

CZ0534: HOW TO PLAY RED (WITH JIMMY WONG)

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CLAP AND SLATE

- 1) INTRO JIMMY & RACHEL

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ATTENTION: RED MAGES. Today, we're breaking down Magic's fieriest color, the strengths, the weaknesses, the strategies, and the staples. And who better to do that than Jimmy Wong? BUT FIRST:

****CARD KINGDOM** **ULTRAPRO #1** **PATREON: RYANNE HARRIS****

- 2) MAIN TOPIC: **HOW TO PLAY RED**

The first thing you have to understand when building your own Commander deck is the color pie. Commander players are limited by our deck's color identities, so we should know what each color is good and bad at, and how they work best when they're the primary focus of a deck, or as an additional way to power it up and enhance. That way we're not relying on a color to do something it simply isn't designed to do. Today we're talking about RED.

LOOK TO THE KING

A very simple way to understand each color is to look at one card in particular: Kenrith, the Returned King. Each of his five abilities give you a very quick snapshot of some things that are important or fundamental to each color:

Red: Giving all creatures Trample and Haste

Green: Putting +1/+1 counters on creatures

White: Gaining life

Blue: Drawing cards

Black: Reanimating creatures

While this is extremely simplistic, it's a good place to start off when asking "What is special about red?"

To get a little more in depth, Red is the color of:

- *Passion (spellslinger)*
- *Impulsivity (Impulse Draw, Haste)*
- *Recklessness (Chaos)*
- *Damage (Burn, Dragons)*

- Artifacts (Goblins love to tinker)

WHAT IS RED ESPECIALLY GOOD AT?

At this point, every color in Magic has SOME way of doing all of the important things: ramp, card draw, removal, board wipes, etc. But each color has its restrictions. Some things it's great at. Others it's just ok. When building a primarily red deck or just splashing red, it's good to know the answers to: What can red effectively add to your strategy? When should you turn to red cards? How can you maximize red's efficiency?

EXPLOSIVENESS

Lots of mana fast > Jeska's Will; Dockside Extortionist; Mana Geyser; Path of the Pyromancer; Professional Face-Breaker; Rose Room Treasurer;

- A lot of this comes from rituals and treasures

Haste > Anger; Sneak Attack; Footfall Crater; Mass Hysteria; Civil Unrest

CHAOS

Wheels > Wheel of Fortune; Wheel of Misfortune; Reforge the Soul; Invasion of Kaldheim; Valakut Awakening

Messing Everyone Up > Descent Into Avernus; Warp World; Pandemonium; Dance with Calamity

ARTIFACT SUPPORT

Specifically graveyard recursion > Goblin Welder; Goblin Engineer; Daretti, Scrap Savant; Scrap Mastery

COPIES

Copy tokens > Kiki-Jiki, Mirror Breaker; Fable of the Mirror-Breaker; Cursed Mirror; Mirror March

Copy spells > Reverberate; Fork; Dualcaster Mage

SPELLSLINGER

Key slinger support > Birgi, God of Storytelling; Storm-Kiln Artist; Guttersnipe

Red is good at turning game actions into damage, which is why it's a particularly good Spellslinging color. It gives blue a spellslinging win con.

NONCOMBAT DAMAGE

Turn lots of creatures into damage > Impact Tremors; Goblin Bombardment; Terror of the Peaks; Warstorm Surge

Turn other things into damage > Reckless Fireweaver; Firebrand Archer; Passionate Archaeologist; Valakut, the Molten Pinnacle;

REACH

Amp it UP > Torbran, Thane of Red Fell; Fiery Emancipation / City on Fire; Solphim, Mayhem Dominus;

Extra combats > Moraug, Fury of Akoum; Relentless Assault;

Extra turns (where you lose after) > Final Fortune; Last Chance; Warrior's Oath

Big burn spells > Crackle with Power; Chandra's Ignition

RED'S CREATURE TYPES

Every color has creature types it effectively supports. Red has many popular tribes, but none more so than...

- Goblins and Dragons
- *But also...* Warriors, Devils, Elementals, Dwarves, Phoenixes
- *Generic Tribal Support > Molten Echoes; Shared Animosity; Kindred Charge; Roar of the Crowd; Mana Echoes; Basalt Ravager;*

MIDROLL POINT

WHAT DOES RED STRUGGLE WITH?

This is important to know when you're building mono-red or mostly red. It helps you anticipate some of your deck's problems before they happen in game. What are the pitfalls of the color? What cards should you add to patch some of those holes?

CARD ADVANTAGE

Red is great at selection, but getting card advantage isn't always easy.

- *Card selection > Faithless Looting; Thrill of Possibility; Valakut Awakening;*
 - *Turn Discard into Card Advantage > Containment Construct; Crucible of Worlds; Reverberate;*

Wheels, specifically draw sevens, can reload your hand after you run out of spells. Of course, you often refuel your opponents as well

- *Wheels > Wheel of Misfortune; Reforge the Soul; Knollspine Dragon*

For more incremental draw, red has impulse draw. It's harder to time in game, but increases the number of cards you have access to.

