, or something much more techy: recycling a key card that got discarded. What? You didn't know that your discard pile is located through some crack deep down in the darkest delvings?

VANISHMENT (V)

These “wizard duel” cards are tied for the second most talked about card or card strategy. Keep an eye on the boards—we might pull them from the first set, to allow more time for playtesting and a greater focus on the other introduced cards.

REBUILD THE TOWN (V)

This card takes the idea of one company working to assist a second company to a whole other level. Hitherto, a player needed to make a deck that worked by the odds—put in 3 Dark Quarrels since you'll be facing Orcs and Trolls, but don't have your deck go to any other auto-attack sites (like Undead), 'cause you simply don't have the room for all the different kinds of cancellers. Now, decks can go to different varieties of sites and regions and carry only one or two copies of a needed support card in the play deck, since you can tap the townies in the second company (farmers and fisherman, I bet) in response to hazards played on the main company, and, with grace and efficiency, grab just the perfect thing!

A bold card. I'll say it again: this is a bold, bold card. But it can have nasty repercussions for the minion player who was relying on playing his Sauron-only cards, like Eye Never Sleeping and The Great Eye, not to mention that sudden loss of 7 or 10 mind in characters from the drop in his general influence! And a Balrog player will have to make haste to redraw not only his avatar but (in most cases) his demon-fana as well.



REFORGING (V)

Another card I haven't gotten any playtesting reports on. This card was designed with the "German Nine" Promos in mind, since they are legal in Virtual Format games, and the promo items only give you the full effect of their nifty abilities when they are "restored."

SNAGA (V)

By Mark Alfano

alacrity is a facile task.

Minion Example

Here's another example, on the minion side of the fence. Let's say you want to play a dragon faction deck. So you throw in Smaug Roused of course, and then probably Scatha Roused, and Agburanar Roused. You put a couple greater items in the deck, a regiment, and a bunch of cancellers. Great! Instead, however, you could put Agburanar in your sideboard and switch in the Ice-Orcs, who are a bit more versatile, as well as easier to influence. Now, when your Ringwraith comes into play, have him discard five resources from your sideboard, one of which will be Agburanar (you can figure out what the other four should be). In your hazard portion, pack three copies of Parsimony of Seclusion. During your opponent's turn, you can play Parsimony to fetch your dragon faction to your hand, increasing his hazard limit while simultaneously setting up your resource play for the next turn. Agburanar Roused is now playing a dual role in your deck:

- (A1) to be a big nasty dragon faction and
(A2) in combination with Parsimony of Seclusion
to increase your opponent's hazard limit.

But that's only the beginning. Now you should think to yourself, "Well, I can of course use Parsimony of Seclusion to fetch Daelomin at Home, which would be useful." Good start. You can also use it to grab Agburanar himself, or even Smaug or Itangast, and then play the creature with (say) Dragon's Desolation. Now Parsimony is playing a quadruply overdetermined role in your deck:

- (P1) in combination with a manifestation of Agburanar to increase your opponent's hazard limit,
(P2) in combination with any dragon faction to set up your resources for the next turn,
(P3) in combination with any dragon creature to set up a doozy of an attack, and
(P4) to return Daelomin at Home to your hand.

Why Overdetermination?

“Why are you telling us to play combos, Mark? We already know that combos are very important.”

I am telling you to play combos, but I'm not just telling you to play any old combos. Rather, I'm telling you which combos to play: overdetermined ones.

"I don't know, Mark. I feel like the really fast and effective decks are usually the ones that don't have any (or at any rate, many) combos. Combos make for hand jam, and that can be the death of a deck."

Combos do make for hand jam, it's true. However, overdetermined cards reduce the like-

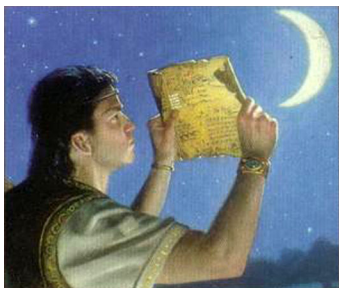
likelihood of hand jam because they can be used in so many ways. The reason you get a hand jam is that you're waiting to draw a certain card, which once drawn will allow you to play two or more cards at once. But if you are not waiting to draw just one card, but any of a large number of cards (as in the elf deck listed above), the likelihood of hand jam decreases dramatically. Think of "outs" in poker.

