

CZ0516: HOW TO PLAY INFECT (WITH MR. INFECT)

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1) INTRO Craig & Rachel

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All Will Be One introduced a brand new way to poison your opponents with the Toxic mechanic, which means a new age of Poison has begun! Today, with the help of Mr. Infect himself, we're going to be discussing the ins and outs of building and piloting one of the most contentious strategies in Commander: INFECT. BUT FIRST:

****CARD KINGDOM** **ULTRAPRO #1** **PATREON: KAYLA NORDSTROM****

2) MAIN TOPIC: **HOW TO PLAY INFECT**

Poison is an aggressive strategy playing with slightly different rules than other aggro decks. It uses smaller creatures with special abilities, but only has to deal 10 poison damage to each player rather than 40. This means the timing is completely different from other aggro strategies. Where a Boros aggro deck may win on turn 8 with multiple combats and buffed up creatures, Poison decks hope to take individual players out much earlier. It takes a very special build to do so.

BUILDING AN INFECT DECK

Traditionally, Infect decks are Black and Green with Blue or White as supporting colors. They are fast and low to the ground, using cheap infect creatures and pump effects to KO their opponents.

INFECT CREATURES *Let's start with the most important part of any infect deck: infect creatures.*

- *Low MV* > Glistener Elf, Blight Mamba, Ichorclaw Myr;
- *High MV* > Tine Shrike; Shriek Raptor; Putrefax; Skithiryx, the Blight Dragon; Phyrexian Hydra;

PUMP EFFECTS *The scariest part about playing against Infect is the pump effects. Which do you include?*

- Modality and utility is IMPORTANT
 - Ruinous Intrusion; Simic Charm; Berserk;
 - *Equipment* > Sword of Feast & Famine; Sword of Forge & Frontier;
- *Lethal pump spells* > Hatred, Might of Oaks; Stonewood Invocation; Predator's Strike;
- *Traps* > Not just +2/+2

BREAK THE LINE *What happens when your opponents get blockers down?*

- Remove those blockers and clear the way for big attacks!
 - Swords to Plowshares; Go For the Throat; Chain of Vapor; Snap;

EVASION *If you can't remove them all, how do you ensure your attackers make it through?*

- Rogue's Passage; Demonic Embrace; You Come to A River;

PROTECTION *Sounds like the table is going to have to come for you fast, how do you prepare for that kind of attention?*

- *Protect your boys* > Winged Boots, Swiftfoot Boots, Heroic Intervention;
 - Ward is GREAT; Shroud is not great.
- *Protect yourself* > No Mercy; Ghostly Prison; Propaganda;

PROLIFERATION *Even with pump spells and evasion, it seems like those last few Poison counters will be tough. How do you get them to 10?*

- Flux Channeler; Evolution Sage; Karn's Bastion; Inexorable Tide; Contagion Engine; Unnatural Restoration; Contaminant Graft; Vat Emergence; Norn's Choirmaster; Bloated Contaminator;

CARD ADVANTAGE *When your curve is this low, it's very easy to run out of cards. How do you keep cards in your hand and on the battlefield?*

- Hunter's Insight; Momentous Fall; Village Rites; Deadly Dispute; Distorted Curiosity;
- Sylvan Library; Black Market Connections; Necropotence; Rhystic Study; Mystic Remora; Ixhel, Scion of Atraxa;
- *Recursion* > Reap; Geth's Summons;

TRAPS *Okay. Before we move on, any pitfalls to avoid? Any traps our viewers should be aware of?*

- Don't need to ramp at all. Your curve is low. Turn 2 is for creatures not signets.
- Board wipes aren't great in this deck unless they're one-sided or provide added synergy.
 - Cyclonic Rift; River's Rebuke; White Sun's Twilight;
- Not ALL toxic/poison cards are infect cards.
 - Skrelv's Hive; Venerated Rotpriest; Ria Ivor, Bane of Bladehold;
 - Phyrexian Swarmlord;

BUILDING A TOXIC DECK

All Will Be One and Toxic changed the pace of poison decks a little. It introduced a go-wide strategy that hasn't really been possible in the past. (With the exception of Fynn the Fangbearer?) Corrupted cards added payoffs for spreading poison around, which was an actively bad strategy with Infect. It feels like building a Toxic deck is completely different than building an Infect deck.

