

The Terminus Shores

Animated Commander's Almanac

As of version 1.5

Original Contributors in Alphabetical Order: Alarak, BetterWay, JadeXyan, Jeffrey, Sarpedon.
(Msg Sarpedon if I missed anyone).

Purpose: A robust set of skills and information to round out player skill. Aimed at all skill levels from new players to Tiberium league.

Scope: The initial scope of this document is tournament-style play, so levels and training are for the most part intentionally omitted. Meta decks as they apply to ladder are discussed so some level considerations there may leak in.

Before the game:

Preparation

So you are ready to play. A few things to keep in mind:

- Make sure to double check the deck you are using!
- Make sure your space is comfortable.
- Take a breath between games. Tilt is real. Don't just click the "Battle" button out of anger or impatience!

Understanding the meta

- **No Harvester Aggro** - No harvester decks seek to take advantage of the extra popcap that is usually taken up by harvesters to overwhelm the opponent before they can properly build up and react. They are risky strategies that rely on winning the first two missiles, lose either one and the game is likely lost.
 - ❖ **GDI** - GDI no harvester aggro tends to be more defensively oriented, taking advantage of strong defensive units like mg squads and the affordability of pitbulls moving in and out of cover to securely hold positions. You rely on a deck full of cheap units and that extra popcap from not having a harvester to first overwhelm your opponent and then secure taken positions. Because of this reliance on holding positions, GDI no harvester aggro tends to be more map dependent than nod's variant. Commander-wise you're looking at either Strongarm or Jackson. Strongarm is the most common choice as the turret is cheap and can further fortify a position when needed, Jackson's boost of course is a more versatile option if you're looking to play a less traditional deck. On the surface Liang can often seem like a decent choice due to his

synergies with MG Squads, but generally speaking his healing just doesn't have enough synergy with other infantry, you aren't running a bunch of other high hp units, and paying 70 for a somewhat beefier mg usually isn't worth it.

Additionally, care needs to be taken with the economy of the deck.

Without a harvester, your rate of tiberium is much lower and as a result, a 40 cost unit in this deck tends to be quite expensive. Care must be taken to build order and identifying the correct unit to build in each situation, making practice very important for mastering this deck. With a starved economy, units become important investments and deploying a turret when you actually needed a Pitbull can cost you the missile.

Furthermore, with the extra popcap and no harvester to manage, this allows you to focus your micro much more intensely, and makes micro a key aspect of winning with this deck. In short, you exchange economy for an extra unit and the ability to focus completely on the units on the field. Finally, because of the cheap nature of the deck, charging the missile is part of the win condition. Charge the missile as often as you possibly can (see the section regarding Missile Charging for more information).

- ❖ **Nod** - Nod no harvester aggro on the other hand relies on being aggressive, attacking with multiple unit types to keep your opponent off-balance, always on the backfoot and reacting to your actions. If you can't manage this then your no harvester deck will quickly crumble as the higher funding of your opponent and their ability to be versatile will overwhelm you before you have the resources to react. The core of the no harvester nod deck is the Scavenger. Without scavengers you will likely win the first missile but often run out of money or be unable to get your more expensive units out when you need them. With scavengers you effectively have an alternate income source, suddenly all of the cheap counters you're running become effectively cheaper, free, or net income when they die, as such it's important to run a suite of cheap counter-units that scavengers can benefit from. Because of this extra income you can then safely run a handful of expensive units to act as reusable versatile counters and attackers, stealth tanks and giga-cannons are popular choices here, having a high impact for their cost. Also, unlike GDI, you aren't particularly limited in commander choices, outside of Kane every commander is useful, Jade allows you to finish games with chems as your expensive unit to base rush, Oxanna's the cheap option that lets you boost when you need to and makes giga-cannons a better expensive splash option, and Seth can turn the tide and steal a missile at the last moment while also giving you a 2 popcap advantage over your opponent.

- **Delayed Harvester Aggro**

- Delayed harvester aggro decks are designed much like traditional aggro decks except that you're looking for the fewest possible cheap units you

can run to guarantee a first missile win and then building a harvester to afford the rest of your deck for the second and third missiles.

