



MAGIC
The Gathering
COMMANDER

Tournament good practices:
How to organize a Duel
Commander Tournament

Introduction

With the Duel variant of Commander having increasing success in France, several organizers have tried organizing tournaments or leagues in this format. After several years, we have noticed that these events meet a certain amount of success, as long as some precautions are taken.

Warning: this article is not an official document and its purpose is not to state hard rules. It is simply a source of advice to help you overcome the difficulties that may arise when organizing tournaments in a format as particular as Duel Commander. As such, this document is a complement to the Duel Commander rules which you will find in the Duel Commander Rules Summary (found at <http://www.duelcommander.com>) and to official Magic Tournament Rules published by Wizards of the Coast (<http://dcirules.org>).

I Duel commander specifics

A Duel Commander deck must have 100 cards, including the commander, and be singleton (except for basic land). These cards must belong to the commander's color identity and can't be from the Duel Commander ban list. (For more details, please refer to <http://www.duelcommander.com>). Players start the game at 30 life, not 20. These are important elements to consider when organizing a tournament.

1. Cards are sometimes very old

Since Duel Commander allows all tournament-legal sets, players frequently use very old cards, the printed text of which is not necessarily up to date. It's therefore a good idea to have internet access (be it with a computer or a smartphone) to check what cards do at any moment. It doesn't have to be the organizer that has internet, it can be a judge or even a player. We also advise you to display the list of banned cards somewhere accessible to all the players, so that they can check it in case of doubt or follow the evolution of said list.

2. A deck of 100 cards, which has to be singleton

A Duel Commander deck is impressive, be it in size or on paper (100 cards is not a small number!). Since most tournaments are organized under the

Regular rules enforcement level, this creates no problems as decklists aren't required. In Competitive, it's a bit more challenging since listing a 100 cards deck is quite a boring task for players. If your event has significant prizes and you wish to use decklists, communicate this in advance so that players have the time to prepare their decklists at home, at their own pace, rather than having to scramble to finish it 5 minutes before the first round at the venue. Even if it could deter a few people, to some others it would be a guarantee of tournament integrity. What's more, if you have a nice decklist sheet printed out, players will be more willing to fill one.

3. 30 life changes everything

It's not only the deck construction rules that warrant some caution; the difference in game rules also influence how a tournament should be organized. Because players start at 30 life (as opposed to 20 life in official formats), some Duel Commander games can last quite long. If you want to make the matches best-of-three, rounds should be longer than the recommended 50 minutes for official Constructed formats, in order not to be overwhelmed by too many draws. No optimal round length has been agreed upon yet, but most organizers choose to give 55 minutes; some even give 60. This is usually sufficient to avoid too many draws, while still allowing the tournament not to last forever.

II Duel Commander players

Duel Commander players are a particular group. Most players like this format because it enables them to play with old cards that they wouldn't play otherwise. Many also play it because it's different from stock formats like Standard. Some are also attracted to the deck building aspect, which in Duel Commander is quite a challenge. What's more, these players often get attached to their favorite deck (and commander), much more so than they would to a Standard or Modern archetype, because they've polished their deck over time by adding cards from the latest expansions. These elements should be considered in order to satisfy the players.

1. Communication before and after the tournament

More so than with official Wizards of the Coast formats, it's important to communicate about a Duel Commander tournament, because it's essential

to get in touch with THE Duel Commander community. Indeed, it's quite hard to catch the interest of someone who's never played Duel Commander, when you tell him there is a tournament in a couple of days. Another factor is that because Duel Commander tournaments aren't so common and the community is closely knit, Duel Commander players are likely to travel some distance in order to challenge a different group of players with their favorite deck. So, do spread the word (for example on forums) in neighboring regions. Last but not least, players like to see a report of the tournament, whether they were present or not. Pictures and decklists are quite appreciated. The tidbit that players will like the most is to know which commander won in the arena of Magic legends!

2. Prizes

We've seen that the Duel Commander format and its players are particular. This impacts the tournament on several levels: communication about the event, extended round times, old cards? This affects prizes too. Indeed, the Duel Commander community is in great part made of players who want to play old cards and/or play something different from official Constructed formats. That's why boosters from the last expansion aren't a good prize. Like Vintage and Legacy tournaments, old, valuable cards will be appreciated, especially if Duel Commander players can play them in their decks. Good examples are fetchlands and dual lands. You could also include something less conventional like Commander packs, From the Vault packs, old boosters, or custom and unique prizes like playmats or trophies. The key is to be original and make the players dream!

3. Gap between casual and competitive player populations

The last thing we'd like to mention in this article is something that can really compromise the atmosphere of a Duel Commander tournament if you're not aware of the issue. We're talking about the separation between two distinct populations among the Duel Commander community. We've seen above that most players are fun and casual, so they will be more interested by the social and community aspect of a tournament. But on the other hand, some players are quite competitive! This isn't usually a problem, but it's not very hard to see that a match between such a player (whose deck will be finely tuned) and a casual player (with a deck full of

old and favorite but maybe not so great cards) will be quite imbalanced. It's therefore important to realize that there is a gap; to explain to each part of the population that the other one exists and has the right to be welcomed in a Duel Commander tournament. What's more, as an organizer you can steer your event one way or the other so that players will understand if you prefer the casual aspect (by giving instant prizes and door prizes for example) or the competitive aspect (with deck lists and a stricter atmosphere).

Conclusion

In conclusion, we'd like to point out once more that there are no absolute rules to organizing a Duel Commander tournament. What makes this format so interesting is its originality. The main goal is therefore to propose to the players something attractive in terms of fun and/or challenge. Please don't hesitate to contact any member of the committee in case you have a question or if you need help to organize a Duel Commander event. We are available on Magic forums, at tournaments, or by e-mail. We'll do our best to assist you. We're also interested in hearing any piece of feedback you may have.