

The Impact of Netdecking

(Article by Kalani 01-13-2009)

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The Impact of Netdecking

While it is an undeniable fact that net-decking (with the intention of winning in a major tournament) plays an important role in determining the popularity of any TCG, the negative ramifications of this phenomenon are a double-edged sword which can likewise spell disaster for the games continued survival.

No-where is this more noticable than in the game of Yu-Gi-Oh, in which this phenomenon has not only resulted in a lack of diversity in the metagame, but has simultaneously driven the value of cards on the secondary market to an astronomical level.

As a result, playing Yu-Gi-Oh at a competitive level has become increasingly more cost prohibitive. Should this trend continue unabated, it bodes ill for the games continued survival, increasing the likelihood of any given player dropping out in favor of a more cost-friendly game such as Magic The Gathering, World of Warcraft, or VS. where the value of most cards never climbs above \$20 - \$50.

The Solution?

The solution to this problem (which will undoubtedly spell the end of competitive Yu-Gi-Oh if left unaddressed), is to limit a player's ability to net-deck.

Unfortunately, the only way in which this could be accomplished is for Konami to re-evaluate their policy of publishing top-16 deck lists as a method by which top-16 competitors would have prior knowledge of their opponent's deck.

Should they wish to continue the practice of allowing day 2 competitors to have prior knowledge of their opponent's deck, they can always have day 2 competitors sign an NDA in order to gain supervised access to their opponent's deck lists 1-2 hours prior to the event, with the stipulation that any notes made be submitted to a Konami Official at the end of this period.

By prohibiting the publication of top-16 deck lists, net-decking will all-but cease to exist in YGO. This in turn, will reduce the secondary market demand (and cost) of specific cards, while simultaneously increasing the amount of diversity in the YGO metagame, as all decks will then become the product of independant research and testing, rather than the collective perfection of a select few decks.

Just imagine how different the various "Dark Armed Dragon", "Monarch", "Gladiator Beast", "Lightsworn", "Synchro", or "Teleport" decks would have been, if we were forced to rely exclusively on the thousands of deck-lists, card reviews, and combo's floating about the forums, without being provided the quantifiable evidence (aka: Tournament Results) which separated the jank ideas from the gems.

Something has to be done about the prevalence of Net-Decking in the Yu-Gi-Oh TCG. The continued survival of this game depends upon it.

Should this issue be corrected in the immediate future, it will help repair the damage caused by the recent tug-of-war over the brand name, and will rekindle enjoyment in organized play for the thousands of dissatisfied players who are unhappy with the lack of diversity, and associated costs of competing in organized play events.

The Benefits of not Publishing Deck Lists

Net-Decking is a perfectly understandable phenomenon, as no-one wants to lose, especially when one has spent hundreds of dollars in travel expenses to attend a major organized play event.

Unfortunately for us, Net-decking is also the #1 cause of metagame stagnation, and how increasingly cost-prohibitive organized play is becoming in the YGO TCG.

The solution I proposed in the previous section was to address this problem before rising costs of competition force players to stop playing YGO, was for Konami to discontinue publication of the Top-16 deck lists.

In this section, I wish to elaborate on the benefits which I believe will occur should this practice be discontinued.

Without Cross-Comparison.....

To begin with, it is my belief that without the ability of cross-comparison, "Tech" choices made by both pro and amateur duelists alike will inevitably result in multiple competing and divergent strains of the same deck (eg. Tele-DaD) in as little as 3-6 months.

This is due to the fact that without cross-comparison, no-one will be certain which "Tech" choice is superior (and should therefore become the new "staple" for the archetype).

Over time, some of the "Tech" choices made by any given player will eventually become "Staples" in their version of the original deck. This in turn, will inevitably lead to additional modification of the core strategy in order to better incorporate (or otherwise improve upon) the benefits said "Tech" card(s) granted the original strategy, and/or the incorporation of additional "Tech" cards the player felt was necessary.

After several repetitions of this pattern, this will result in a divergent strategy being created which may have little in common with the original deck it was based upon.

For Example: I myself am in the process of perfecting a divergent Tele-DARK strategy I call "Tele-Kuriboh".

This strategy evolved out of my desire to reliably prevent being OTKed, something all too common in today's fast-paced format.

As a result, I began experimenting how best to incorporate "Winged Kuriboh", "Threatening Roar" and "Flute of Summoning Kuriboh" into numerous different strategies. Unfortunately, the only deck fast enough to support this was "Tele-DaD".

This inevitably lead to the inclusion of "Mind Control" in order to steal my opponents (now vulnerable) monsters, "Junk Synchron" to return "Krebons" and "Winged Kuriboh" to the field on command, and most recently "Hanewata", "Volcanic Queen" and "Owner's Seal".

Save for the Destiny/Teleport Engine, the current deck looks nothing like the Tele-DAD deck it was based upon.