- You're looking for decks that can run a bunch of cheap units, functioning with only 3-4 units for the entirety of the first missile.
- You can't splash expensive units first missile like no harvester nod does or you won't have the money to build a harvester at the start of the second.
- **Aggro decks**
 - The current most common deck type, aggro decks seek to end the game early before more powerful units can come into play.
- **Mid-game non-tech decks**
 - These are decks that have high cost top ends but don't actually reach tech. At time of writing Inferno Phantom and Orca Bomber Hammerhead/Slingshot decks fall squarely into this category, looking to maintain an amount of control over the first missile while building to a far more reachable top end with the potential to quickly grow beyond the opponent's control. Often these are late double harvester decks, playing with a single harvester for a time to keep up pressure and build the necessary structures, and then ramping up the production of top-end units with a second harvester.
- **Tech splash**
 - Aggro decks that run a single tech unit as either a finisher or a money sink, tech splash decks aim to be able to operate without a 6th unit when necessary while also leaving open the option to bring out something difficult to deal with to lock down the game once an advantageous position is achieved.
- **Tech decks**
 - Popular in the lower leagues, tech decks play for the long game, delaying missiles and buying time to build an incremental advantage with units that are more powerful for their cost.

Understanding Win Conditions

- There are effectively two win conditions and one draw condition in Rivals.
- The first method by which you can win is to hold the pads and launch two missiles at the enemy. This is by far the most common method of achieving victory, and for good reason: it works. It is considerably less risky than the other option, fulfilling it grants you control of the map, and it allows you to overcome otherwise greater forces with good unit compositions and micro.
- The second method of course is to assault the base directly. This method is risky and can be very level dependent, you need an advantage for it to work, and I would not suggest it to new players or anyone seriously looking to climb the ranks, it's a good strategy to be aware of and keep in your back pocket, you can even deck build with it in mind if you like, but it should almost never be your main goto.

- Lastly there is one draw condition in rivals, one that most people don't know about. If you play a game and nobody has one after 8 minutes the game ends in a draw. This is exceedingly rare, most games last in the area of 1-3 minutes, 5 at most, but sometimes when the match is close enough you can get here, it's an important fact to know and a reason many of us play with the ingame clock active. Knowing the game is about to end no matter what you do means you know when you have to make that final push to get the win by, or if you're behind, that you can try to stall the game out to that draw in the worst case scenario. You may never see a draw in your entire time playing rivals, and that's okay, but do not forget that the option exists or when you do see it you will be the one who was caught off guard, having not managed to do all of the things they wanted.

Deck Building, Commander Abilities, and Map Considerations

- So how do you begin building a deck?

Knowing your openings, and how to deal with common meta openings

- So you've built your deck, and you have some idea on how to play it, but what can you expect to face? What do you do when your opponent opens rifles, cyberwheels, two harvesters, or throws a bike or jumpjet rush at you?

During the game:

Unit placement

- **Defender's advantage**

- When possible you always want engagements to happen when you have defender's advantage. Defender's advantage is, as the name implies, the advantage you get when defending because the attacking unit has to move into range while being fired upon the entire time. Notably this does not apply to raider units which can fire while they are moving and thus negate defender's advantage.
- Take the example below, with defender's advantage (on the left), two rifles handily dispatch a group of shockwaves with neither of them dying, while on the right two attack in only for both squads to be annihilated by that same squad. Defenders advantage isn't minor, it isn't something you can just ignore, it is a decisive decider of battles.



- This said, sometimes you can't avoid attacking into defenders, in these scenarios you want to move in with either counters or non-counters (see

the section on soft counters) and often multiple of them so that you can counteract defender's advantage and the time that the defending unit would otherwise delay you while the enemy builds reinforcements with overwhelming force.

- Defender's Advantage and the stank orca interaction. Note when the orca is on defense, its orientation relative to the stank does matter!



Orca Defender's advantage and stealth: (Not this is pre-Stank nerf, may have changed)



- **Reading Maps**

- Placeholder..

