

EA Arcoscephale - The Children of Olympus



Arco is quite a versatile nation with a wide tool box for every occasion. There's a lot of different directions you can go in for this nation, and while many may have the impression that this is a slow, deliberate nation marching plodding communions around - that's not the nation we're playing today. Today we're going hard, we're going aggressive, we're going full Clash of the Titans and we're gonna to channel the might of Olympus to remind the world who the OGs of godly warfare are.

Pegasus Is One Badass Horse

The centerpiece of this strategy is the glorious Wind Riders and their commanders the Wind Lords. For some reason Arco is a nation that people tend to overlook when considering ferocious sacreds, but make no mistake - those pegasus shock troopers are the best in the game at what they do. These are no blunt instruments like those ubiquitous regenerating giants, what they are is medium strength flying assault terrors with unparalleled mobility, great flexibility, and finesse few can deal with.

The goal with Wind Riders is not to stand toe to toe and slug it out like many sacreds, it's to use their mobility to give your opponents no safe space. To project your power everywhere, cut off supply lines and leave your opponents in no-win situations. To start though, we're going to conquer indies and expand in one of the fastest year one's in the game.

First stop on our world conquest is to be blessed by Zues with awe (F7 blessing). After that get Hades to dip those pegasus stormtroopers in the stygian river (D5 blessing). Hang them up because once they're dry - that is all you need to absolutely obliterate your initial expansion. Crazy fast expansion. A Lord leading 3 Riders with this blessing can reliably take the weaker indies, but you're not recruiting 3. With Order-3 scales (pretty much your only scale needed) you can get up to pumping out 8 or so per turn - limited by resources, gold, or holy points (take a high dominion score!). With a flying map move of 22 and the strength to punch through almost any indies easily your expansion is frighteningly fast. Use your absurd maneuverability to double up expansion parties for the harder indies, then splinter to quickly gobble up the easy pickings. You'll take a loss here or there, but overall you're gonna blast through indies like....well like Perseus with blessings from the gods riding a flying horse!

This is almost certainly all you need to be one of the leaders in year one. This game does tend to go on beyond that, so rounding out the big three what boon do we ask from Poseidon? There's lots of good options from the god of the sea, far more than you'll be able to afford so this comes down to preferences. Some particular good choices to consider that won't break the bank:

Magic Weapons - (hard counter to a number of things)

Spirit Sight - (Solar Eclipse is easy for you, and your pretender can put up Darkness)

Wind Walker - (up your best-in-game mobility to ludicrous good)

Chill Aura - (clutch in some matchups and reasonably cheap)

Fire & Shock resistance (pretty straightforward)

No wrong choices, each of these makes Wind Riders very hard to deal with in some circumstances - circumstances you can lean into for your build (and you should consider, knowing your specific opponent nations). The great thing about Arco's wide toolbox is that it's easy enough to go Grip of Winter or Heat from Hell or Solar Eclipse or...lots of options depending on what your build can support without being hard committed to anything. This is important because while Wind Riders will easily demolish indies and PD, and they're pretty good at not dying, they can struggle a bit with damage outlay against heavies.

I do want to take a quick sidebar to break down why Spirit Sight/Darkness is such a powerful play, for a nation that doesn't naturally scream "BLOT OUT THE SUN!". Realistically, you're probably only going to be looking at full Darkness from your pretender (lucky we took the D5 blessing!), but Darkness's little brother Solar Eclipse can be cast by any fire random Mystic with a couple gems (Phoenix Power first), and the 2F mystics can put it up carrying a very modest Fire in a Jar. Very small investment, you can easily have this up for any substantial battle. Solar Eclipse results in a -3 att/def/prec for anybody who can't see in the dark. -3 to your opponent's attack/def is effectively a +3 to your attack/def, which is especially effective on a high defense, awe based unit. Full Darkness via your pretender for key battles brings an effective +6 to your already sturdy pegasuses which brings them to nigh untouchable against many types of units since the awe already reduces the number of attacks they need to defend against. This also tanks the precision of the enemy mages frantically trying to find some way to bring those awe-ful flying horses down after they have flown straight into melee. What could possibly go wrong trying to blast close combat support when your aiming just went all wonky?

