Grognack deck build (Tundra Orcs)

2014/10/10

The Tundra Orcs are part of the original “big three” Summoner Wars factions. And deservedly so, Grognack’s faction is very strong and plays pretty intuitively. This is why the faction is somewhat frowned upon in competitive matches on iOS. Still they are not unbeatable and if you are starting with the game it is a fun faction to start out with. This guide will go into more detail on how to play Grognack well. It will not include second summoner units and mercenaries. Those will probably be added in an update to this post once I have had experience with them. Summoner Wars is a game by Plaid Hat Games. It’s available on android / iOS / Vassal.

Basic idea



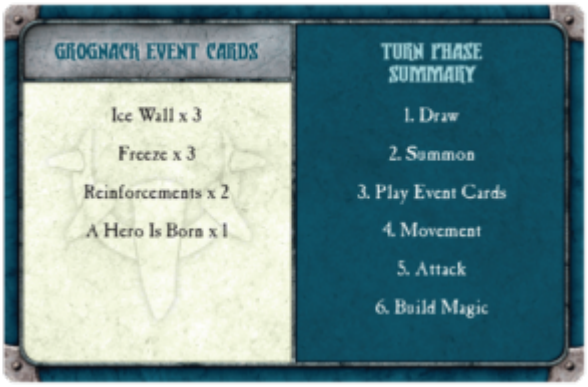
The main strong point of the Tundra Orcs is their high health and high dice units. Grognack himself is as powerful as their strongest champion and he has some of the best events in the game. Knowing that it’s not surprising they are considered one of the strongest factions. The style I’d mainly recommend while playing them is to overwhelm your opponent’s units / walls with your own. This often means aggression, but against some factions being more defensive is actually preferable as they have too many good counters against your common units or just too much burst damage against Grognack. Also note that your special can absolutely crush low health commons that are being aggressive. Just be careful not to be too defensive against factions like the Deep Dwarves who will outlast you with their economy. His events are best used offensively as you can cheaply reinforce your units and Freeze can force them to burn through their hand / magic pile instead of summoning extra units.

Basic tactic and combo suggestions:

– Walls of Ice Shard combo’s very nicely with one or more freshly placed walls as against good opponents that’s probably the only way you’ll be able to hit low

health units with it.
– Reinforcements can be placed next to these freshly placed walls, so you can suddenly have two more free units next to a wall you just summoned.
– Freeze is most effectively used if your opponent can't get rid of it right away. To get this situation you can play multiple Freeze's at once or play one after summoning Bragg. Be wary of Freezing lower tier units as your opponent can opt to ignore the Freeze or even kill the unit instead. Freezing the summoner is always good; especially if he's in an unsafe place.

Deck build (19 / 18 magic for the champions / commons)
– 1 Bragg
– 1 Ragnor
– 1 Krung
– 3 Fighter (2 initially)
– 5 Shaman (1 initially)
– 5 Smasher (1 initially)
– 5 Thwarter



Choosing the champions was pretty hard as Rukar, Blagog, Bragg, Krung and Ragnor are all relatively close. Gruggar is the only one which I feel is clearly worse. In the end I decided on Krung, Ragnor and Bragg. Krung because he has high damage and the most hitpoint of all the champions, Bragg because of his ranged ability and value when using Freeze. And finally Ragnor because he's best against commons as he can hit multiple targets in one turn. This means I have a good set of champions to deal with both commons and champions. If I'd exchange champions I'd consider exchanging Blagog for Bragg or Ragnor (not Rukar as I feel Blagog is always worse than Rukar). Rukar might be interesting to exchange with Krung as it's debatable which one is better. Finally switching Rukar with any of the other two would probably be too magic intensive. A reason to do these exchanges would be to either get more powerful champions (Bragg is more of a support champion) or to boost my single target damage (Rukar does the most single target damage of all the champions).