- **Identifying your opponent's deck**

- Are they following the meta? What roles have you seen filled? What roles are still missing and what is most likely filling those roles based on what you've seen so far? Knowing what your opponent is running allows you to identify weaknesses in the deck.
- You're looking for anywhere they need combinations of units to counter something, anywhere their only counter is something high cost, anything you can force them to build as a counter which you can then predictively counter, and just the general knowledge of what counters you need to have ready. Knowledge of your opponent's plan allows you to predict their

actions, and predicting their actions allows you to take advantage of every bit of strategy listed here and keep them on the defensive.

- **Many vs One**

- When you begin playing rivals it can be tempting to believe that bigger more expensive units are always better, but this is rarely the case. Yes, they often win in 1v1 scenarios if you blindly throw units against one another, but battles are more complicated than that.
- Many cheap units will almost always beat a single more expensive unit and often cost effectively. Take the examples below, two rifles on defense kill a squad of shockwave troopers losing effectively one squad, 10 tiberium for 40. Two pitbulls wipe out a tank losing only one of them, 40 tiberium for 70, and that's without any degree of micro. These are good trades.

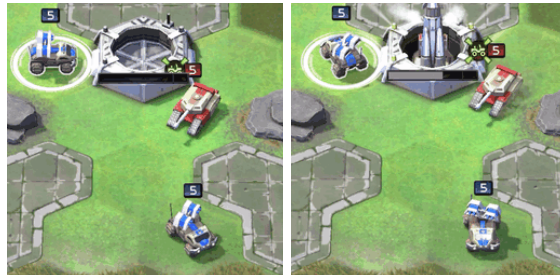


- This isn't to say never build expensive units, if you build nothing but pitbulls and I build 3 tanks and we both micro well the tanks will win, this is to say that you should not be afraid to engage against enemy counters when you have a numeric advantage, numbers are power just as much as unit strength is, and more often than not it is the great power.

Micro:

- **Forcing retargeting**

- One of the core tenants of microing in battles where units have raider is forcing enemy units to retarget, thereby extending the life and damage of your own units. Take the scene below for example:



- By microing the second pitbull away before the tank can get a final hit in, one of the pitbull survives. The second pitbull has the same amount of health left as it would when there was no retreat due to the extra shot the retreating pitbull gets when it comes back. Even though one of the pitbulls

is on dire straights, it will still get another shot off in the next engagement before it dies, and may perhaps even get multiple if targeting is managed well in that battle.

- You want to get the most out of your units, let them inflict the maximum possible damage, earn back as much of their cost as possible before their deaths.

- **Manual Targeting**

- By the same token, you can manually set the targets of your units to negate your opponent's attempt at forcing retargeting.

- **Retreating and when not to retreat**

- **Don't be afraid to retreat from a losing battle.** When you see an attack coming that you can not defeat, that is the time to pull back, before they get into range, before the engagement happens. Unless you really need the popcap back you shouldn't fight a battle you can't win.
- **Don't be afraid to stick around and let a unit die.** Once a unit is exchanging blows your opportunity to retreat is effectively gone. Running away at this point usually means your unit will either die in the retreat or escape with so little health that it might as well be dead. Better to die fighting and doing the damage you can than to flee with a now useless unit wasting your popcap.

- **Raider**

- Shielding, Stacking, Chasing, Fleeing

- **Pad Blocking**

- Blocking adjacent to enemy units and blocking behind your own units.

- **Harvester Defense**

- Always equip your harvesters with high powered laser cannons, helps a lot.

- Forcing units with reload to fire (and avoiding letting your opponent do that :P)
- Controlling the opponents movement
- When not to micro

Missile Control:

- **Stalling**

- Any deck seeking to get out expensive late game units or run multiple harvesters requires you to stall the missile to provide time for your strategy to get up and running.
- In the case of tech decks, this is because these units are paywalled behind the tech lab, which at 120 tiberium, is expensive and takes quite a while to save up the tiberium. In addition, you are less one popcap if you run two harvesters, and this means you will have more difficulty contesting pads against an aggressive styled deck. Essentially, you are hoping to buy time, rather than attempt to win the first missile. By doing so, you'll give yourself an opportunity to pull out your win condition - which

is generally late game, tech units. This puts you in a position to win the second and third missile, therefore winning the game.