Early Warfare - Athena Air Power

So we've conquered more than our fair share of indies and have established ourself as a world power to watch. Now that we're looking at our first real war, let's see what step two is.

Athena is not just the goddess of war and wisdom - but also of crafting! Your first research goal is going to be Construction 2. This is because your Wind Lords are tough enough to lead from the front line! With a few Riders guarding commander the Lords have a pretty high survivability against most things. Shortly after the game starts you'll start handing out Greatswords of

Sharpness and Lucky Pendants to some of your Wind Lords, and this will handily chop up all but the toughest enemy pretenders stomping around in the early game. This is great, cheap default equipment, but obviously you've got tons of options to kit out other nastiness depending on what you're facing. Even fully kitted and powered SCs can be taken out like this with a little bit of thought as you unlock higher levels of construction.

The real strength of the Riders though is that they can (and will) be everywhere. With this blessing it's not realistic to stop them with PD, and with their flying map move their threat projection area is horrific (especially if you took the Wind Walker blessing). Your primary strategy here is to destroy the enemy economy, hit everywhere he can't defend well, and when they start putting troops and mages out to catch you - triple and quadruple up your raiding squads to come together, overwhelm and squash the defenders who are trying to spread out too much. Hit their cap and siege it for just a turn - force them to burn mage time guarding castles and chasing horse tail. They're everywhere, and tough enough to take out anything that isn't a pretty hard defense. This does take a bit of finesse in outplaying your opponent and anticipating their moves a bit, but this right here is what those glorious pegasuses are so damn good at! You've got the dominant hand and this raid game is yours to lose.

This is an aggressive early game, but you're not locked into a rush strategy - where you need to make your first moves super fast before your opening play loses steam. EA Arco starts pretty strong, but also has a pretty steady power curve growth. Just as your opponents start fielding counters to your blessed pegasus you're ready to counter his counters and kick them up a notch to freshly difficult to deal with. Arco's mages are pretty good at research, and your pretender needs to be awake for the blessing but has no need to help out with your already blistering expansion, and why not use your initial A income to crank out a few owl quills since we went straight for construction 2. Your initial research push ends up being surprisingly brisk to pair with such aggressive opening moves - even with drain scales to pay for an expensive blessing.

It is impractical to get a bunch of mages to everywhere your horsies are zipping around to, but consider Constr-4 + Thau-3 as good early targets for that brisk research. Making a couple astral caps to get some teleport capable mystics is very do-able pretty early, and that's gonna open up some very welcome magic support wherever those horsies want to fly. What kind of early game support tricks does Athena inspire? Athena DGAF what your opponent is fielding - just one or two mystics 'porting in can hard counter most early game shenanigans.

Clearly, if you've got one guy teleporting in you're not going to be doing all of this at once, but just use some imagination and think about how much leverage it is to pick whichever of the following is most impactful for these relatively early fights. Remember that a lowly E1 mystic, holding an E gem can cast Earthpower, and burning another gem can then cast E3 spells. Look at that, we just teleported in those classic twins of Strength of Giants/Legions of Steel by burning 3E gems. Antimagic, Flame Ward & Cold Resistance are similarly easy.

We'll talk more about Oreiads in a bit, but if your early game need is for their menu they can Cloud Trapeze in Thunder & Poison Ward - which if you're keeping score gives you access to

every elemental resistance at magic speed for any of your Wind Riders that need it. This is a counter-counter to many of the early game things you'd otherwise be worried about killing off your Wind Riders, and is a pretty powerful tool even into late game.