For the commons there is a similar problem. Chargers are pretty bad in my opinion, but Smashers, Thwarters, Shamans and Fighters are all pretty good. As Smashers are the only two magic common out of those I'll include them to summon with Reinforcements (or otherwise probably build for magic). Shamans

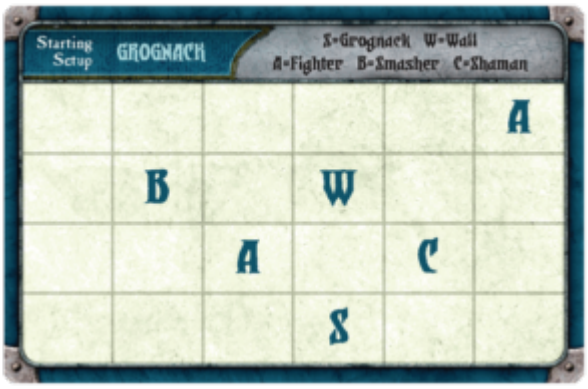
are in my opinion the best of the three 1 magic cost commons so I've included five of those as well. Finally between Fighters and Thwarters it's pretty even although I'm more likely to summon Thwarters as they are great as blockers against high dice units. This selection of commons can be both used offensively and defensively as Thwarters and Smasher are hard to kill and all three of the core commons throw two dice and have at least two hitpoints. Do note that I'm keeping to the maximum of what's included in one physical set of base cards + reinforcements. If I'd ignore that I might include another Smasher / Shaman / Thwarter.

Playing the faction



At the start you have the interesting choice of what to do with your Fighters. If you can get a one on one trade for them, go for it. If not, it all depends on whether you want to pressure the opponent. If so, move them towards his / her walls (without losing them needlessly). Another option is to kill off your fighters yourself so you can try to use Reinforcements. I'd recommend holding on to the Shaman / Smasher as they are more valuable, but it can be worth it to kill them as well. As Grognack has a lot of hitpoints, he's excellent to move along with an initial advance. He can take out most strong commons with one hit and tear down a wall in a few turns. So if you are aggressive he's your greatest asset at the start. Just don't get him too far in front as a well placed wall can isolate him on the enemy's side.

As with most factions I'd recommend building magic aggressively in the start. Ideally you'll get Bragg early, summon him fast to start using extra powerful Freeze's. It's not necessary to wait for him before using a Freeze though as they are good in their normal form and you don't want to clog up your hand too much. You can afford to build some (Ice) Walls as you have effectively five walls unless you are expecting a need to place them. If you are fighting on their side of the map during the middle phase of the game you can best keep Grognack lightly involved while making good trade's with the rest of your units. If you're in a more defensive fight, it's much harder to execute that well. Some options are to take some shots at their walls with Shamans or to put Rukar / Ragnor next to a wall in a safe position (flanked by a Thwarter in example). In terms of wall placement I'd recommend offensive wall placement in most situations.



Another thing to keep watch for is a chance to use your Reinforcements; this is often easiest if you only have Grognack and a champion and they need to summon extra stuff to defend. You'll end up building the Reinforcements often though as most people play around it. If it goes to the end game you should have a good chance with your three champions plus Grognack's four dice attacks. Rukar and Ragnor are two of the higher single target damage champions around. One weakness you need to watch out for is that you have almost no ranged units. So make sure you can't be hit from range too easily. Grognack's end game isn't the best, so best make sure you have a solid advantage by then. This is why being too defensive as the Tundra Orcs is suicide against some factions. And you have no magic sink like some factions, so make sure to not have ten magic left and nothing to summon.

Match up analysis

I might do a faction by faction analysis eventually, but I'll start this off with a few general observations. Factions that have anti common or magic drain type cards are very annoying. Also, factions that can gain an economic advantage like the Deep Dwarves and Filth need to be dealth with aggressively.

First summoner specific cards

Card	Deck	Notes
	Base	His special is very useful defensively as you can not only hit every unit next to a wall at once, you can also place walls strategically and then use it. Be careful not to use him too defensively though as his four attack dice and seven health put him on par with most top tier champions.