Now imagine how quickly such divergent strategies would develop if we were bereft of our ability to cross-examine our ideas with the Top-16 deck lists?

But wont this make players ignorant?

No it wont. Even if Konami did decide to stop publishing the Top-16 deck lists, we would still glean some insight into the metagame as a result of:

- Gossip
- Revelations/comments made by duelists who faced a top-16 competitor in the swiss rounds/top-16
- Feature match coverage showing the play-by-plays
- Notes taken during a match
- Deck Submissions/discussions on the internet
- etc

As such, we would still be informed about the type of deck each top-16 competitor was running, as well as the key cards/combo's they used to pilot their way to a top-16 finish.....

However, due to the fact that the cards which make up a decks key combo's typically account for only 20-60% of their deck list, you can be certain that the copy-cat decks which are created as a result will have significant differences from the deck they are attempting to emulate, only adding to the further diversification of the metagame....

Netdecking without a Deck List

This section is the third (and final) installment in my series describing the impact that Net-decking has on the YGO metagame, and my proposed solution to correct this problem.

In this section, I will discuss the impact that my proposed solution will have on the act of netdecking itself.

For those who have not read the previous sections in this series, my proposed solution to the problems caused by Netdecking was for Konami to create a policy prohibiting tournament officials from publishing (or otherwise disseminating) the top 16 deck lists of any OCG or TCG event.

As indicated previously - my proposed solution will not cause netdecking to become a thing of the past. What I failed to mention however, was the fact that without the publication of deck lists - the combination of feature match coverage, gossip, and revelations made by the opponents of a top-16 competitor will only reveal a partial spoiler of the top 16 deck lists, and it is this fact which will revolutionize the impact that netdecking has on our metagame.

While you can be certain that such information will universally include the core strategy of any given deck, this information will only provide an incomplete picture, resulting in imperfect copies of the original deck being created, simply due to the fact that copy-cat duelists will only have a fraction of the required information needed to make a carbon-copy of any given top-16 deck.

This is similar to what would happen if an artist gave 10 of his peers one-half of an original piece of artwork s/he had yet to reveal to the public, and asked each artist to finish the canvas using the same color palette as used in the original.

You can be certain that each of those artists would have a different finished product from the original, and

from each other, despite their similarities.

By itself, I realise that this concept is difficult to grasp without some kind of example, and what better example do we have than the current "King" of YGO - Tele-DAD.

Example: Duplicating Tele-DAD without a Decklist

If we pretend for 1 moment that no-one has ever seen a published deck-list for Tele-DAD, and never will (as a result of my proposed solution being implimented by Konami).

Based on gossip, and feature match coverage alone, we could safely assume to learn all of the following information about the Tele-DAD deck:

- 1) Acceleration:** This deck relies heavily on Allure/DDraw to accelerate towards its combo pieces.
- 2) Win Condition:** Tele-DAD seeks to OTK the opponent through a combination of Special Summons, Synchro Summons and "Dark Armed Dragon".
- 3) Key Combo's:** Malicious + Emergency Teleport (Krebons) in order to Synchro Summon Stardust, TRA or CF w/wo the support of "Dark Armed Dragon" to clear the opposing field.
- 4) Reliability:** This deck can reliably OTK the opponent with high-ATK monsters during its first or second turn.

Known Cards: As a result of Feature-Match coverage and deck spoilers (provided by duelists who faced the Tele-DAD deck at the event) we could reliably learn the following details of the Tele-DADs deck list:

Tele-DAD: Cards Known (20), Suspected (5)

2 Allure of Darkness*
2 Destiny Draw*
3 Malicious
2 Krebons*
2 Emergency Teleport*
1 Psychic Commander
1 Dark Grepher*
1 Stratos
1 RotA*
1 DAD*
1 Monster Reborn
1 Heavy Storm
2 Solemn Judgment*

*Additional copies may be suspected but will not usually be played over the course of a single match.

Even if we make the logical (but not always correct) assumption that the Tele-DAD deck runs maximum copies of Allure, DDraw, DAD, Krebons and Emergency Teleport - that still leaves approximately 15 cards whose identities are an unknown quantity.

In such a format, the copy-cat decks of subsequent tournaments will do nothing to alleviate our confusion surrounding the impact that the remaining 10-15 unknown cards of the original deck had on its overall performance.

In fact, the existance of such copy-cat decks will have the opposite effect, muddying our knowledge of the Tele-DAD card pool due to the deckbuilding decisions made by each copy-cat deckbuilder in order to fill the void of the unknown card slots.

Which would you prefer?

1 to 3 competing Decks which only evolve as a result of "Tech" choices

OR:

30+ different variations on each of those 3 decks, whose deck lists differ by at least 25-50% of the original design, and by upto 70% from a specific variation.

I know which one I would prefer.