

Ret-Talus deck build (Fallen Kingdom)

2013/11/17

The first time I played against Ret-Talus and his Fallen Kingdom units I got the impression his deck is the worst in the game. Now that I've played him myself I don't think so anymore. Mainly because he has some superb champions you can make use of early, cheaply and very effectively if you play him well. This guide won't include mercenaries and second summoner units yet. The deck build I'm looking to create here is the one closest to strongest for this summoner and his events. Summoner Wars is a game by Plaid Hat Games. It's available on android / iOS / Vassal.

Basic idea

Ret-Talus's deck has a several weaknesses. One is that his commons are pretty much worthless at actually killing anything but one health units (cultists being an exception) and he has almost no ranged. Secondly Ret-Talus is very weak to assassination and he has no events or abilities to do movement tricks or to dislodge enemy blockers. Finally his deck is pretty draw dependent, especially if you don't get your events or champions at the right time. So what are his strengths? Mostly his champions. If you can keep them alive!



They can be summoned very cheaply (2 magic for 3 champions with forced summons) so you can use Legions of the Dead and his summoner's ability to outlast a lot of factions in an economic war for magic. And he can have a crazy amount of momentum especially if you also use legions of the dead in combination with the forced summons. I basically play Ret-Talus very similar to Sera. This means: A defensive, careful style of play. Naturally this shouldn't stop you from going offensive or wall hogging where there's room for it. Just as long as you protect him / and flank his champions carefully. So wall placement, positioning and keeping Ret-Talus protected is essential.

Deck build (19 / 22 magic for the champions / commons)

- 1 Elut-Bal (the hard hitter, keep safe)
- 1 Anica (magic denial)
- 1 Skhull (anti-common and hard to defend against)
- 3 Skeletal Archer (2 initially)
- 1 Reaper (1 initially)
- 4 Zombie Warrior (1 initially)
- 5 Phantom
- 4 Cultist (the only two dice common)
- 1 Reaver



Champion wise the choice is pretty simple. There are only four champions and Dragos is easily the worst of the four. I'd say Anica is the best. Common wise it's harder. My most important consideration is that this deck is more about champion play, so the commons are here to be bodyguards, extra attack dice and sacrificing. For that purpose cultists are in and skeletal archers are out. Phantoms I really like, because they are only one magic, so you can summon them cheaply for dark sacrifice (or hitting a champ and then killing it from behind). Reaper or Reaver is a toss-up in which I went for reaver. The zombie warriors are in for their ability; but I feel four is enough to make the most of it.

Some tactic and combo suggestions:

- Dark Sacrifice or summoning Elut-Bal can be combo'ed with Magic Drain and Legions of the Dead very effectively. Another combo is Legions of the Dead followed the next turn by Dark Sacrifice or summoning Elut-Bal. Another interesting one is a wall followed by a forced summon.
- Flanking champions with units or walls is even more important with Elut-Bal then with other factions due to dark sacrifice and the low health and high attack value they have.
- If you have the magic and don't need the three attacks you should be using Ret-Talus's ability instead of summoning two cost commons. This can also give you extra units to sacrifice if necessary. Do remember that if you want a unit not next to Ret-talus, you'll have to summon it normally.



- Your commons are your sacrificial lambs. Killing them after they attack (phantoms) can be good. Also, I tend to use them most of the time as meat shields for champions or Ret-Talus.

Playing the faction

My start depends very heavily on my first draw. If I get Elut-Bal and / or a forced summon with a champion I'll probably go pretty aggressive. Otherwise it will be much more defensive with both skeletal archers being suicided against enemy units. In both situations I'll be building almost every common I get to get to the good stuff and get my discard pile going. An early dark sacrifice or legions of the dead can be annoying to get as you don't want to clog your hand too much. I take next to no risk with Ret-Talus as you really need him to stay full health. I do prefer keeping him on the third row if possible.

When going towards the mid game you'll probably have a feel of whether you'll need to outlast the enemy or that he'll buckle under pressure. In the first situation I'll try to play very magic efficient. Using the forced summons, dark sacrifice, not losing commons unnecessarily, etcetera. I like placing walls in a pattern that resembles how a knight moves in chess. This allows for the creation of choke points while still having many summoning spots. Assassination is generally not on my mind too much unless their summoner is in the fray or is low health. It's about creating the magic advantage.