“I’m still not convinced. Show me some strong decks that actually use this overdetermination principle.”

OK.

Gates of Morning Lucky Search Deck
Hobbits in Dragon Country (Halfling Strength overdetermined)
Red Hills (Hold Rebuilt overdetermined)
Elf-Lords Squatting (Elf-Song overdetermined)
The Mouth Influencing Factions (Bane overdetermined)
Elven CVCC
Hobbits with 'Gorn on the High Seas





TEST OF LORE: TOURNAMENT-LEVEL AND FUN DECKS

King Khamul and the Destruction of Cirdan's Home (Virtual Format Deck)

By Bert Claessen

When I got involved in the creation of the Council of Elrond's Virtual Cards, I was curious, having heard a great deal about them due to my sideline following of how things were going in the world of Star Wars CCG (The Decipher one) after Decipher lost its license due to Wizard of The Coast. The cards appealed to me, as most of them did what I believe Virtual cards should do; which is: spice up the game, don't be broken, just add some new flavor to make new decks possible.

When I was thinking and looking through the cards available, Riven Gate and its combo-card Terror heralds Doom were among the cards that sprang out that I thought were fun, and a little thematic: Sauron sending out Ringwraiths to destroy the refuges of the Free Peoples, then burning down the hero havens themselves.

Here are the two bad boys. Let me analyze them:

Riven Gate

- 1) It is playable at your Ringwraith at a Darkhaven, which can easily be done, as that is the place where Ringwraiths usually reside. Also, some extra reinforcements may be added if needed in the form of small orcs and trolls, to provide the necessary cannon fodder.
- 2) The next step requires the Wraith to go a freehold and tap said freehold, so Riven Gate can be activated. Since Freeholds are usually the source of great evil and perils for a wraith player (maia attacks) he can take with him the necessary cannon-fodder.
- 3) If the Ringwraith arrives at the freehold and gets it tapped (by play of an item there, maybe a piece of information or another card that taps the site, like Long Winter) he may tap Riven Gate, which will remain forever tapped and seeks the deck for Terror Heralds Doom (barring lady of the Golden Wood of course).

Terror Heralds Doom

- 1) This card is the sweetener of the deck. Anything is possible, and hero havens just became less safe for the hero player. Ringwraiths may move there, they may initiate company combat against unsuspecting companies there, AND you get a bonus if they torch the place to the ground. In retrospect, the hazard player may add some extra hazards from his sideboard or hold onto them to battle the company, and Elves, Dunedain, and Maia are always playable regardless of



Pool:
Lt. of Dol Guldur
Dorelas
Nain
Ugluk with
Blazon of the Eye
Khamul
Unleashed (v)

Other characters:
Khamul the
Ringwraith x3
Ulkaur the
Tongueless
Dror
Baduila

Resources:
Above the Abyss
x2
Blasting Fire x2
Cave Troll
Dark Tryst x3
Fell Rider x3
Liquid Fire x2
Orcs of Dol
Guldur
Orcs of Gorgoroth
Orcs of the Red
Eye
Orders from
Luzburg x2
Riven Gate (v) x3
The Arkenstone
(m)
The Iron Crown
(m)
The Tormented
Earth x3
Uruk-Hai
Voices of Malice
x2
Weigh All Things
to a Nicety x3

Hazards:
Typical grab bag
Be sure to add 2
Bane of the Ithil
Stone

DECK LIST



By Brian Min

Hazards (30)

- 1 Adûnaphel
- 2 An Unexpected Outpost
- 2 Cave-drake (LE)
- 2 Corsairs of Umbar
- 1 Daelomin at Home
- 3 Doors of Night (LE)
- 2 Foul Fumes
- 1 Ice-drake
- 3 Morgul Night
- 1 Mouth of Sauron
- 2 Nameless Thing
- 2 Peril Returned
- 2 Pûkel-men
- 1 Rain-drake
- 1 Revealed to all Watchers
- 3 Twilight (LE)
- 1 Ûvatha the Horseman

Minion Resources (30)