But wait - these teleporting support mages can do so much more! Don't forget about the wonderful Power of the Spheres, which your Mystics can cast as well as Earth/Phoenix Power ...opening up a lot of nasty options. Having just a couple mystics ready to teleport lets you suddenly, as a surprise, show up to early fighting with Curse of Stones, Solar Eclipse, or Heat from Hell. Since you're already at constr-4 for the Astral Cap, go ahead and make some Earth Boots and a Ring of Levitation, and now you're teleporting in Earthquakes. Think that might be helpful with all your guys flying? There's a steady parade of increasing nastiness available to teleport in as your research and access to boosters progresses.

You can push into mid game very effectively with fairly light magic support, but regardless of how you buff them your Wind Riders are gonna struggle to stand toe to toe with the best heavies in the game. When you find yourself on the wrong end of the melee math it's time to turn to Athena's half-brother.

God of War - Battlefield Magic, Ares style

Awe and Stygian Skin are fantastic against average troops, but are hard countered by certain kinds of units. It's not like Wind Riders are pushovers even without the blessing, but those resistances we were just talking about are not gonna help much against the wood chippers that some of the enemy elites are, with their inconsiderate berserking and magic weapons. Clearly you're going to have to win some pitched battles to make it very far in the game, so now it's time to remember the obvious part about Arco - fantastic artillery! A Mystic pops out every turn, from every non-cap castle you get up. Let loose the dogs of a much more direct God of War and start the carnage of Falling Fires, Astral Fires, Blade Wind, Cleansing Water, Poison Clouds - Arco has a variety in their hard hitting evos that few other nations can match. Pick the one your opponent is weak to and get to blasting. Don't overlook Frozen Heart and Incinerate if those are the better tools - critical mass of those blasting will absolutely shred heavies that might struggle off the wider area effects. They also don't care about the Darkness/Solar Eclipse you may be putting up.

You generally want to avoid communions for broad evo barrages as you'll have a high attrition rate of the slaves. Between Light of the Northern Star, Power of the Spheres, Earth/Phoenix Power, and burning gems it's often better to not communion up if you're planning on blasting evos because even if you manage to avoid slave attrition - you've got a pretty good percentage of your mages not doing anything other than being a slave. If you need to burn out some slaves though don't sweat too much - those mystics do recruit fairly fast so losing a few in the wash isn't the end of the world.

Where communions do shine though is letting a couple masters lay down a couple fight winning big spells - this is why it's trivial to get up that Heat from Hell/Grip of Winter/Fire Storm/Will of

the Fates/<almost literally whatever is helpful>. Your pretender of course is a premier communion master (with a crystal matrix if necessary) - get creative about fielding the biggest spells in the game, depending on what paths your pretender settled on. Your Wind Riders now become super effective bodyguards (particularly if you have magic weapons to ward off things like Air Elementals) while your mages layeth the smaketh upside yon hethen's face. Eth. Ares DGAF.

EA Arco is generally not gonna have a terribly high unit count because to be honest I have a hard time justifying recruiting anything other than pegasus and mages with this build most of the time. They're cap only, but if you get to the point that you're maxing out Rider production from your cap and you still need more troops you're better off looking to summons to fill the gap. Arco has such a wide range of options it's hard to look at them all absent a specific situation, but depending on what gems you've got handy Mechanical Men and Vine Ogres are fair choices for filling out some mass in your armies and gargoyles can give you some extra flying support. You generally won't need too many line troops though because your pegasuses can do some heavy lifting with smallish numbers to hold off the nasties long enough that your evocations make people remember what happens to mortals that slight the gods in Greek mythology.

