

CZ0535: RACHEL'S 25 PERSONAL COMMANDER DECKS RANKED

- 1) UPKEEP STEP
 - 2) MAIN TOPIC
 - 3) TO THE LISTENERS
 - 4) CLEAN-UP PHASE
-

CLAP AND SLATE

- 1) INTRO RACHEL

@wachelreeks - @commandcast

We're trying something a little different for today's episode. I refer to my decks a lot on the podcast and want to provide a little context for those comments. And I have a lot of them! So today I'm going to do a quick tour of my 25 Commander decks, ranking them from F- to S-tier. BUT FIRST:

****CARD KINGDOM** **ULTRAPRO #1** **ARCHIDEKT** **PATREON: SEAN LOGUE****

- 2) MAIN TOPIC: **RACHEL'S COMMANDER DECKS RANKED**

I've highlighted four "Cornerstone" cards in each deck to show you what the deck does. But I also like building with cards you don't necessarily see a lot. So I've also highlighted one "Weirdo" card for each deck that may not be the most powerful include, but has some neat synergy or is a personal favorite.

The true test of a commander deck is longevity. With new commanders coming out every few months, how long will it stick around? How long will I continue to pack it up for game night? So I've ranked all of my decks on their likelihood to survive long term. F being a deck that will likely be taken apart in the next year. S being a forever deck.

RATCHET, FIELD MEDIC // RATCHET, RESCUE RACER

PLAN

- This is a mid-power eggs deck
- Ratchet uses life gain to recur cheap artifacts once per turn, usually eggs that sacrifice themselves for some amount of value. The deck hypothetically wins with life gain payoffs like Nykthos Paragon; Crested Sunmare or Archangel of Thune but mostly durdles.

CORNERSTONES

- Implement of Improvement; Zuran Orb; Crested Sunmare; Losheel, Clockwork Scholar;

WEIRDO

- Bottle Gnomes;

RANKING

- This deck takes game actions! I can take about 4 game actions every turn that result in me drawing 4 cards and gaining 8 life for 4 mana. But the payoffs are... slow. You need to generate a LOT of value to turn all those cards and life into a lethal threat. And no it doesn't gain enough life for Aetherflux Reservoir. It's been a neat experiment, but I don't think Ratchet will last long. This deck is an F.

KATILDA, DAWN HART PRIME

PLAN

- This is a low-power human deck.
- The deck uses a lot of cheap humans and human token makers to ramp, then uses Katilda and other anthems to buff them up. There isn't a lot of synergy between humans currently and the deck can struggle to close out a game despite a lot of mana and creatures.

CORNERSTONES

- Abzan Falconer; Midnight Guard; Tireless Tracker; Call the Coppercoats

WEIRDO

- Planar Guide

RANKING

- I think this deck is due for an overhaul. I have always liked Katilda, but have never been particularly happy with this loose tribal build. Humans are very low CMC, so the current build doesn't take advantage of all the mana Katilda can create. Maybe a minor rebuild will be enough to keep her around, but as is. Katilda is E-tier.

KRARK, THE THUMBLESS & TANA, THE BLOODSOWER

PLAN

- This is a mid-power storm deck that uses pump spells to maximize Tana's power for huge value.
- Ramp on 2, Tana on 3, Krark and one or two pump spells on 4 buffs up Tana enough to make a few saprolings. This curve alters depending on any payoffs in your hand (Purphoros, Krenko, Tin Street Kingpin, etc.). Then just start sending squads of saprolings to their death until there's a board wipe and you're out of cards.

CORNERSTONES

- Halana and Alena, Partners; Zada, Hedron Grinder; Season of Growth; Wild Defiance

WEIRDO

- Wort, the Raidmother

RANKING

- E. As much as I loved building this deck, I rarely get to play it. The deck is very aggressive and can close out games faster than most low or mid power decks are ready for, but it folds completely to decks with lots of interaction. It's likely to get turned into a Blanka deck (which might power it up enough to hang) or taken apart.