- 1 Black Mace
- 3 Crept Along Cleverly
- 3 Dark Tryst
- 2 Down Down to Goblin-town
- 2 Eye Never Sleeping
- 1 Great Army of the North
- 1 Grey Mountain Goblins
- 1 High Helm
- 1 Ice-orcs
- 1 Orcs of Dol Guldur
- 1 Orcs of Gundabad
- 1 Regiment of Black Crows
- 1 The Arkenstone [M]
- 2 The Great Eye
- 3 The Lidless Eye
- 1 Thong of Fire
- 1 Thrór's Map [M]
- 2 Voices of Malice
- 2 We Have Come to Kill

Pool

- 1 Baduila
- 1 Bûrat
- 1 Lieutenant of Dol Guldur
- 1 Lieutenant of Morgul
- 1 The Grimburgoth
- 1 The Mouth
- 1 Tûma
- 1 Wûluag
- 1 Foul-smelling Paste
- 1 Orders from Lugalûrz

Sideboard

- 1 Foul Fumes
- 1 Eye Never Sleeping
- 1 The Great Eye



DECK LIST





CARD OF The MONTH

Bitter Cold

By Mark Alfano



In this article I will highlight the sorcery card: Bitter Cold. When played, it gives -1 prowess and -1 body to all attacks against the sorcerer's company for the rest of the turn. He then makes a corruption check modified by -4. That's a high price to pay for a seemingly small adjustment. Why is the corruption check so nasty? Well, in general, reducing body is difficult in the world of MECCG. Prowess modifications are a dime a dozen, but body modifications are more meaningful (think of Black Arrow, Sacrifice of Form, Morgul Blade, etc.). Bitter Cold lasts till the end of the turn, so if you know you're going on a killing spree, it would be nice to have around.

But when can you know you're going on a killing spree? CVCC cries out, but Bitter Cold will have no effect if you are the attacker. What, then?

This was the question I asked myself, when I came up with the following solution: The Great Hunt. Outside of scenarios, there's no better way to be sure you will face a bunch of creatures. The next question is: how should you use Bitter Cold? Two answers spring to mind: (1) Hador and (2) Fallen Alatar himself (with Spells Born of Discord).

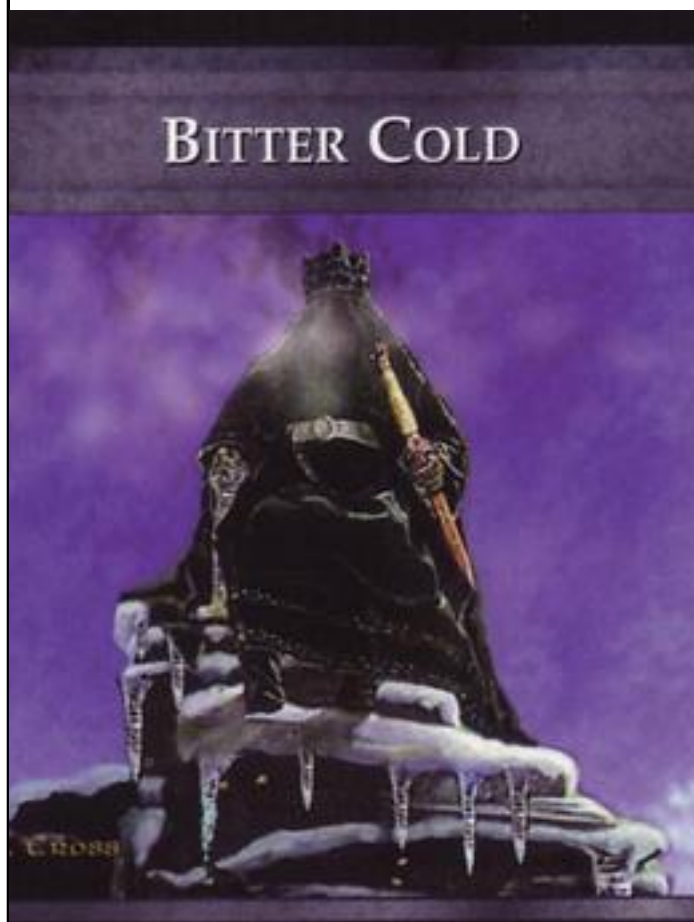
If I were to make a deck based on (1), I would gather up a bunch of Dunedain like Beretar and Faramir, and then either get (a) some Men or (b) some Elves. If I went with (1b), I'd use Sun to boost the ladies as they ripped through the Nazgul. If, instead, I went with (1b), I would use Star of High Hope to make the elves and dunedain beefcakes. Throw in a couple copies of Bitter Cold (one copy of Never Refuse should help here), and you'll have yourself a grand old time.