You're not just leaning on your opening pegasus play to carry the day though. As your research progresses and you can throw in some magic support, those pegasuses become a lot more able to slug it out with the heavies. Lucky, Spirit Sighted Wind Lords snicker-snacking around with nasty forged items under Darkness are genuinely terrifying to most things even without artillery to drop the hammer. If appropriate invest your first couple turns in Body Ethereal & Iron Warriors - its painfully inefficient to get the buffs up on size 4 units, but if you've got bunch of mystics about to drop into a communion it may not be too outrageous to spam these a dozen times first - and it'll make your Wind Riders damn near invincible in melee while there's not a hell of a lot that's gonna tank the forged weapon blows you've got sprinkled in...and then of course there's that communion that just powered up. Hoping to take down annoyingly resilient pegasuses before Heat from Hell/Grip of Winter brings you to your knees is not the bet you want to be forced to make. And we haven't even gotten into Thaumaturgy yet! There's some obvious gotos in that school, but for the real money shot hail to the king baby!

Zeus' Gun Show - Death from the Mountaintop

Zeus is iconically a lightning bolt throwing sonofabitch, and air magic is one of the few paths Arco doesn't have particularly good chops in. Functionally though, sudden murder out of a clear blue sky is the domain of the father of all gods, so we'll channel that in spirit. EA Arco has the best healers in the game, and an easy time forging crystal coins, astral caps, rune smashers and void eyes. That's a fair investment of gems (55!), but - add all this up and you have the potential for a horrific mind hunt artillery squad with the capacity to heal your own feebleminds. Zeus says what? This is a big deal because you can be a lot more aggressive in your mindhunting - targeting stuff when you're not sure if there is enemy astral cover or not. If your opponent has anything other than ubiquitous astral mages all over this will likely bring them to their knees once you get it set up - it is BRUTAL when you're set up to spam this many times

per turn. If you recall one of our core strategies is to force your opponent to spread themselves out trying to stop pegasus raiders and having the potential battlefield each turn be everywhere. This will often give you many sweet targets for mind hunts, and is the sort of no-win situation for your opponent I was referring to. Oh, you thought your sacreds were going to stop the pegasus raiders? Who...exactly was it you thought was gonna bless them? Guess you didn't bring magic weapons to this fight after all. Oh - so sorry, half your units didn't move into this fight because the guy leading them had a bad case of exploded soul. Be prepared for your opponent to rage quit once you get this annihilation squad going - it's pretty hard to get out from under if your nation doesn't naturally have the tools.

Plus, even if you guessed wrong and there's too many enemy astral mages to make this effective, you maaaaay be able to find a use or two for S4 penetration boosted mages.

Like....

First - invest in a 3 gem Ritual of Returning since you've already stuck 55 gems worth of items on these guys, and you probably want to stick some cheap armor (lion pelts are good ones) to keep them from being one-shotted. It's a reasonable insurance policy because...they all Teleport and Gateway (Arco builds labs for 250 gold!). They can also Soul Slay/Enslave Mind and Astral Fires - which are all nasty as fuck penetration boosted and spammed in critical mass. They can also air drop in a Light of the Northern Star. This is even bigger than it seems at first glance because almost all your mages have at least S1. LotNS brings them all to at least S2, which makes every mage you've got able to cast Power of the Spheres without expending all their fatigue. This makes an ENORMOUS difference for high effort fights because suddenly with judicious gem burning pretty much every one of your mystics, even the weird low cross path ones are able to chunk exotic spells like Acid Rain and Magma Eruption. Obviously this also puts everybody to 3+S setting up a really alarming amount of Soul Slay or Astral Fires spam out of mages otherwise probably relegated to communion slave fodder. This same sort of fuckery can be accomplished with communions, but communions have the very substantial drawback of requiring critical mass to be feasible. Your teleporting S4 gangsters can drop in to crank up those 3 mystics sitting way over there who can now blast enough firepower to stop anything but a substantial army. Try pulling that off with a communion.

When you do want to communion though, your teleporting S4 gangsters can air drop in to lead them for all the biggest astral spells in the game (many of which benefit from penetration) - I won't bother to list them all. Think this might be a wonderful synergy with super mobile flying stormtroopers? So, yeah - it's an investment to kit several guys like this, but you're probably gonna want to invest a fair percentage of your gems in exactly this as these are the office workers of Olympus and Zeus has a naughty list to work through. Zeus most especially DGAF.