- This is not restricted to just tech decks however, it applies to any deck that needs to spend a lot of tiberium to get its plan going. Double harvester inferno and orca bomber decks for instance require stalling you to stall the missile, not because a wall stands in the way of getting your units, but because you need a large number of expensive units as you are seeking to win the game through sheer overwhelming force.
- Consideration should be given to the map as well. Two pad maps require different strategy than three pad maps, simply because your distribution of units will differ. For example on a three pad map, you may wish to keep a cheap unit on one pad so you can more easily stall the missile, but you will need to keep an eye on it in order to determine if it should be on the pad, or off the pad.

- **Keeping the Pad Charging**

- Aggressive strategies require that the missile is charged constantly.
- This does not necessarily mean that the missile needs to be charging for you - you can let your opponent charge the missile. As long as the missile does not go yellow or grey, it will keep charging. This is most important when you are facing tech decks - this becomes your top priority. Time is the greatest weapon against tech because with 40 seconds for each missile, that is not enough time to pull out a strong combination of tech. Additionally, if you are running a very low cost deck (such as no harvester GDI or Nod), charging the missile becomes a win condition against most decks. This is because you run out of steam and will not be able to contest bigger units as the game goes on.

Some basic tips to keep in mind when charging:

- It is not necessary to have the missile charge in your favour, your opponent can be charging the missile. As long as you recover the pads before the missile goes off you will win.
- Tech decks require time to work. Charging the missile is effectively the best way to address tech because it stops tech from coming out. Pressuring harvesters is also something that's good against tech decks but never ever forget to still keep the pads charged while doing so.
- Yellow/Grey means the missile is stalled. Avoid this as much as possible, even if it means moving your units off of the pads.
- Low cost decks that rely on cheap units only can make charging the missile a win condition. Consider this if you are running one of these decks.

Tactics:

- **Managing the opponents popcap**
 - Retargeting between different squad based units.

- Predicting unit construction times based on deaths
- **Managing your popcap**
 1. Creating unpredictable unit timings
 2. When to build a unit and when to wait
 3. Getting your own units killed in the most efficient way possible
- **Picking the right unit to build in the middle of battle**
 - Intro
 - Building to apply pressure
 - Building reactively
 - Building predictively
- **Know your soft counters**
 - Everyone knows the hard counters, flames beat rifles, tanks beat rhinos and buggies, missiles kill bikes, etc., but that's not all there is to Rivals. There are three kinds of soft counters and each is equally important to understand.
 - **The shared weakness counter** is the one people most commonly think of when discussing soft counters -- an orca will 1v1 a pitbull but multiple pitbulls will cost effectively beat an orca, two rifles on defense will beat a flame trooper, two pitbulls can take down a tank, these are all shared weakness soft counters. They tend to be fairly situational but they are important to know and keep in mind during your game.
 - **The incidental counter** is one players more often don't think of, these sorts of counters often change with balance patches so it's important to find these for yourself as anything I list here might vary dramatically by the time you read it. These are things like how a rifle squad can kill cyber wheels reasonably well if they aren't being focused down, and still kill a member of the squad even if they are, how fanatics are actually surprisingly good against attack bikes, or how tanks in numbers can actually devastate missile and laser squads while taking minimal damage in return. There are many more than these and testing to find such counters can be greatly advantageous, but keep in mind that, like shared weakness counters, these are situational, you aren't building these units in order to be a counter, you're using your knowledge of them being a counter at the right time to gain that slight edge in a battle.
 - **Lastly we have the non-counter.** I'm sure there are people that would argue that this isn't a counter, it's even in the name :P, but what is the purpose of a counter? It's to get a step closer to your victory condition, we're not here to kill units, we're here to win, and the non-counter is one of the most proactive ways you can do that. A non-counter is when you build a cheap unit that never in a million years could kill the thing you're facing, but also won't die to it anytime soon. You build this thing to force your opponent to change their build lineup or grab that pad when you need it most. I could build all the counters I want to fight your tanks but if

you have a solid cycle of units that will defeat my predictable answers I'll never win, where if I build rifles I'm now forcing you to react, you need an infantry counter, you can't just keep building tanks, and I can predict that reaction, the battle is no longer about how do I beat your tanks and then your counter to my thing that beats your tanks, it's about how do you beat my rifles and my counter to what you're going to make to beat my rifles, your tanks are largely irrelevant units I can pick off later at my leisure, wasted tiberium, that's why the non-counter is a counter, and one of the most powerful in your arsenal.