ROGRAKH, SON OF ROHGAHH & AKROMA, VISION OF IXIDOR

Art by Lily Gray (A young Game Knights fan drew Akroma after my first episode. I asked her for Rograkh and made proxies)

PLAN

- This is a low-power aggro deck with a focus on keywords.
- Attack fast and hard with efficient, evasive creatures that are loaded with keywords. Slam Akroma to close things out with maximum damage.

CORNERSTONES

- Odric, Lunarch Marshal, Skyfire Phoenix; Commander's Insignia; Aurelia, the Warleader;

WEIRDO

- Power Matrix

RANKING

- D. Unfortunately my very first Game Knights deck (updated as it may be) feels like it has fallen out of favor. It is largely outpaced by more value-based strategies that are now just as mana-efficient. Plus, Akroma is extremely telegraphed from the Command Zone and tends to eat removal after the first attack.
- Nostalgia has kept this deck around. Sometimes it still feels good to play a straight forward Boros attack deck.

TEMMET, VIZIER OF NAKTAMUN

PLAN

- This is a low-power equipment deck themed around Living Weapon cards. Temmet isn't the best commander for the job, but I wanted white and blue to be able to play Mirrorweave.

CORNERSTONES

- Stoneforge Mystic; Armored Skyhunter; Batterskull; Mirrorweave;

WEIRDO

- Vulpine Harvester

RANKING

- This deck started as a "Germ Tribal" joke and turned into a very strange little equipment build. I don't reach for it very often, which is always a sign that it's time to take a deck apart, but some new tech from March of the Machine may keep it around a little longer. D

A EVE, PROGENITOR OOZE

Proxy by Tim Taranto (@GSabetooth on Twitter; @timtaranto_goldsabetooth on Instagram)

PLAN

- Aeve is a high-power storm deck with a focus on creatures. I use Aeve and her copies' high devotion to green to generate huge amounts of mana with Nykthos or Karametra's Acolyte. Then, I storm off with creatures until I draw a lethal overrun or burn my opponent's out with Squall Line. This deck bears resemblance to an elfball deck: big mana, high card velocity, and huge damage outputs. Uninterrupted, it can close out a game on turn 6 or 7. This deck is a well-oozed machine.

CORNERSTONES

- Nykthos, Shrine to Nyx; Malachite Talisman; Augur of Autumn; Temur Sabertooth;

WEIRDO

- Gaea's Touch

RANKING

- Aeve started from a pile of green staples that were sitting in my binder unplayed. I'm not much of a green player so there were a lot of them. As a result, the deck is a bit more goodstuffy and powerful than I or my playgroup tends to build. So, I don't play it much. On top of that, it's not really my style. It's greedy, inefficient, over-the-top... That being said, it is a ton of fun. **I'll give it a C** for a good time, but not always appropriate.

DYNAHEIR, INVOKER ADEPT WITH ZIRDA

PLAN

- This is a low-power artifact deck loosely themed around wizards, artificers and their trinkets
- I don't rely on activating Dynaheir. She's largely here for the haste.
 - Zirda and Dynaheir are an interesting duo. They don't work well together but they work well with a lot of the same cards. Largely, Zirda gives this deck an interesting restriction.
- I've found I like building linear, efficient decks, but I enjoy playing decks that ask me to puzzle out a win in a game. They tend to be more interesting to play longer and are endlessly fun to upgrade.
- This deck certainly isn't linear. It can win by burning out my opponents with Nin, the Pain Artist and Stuffly Doll. It can win by throwing Parhelion II at an opponent's face with Bosh. It has won with Commander Damage using Diviner's Wand and a few draw spells.

CORNERSTONES

- Wand of Wonder; Bosh, Iron Golem; Fatestitcher; Osgir, the Reconstructor;

WEIRDO

- Viashino Heretic

RANKING

- C. This one falls in and out of favor. There are some days that it's exactly the deck I want to play. There are others that I get very frustrated with its lack of clear win con.