If, on the other hand, I were to make a deck based on (2), I'd pump the deck up with all kinds of spells. For help, Bad Company is in order, with Ulkaur, Ugluk, and a couple orcs. Since men (and women) can join up with such a company, Eowyn (or perhaps Peath) with Glamdring is a must. Since there's Orcs afoot, throw in a couple copies of Swarm of Bats. If you can manage to play both copies of Bitter Cold and a Swarm of Bats, your Great Hunt will be aided by a permanent Old Thrush: -3/-3 to all attacks! Eowyn with Glamdring is 11 prowess against Nazgul, so she'd be 11 vs. 12 against most of them, and they would be reduced to 2

body! If you have a way to keep her untapped, either by supporting her as she fights or playing a Risky Blow, you can kill multiple dark riders in your org phase! (By the way, Wizard's River-Horses is a must in this kind of deck – to put all those lovely nazgul in the discard pile right before you hunt them....)

So, as often happens, Bitter Cold is not particularly useful in any straightforward sense, but if you build your deck to its strengths (i.e., decreasing body), it can be very powerful. Incidentally, I also used Bitter Cold with Akhorahil to win the Dragon Hunt scenario at LURE. In one game, I played so many copies of Bitter Cold that he was able to kill Itangast at Home without tapping or rolling.

✚





DREAM -CARDS AND OPTIONAL SCENARIOS

Enhance the game the way you fancy it!: A Small Peek into the waste field of dream-cards

By Nicolai Willinek

Ever wondered why the card Farmer Maggot only appeared as late as MEAS, or why Theodred, although quite dead in the Lord of the Rings, never made an appearance in MECCG, while long dead Fram Framson did?

If it had been left to the die-hard dream-card fan community, Theodred would have had his chance while ICE was still around. Sadly though, as ICE had their licence for Middle-earth stolen from their hands, it is left upon us to further this game in a matter that fits most. Most CCGs have been prone to the effect of Dream-card creations, so MECCG is no exception to the rule.

Although the Lord of the Rings is such a tremendously satisfying work, it creates loads of ideas for dream-cards in every player's mind. In my opinion no one can say he/she is free of charge when it comes to the creation or desire for dream-cards. Most players dream about people and places that were left out by ICE and deserve their own cards!

So what got me into designing my own cards? How is my creation and completion of over 500 dream-cards different from what is going on in the Dream-card section in the Meccg.net/forum?

Dream-cards in the Past

I started playing MERP & METW at only 14 summers old; the books of the Lord of the Rings got me into roleplaying in Middle-earth, so trying out METW for evenings where my entire RPG could get together was only natural.

The creation of Dream-cards came quite natural to me, as soon as MEDM came out. My first dream-cards were not only set for the text, but the real deal – finished with artwork and all – as ICE obviously had so many things missing. Though I wasn't alone and a bunch of players created quite decent dream-cards, back then players used to post at Steve Hess's homepage:
<http://www.geocities.com/TimesSquare/2053/mecards.html>

Steve Hess was a role model for me, since he used to add tons of new cards every week. Most of the dream-cards people might expect being my creation are actually his. So big props to Steve Hess for his creativity.

Many other people dug deep into the creation of Dream-cards, some quite early as myself, but only few are still among the active player community as we speak. There are many players from the dream-card community which had a lot of influence on me. Some of them I would like to give a special mention: Glomeor aka Tobias Stapelfeld (<http://glomeor.de>) was among the first to create an entire expansion around one theme, Nine Mortals Doomed to Die. This is a 40 card expansion dealing with the Rings of Powers that were given to men. Only playtesting these cards for many years brought up some small flaws. Another of my heroes is Rodrigo Perez, as he is the mastermind behind: Middle-earth: The Firstborn (unofficial) expansion. It can be seen as text files at:

<http://www.geocities.com/blackcouncil/mordor/mordor.htm>
 Many players gave credit for it to me, but it belongs to Rodrigo Perez. The Council of Mordor holds even more expansions, such as Glomeor MENM expansion.

Besides I would like to thank these players for contributing to the huge stock of dream-cards that flow around the internet: James Kight, Nigel Buckle, Charles E. Bouldin, Andrew Sitte, Julian Wilson, Ilkka Launonen, Ichabod aka Craig O'brian (if I am not mistaken), Anthony Perez-Miller, Miika Karmitsa (and his use to be Old Man Willow Site), Ernst Brun, William Danchus and all others I might have overlooked.