Card	Deck	Notes
	Base (x3)	Freeze is one of the best event cards in the game. The big reason being it can always be used instantly (if you want to) and almost always gives you a direct (magic) advantage. Generally I use it against the enemy summoner but in some situations it can be better against a certain champion or even a common unit. Combine it with Bragg for an even bigger advantage. Personally I think this event is better than Reinforcements. Also take note that it eliminates their special ability, so it can be used against units with particularly annoying special abilities.
	Base (x3)	Ice walls are especially useful to combine with Reinforcements as that allows you to summon in the event phase. And they can be used with Grognack's special ability to possibly get some easy hits in on enemy units. Other then that I'll often prefer building them as they do give magic if destroyed and three health is easily destroyed. You can use them as an emergency defense or replacement wall though, so they are very versatile. Combined with Bragg they become a lot more durable.
	Base (x2)	This card is the reason it can be quite good to kill your own units for magic at the start. Especially against magic drain factions as that also eliminates their advantage. Reinforcements is especially useful with high magic cost commons and can be used with a freshly placed walls for a surprise attack. Do note that you need to have those commons in your hand so you'll need three cards in hand to use this most effectively. Magic wise you are paying 3 magic (1 event card + 2 commons you can't build) for 2 commons on the board so it's cost effective if you can summon two 1 cost units (which would cost 4 magic normally).
	Base (x1)	In general I like building this one in most deck builds. In this deck build it can be interesting to use it to get Bragg, especially if it's a defensive battle and you haven't used / gotten any Freeze's yet. Other then that I'd build it.

Generic cards

Card	Deck	SSCF*	Notes
	Base	1	Blagog's average damage is 2,5 per attack (5 max), which is good for his 6 magic cost. Compared to Rukar he does less average damage, does less maximum damage, has less life and is useless against units which require you to hit every die. Interesting mechanic though. Check Rukar's info for more comparison.
	Base	1	Krung is an interesting champion. With his 9 life, three attack and his special he's a beast to take down. However, his 8 cost make him quite the investment. He can't really be used with other units or your own walls effectively as he will hit those as well. Often he'll cause the opponent to avoid him or focus all his attention on taking him down. Both can be used to your advantage to take control of the board. Still I'm conflicted on using him as he can be played around to an extent and might not give enough bang for your buck. One thing I'm sure of is that he's a champion you'll want to use aggressively as he'll otherwise impede your own units.
	Base	-1	Ragnor will on average do 1,5 attack, equalling an average damage of 2 and has a 1 in 13 chance of not doing any damage. As his special also allows him to move and hit another target it's especially versatile against spread out / low hitpoint units. This flexibility and his relatively low cost is why I like him quite a bit. Be careful of his health though; it's quite easy to over extend him.
	Base (x8)	-1	A fighters average damage is 1 (including the fury ability). This makes it a cost efficient unit. A nice trick is hitting a wall and then seeing if you trigger the fury ability, giving you a possible extra movement and attack. This means you should be very aware of your positioning when these are around (both as a Tundra Orc player and the opponent of one). And yes, there are situations in which Fury is absolutely crazy good ;).

Card	Deck	SSCF*	Notes
	Base (x5)	2	These can be very strong as they have two health and can do two damage at range for 1 magic cost. The chance of them doing the two damage is 44%. They are much less effective against 1 hitpoint units however as the same 44% chance applies while a normal 1 dice attack unit has a 66% chance of killing it. So mostly build them for magic against factions with 1 hitpoint commons.
	Base (x5)	2	Another interesting common. It has four hitpoints but takes hits automatically. This basically means it's slightly better then a 2 hp common (which requires 3 dice on average) and slightly worse then a 3 hp common (which requires 4.5 dice on average). The main reason these are useful to use is that they have two attack dice and can be summoned for free with Reinforcements. Their auto hit mechanic can be both useful (i.e. against burn) and bad (i.e. against gorilla's). So take into consideration which faction you are facing.
	Base (x3)		
	Reinf	-1	Rukar's average damage is 3 per attack (6 max) , which is good for his 7 magic cost. He especially excels at hitting enemy champions / summoners / walls. His only disadvantage versus Blagog (which I tend to compare him with) is that he's one more magic cost and has a slightly bigger chance of missing all together, other than that he only has advantages. This is why I'd consider him slightly better.

