

UR Cutter: Accompanying notes

Build Philosophy

Going into the event, we expected 50% of the field to be playing UR or monoR. Additionally, we expected 15-20% of the field to play UW omni, 5-10% to play UB/BW, 5-10% to play domain/UWx control, and the rest to bring some fringe decks/brews.

Hence, we made the decision to preboard 60 cards for UR and monoR, sideboard 10 cards for UW omni and use the remaining slots to cover the Bx midrange and control matchups.

The only sideboard card we actually wanted for the mirror was lithomantic barrage, which also conveniently mapped well against some of the midrange and control matchups.

For a long time we expected close to 25% of UW omni, so I had some slickshots, soul-guide lanterns and spell pierces in the maindeck, but following the online release of Final Fantasy it became clear that UR and MonoR were the decks to beat, and these cards were too costly to draw in those matchups.

In this context, it is easy to see why we opted for 0 copies of Vivi in the maindeck.

First, we found that Vivi performed quite poorly in the mirror. The card needed to be jammed early on t3/4 but was then vulnerable to a torch or flood maw. The typically strong play pattern of t4 Vivi->rage is extremely poor into just one open U mana.

Second, we felt that all of our cards were already good vs monoR/UR - if we wanted to add Vivis, we would have to cut good cards in these matchups. Most players opted to cut either swiftspear or hatcher to make room, but both of these cards are exceptionally strong in the red matchups (certainly better than Vivi).

Third, we just didn't care about beating lockdown decks preboard. This was the only matchup we felt Vivi was meaningfully stronger than either hatcher or swiftspear.

Sure, you can play Vivi on t3 vs Omni and it's much better than drake hatcher. But how much does it actually increase your win percentage by? You cannot interact well with their combo and it is difficult to one-shot them through ephara's. You are much stronger against their 2drop/Lockdown non-combo range, but that's definitely not enough. I'd rather accept a 35% winrate g1 and target the Omni matchup postboard.

Finally, we didn't want to 'midrangeify' our deck around Vivi. If you cut swiftspears for Vivi's (like many players chose to do), you weaken your nut range quite dramatically, and it becomes much harder for you to steal games on the draw generally, particularly vs the mirror and monoR. Your nut range typically contains some 1drop->cori hands, some double-cori+interaction hands, some hatcher->cori hands and quite a lot of double/triple 1drop hands. The double/triple one drop hands are the only part of your nut range that does not contain cori, so removing swiftspear from your deck dramatically reduces the amount of hands that are capable of winning vs strong monoR/UR draws your opponent might have. We actually found that the triple one drop hands, or double 1drop+interaction hands were the strongest hands you could open on the draw in the mirror.

Additionally, the UR midrange decks were incapable of playing an effective and reliable control plan in the mirror or vs monoR. You can't really maindeck any answers to screaming nemesis, and flood maw is ineffective unless you have creatures/cori already in play to progress your board. Vs the mirror, you cannot control cori unless you have abrade in the top10 cards of your deck. Even then you often still lose those games to a 2nd cori or stock up, or you're forced to abrade a drake hatcher and lose to the cori in hand anyway. The core problem we found is that trying to adopt a control plan with abrades and spell pierces

(leaving up mana and trying to prevent them from triggering cori) loses to the creature plan and is specifically weak vs monastery swiftspear. Vs some opponents boarding in lithomantic barrage and roaring furnace, even slickshot show-off becomes fairly threatening.

The control plan works better vs monoR, but it is hard to dedicate enough sideboard slots and maintain a reasonable winrate vs the rest of the field (you need unable to scream/furnace/fresh start for both lizard and nemesis). The midrange version is much stronger in the mid-late game with much better topdecks, but it struggles a lot in the first few turns, and this is typically where the games are decided.

With this version, the best plan is to simply race the monoR player and take advantage that our interaction is much better and our deck is more consistent.

Card Choices

All of the maindeck choices are stock. I would not change any card. We played 3 torch since it is pretty costly to draw in non-red matchups and we trim it in the mirror anyway postboard (you do not want too much interaction and floodmaw/litho are much better against hatcher). In the sideboard you could definitely add an unable to scream or 4th torch over the obliterating bolt if you really wanted to target monoR. We wanted 1 4dmg removal for Bx matchups that we could buyback with talent, so bolt was the best option. Scream is much worse in this version with swiftspears since the chump blocker is awkward and messes with a lot of the combat maths.