KUMENA, TYRANT OF ORAZCA

PLAN

- This is a low-power Merfolk deck
- It floods the board with merfolk, uses them to draw more merfolk, and then hopefully has enough merfolk anthems to take out a player at a time. It hopes to go more wide than tall and relies on merfolk evasion to punch through. Kumena really wants you to overcommit to the board so it can get blown out pretty easily.

CORNERSTONES

- Throne of the God-Pharoah; Merrow Commerce; Lord of Atlantis; Emperor Mihail II

WEIRDO

- Political Trickery

RANKING

- C. I tend to take Kumena out after I've won a game of Commander. He lets me draw cards, cast spells, and "do the thing," but rarely accrues enough value to close out a game.

- I love merfolk and how they work together. I think a tricky, tempo-y merfolk deck would be a ton of fun. I'm not sure Kumena is the perfect merfolk commander for me though. I'm hoping one that suits me a little better comes along in Ixalan.

HAZEON, SHAPER OF SAND

PLAN

- This is a mid-power lands/token deck.
- It can be explosive, but is often fighting it's own mana base
- Sacrifice and replay deserts from your graveyard to generate an army of Sand Warriors. Buff them up with anthems or ping your opponents with damage.

CORNERSTONES

- Nahiri's Lithoforming; Realms Uncharted; Rite of Harmony; Jetmir, Nexus of Revels

WEIRDO

- Ruin Ghost

RANKING

- C. Hazon is a neat twist on a lands deck. I like that I have a strong home for my expensive land cards that isn't a traditional Simic+ value pile. It's a little higher power than I often get to play, so I don't get a ton of time with it. But it has enough cool tech that I'm hoping it sticks around for a while.

TAYAM, LUMINOUS ENIGMA

PLAN

- This is a mid-power Saga/self-mill deck
- This deck uses counters and counter manipulation cards to control and recur Sagas for value until you can create enough tokens that an overrun will win the game. It's a bit durdly but a fresh suite of payoff enchantments has gotten the deck closer to where I want it to be.

CORNERSTONES

- Scholar of New Horizons; The First Iroan Games; Archon of Sun's Grace; Beastmaster Ascension;

WEIRDO

- Hunting Grounds

RANKING

- C. I've really struggled to build Enchantress. I've also struggled to build Abzan. But this deck comes close. It's a lot to track and can be overwhelming to pilot so this may not be the final iteration of the deck, but Tayam definitely suits me.

****MIDROLL POINT*** We've covered 10 of my 25 decks. Soon, we'll get into the top tiered decks in my collection, but first a brief word from our sponsors.*

ELOISE, NEPHALIA SLEUTH

PLAN

- This is a mid-power tchotchke deck with an investigation and murder mystery subtheme.

- Generate a lot of clues, treasures, blood, and more to drain the table with Disciple of the Vault or bring them to life with Cyberdrive Awakener.

CORNERSTONES

- Murder; Ceremonial Knife; Hard Evidence; Sanguine Spy;

WEIRDO

- Thran Turbine

RANKING

- B. This deck has crawled its way back from the brink a few times. These days, it's a great mid-power option to bring out when I'm not sure exactly how the power level will

KETHEK, CRUCIBLE GOLIATH

PLAN

- This is a low-power sacrifice deck.
- This deck plans to sacrifice and reanimate nonlegendary nontoken creatures to reuse ETBs and dies triggers. It can win through combat or with Gary, Flayer of the Hatebound or Stalking Vengeance damage.

CORNERSTONES

- Doom Weaver; Seize the Spotlight; Flayer of the Hatebound; Archpriest of Shadows

WEIRDO

- Body Snatcher

RANKING

- B. This deck really surprised me. I always liked my friend Mike Carrozza's Lyzolda, the Blood Witch deck that focused on sacrificing and recurring creatures for value so I built something similar out of cards around the house and a Kethek I opened in a pack. The play patterns are fun and high variance. It's a sacrifice deck that doesn't feel samy.