- *Impulse Draw > Jeska's Will; Reckless Impulse; Professional Face-Breaker; Valakut Exploration; Invasion of Kaldheim;*

Use red's affinity for artifacts to add card draw! These will be more build-around cards that synergize with your overall plan.

- *Synergistic Artifacts > Idol of Oblivion; Mask of Memory; Tome of Legends; Skullclamp; Treasure Map*

TUTORING

Poor tutor suite > Gamble; Imperial Recruiter; Reckless Handling; Goblin Engineer; Magda, Brazen Outlaw;

Red can't really search for exactly the right piece, but it can DIG.

- *Valakut Awakening; Winds of Change; Quicksmith Genius; Neheb, Dreadhorde Champion*

RESILIENCE

Red is the most “glass cannon” of all the colors. It can do a lot quickly, but struggles after a board wipe or if it runs out of cards. Red also has no real board protection outside of cards like Fork / Deflecting Swat.

- Red can reach into the Graveyard fairly effectively however: Underworld Breach; Mizzix's Mastery; Finale of Promise; Past in Flames;

Red decks, especially mono-red permanent decks rely on artifact strategies to flourish in the long game, but folds to graveyard hate.

- Goblin Welder; Goblin Engineer; Daretti, Scrap Savant; Scrap Mastery

INTERACTION

Although a well placed Lightning Bolt can take care of some creatures. Red spot removal is limited to a few pie breaks and artifact removal. Also, Red is primarily focused on Damage based effects, there are only a few cards that remove permanents in their entirety without it.

- *Permanent Removal* > Chaos Warp; Wild Magic Surge;
 - Wand of Wonder;
- *Artifact Removal* > Vandalblast; Abrade
 - Liquimetal Torque
- *Stack interaction* > Tibalt's Trickery; Deflecting Swat; Bolt Bend; Reverberate;

Red is better at taking out a LOT of creatures rather than just one

- Blasphemous Act; Mizzium Mortars

Why remove them when you can use them yourself?

- *Goad* > Disrupt Decorum;
- *Threaten* > Insurrection; Mob Rule;

PRIMARY COLOR VS. SUPPORT

Red has things it's good at and others that it isn't. Remember not to fall back on red staples when another color could handle things better.

- *Red as a Mono Color* > If Red is your Mono Color, then you will need to recognize the inherent weaknesses of the colors (not flexible removal, limited counterspells, weak card draw, no tutors) and play to its strengths (the entire first half of this podcast)
- *Red as a Support Color* > If Red is the second color, then make sure that you're not wasting a slot on a card like Chaos Warp in a Boros deck when White has much more efficient and effective removal. If you're playing Blue, then there's no need for a Tibalt's Trickery. You might not need Faithless Looting if you're not looking to fill up the graveyard either.
- *Red as a Tertiary Color* > If Red is your third or fourth/fifth color, then you really want to focus on just using the cards that synergize the most or give you the most bang for your buck. There are the generic good stuff cards like Jeska's Will; Dockside Extortionist; Deflecting Swat.

WINNING WITH RED

If you want to play Red and not just default to the Dockside of the world, then you're best off relying on Red's strengths.

- *Win Conditions* > Chandra's Ignition; Comet Storm; Terror of the Peaks; Purphoros, God of the Forge; Moraug, Fury of Akoum; Guttersnipe; Fiery Emancipation; Kiki-Jiki, Mirrorbreaker; Dualcaster Mage; Insurrection
- Red is annoying and can attract a lot of attention in the early game.
 - "What is causing all that damage?"
 - Hold repeatable damage effects until you can really capitalize on them or protect them
- Red tends to dump it's hand or overcommit to the board without generating enough value
 - Make sure you are prioritizing enough repeated sources of card advantage
 - Use cards that have been impulse drawn as much as possible
 - Red has no real board protection, always be ready for a board wipe.
- Red is good at ending the game, but struggles to protect that win.
 - Using Mana Geyser or bursts of mana to make sure you can do it all in the same turn
 - Deploying damage doublers or triplers to turn incremental damage into lethal damage

GOLD CARDS

We talked a lot about cards that are purely Red today, but you'll find that being in more than one color means access to Gold cards / multi-colored cards. Red always adds on some level of the spice we have discussed today. So keep an eye out next time you're looking to build a Commander deck - maybe some gold cards will push you in a direction to make you want to include more red. Here are some two-color cards that show how Red can really add to another color and help push a deck in a certain direction:

- *Rakdos*: Prosper, Tome-Bound; Mayhem Devil; Kardur, Doomscourge
- *Gruul*: Goblin Anarchomancer; Rhythm of the Wild; Raggadragga, Goreguts Boss
- *Izzet*: Goblin Electromancer; Third Path Iconoclast; Sarkhan, Soul Aflame
- *Boros*: Nahiri's Resolve; Sunforger; Deflecting Palm

3) **TO THE LISTENERS**

Red mages! What's your favorite thing about playing red? Did we miss any of the color's pitfalls? What's your favorite red tech to shore up those weaknesses and pilot your reddest decks to victory?

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

4) **THE END STEP**

Something cool outside the world of Magic

5) 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; and Josh Lee Kwai.**