

With the advent of the new ranked mode and unranked draft coming out, I feel like people are more interested in this aspect of the game but also woefully unprepared. This is a quick guide to the basics of drafting as HotS currently stands. Outside of specific cheeses or experimentation (which should not happen in HL, please) there is very, very rarely a reason to deviate from this format.

The Basics

First a caveat: Some heroes fill a role better than others in general and for certain comps specifically. For instance Johanna's only initiation against good players are her Heroics, meaning she can only initiate fights every 60 seconds at most. Diablo has great initiation but his sole claim to survivability is a large health pool, which is a once per fight resource. There are tons of tier lists that try and rank these heroes. I'm not doing that. I'm saying that, played well, these heroes CAN do the job listed. If they aren't on the list, they can't. Draft accordingly. Note that specialists are not unique snowflakes in these lists, they are lumped in with whatever role they actually do in a comp. Labels are only good if they are accurate, "Specialist" is just a catch-all category, not a limitation on what heroes are capable of.

The Frontline

Every comp should have two melee. One of these should be a tank. Not a warrior. A tank. Someone who can initiate fights, peel, soak damage, and ideally has some mobility as they will act as mobile scouts, which usually means taking the more dangerous rotation path and standing in lots of bushes.

Tanks: Anub'Arak, Arthas, Chen, Dehaka, Diablo, E.T.C, Johanna, Leoric, Muradin, Stitches, Rexxar, Tyreal.

The other should be a bruiser. That is someone who does a reasonable amount of damage and, most important, doesn't die. They have self-sustain and damage. The reason the tank, above, needs to be survivable is because the bruiser should absorb most of the support's attention.

Bruisers: Artanis, Arthas, Chen, Dehaka, Diablo, Illidan, Kerrigan (Shrines and Tomb only), Leoric (only against multiple tank comps), Muradin, Rexxar, Sonya, Stitches, The Butcher, Thrall, Xul, Zeratul (not ideal in the role, essentially has regen master, blink, and VP in place of real sustain).

The Damage

In an ideal world you will have one sustained damage dealer and one burst damage dealer. Most bruisers qualify as sustained damage dealers already, which is why you often see Mages (including Falstad) being drafted as solo ranged damage dealers in pro play. Having just

sustained or just burst is not ideal, but is workable. Falstad, with the ability to be either just by switching talent builds, is amazing in this regard.

Ranged damage: Azmodan (stacks on BHB, Shire, Tomb, Shrines, and Towers otherwise he occupies the flex slot), Chromie, Falstad, Jaina, Kael'Thas, Li-Ming, Lunara, Nazeebo, Nova, Raynor, Sgt. Hammer, Sylvanas, Tracer, Tychus, Valla, Zagara.

The Support

You need a support. This gets into a strange area because at a high level of play there are only three viable solo supports that just work. Every other support needs to have the right type of draft on both your team and the enemy team to work, but in less coordinated environments (HL/Unranked/QM) the lack of focused damage on single targets dramatically changes, which makes other supports viable as solos. On the other hand, most supports are viable as double supports, usually but not always occupying the flex spot, but this makes focus fire even more of a requirement to actually finish kills, so drafting double support in HL or unranked is always a risk. With those caveats in mind:

Coordinated play viable solo supports: Rehgar, Uther, Kharazim. Morales can be added to this list if the enemy team has limited dive potential, near zero area of effect burst, and no spread DoT.

Uncoordinated play, comp dependent, and/or double support: Brightwing (cannot ever take Cleanse solo), Kharazim, Lili, Morales, Malfurion, Rehgar, Tassadar, Tyrande, Uther. It should be noted I'm not thrilled with where the support meta is right now, but this is just how it is for the moment.

The Flex

The last spot is flex. It can be anything that works on the map, works for your comp, or counters the enemy comp. Any of the above heroes can occupy the flex slot, though you should almost never double on tanks that are only on the tank list.