- **Managing your spending**

- You can get a long way without knowing how to properly manage your spending, but sooner or later you'll hit a wall, your opponents will always seem to have more and better things than you do. The principle behind managing your spending is simple: never spend more than you need to in order to counter what your opponent is doing. Seems simple, but it's deceptively difficult for a lot of people, easy to know on paper, but hard to apply mid-battle. Is your opponent building missiles? Better build a chem warrior to deal with it! Oh good, that worked... but wait, that chem killed two missiles and then died to some drones..... Okay right? Nope, this means your opponent won that trade, you spent 60 and only got 40 of it back, they spent on the drones and the missiles sure, but the missiles likely did something before your chem got to them otherwise they wouldn't just sit there and die, and yeah the drones were costly but they're still around to cause you problems and force you to build the next thing to counter them. You can easily convince yourself that your opponent is spending more than they actually are and that all your trades with strong counters are good, but end of the day your opponent rarely factors in here, had you built a militant or two to counter instead of that chem warrior you'd be up 30-40 tiberium and they'd have spent more than the cost of your militants to counter them with drones, even in the scenario where maybe your opponent wasn't the most efficient with their spending and your chem warrior trade is okay, this trade is considerably better, and it's these sort of small advantages that win games. This doesn't just apply to infantry and simple counters, this applies to every unit you build, if you build a stealth tank to counter my single mohawk you've done the same thing, lost yourself 40 tiberium as I proceed to make things your stealth tank doesn't do anything against, if you decide to go on the offensive by making an avatar and I beat it down with scorpions and laser drones you've wasted a lot of resources that could have gone to applying pressure in a better, cheaper, way that would have gotten me to build units that your avatar would then counter and recoup some of its cost from instead while still applying that same pressure.

- **Forcing counters to force good trade values**

- It's not enough to just build cost efficient counters though, you have to force situations where you can be more efficient than your opponent, and this means understanding their deck and what they will do in response to your actions. Take an example from Sarpedon, your opponent has a chem buggy as their anti-infantry unit. It devastates your frontline infantry before dying to a counter that you build, a relatively even trade, but now you know that they're relying on chem buggies to deal with infantry at this point in the game, by building another infantry unit you are forcing them to respond with a 60 cost chem buggy, what other choice do they have? Maybe if they had more time or were later into the game they could switch structures and pull out another counter, but for now you've created a weak point, they have to spend 60, they won't earn that much back again, and your counter can be ready and waiting. It's okay to build units you know your opponent can hard counter, if you can figure out their deck then these units lead to predictable responses from them which you in turn can profit off of in good trade value.
- **Timings and Taking Advantage of them.**
 - There are many timings of note in this game, and I suspect very few will be listed here as they aren't something many players, even at the top of tiberium keep active track of, this isn't to say they don't know them or have a sense of the timing, but that having a sense of timings and knowing solid numbers of "when does this thing happen" are two different things. Here those of us who can do so will list the numbers we know, and you should look them over and keep them in mind during your own games, but you should almost never be watching the clock for them to happen in a real match, you need to get a sense for when things happen in terms that you will understand without having to interrupt your gameplay with clock-watching. For instance, I can tell when an opponent is switching tech to a new building, there is a distinct pause in unit production that goes just a bit longer than most people will delay making a unit when they have popcap, I couldn't possibly tell you how long that pause is offhand, I've just seen it enough to have a feel for it, that's what you need to develop, and this is a list of things to do that for.
 - **Harvesters finish their initial field and move to a new one at around 1:40**, on some maps this means that harvesters will move to less defensible positions around this time, especially in the case where people are doing double harvester builds that block nearer, safer tiberium options, allowing you to be ready and waiting with an ambush. By the same token, your harvesters will move out of their cozy little defensible positions around this time so beware of ambushes planned against you.
 - **There is a ____ second delay between units when switching to a new tech building or making a second harvester.** When you see this you

need to stop making things to fight what's on the field and start anticipating what they could be going for and building things that will do well against them in advance. By the same token, this is usually a good opportunity to press the advantage if you can counter everything on the board and push forward to apply pressure safely.