LORD OF TRESSERHORN

PLAN

- This is a low-power Voltron deck
- The plan is to get Lord of Tresserhorn in play and hit people with him. If I succeed in that even once, I have to be satisfied.

CORNERSTONES

- Obeka, Brute Chronologist; Uncaged Fury; Bolt Bend; Exalted Flamer of Tzeentch;

WEIRDO

- Lord of Tresserhorn, Sinister Concierge

RANKING

- B. This is such a weird little deck. Some of the cards are pretty self explanatory but a lot of the deck was built by feel, using my experience with the deck in games rather than normal deck building strategies. That's kind of what I love about it. It isn't a traditional Voltron deck. It isn't a traditional grixis deck. It's just cool grixis cards that I make work with this old doofus.

NORIN THE WARY

PLAN

- This is a low-power sticker deck
- Getting stickers on Norin (without scaring him away) requires generating enough tix to buy a meaningful ability sticker, then copying or blinking a creature that allows me to put a sticker on him. Then hopefully the sticker will do the work! Sometimes it's a power/toughness sticker that makes Warstorm Surge better. Sometimes it's a "leaves the battlefield" trigger.

CORNERSTONES

- Minotaur de Force; Rose Room Treasurer; Warstorm Surge; Fable of the Mirrorbreaker

WEIRDO

- Sanctum of Eternity

RANKING

- B. This deck was born the moment I found out that stickers don't fall off when creatures leave the battlefield (unless they go to a hidden zone like your hand). It was built the moment I figured out how to actually get a sticker on a card that is constantly running away. It's so silly and such a fun subgame. It may not last forever—many joke decks don't—but for now I'm having fun.

LORD WINDGRACE

PLAN

- This is a high-power superfriends deck
- This deck uses Windgrace's raw power to draw and ramp into an overwhelming number of planeswalkers. I didn't include Doubling Season. I didn't include Vorinclex. It's walkers, defensive creatures and proliferate. And a lot of the time, that's enough.

CORNERSTONES

- Evolution Sage; Carth the Lion; Chandra, Awakened Inferno; Field of the Dead;

WEIRDO

- This isn't a particularly weird deck, but the card that probably sticks out the most is Kura, the Boundless Sky

RANKING

- A. I really enjoy playing this deck. It's a classic, fair, Jund deck made up of good, powerful cards. It's another deck I really have to play well to win, not just follow a set plan. It's a little good-stuffy, but that makes it interesting to pilot and new every time.

GALAZETH PRISMARI

PLAN

- This is a high-power burn deck that uses 25 copies of Dragon's Approach to take huge bites out of my opponents' life totals.
- After a brief bout with Niv-Mizzet Parun in the Command Zone, the deck settled perfectly into a Galazeth Prismari deck.
 - Turn 2 mana rock; Turn 3 Galazeth, make a treasure; Turn 4 two Dragon's Approaches
 - Galazeth shores me up mana wise, but the deck CONSTANTLY struggles with card advantage despite 20 cards that provide some kind of card selection or advantage.

- It is very low on defense and interaction, hoping to kill you before you become a problem

CORNERSTONES

- Dragon's Approach; Knollspine Dragon; Locket of Yesterdays; Trail of Evidence;

WEIRDO

- Mind Bomb

RANKING

- A. I've built a few storm decks and this one is the most fun. I never fail to get a kick out of firing off Dragon's Approach after Dragon's Approach until I either win or my opponents decide it's time to kill me. I love switching the Dragons in the deck and am considering a version with a bigger "Dragonboard" that I select a few dragons at random before the game.

WINOTA, JOINER OF FORCES

Alter by Modfly (@modflyalters on Twitter; @modfly_alters on Instagram)

PLAN

- This is a cEDH Stax deck
- Largely based on Comedian's snowball stax list, my Winota is fairly stock. But I couldn't resist putting a few weirdos in there to make the deck feel like mine.