The Present – What's keeping me busy

As many players were no longer interested in a game (or got a RL so to say) that no longer had a company producing cards for it, the numbers and quality of dream-card makers has dwindled as well. Over the years my crew of friends (Daniel "Jesus" Austerfield and Peter Duda) had to endure (or were so lucky) all my attempts of creating fitting, in-style dream-cards which could actually be used to play.

My waste knowledge (as I said, RPG-nerd) concerning Tolkien's books and the RPG background material became a pool for the creation of many dream-cards of the "not so obvious kind". Especially the Northern Wastes of Middle-earth caught my interest, as the RPG book was a tremendously written and quite near to the original regions of MECCG.

Thus the Northern Waste set became my own hobbyhorse.

After creating far above 100 cards in text, the actual putting stuff into picture still occupies my time. The peoples and creatures that hunt in the regions beyond Forochel are quite an intensive playground for hungry treasure seekers. Many a dream-card already in existance, smoothly blended within this set. This is why over 100 Northern Waste cards (20% sites I must admit) are my gift to our community.

Middle-earth: The Firstborn

Quite midway through this project, I stumbled over the MENM & MEFB expansions mentioned above. So another addiction became the creation of the Firstborn set.

This set focuses on the play of an Elf-lord, such as Elrond & Galadriel, shaping Middle-earth the way they see fit. Mighty Elf-lords wielding flashy swords try to break Sauron's hold over middle-earth. Set count so far 123 finished cards.

Middle-earth: Durin's Folk

This set was soon to be followed by a Dwarf-lords set: Middle-earth: Durin's Folk. This set was mainly inspired by an article published in a RPG fanzine for Middle-earth: Other Hands Issue 23: The Dragons of the North. This article states many ideas that were supposedly to be introduced in an upcoming ICE-product: The Dwarven Company. Using the knowledge within my grasp, I started from scratch, on what could have been the next ICE publication for MECCG. As with the Firstborn set, this set focuses on new Avatars, the Dwarf-lords, who seek riches within the mountains and fight an unending battle against the Dragons of the North. Up to now 78 cards are done for this set.

Middle-earth: The Great Wyrms

As you might have guessed The Great Wyrms expansion MEGW was not far from hand. The start though was easier, as this set was quite put into picture by Ernst Brun from France. His homepage contains 44 finished cards already, though some aspects of the rules & cards were prone to discussion, especially when you have the creation of 3 sets in your reference as well as 8 years of playtesting hundreds of dream-cards. Still I own a lot to Ernst. So especially this set is far from set in stone! The set focuses on the play of a Dragon-lord as your avatar. Smaug the Golden, Scatha the Worm and other Dragon-lords gather huge hoards and beat the factions into submission. Vile creatures do their bidding and hunt for free peoples which come to close to their Dragon's Den. Card count so far 77.

Besides these 4 major sets, there exist many smaller sets, either based on a theme (such as the Fellowship of the Ring), a region (such as the Eriador/An Unexpected Party expansion) or a certain time frame (such as the Kingdom of the North expansion).



Within the last year I started gathering interested players in team called the Expansion corp. Members come from all over the planet and each with a different expertise, which helps me to stay on course to actually finish these expansions in the near future. If you always wanted to do something with dream-cards it is up to you to join with the fun.

What does the Future has in store for us all? Well basically 500 brand new cards (well quite not so new for some of us) for casual and tourney play. Dream-card tourneys have been organized at the LURE for the last 4 years, but not until last year's introduction of a challenge deck format (10 Elf-lord & Dwarf-lord decks built from the cardstock of my crew), has the audience been responsive in great numbers. This year's LURE saw even two dream-card events with increasing numbers of participants. Two more decks were added to the Elf-lord & Dwarf-lord event bringing the numbers up to 12 players. Among these new decks was Smaug-Dragon-lord Avatar and a minion War-lord deck.

The later introduces a new play variant and new mechanisms from FATE. FATE is 33 player multigame under development by William Danchus, so there is much to keep everybody on their toes when it comes to deck-building for future dream-card events. In the long run I will try to get more attention by promoting more dream-card tourneys as side-events to bigger national and international events. Even more, the next big thing for me is FATE; (make sure to look it up in the forums if you have no clue of what I am talking about) William Danchus created an astonishing play format, which clearly deserves to be tested. That is one way in which my expansions are going to contribute: to create more specific cards to allow the 74 FATE decks to be built.