- **Managing your harvester(s)**
 - Knowing when to let your harvester die, when to use it to hold a platform, when to run it away from attackers, and whether or not you should rebuild a destroyed harvester
- **When you should and should not micro your units**
 - Don't idle units on a platform unless you need to contest the missile, especially right after the missile fires move your unit from the 'safe' platform and get it involved in the game. The exception to this is that if you are in a more aggressive strategy, in which case you should keep the minimum number of units on platforms necessary to keep the missile charging and apply time pressure to your opponent, note however that if your opponent is holding a platform you can just let them charge the missile for you and make full use of your forces, just be sure to not lose track of when you need to pull back and actually win the platforms.

Winning the game

Base rushing

- **Jade + Chem explosions**
 - While the Jade + Chem combination can be a powerful finisher, it relies heavily on first securing a missile.
 - Once you've secured a missile, two chem units and 4 clouds will take out a little over half of a base's health in a single catalyst explosion.
- **Tech**
 - Disruptors, flame tanks, artillery, juggernauts, these units and more can rip apart a base in no time. The problem with the tech plan however is that everyone sees it coming. Tech takes awhile to get going, they may not know what you're doing, but they sure know whatever you throw out there will be threatening enough to have to be dealt with immediately, that's why tech splash decks aren't on this list, if that first unit is a base killer your opponent isn't going to let it anywhere near their base if they can help it. What can work however is if you are running a tech deck that can utilize your base killing units in other ways that synergize with everything else you are running, then you can freely threaten base destruction anytime your opponent leaves even a slight opening without relying heavily on your opponent not being able to counter your attack in time.
- **Aggro**

- Though less common, **aggro decks are just as capable of base destruction as their more dedicated counterparts, but it should not be your main strategy**, if you want to go in thinking you'll blow up bases without missiles look elsewhere.
- Aggro decks generally only go for base assault when either they have a decisive advantage and want to finish the game quickly before the opponent can turn it around, or it is no longer possible to reliably contest the pads but assaulting the base forces a response that leaves an opening to retake one or more pads.
- Naturally **attacking the base when you have the advantage** is more common and far easier to pull off, facing a tech deck and have a spare giga-cannon sitting around while they're slowly building to that first tech unit? Throw it at the base. Secured the pads and have a bunch of tanks sitting around? Keep something on the pad to charge and throw those units at the base. Even if you don't manage to kill the base you will often get it low enough to bring it into play, suddenly your opponent doesn't just have to worry about the pads, they have to keep careful attention to units ignoring the pads and pull things back to defend, whether you go through with those threats or not.
- **Attacking the base when you can no longer contest the pads** is much rarer and often a desperation move. Like assaults where you have great advantage the goal isn't necessarily to destroy the base, its to make base health a factor for your opponent, forcing them to divide their focus between base defense and the pads. In this situation you are looking to use units that are naturally better at destroying bases, things like Infernos, Giga-cannons, etc., following them up with renewed efforts toward the pads.
- **When to go through with base destruction and when to just threaten it.**
 - It's important to remember that even if you are playing with a deck designed to destroy the base you don't need to win that way, often the threat of destroying the enemy base is more than enough to hand you the game, especially if the enemy has figured out your plans. Rushing your base killing units into a prepared enemy is the same as throwing them away, sure every so often this will work, but more often against a good player you'll just lose, the point at the end of the day is to win the game by any means necessary, not to stick unerringly with the strategy you decided long before the game started to the point of making life harder on yourself or actually just losing instead.