Heroes that are only flex: Abathur, Cho'Gall (replace the tank or the bruiser with Cho, Gall is the flex), Gazlowe, Medivh, Murky, The Lost Vikings.

The Maps and the Lanes

While covering all of the above, you need a solo laner on the following maps: Dragon Shire (Top), Tomb (Bot), BHB (Bot), Shrines (Top), Towers of Doom (Top), Sky Temple (Bot), BoE (either). Garden and Cursed there is not a preferred solo lane, but you should still draft a solo laner and pick either top or bot so one lane is always managed. Having a solo laner is not about wave clear. It is about safety. You want to know that 1) They will not miss any soak, due to being

dead or forced out of lane. 2) They will not be ganked on rotations, and 3) they can keep the minion wave off the towers, preventing loss of ammo. So they need sustain, range, escape, vision in some combination that allows that to happen. Wave clear? If they can clear the wave before the towers start shooting it, that is all they need. Wave clear is about enabling rotations, solo laners are not concerned with rotating, they want to manage their lane. Sylvanas and Xul are not great solo laners for this reason. Sylvanas has an escape with a clear wind up and no sustain, Xul does not get sustain till 7, never has any vision or escapes. They are far, far, better utilized elsewhere on the map, acting as force multipliers for your team's laning. This is one of the most common mistakes in the entire game, which is why I am emphasizing it.

Solo laners: Anub'Arak, Arthas, Azmodan (only on flex, not on ranged damage/stacks as he cannot stack efficiently solo), Brightwing, Chen, Falstad, Greymane, Illidan, Leoric, Lunara, Malfurion, Murky, Nazeebo, Rehgar, Rexxar, Tassadar, Thrall, Tyreal, Sonya, Valla, Zagara, Zeratul.

Map Specific Additions or Priorities

Towers of Doom: TLV, but it is a very difficult map for them.

Infernal Shrines: Xul and Sylvanas are, far and away, the two best heroes on this map. Xul can consistently soak two lanes during early punishers getting a huge lead if the rest of your team delays and doesn't die, while Sylvanas can more than double the value of any punisher that is won. Diablo, Kerrigan, and Cho'gall are all quite strong here as well.

Battlefield of Eternity: Greymane, Lunara, Sylvanas, Tyrande. BoE has the single strongest objective in the game. Winning it consistently wins the game. These four heroes provide more damage, while not having notable downsides, to win the immortal than any others. Plus Sylvanas can more than double the value of any won Immortal.

Tomb of the Spider Queen: Xul's map. Go mid, clear the wave. Rotate top, clear the wave. Repeat until you win the game. A comp with Xul on Tomb basically should not lose. Also the second map where Kerrigan is a generally viable bruiser and yet another map where pushing with a Sylvanas adds incredible value.

Sky Temple: TLV, globals just due to sheer size, anyone with sustain and damage to solo temples is a great asset.

Garden of Terror: TLV. A TLV comp should not ever lose on GoT, assuming two teams of equal skill.

Blackheart's Bay: You must, must, must, must, must draft a hero who can solo camps efficiently. Illidan and Sonya are the two top tier heroes for this, but there are other options. Starting from minute 2:00 and most of the way through the game, this is all they will be doing.

Dragon Shire: REXXAR is the only solo laner that can safely and efficiently hold top shrine and clear the top lane. He is a pocket pick on this map that, played well, should all but guarantee the enemy team never gets a DK.

Cursed Hollow: The actual win condition of this map is not the Tributes, though they help open it up. The actual win condition is the bosses. As soon as either top or bot keep is destroyed, the boss that pushes that respective lane becomes a high automatic win condition. For this reason boss steal heroics are more highly valued on this map than any other. Not only to win, but to prevent losing outright. Chen, Tyrael, Zagara, Falstad, Thrall, and Brightwing all have the potential to make game winning plays with their heroics on this map. Outside of that, globals to keep lanes pushed and mercability to keep lanes pushed are both highly valued.

All rights reserved.