Card	Deck	SSCF*	Notes
	Reinf	-1	Gruggar is not a champion I feel is very good. While he can technically have an attack up to five dice, it's too easy to kill him off in one or two turns. And it's way too easy to ignore his one attack dice until you are ready to take him out. He's best used in tights spots where he can't be attacked from multiple directions so he actually gets to use his higher attack dice. Still he'll generally only get to use the four or five dice attack once. Minor note: You could injure him yourself to get his higher dice when you want it.
	Reinf	-1	Bragg excels in more defensive match ups as your Freeze cards trade 1 for 3 instead of 1 for 2. And your ice walls basically require 6 hits to die instead of 3. Just make sure he doesn't die until you have taken advantage of his ability. As he's a two dice ranged champion, he'll be cost effective once you use him for at least one Freeze.
	Reinf (x5)	0	The main problem this common has, is that one attack dice simply does not pack enough of a punch for the cost. It does however have three hitpoints, so will be hard to immediately kill. This can make it useful in conjuction with other units, i.e. to reinforce your attack quickly / outflank an opposing unit to get another attack in / prevent counter attacks. Still I'd only really summon these with Reinforcements.

Card	Deck	SSCF*	Notes
	Reinf (x5)	0	The thwarter is considered by many to be the best common the Tundra Orcs have. This may appear counter intuitive, but it's ability to completely block a 3, 4 or 5 dice attacking champion or summoner can be absolutely huge. Use these to block off avenue's of attack for big enemy units. They are much worse against single hit units, but aren't awful as they do have two hitpoints and only cost 1. Final note: These do get hit by your own attack dice normally. Chance to get hit: 13% (5 dice), 20% (4 dice), 30% (3 dice), 44% instead of 88% (2 dice).
	Second	0	First of all, note that it works for all walls, not just your own walls and ice walls. This makes him much better, especially against factions that use walls themselves like the Swamp Orcs and Mercenaries. To have him be really worth it, you should be attacking with at least two walls adjacent, which isn't impossible, but probably won't work consistently. Because of this, he's strongest in situations in which there's not much room to maneuver. Note: Grognack has three ice walls, Torgan up to fifteen (four by events) and Hogar as many as he has Ice Golem's with rune's / Avalanche. Because of this, this champion is best in Torgan and Hogar.
	Second	-1	In terms of dice this is a monster. Four dice for 6 magic is great. Effectively he only has 5 health though, which makes him pretty much only decent when fighting high health commons / champions. With so many other great champions this means he's simply not good enough to include.

Card	Deck	SSCF*	Notes
	Second	3	Another champion that has synergy with walls; but only ice walls this time. He has a small area of effect attack based on them, it only goes off 2/3rd of the time though and the effect also hurts allies. This all makes it a pretty situational ability that's most useful if you are defending as you can more easily position an ice wall in the right position.
	Second (x7)	1	A very interesting common. Compared to a Smasher it takes three dice (instead of four) on average to take it down. In terms of attacking power however it does slightly more damage (1.5 v.s. 1.33) per attack. So basically it's a choice between damage and survivability. Another advantage over Smashers it that it can get boosted by champions or events that make it harder to hit.
	Second (x6)	0	This is the common version of Grok. Understandably he can only gain one extra AV. Luckily he also doesn't care whether or not he's next to an enemy wall or non-ice wall. This makes him a pretty interesting common as it's not that difficult to get next to a wall and he only costs one magic.
	Second (x5)	2	This is easily the most strange common of the Tundra Orcs. Unhurt it has 60% chance to do at least 3 damage (20% for 4) against a target. Making it good for taking down high health targets (2.2 average damage). At 1 health it can only hit for 4 damage and has 20% chance of doing so (0.8 average damage). Naturally it's not very good against 1 or even 2 health units as the extra damage is overkill and it's more likely to miss. Also note that your Crusher ALWAYS takes wounds for it's misses, even that will destroy it. So worst case you are summoning it, you roll 2-4 misses and it dies instantly without having done anything (the magic does go to your discard pile).

* SSCF = Secret Summoning cost formula = attack value + base health + 1 if ranged - (2 if common OR -3 if champion) - magic cost. I haven't included the worth of the ability as that's generally controversial.

References

– All Tundra Orc cards (especially strategy section and comments are useful)

– A Doug’s Guide To Summoner Wars podcast (strategy discussion and community news)

– Mythacle Battleplan for Summoner Wars (deck builder)