CORNERSTONES

- Kiki-Jiki, Mirrorbreaker; Archon of Emeria; Rick, Steadfast Leader; Drannith Magistrate

WEIRDO

- Zurzoth, Chaos Rider

RANKING

- A. I don't play a lot of cEDH, but I love playing Winota when I do. I think Stax adds such an interesting element to high-power games, it introduces a problem to solve, a puzzle to sort through. Plus, I love fighting combo decks on an axis they aren't ready for: combat.

BLEX, VEXING PEST // SEARCH FOR BLEX

PLAN

- This deck is a mid-power Reanimator deck, built around the Sorcery on the backside of Blex: Search for Blex. While its color identity is technically green and black, I've built it as a mono-black deck with zero ways to make green mana. You may notice a couple of hybrid Golgari cards, but pay no attention to those little trees. Other than that restriction, Blex is a traditional reanimator plan. It uses Search for Blex for self mill and card advantage and reanimates big threats with a typical suite of reanimation effects.

CORNERSTONES

- Life // Death; Abhorrent Overlord; Ayara, First of Lothwain; Thieving Amalgam;

WEIRDO

- Ritual of the Machine

RANKING

- Search for Blex is the culmination of my long quest for a mono-black deck. And I really like where it landed. It feels powerful but not over-powered. It has a range of threats, expected and unexpected. And it can win in a variety of ways. I'll give Blex, or Search for Blex rather, **an A.**

DIHADA, BINDER OF WILLS

PLAN

- Dihada is a mid-power aggro deck with a legendary theme, very similar to the one I played on the Dominaria United: Game Knights. This deck uses efficient legendary creatures to take huge bites out of my opponent's life totals. It uses haste, evasion, and recursion to attack hard and fast every single turn. And why attack once when you can attack twice? Use Karlach and Aurelia to hit your opponents again.

CORNERSTONES

- Balthor the Defiled; Heartless Hidetsugu; Goro-Goro, Disciple of Ryusei; Ao, the Dawn Sky;

WEIRDO

- Lingered Souls

RANKING

- Dihada continues to surprise and excite me. It's what I've always wanted Mardu to feel like: both fiercely aggressive and stubbornly defensive. I really like what this deck has turned into: a collection of Mardu legends that I've always wanted to play but can't build them all. I give Dihada an A.

MANGARA, THE DIPLOMAT

PLAN

- This is a high-power midrange deck that uses relentless removal and resilience to outlast its opponents
- Grind, baby, grind. Mangara is a slow, inevitable deck that picks apart his opponents' boards while hitting them in the air for 4. It looks innocuous at first, but by the later turns, it's in complete control. It gains just enough life to stay out of reach. It draws just enough cards to keep up with the table. It's completely and infuriatingly white.

CORNERSTONES

- Angel of the Ruins; Marshal's Anthem; Aerial Extortionist; Elspeth, Sun's Champion

WEIRDO

- Righteous Aura

RANKING

- S. This deck is one of my very favorites to play, although it can be frustrating to play against. It was important to me that the deck felt very true to the white color identity of the commander and I think it really got there.

PRINCESS TWILIGHT SPARKLE

PLAN

- This is a very low-power pony deck with a silver-bordered Commander
- Every card in this deck has a horse on it or is friendship themed. Its plan is loosely, "buff up cheap fliers," but it has a life gain and blink subtheme? I play the best ponies they've printed and do my best to make them work.

CORNERSTONES

- Storm Herd; Emiel the Blessed; Pegasus Guardian; Sacred Mesa;

WEIRDO

- Dwarven Pony

RANKING

- S. I absolutely never play it and I'm absolutely never taking it apart.