Here are the some other expansion sets in the works (no more than 24 cards done in each set):

Theme-expansions:

METF: Middle-earth: The Fellowship

METT: Middle-earth: The Two Towers

MERK: Middle-earth: The Return of the King

Time-frame-expansions

METN: Middle-earth: The Necromancer

MEKN: Middle-earth: The Kingdom of the North

Regional-expansions:

MESL: Middle-earth: The Sun Lands (A Haradwaith expansion)

MECA: Middle-earth: The Court of Ardor

And many more to come!

See Vastor's incredible expansions at the Council of Elrond website - Vastor's Showcase

play Old Thrush to reduce the prowess/body of an automatic attack.

- During the site phase while the automatic-attack is being faced, reveal Dragon's Desolation on guard to increase the prowess of the attack.
- During the site phase while the automatic-attack is being faced, reveal Exile of Solitude on guard to attempt to capture a character.

However, it is not possible to do any of the following:

- During the movement-hazard phase, play Old Thrush to reduce the prowess/body of an automatic attack.

6. CoE Rulings Digest #17 incorrectly states that "If you can initiate COMPANY VS. COMPANY, you can obtain kill points from it."

Both the defender and the attacker can always receive kill points from defeating characters or allies in CVCC.

7. David Barton asked: "In CVCC, are cards that change the number of strikes playable by the defender? I think the answer should be no, but the recent ruling leaves this open. If you can play these cards it would be a bit of a mess, because how do you decide which strikes are eliminated and which are still going to happen?"

Your intuitions are entirely correct. Cards that change the number of strikes are not playable by the defender in CVCC.

8.

I said something stupid about Forge-Master in my last digest. Please ignore "Note that there are no hoard items that Forge-Master would allow you to play: all the hoard items are battle gear."

9. David Barton asked: "In line with the recent ruling on CVCC, the defender is prevented from playing anything in between strike sequences, correct? Because it is too late to play resources that affect the attack, and otherwise he is only allowed to play resources during the strike sequence."

Your intuitions are entirely correct again.

10. David Barton asked: "I've found contradictory rulings on playing at-home dragons and legendary hoard. (COE 19 & 59, also COE 46 might be relevant) I still find the playing of items with legendary hoard somewhat confusing. I know there is a three item limit, but what if I only play one item and the card isn't rotated. Can I play another item the next turn and the site still won't tap, and then another item the following turn?"



None of these digests contradicts another regarding Legendary Hoard. Your suggested cheeziness at a hoard is indeed possible.

11. Jaded raised a question concerning the mechanics of To Get You Away, especially the use of the site cards. This in turn led us to deal with general mechanics for site cards in play but not being used by companies.

(a) To Get You Away specifies that the agent returns to the site placed with the hazard host. Therefore the site card is considered to be with the agent as well.

(b) Site cards associated with agents or hazard hosts are considered in play. However, those site cards are placed with the agent / hazard host, meaning that the site cards are reserved for that purpose only. They may not be used for other purposes (e.g. company movement, playing cards on the site), unless so specified in the rules or card texts. Global-effects (e.g. Long Winter) still affect these sites as well.

By Mark Alfano

Official Council of Elrond Netrep*

<http://www.councilofelrond.org/>, <http://www.councilofelrond.org/forum/index.php>,

*Prepared in collaboration with Mikko Vihtemäki (NetRep Team), and Chad Martin, Brian Min, Manuel Cabezali Romero, Konrad Klar, and David Barton (NetRep Advisors).





THE HORN OF ANOR: CALL FOR VOLUNTEERS FOR PROJECTS

by the Editor

Will you answer the call??

In this column the COE will blow its bugle and call for volunteers for projects. There are some calls that require only reading posts and contributing opinions! We hope that you will find a project that meets your creative interest, so you can be a fuller part of the Middle-earth community and watch our game change for the better.

If you are already working on a project, and you'd like to advertise your project here and scout for helpers, please email the Editor and we'll send out our spies for you!