SIMILARITIES

- Proliferation, defense, and board protection are just as important in a Toxic deck
- Corrupted cards are likely good in both strategies. They add value and reach to any deck adding poison counters

DIFFERENCES

- Toxic strategies are less go-tall (one creature dealing 10 poison) and more go-wide (5-10 creatures doing 1-2 poison).
 - Ria Ivor, Bane of Bladehold; Vishgraz, the Doomhive; Kinzu of the Bleak Coven;
- Because of this, infect creatures are less important overall.
- Has a lot of similarities to a token deck
 - *Token doublers* > Mondrak, Glory Dominus; Anointed Procession;
 - *Mass evasion* > Akroma's Will; Akroma's Memorial; Ohran Frostfang; Mirri, Weatherlight Duelist; Rebec, Architect of Ascension; Champion of Lambholt;
 - *Mass protection* > Clever Concealment; Guardian of Faith;

*****MIDROLL POINT***** *You've built your deck, you're ready to go. Next up, we're going to talk about piloting your poison deck to victory. BUT FIRST! A few words from our sponsors.*

PLAYING WITH POISON

Let's walk through how your infect games will likely play out and what to do every step of the way.

EARLY PRESSURE *Ok. Turn 1, Turn 2, what do you want to be doing?*

- No set up turns.
- Look for a low CMC Infect creature in your opening hand.
- Aggressive out of the gate.

PROTECT YOURSELF *The table has started to turn against you by turn 3, how do you respond?*

- Start building a pillowfort.
- You're starting the game playing 3v1 so be prepared for interaction. Don't overcommit to the board, hold up mana for protection spells.
- The tendency is to go fast and hard, but don't open yourself up to getting blown out.

FIGHT STABILIZATION *It's turn 4, blockers are down, your opponents are playing defensively, what do you do next?*

- Cast and equip your swords.
- Stay on the straggler (hopefully the most controlling deck)
- Could be a good early use of a bounce or targeted removal spell if they only have one blocker.
- Do anything you can do to keep opponents from getting to the late game. Stay wary of huge ramp pieces. Delay, delay, delay.

LETHAL BLOW *A few turns later, you are not going to be able to get in for more combat damage, how do you close the game out?*

- This is the moment for last ditch attacks with evasion.
- Use your one-sided board wipe to reset opponents and deal surprise damage.
- Can't attack? Lock down the board with something like Glacial Chasm.
- Get proliferating.
- Good time for Corrupted cards or cards that say put counters directly onto players
 - Caress of Phyrexia; Ichor Rats; Infectious Inquiry;

CAUTION *What do you have to be wary of when you're playing Infect? What are the major pitfalls?*

- Board wipes and single target removal can ruin your strategy.
- Anticipate they are coming your way. Play around them. Leave up protection.

3) **TO THE LISTENERS**

Are you building a toxic or infect deck in the wake of All Will Be One? Who is the commander? What is your favorite piece of poison tech?

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

4) **THE END STEP**

Something cool outside the world of Magic

5) CLEAN-UP STEP

Big thanks to our amazing team here at The Command Zone! **Damen Lenz; Arthur Meadowcroft; Ladee Danger; Manson Leung; Josh Murphy; Jake Boss; Jordan Pridgen; Sam Waldow; Gaurav Gulati; Jamie Block; Mitch Trafford; Evan Limberger; Gabriel Pozos; Megan Yip; Eric Lem; Josh Lee Kwai; and Jimmy Wong.**