Pad Control

- 2 pad maps

- 3 pad maps

After the Game:

- **Analysing your own replays** - It is highly recommended that you watch your own replays after completing a game, win or lose. Go over your replays with a critical eye, figure out why you won or why you lost, but also keep track of the small mistakes in both your play and your opponent's, they may not seem like much but if you continue to see these mistakes over multiple replays then they're something you clearly need to work on, games are rarely won or lost because someone made a major misplay, it's more often an accumulation of these small mistakes that determines the outcome, especially in extremely close games where you might initially think that one bit of micro or one different unit choice might have won it, don't just look at that and go "Ah, I figured it out!", look at why it came down to such a small thing in the first place, what led you into that situation. Paying attention to your opponent's mistakes and the opportunities they open also helps you to identify them in future games and hopefully avoid making them in your own.
- **When to ask for outside assistance** - Anytime you watch one of your own games and can't figure out why you lost or why you won, anytime you watch a game and think you or your opponent played perfectly you should ask for another pair of eyes to look at the game with you. This isn't to say avoid help at all other times, there are many other situations when you should go for help - when your deck just seems to have stopped working for you, when you seem to continuously make the same mistake and can't figure out how to solve it, etc.
- **Tuning decks based on results** -
 - ❖ **Don't make changes on a whim.** First and foremost be warned, nobody should try to tune their deck after a single game or two, you don't really learn how a deck works in that time to really know what to change (obvious exceptions to "Oh shoot I forgot to put something in my deck that can shoot air units/kill infantry/whatever else :P). You want to have solid reasoning and at least a dozen (preferably more) games under your belt with a deck before you start trying to tweak it, learning a new deck takes time, understanding how things should interact takes time, and a few losses here or there aren't enough to say "X thing isn't working burn it with fire!".
 - ❖ **Know the difference between a good deck and a good deck for you.** It's also important to keep in mind that not all decks are for everyone, you may be playing a deck that been proven to work at the highest levels of play, but if you can't play it well that doesn't mean you should sit there and struggle with trying to learn everything you need to know to play that deck all at once, tweak it, make it better fit your playstyle, perhaps someday you'll get it back to where it was before, but you want to be

playing decks that work for you and help you learn, not diving into the deep end and becoming lost in the minutia that makes a deck you can't really play function.

- ❖ **Look at units you aren't using very often.** While this is not always a sure-fire way to find units to cut (please don't realize you're not using missiles and lasers very often and then cut them only to die to rushes every 5th game :P), it's usually a good start, and often indicative that something else could better fill the role that unit is in or that you've overlapped a role in a way you didn't need to -- like running both grenadiers and predator tanks, either might not see much play, but its not necessarily because one of them is bad for your deck, it's because you either build one or the other but rarely both. Sometimes these situations are fine, it may be that your deck utterly dies to an edge case that requires you have them both, but generally speaking if you don't know about such a case you should look at replacing the unit, worst case scenario you find that edge case and learn more about your deck, simply adding that unit back in, or adjusting in a different way to meet it.
- ❖ **Watch your replays and see how well you are utilizing your units.** Maybe you run pitbulls as your early anti-air, you've seen high league players stack and maneuver them across the battlefield, keeping them alive and dealing damage for long periods of time but yours always seem to manage to get picked off and only just perform their needed function before they die, sure you're making them and they're technically working, but there are things you could put in that slot that would work better for you. Not everyone has to master the intricacies of every unit, especially if you have other things you're working on improving that are more fundamental to gameplay; trying to figure out how to use a unit efficiently while still learning the core of the game can be overwhelming, there's no shame in swapping out a unit you just aren't good with for something that works a bit better for you. And just because someone makes a unit look amazing doesn't mean that unit's actually any good either, you can go watch 13lade destroy people with scarabs, but just because he has enough skill to make them work despite their flaws doesn't mean you should start incorporating them into all of your decks. Run things because you like them, because you want to, and most importantly, because they work for you.
- ❖ **Watch the replays of of the top 100 and C&C TV to see how they play.** Specifically, seek out people who are running decks similar to yours, try to predict what they will do, and then see what they actually do. If their unit choices differ from yours try to figure out why and if it's working for them or not, and consider finding their profile and watching more of their games with the deck to get a better sense of what they're doing. Sometimes just seeing how other people work with the same tools can

help you improve your own play and your own deck. Though do take note of the relative unit levels when picking a good game to watch.