++A hearty hobbit THANK YOU to those of you who answered the call last issue and helped the COE with some very pressing needs! There are no new calls in this issue, only ongoing calls from the last.++

Still Blowing a Call for: Judge Certification

COE Chair Mark Alfano is running the "Judge Certification Program" where players work on a rules-related project, like a sealed deck tutorial, and are then given a quiz by a high-ranking Rules Judge. If the player passes, the player can move up to the next level of Rules Judge starting with Level 1. The main goal (hopefully not a "mission impossible") is to someday create a Unified Rulesbook. Interested? Contact: Mark Alfano (mark.alfano@gmail.com) so that he can allow you access to the Judge Certification Forum and you can see what projects have been done.

Still Blowing a Call for: Assistant Editor

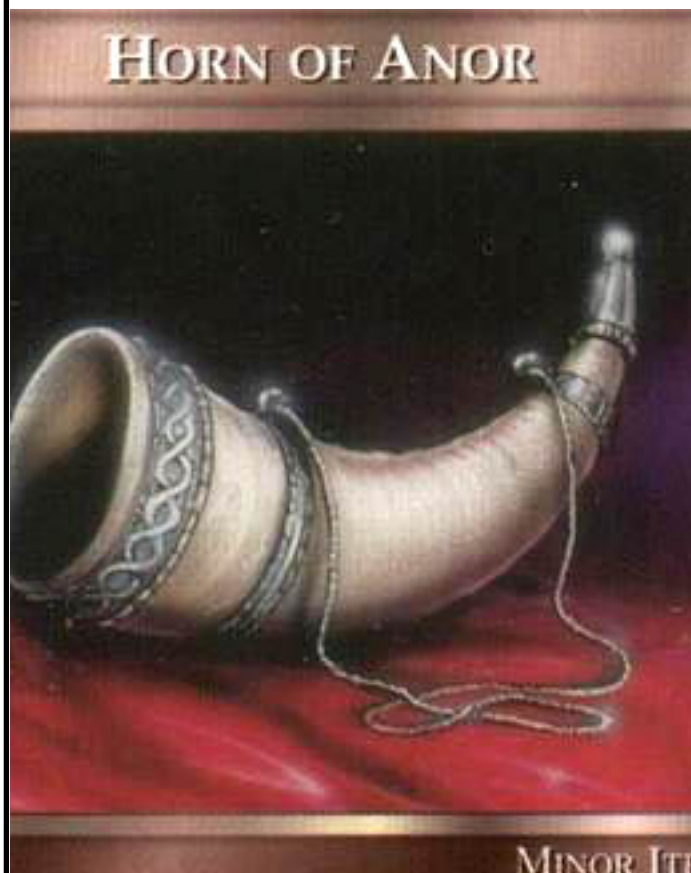
The Editor of the Red Book Newsletter, Joe Bisz, is ****STILL**** desperately looking for an Assistant Editor to help him. Responsibilities are flexible, but will probably include serving as a contact person on the forums for people who have questions about the newsletter; also gather MS-Word versions of the articles submitted; doing simple formatting of articles in MS-Word. He can even teach you QuarkXPress if you're interested (it's not that hard!). If the Assistant was eager enough, he or she could even take over some of the issues of the newsletter per year. At present the newsletter is published about every season. Contact: Joe Bisz (joebisz@verizon.net)

Still Blowing aCall for: Worlds 2007 Helpers

Worlds 2007 is coming up, and it's in New York City! That means the Americans will need help from other Americans to organize this grand event and make it as wonderful as possible. Some work will include gathering prizes, making t-shirts, buying flowers, putting together welcome packages for the non-Americans including hotel info, etc. Contact: Mark Alfano (mark.alfano@gmail.com) or Joe Bisz (joebisz@verizon.net).

Still Blowing a Call for: Virtual Cards

Did you know the Virtual Cards are up on GCCG? That's right, and we need people to playtest them in your games. Contact: Visit the Virtual Card Showcase forum (Council of Elrond forums, Virtual Card Discussion) and start playtesting. You can also send comments to Joe Bisz (joebisz@verizon.net)





RIDDLING TALK

“Make an Original Minion Deck” Riddle

By Mark Alfano

LET THE RIDDLE GAMES BEGIN

Riddle #1 by Mark Alfano mark.alfano@gmail.com

Minion versus minion games tend to be boring, right? Yes, because there are only a few strong deck types, a few strong avatars, and most decks use the same 10 MP-resources (the Lieutenants, Ice-Orcs, Orcs of Gundabad, Orcs of Dol Guldur/Moria, Thong of Fire, The Arkenstone, Ancient Black Axe, Regiment of Black Crows).

