

CZ0519: BUILDING A DECK YOU LOVE TO PLAY

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1) INTRO Jimmy & Rachel

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We spend a lot of time talking about how to build a powerful deck or a synergistic deck, but today's episode is about building a deck you love to play. It's a lot harder than it sounds! Building decks is my favorite thing to do and I still build decks that seemed fun, but were a lot less enjoyable in practice.

We're going to get into it soon, but if this episode inspires you to build something new or make some changes to an old deck, you should go straight to...

****CARD KINGDOM** **ULTRAPRO #1** **PATREON: DAVID LE****

2) MAIN TOPIC: **BUILDING A DECK YOU LOVE TO PLAY**

Decks are investments of time, mental energy, and money. As a result, "getting it right" is a shared goal amongst every player. We want our Commander decks to be fun for us to play, fun to play against, and maybe even inspire some people along the way. But that isn't always the case.

BUILDING A DECK YOU DON'T LIKE TO PLAY

There are numerous reasons why you might build a deck that's not fun to play.

- You didn't know what you were getting into.
 - Trying out Storm for the first time?
 - Dredging isn't your style?
- It just doesn't work the way you wanted it to.
 - Three sub themes too many? Whoops, that's a non-bo!
- Your playgroup was not pleased, and neither were you.
 - Stax went a little *too* hard?
 - Mono blue counterspell deck wasn't what you expected?
- *Have you built a deck you didn't like playing? What was it? Why didn't you like it?*
 - Decks We Built... But Hated - 426 - Podcast Episode

So what are some actionable steps you can take to build a deck you love to play?

WATCH IT IN ACTION

- Watch gameplay of the deck in action!
- Search YouTube for videos to get an idea of what it can do
- Search Moxfield or other deckbuilding sites for decklists of the Commander you're interested in. See what kind of cards they often play. Are those the kinds of cards you like to play?

CHECK IN WITH THE PLAYGROUP

- Something you're not sure about?
 - Group Hug, Stax, Combo, cEDH
- Confirm with your playgroup that they don't mind playing against it
- Confirm with yourself that it'll match up well against their decks
 - I've built decks that I love to play but never seem right for a table.

CHECK IN WITH YOURSELF

- What do you like to do at a Commander table?
- What kind of plays are the most fun for you?
- Next time you're playing commander, try to recognize what cards or moments really made you excited.
- Does this deck make for those kinds of moments?

TESTING, TESTING, 1 2 3

- Goldfish your deck before buying it
- Try out new cards with playtest cards before investing
- When I build personal decks, I start with a Commander that interests me, then I build a 99 from cards I have lying around the house. A rough mana base. A general idea of what I want the deck to do. Then I play it a couple of times and ask myself if this is a deck I'd like to invest in further.
 - Do I enjoy the play patterns?
 - Did it match up well in my playgroup?
 - Is this the kind of thing I want to play a LOT?
 - If all of those answers are yes, what does the deck want more of?
 - What didn't work the way I wanted it to?
 - It's a slower building process, but part of the joy for me is watching a deck grow from its rough draft.

*****MIDROLL POINT*****

FIND THE PAIN POINT

- Figure out the pain point of why games are unenjoyable (maybe there's a trend across all of your decks)
 - Always losing to board wipes?
 - Unable to interact at instant speed?
 - Curve feels awkward? (Sequencing feels clunky or slow. Set up cards feel too expensive)

- Mana base doesn't work? Didn't count your pips right?

DON'T PLAY CARDS YOU DON'T PLAY

- If a card is rotting in your hand for one reason or another, cut it!
 - My playgroup always complains when I cast it
 - It always feels too expensive to cast
 - I don't always have a target
 - It doesn't make for a more entertaining game
- You can always put it back if you miss it.
- I have a "sideboard" on a couple of my decks. If a powerful card doesn't feel appropriate in a pod or playgroup, I'll swap it out for a less powerful alternative.

EAT YOUR VEGGIES

Deck not playing the way it used to? Or it all looks right but it isn't *working*? Check the necessities.

- Lay out your deck on the table
- Count the number of ramp spells, draw spells, board wipes, removal spells, and lands
 - Did you cut too much ramp for cool new cards?
 - Are you only running 33 lands?
 - Did you change 15 cards and not adjust the mana base?
 - Sometimes you just need more card draw. Have you tried putting in MORE than you need? You might find that more card draw vs less is optimal, and then you can tune from there.

TURN OFF AUTOPILOT

- If you *used* to love the deck, but it's gone a bit stale.
 - Reduce or eliminate tutors to reduce linearity
 - Load it up with card draw
 - Switch out the win con or add a second line
- Remember that the fun part of Commander is playing it: making decisions and taking game actions are the best part. If you feel like your deck is on autopilot, switch some cards out. You can always put them back in.

ALWAYS HAVE ACTION

Commander is not fun to play when you don't have game actions. Make sure you ALWAYS have something to do with your mana.

- Play cards with activated abilities, even overcosted ones
- Utility lands or creature lands (there are TONS of these available now like Castle Ardenvale, Castle Lothwain, etc.)

PRESERVE MENTAL BANDWIDTH

- Sometimes you build a deck and playing it is a real headache! It's loaded with triggers and complexity that you didn't anticipate.

- Cut back on unnecessary triggered effects (for example: day / night)
- Pinpoint which cards are overwhelming you and reduce that kind of effect
 - I cut Sylvan Anthem from my Aeve creature storm deck because I was tired of scrying *every* time a creature entered the battlefield.

TAKE A HINT!

- Didn't like playing previous aristocrats decks? Don't build a new one!
- Magic players are collectors and often completionists: We want a deck for every theme, a deck for each color pairing. But if you don't like the archetype, you may just not like it.
- I've tried building Abzan so many times and it just never sticks.

3) **TO THE LISTENERS**

What do you love about playing Commander? How do you make sure your decks enable that result? Any tips for fellow deckbuilders for fine-tuning a deck you love to play.

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

4) **THE END STEP**

Something cool outside the world of Magic

5) CLEAN-UP STEP

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