- ❖ **Try units that flow better in your decks.** This is a common mistake, you design a deck and play it for awhile, and it works but somehow... it's just clunky... Your units arrive slightly later than you want them, you find yourself with gaps of time where you're sitting there staring at the hotbar waiting for space to clear for that vital counter, you need an answer quickly and realize that you're going to have to go spend 50 on an airfield before you can build it. These are all possible signs of this problem, and sometimes this problem isn't solvable, but it is always worth trying the more accessible option that better fits your deck if you're having these issues. If you're having trouble getting out a venom but are already in the barracks or war factory try a flame trooper or buggy in that spot, perhaps you open infantry and just die to people running chem buggies through your front lines before the first missile launches because you just can't get that tank up in time, why not try grenadiers or marauders instead? It won't always work, but often times you'll find that simplifying one part of your deck is just what's needed, and worst case scenario you just got a slightly better understanding of a unit you weren't using before.
- ❖ **Don't dismiss options because of levels.** Test everything, make a friend for custom matches and try options you can't run currently, it's better to know what works and where you might want to be headed with your future investments then to sit there stubbornly clinging to those 6 units you got up to level. Sometimes you might even find that the level difference doesn't even matter that much, for instance -- sure having those cyberwheels at good levels would be handy, but if your deck just works better opening warfactory and you're running other anti-infantry options you want to get out regularly anyway what does it matter if your scout is slightly weaker?
- ❖ **Tuning is never done.** The meta is always shifting, balance comes and goes, new units come out, people find new and interesting combinations they find more fun that you now have to deal with, you should never be content to sit there with your "perfect" deck, always look at its strengths and weaknesses, always consider the alternatives and whether or not you should adjust your deck as you start running into more of a strategy, you will eventually be forced to adapt, better to know all of your options and be ready for it then to be surprised and lost when the deck suddenly doesn't work anymore.

Appendix:

Reading material:

<https://cncrivals.blogspot.com/> - Articles on everything from strategy to ingame economics

<https://www.reddit.com/r/cncrivals/> - The official rivals subreddit, mostly harmless

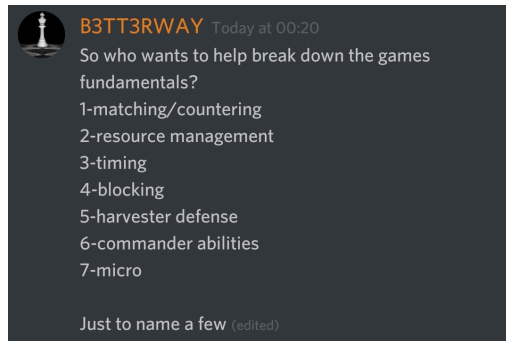
Twitch streams/YouTube:

<https://www.youtube.com/captainbenzie> - An excellent resource for basic information on units, game mechanics, and strategies

<https://www.twitch.tv/13ladetv> -- 13lade regularly discusses balance and tactics while streaming.

<https://www.youtube.com/user/13laded/> - 13lade's Youtube

References



https://cdn.discordapp.com/attachments/520407637381349387/580902094660304916/Screenshots_20190523-023754_Discord.jpg

Technical Details:

Animated GIFs:

Recorded using the built-in IOS recording feature.

<https://instagiffer.com/> used to create the gifs

Settings used:

Smoothness: 15

Quality: 50 (might set lower to keep the size down further)

Remove the quality effect inside the "Open Effects Panel..."

GIF Width/Height: 255x255

Frame Size: 50 (changing this will affect the GIF Width/Height)

On three sentinels, the gif start position is 349,264 for bottom left middle

425,122 For top right corner of pad

322, 122

Original game recording is preferred rather than the replay. It captures the clicks/selection.

Try to keep both gifs the same length.

Remember to give it a few (3+) seconds before start and end of recording.

4 seconds seems to be an ideal length, with 3 and 5 seconds also being acceptable.

GIFS To Do List

- Pad blocking
- Harvester Defense
- **Raider**
Shielding, Stacking, Chasing, Fleeing
- Manual Targeting
- Scarab usage (and particular how the scarab orientation matters in some cases)