Your Challenge: We are soliciting deck lists for minion vs. minion games, Open format. The lists should include everything about the deck: pool, characters in deck, resources, hazards, sideboard, and a few paragraphs on how to play it.

Decks will be judged on three criteria:

- (1) Originality: have we seen its like before?
- (2) Power: could it win versus a cheezy Balrog deck?
- (3) Innovation: does it use the same boring resources as most other minion vs. minion decks?

Riddle #2 by Mark Alfano

Think it's impossible to make an original minion deck that's actually GOOD? Hmm, maybe you're right. That's why we invented the Virtual format, after all.

For Riddle #2, your challenge is to create a Virtual format minion vs. minion deck using the new Virtual cards effectively and in an interesting way. Follow the rest of the rules for Riddle #1. Best deck (by our judgment) wins.

WINNERS # WINNERS # WINNERS

The winners for Issue 2's first RIDDLE GAMES have been decided! (drum roll...)

For Riddle #1, there were seven respondents and many different opinions on what cards could be considered a “manifestation” of the Lidless Eye. David Barton is the winner for being the most accurate. These are the correct answers:

Bane of the Ithil-Stone
Eye of Sauron
The Will of Sauron
Lure of Expedience (Minion)
The Roving Eye
The Lidless Eye
Binding Ring
The Great Eye

Thrall-Ring
The Black Council
Sauron
Eye Never Sleeping
The Dark Power
The Ithil-Stone
Will Shaken
Test of Fire
Balance between Powers
In the Grip of Ambition



One of the more interesting wrong guesses was Withdrawn to Mordor (the guesser wondered, Is there an eye behind the beam of light?) There were some correct cards that were often not guessed at all: The Black Council, In the Grip of Ambition, Balance Between Powers. Finally, one card that Mark confessed he had no idea whether the Lidless Eye was in the picture or not was Fate of the Ithil-stone!

For Riddle #2, there were two winners. The first person to answer the riddle as published in the newsletter was **Sean Sandborgh**. However, the riddle was also informally given out to **Alicia Zaret** at North American Nationals last year. Unbelievably, she shocked the Editor of this newsletter by taking the rune letters, a piece of paper, and a pencil (no computer of any kind!), then walking back to me in 15 minutes with the correct solution. She had “decoded” it based on patterns in the runes she had discovered. Umm... right! I told her she should work for the American CIA... Anyway, the correct answer was: “Gandalf was here in the Year of the Shire of the Third Age.” Congratulations to all our winners, who received the special prizes described in Issue #2!

RULES FOR THE RIDDLE GAMES

Can you guess what we got in our pocketsses? If you can, be sure to email the author of the riddle (the person whose name is next to the riddle) at the email address indicated and to refer to the riddle number. The first person who emails the author with the correct guess(or the best guess) wins!

At the end of each year of newsletters, we will calculate who has won the most Riddle Games, and that very wise person will be declared the **Riddle Game Champion** (“Luckwinner”) and receive a special prize!

Would you like to submit a riddle? Please do! Send one to the editor at joebisz@verizon.net. We'll provide a Riddling Talk pin prize. If you can provide an additional prize, we'd appreciate it.


April						
Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30					

May						
Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		

✂ The **Polish National Championship** took place on April 13th to 15th 2006 in Pabianice.

There are no events planned for May-June.

Worlds 2007 will be held in North America this year—in incredible New York City!—from 26 July through 29 July. Non-Americans attending can apply for free board from Joe Bisz. (<http://www.buonanno.org/MECCG/Worlds07/>)



$\overline{\overline{8+M \times I D}} \quad \overline{\overline{A+I}} \quad \overline{\overline{X P Y Y}} \quad \overline{\overline{r M}} \quad \overline{\overline{Y X Y}} \quad \overline{\overline{Y Y+Y}} \quad \overline{\overline{E D}} \quad \overline{\overline{Y X Y}} \quad \overline{\overline{t X r Y Y}} \quad \overline{\overline{E D}} \quad \overline{\overline{Y X Y}} \quad \overline{\overline{Y X r Y X}} \quad \overline{\overline{t C Y}}$