RAKDOS, LORD OF RIOTS

Alter by Dave Lee (@derfington on Twitter; @durdlingaround on Instagram)

PLAN

- This is a high-power combo deck that
- Uses pingers and groupsluggy enchantments to reduce the casting costs of X-cost creatures and Eldrazis. Take down my opponents with a combination of giant attackers and noncombat damage from Terror of the Peaks, Fanatic of Mogis, Walking Ballista, and more.

CORNERSTONES

- Sanctum of Stone Fangs; Pandemonium; Kozilek, Butcher of Truth; Maga, Traitor to Mortals;

WEIRDO

- Plague Spitter

RANKING

- S. Rakdos has been a loyal turbo-casual deck since very early in my Commander journey. It was the first deck I built that felt powerful. And it may be the last. I love what a clock it creates in the game. I love how many hoops there are. I love that after all this time, I still get to play Lim-Dul's Hex.

SIDISI, BROOD TYRANT

Alter by Dave Lee (@derfington on Twitter; @durdlingaround on Instagram)

PLAN

- This is a mid-power self-mill/graveyard deck
- Featuring a whopping 56 creatures, only 6 noncreature spells, and also Grist, my Sidisi deck is chock full of hits for Sidisi's ability. I use self-mill cards to build up a wide board and battle my opponent's into the long game. The deck is sorcery speed, but explosive and resilient.

CORNERSTONES

- Necrotic Ooze; Wonder; Path of Discovery; Living Death

WEIRDO

- Heartwood Storyteller

RANKING

- S. Based on BDM's Spider Spawning list, my Sidisi build is one of my oldest decks and still one of my favorites to play. It's flexible, powerful, and it's never out of tricks. There's always some cool new tech to try and yet there's always room for some old favorites. It's a classic.

OCTAVIA, LIVING THESIS

Alter by JomAlters (@JomAlters on Twitter and Instagram)

PLAN

- This is a mid-power spellslinger deck that wins with combat

- Cast cheap creatures with evasion, preferably ones that draw cards. Cast cantrips and self mill spells until Octavia costs 2, then start swinging for 8, 16, 24. Usually one player will die to Commander Damage. Ward 8 helps a lot with that.

CORNERSTONES

- You Come to a River; Brain Freeze; Shadow Rift; Faerie Mastermind;

WEIRDO

- Floodgate

RANKING

- S. She's a mono-blue spellslinger deck that feels casual, interactive and permissive. It's an extremely fun design that supports any weird instant you want to play. To everyone who doesn't like blue, I encourage you to try her.

PHELDDAGRIF WITH KERUGA

Alters by Amy Weber and Dan Scott, respectively

PLAN

- This is a high-power big mana deck
- Phelddagrif uses very powerful cards to enact a very stupid plan: giving your opponents too many hippos or too many cards. Or perhaps stealing those hippos. Or maybe making a very big hippo.
- Phelddagrif proves the point that with enough mana and cards you can win a Commander game with a paperclip.

CORNERSTONES

- Selvala, Explorer Returned; Intruder Alarm; Beck // Call; Angel's Trumpet

WEIRDO

- Dingus Staff

RANKING

- S. I feel like Phelddagrif is my master creation. It's the deck I will never tire of winning with. It's the most expensive, most ridiculous deck I own. It will always be mine.

WHAT DID I LEARN?

- I like building high concept decks, but they don't last for long. The decks that go the distance are ones with high complexity in game and win in various ways. The more linear the plan, the less I want to play them.
- I like building decks with character, especially when the Commander brings a lot of it. As a result, I don't tend to love partner decks. I've built a few, but they rarely have the personality that makes a deck really go the distance.

3) **TO THE LISTENERS**

What do you think? Did I surprise you with anything? Any decks you want to build now? Any hot tech you think I might be missing in my decks? Do you want to see this episode for other members of the team?

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

4) CLEAN-UP STEP

Big thanks to our amazing team here at The Command Zone! **Craig Blanchette, 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; Megan Yip; Eric Lem; Josh Lee Kwai; and Jimmy Wong.**