We had 2 Ral for quite a while, but cut to 1 since the only matchup we really wanted him was BW pixie (unplayable deck). Then the slickshot/crab/counter split was our plan vs UW omni and mapped vs some of the other Wx matchups. I won ~70% of my postboard games vs Omni in testing with the plan and 5/5 postboard games in the event. You can cut the slickshot/crab plan for Vivis, however I was winning too much with the 5 creature plan to consider changing it. The idea is that slickshot forces them to play at instant speed, since if they tap out you can easily OTK them. Crab was the best card by far against their marang/creature plan since you tap down their blockers and punch them for 5 each turn and they can't ephara/marang it. The crab was the biggest overperformer and I'm very happy that I played 2 in the event. The counter split was perfect, 2 pierce is too many and all of your counters need to target lockdown. Lantern is much much much better than ghost vacuum, being able to aggressively crack it and not be down a card if your opponent decides to board out combo is huge. I was very happy with the sideboard plans and mapping, I felt that I had enough flexibility from the sideboard to adopt various plans in unexpected matchups.

Gameplay - Some notes

The first thing to be aware of in this build is that we have very little card advantage and lots of card disadvantage. Drawing multiples of flood maw/swiftspear/rage and not finding stock up is often game losing. On many occasions, every card is needed to win the game.

Knowing this informs your gameplay in two key ways.

First, you do not want to mulligan aggressively since we perform poorly on low resources. The saving grace of this deck is that you can mulligan to 5 and open cori+cantrips and not have to worry about resources, but many of your non-cori hands on 5 cards have low chances of winning. I will still mulligan many 7 card hands that lack a plan or have <2 or >3 lands. However, I will mulligan few 6 card hands and will frequently keep 1landers with 1 cantrip otp or 1 landers with no cantrips otd.

Second, you want to prioritise chipping damage in early. It is a lot easier to find lines to kill

your opponent from 8 through a removal spell than from 18. I will frequently cast monstrous rage on turn 2 if my opponent is tapped out and I do not have better plays since I want to convert it into damage early. Note: casting rage on t2 is quite important with some hands vs decks with x/3s (mirror/UB) since it allows you to stock up on t3 and continue attacking. Many of our cards give us a temporary advantage on board (flood maw/rage) but these cards are useless unless we have some way to capitalize on this advantage (creatures/cori/stock up).

In the red matchups especially, make sure to represent monstrous rage. If you played t1 talent and your opponent played t2 drake hatcher, you should attack with your 1/1 and play your hatcher/cori postcombat. Vs monoR, magebane lizard does not block very well. You can easily get in for 5 damage across a few turns by attacking with your prowess creatures. We actually found lizard to be pretty underwhelming, it can't attack or block and only gets a few damage in across a typical game. These matchups are pretty straightforward to play, typically try to play your hatchers before coris with some exceptions. And count, every turn.

Vs Omni, you're pretty behind g1. Throw caution to the wind and play round nothing unless you can afford to. You want threat dense hands that can get a chunk of damage in early and then you try set up flood maw on a lockdown and get the last chunk of damage in. Postboard you do the opposite. You don't want to give them a good lockdown and you rarely want to let them ephara's your otter token. Our best hands are just a monastery swiftspear/slickshot and a ton of cantrips. Typically plot slickshot but there are some spots where you want to hardcast on t2. Save your negates/get out unless the card they're casting will win the game. Use the pierce fairly aggressively. If you see them board in voice of victory/lots of creatures I would board in some lithomantic over additional rages.

I like keeping hatcher/rage vs a lot of the domain/UW decks. Often they play taplands in the early turns and getting in for 6 then fading/countering lockdown is usually enough to win.

Final Notes

In the sidebar mapping document, some of the boxes are highlighted red. These are possible plans that you might want to implement. The BG roots matchup I haven't tested enough to know the flood maw quantity and I think the eddymurk crab plan vs monoR could be very effective on the draw.

I also want to say really think about whether or not you should cast your spell this turn or save it for the next turn. Many times I want to cast exactly 2 spells to trigger cori each turn and no more. We want a constant flow of creatures with cori, we don't want to burn all our cantrips in one turn and do nothing on the next. Think about how you can apply the most amount of pressure while spending the least amount of resources.

Also think deeply about how you want to sequence your cards on the first few turns, this is very often dictated by your manabase. With many basics and verges, using heuristics about which spell to cast first is quite dangerous. While casting swiftspear into talent gets more damage than talent into swiftspear on t2, swiftspear has haste and you will often do more damage on the first 4 turns by casting talent first and swiftspear later. Many times, your choice is dictated by your manabase or which spells you have in hand/want to find off

cantrips. The best practice is to think on your opening 7 and really plan the first few turns each time.

That's all from me :)
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