Aphrodite's Tricks

There is one last small, but quite significant gift from Aphrodite - your cap only Oreiads. Being slow to recruit, and competing with Wind Lords you're not gonna have that many, but you

definitely want to recruit a few because you can do a hell of a lot with just a handful as they're fantastic force multipliers. First off, they can all Cloud Trapeze, so even if you've only got a couple there's a good chance you can get one to any critical battles. They're also stealthy, and definitely worth considering equipping with mobility items like 7 Mile Boots. These girls get around.

That's all good and well, but why do we care? Well they bring strong access to two paths you don't otherwise have - A&N. If you're banking on your mystics bringing down the bad guys before they can overwhelm your fairly limited blockers, having an Oreiad come screaming down out of the clouds to lay Wind Guide then Howl down is gonna completely change the battlefield. If you're on the other end of the equation, having a stealthy Oreiad pop up to lay Mist down on top of the Darkness you put up is going to make your opponent's attempts to shoot your pretty horses down...problematic. This might be a good time to script your Mystics for Incinerates and Frozen Hearts for some very unhappy opponents. Also - a surprise air elemental or two can really hit an Achilles Heel sometimes. Pretty big contribution from a single mage.

Oreiards can also cast Strength of Gaia, and with a thistle mace really high N spells come in reach. Several of the big N battlefield spells are situationally quite powerful (like Serpent's Blessing, Relief, Mass Regen, etc.), but there's also the more universally powerful Syllable of Sleep. One or two Oreiards spamming Syllable of Sleep will shift some major battles! Go ahead and give them a Rune Smasher and Spell Focus for this party.

Finally there's some more niche plays with Oreiards that can be clutch in some situations, particularly with a Crystal Matrix (Crystal Shields can also sometimes get you there with much more mobility!). Surprise Rain of Stones has wrecked more than one person's day. Storm + Wrathful skies might be just the play if you took that Fire & Shock resistance and your opponent is huddled back anticipating all those horsies attacking rear. Slapping Fog Warriors on your flying horsies might be the thing you need for this fight. Add Foul Vapors to the threat list Arco can bring to the party (I did mention you can drop Serpent's Blessing, right?). There's a lot of really heavy hitting stuff here that likely your opponent was not expecting Arco to pull out.

Last but not least Oreiards can do some welcome lab work. Having a few pairs of winged/7 mile boots in your lab greatly aids in shuffling fresh mystics to the front line (don't bring them to fights - these are logistic support). Seeking Arrows can be a hilarious supplement to toss at that very expensive, rare astral mage your opponent managed to scrape up as Mind Hunt cover. Aphrodite does G lots of Fs, but your opponent isn't gonna like them.

RELEASE THE KRAKEN

For late game SC chassis golems are solid, teleporting units - though you've always got plenty of uses for pearls. Your pretender can summon wraith lords and fire royalty - including the banefire lord, and possibly others depending on the paths you picked. Enemy SCs have the unenviable task of being required to have strong MR items because of heavy mind hunt/soul

slays, needing pretty well full elemental resists and then - needing to live through whatever nastiness your Wind Lords are swinging around. Your blessing makes Sacred Shrouds pretty cost effective thug gear for a number of medium weight guys to supplement your Wind Lords (awe + vine shield and it almost doesn't matter what your chassis is for PD popping).

It's hard to properly appreciate how dynamic and mobile this Arco is - starting straight out the gate on turn one and ramping up aggressively from there. This is combined with a strong ability to muck up most other nations' maneuverability - blocking off options and leaving them perpetually responding to you. I guess you could play Arco as a slow infantry blocking and hoping your communions will carry the day, but...why in the world would you want to do that?