In the end game you should have more magic than your opponent. This should mean you can outlast them by summoning as many commons as you need. Still your commons are not that strong against ranged, so ideally you'll have a champion left here. Good stuff to do can be to use a phantom for champion take over; that's a huge swing right there. And using Anica can be devastating at any time in the game if you can get two or three spirit drains off. Finally zombie warriors and reavers can be situationally good as they can easily give the enemy too many targets (who just won't die).



Match up analysis

I might do a faction by faction analysis eventually, but I'll start this off with a few




general observations. Take into consideration which factions have units or events can deal out a great amount of damage in one turn. Those are the worst to play against. Phoenix elves in example can kill Elut-Bal in one turn without any luck needed. Another consideration is that I don't feel Fallen Kingdom is the best in outlasting other factions. Be more aggressive against factions that either have much ranged or better outlasting mechanisms.






First summoner specific cards




Card	Deck	Notes
	Base	His special allows you to extend your staying power as you can reuse cards that have already been discarded before. Secondly, you're not using a card from your hand, so you're actually summoning units that cost one magic for the same cost as if you're summoning them from your hand. Using it with skeletal archers can be interesting as you can move, use the ability and then attack with the archer. Note: The cards you spend raising can be raised that turn.
	Base (x3)	This one is pretty powerful as you get the destroyed units back as magic. So you can in example summon three phantoms from your hand (6 magic cost), dark sacrifice and basically have paid 4 magic (6 - 3 + 1) for 3 health healed. Combo'ed with Legions of the Dead it'd be a 3 health heal for 1 magic paid. Preferably don't use it on skeletal archers (you do get the heal, but might not get the magic). You can generally build them if they are not needed or if gotten too early. Fun to use on wounded units =).
	Base (x2)	An efficient event to summon units. Try to always make use of these. Especially for your two cost commons. It's basically spending 4 magic to summon 6 magic worth of units (from your discard pile!). However, if you want to make use of these units, try to have Ret-Talus at a relevant position on the board. It can be fun to be aggressive with Ret-Talus and then suddenly put four units in the enemy's face. Also note that you *can* use this with no magic as the magic you pay for it goes into the discard pile before you use the ability.

Card	Deck	Notes
	Base (x2)	Very powerful but dangerous event. Use two of these and you'll have one life left. Only use it if you feel you can get away with it. Very, very dangerous against tricky factions like Benders, Jungle Elves, Cloaks or Shadow Elves. Play a wall first, then a forced summon for a surprise attack. Keep Ret-Talus safe!
	Base (x2)	Extremely powerful event due to the four magic slide it causes. One thing I needed to learn to do is to regularly play more aggressive with my commons so that the enemy is forced to kill them and won't end up with 0 or 1 magic at the end of his turn. This will enable me to use the magic drain effectively (and get my units back!).

Generic cards

Card	Deck	SSCF*	Notes
	Base	0	Very good anti-common champion as long as your opponent needs to move next to him or move past him. And with a very good attack value for the cost. So still decent against champions and summoners. He can be crazy against heavy common melee factions as they don't want to move next to him.
	Base	-1	Highly situational. His ability can be useful defensively, but he's too easy to kill in one turn. And his ability is useless as long as the hero hasn't been hurt yet. Can be summoned for free with forced summon.
	Base	-1	A very interesting hero as you can summon him for free if you sacrifice four units on the board (1 magic cost if 3). Excellent wall and champion killer. It's essential to keep him well protected though, he doesn't have much life and will be a prime target. Dark sacrifice works well with him.

Card	Deck	SSCF*	Notes
	Base (x7)	0	As the only ranged unit in this deck, they have their uses. Their ability is pretty useful as you get a 66% chance to deny your enemy the magic and you can reuse the skeletal archer in a legions of the dead summoning. However, it doesn't synergise well with dark sacrifice or the reaper's ability. Best use in my opinion is to use them to summon Elut-Bal.
	Base (x6)	-1	Ideally you summon these with the Legion of the Dead for bodyguards or generating extra zombies. If you don't have any zombies in your discard pile they're only useful as blockers. If you do, then they can generate a free extra 2 health unit. Be careful though, if you don't have the board position to support them your new zombie will be extra magic for the opposition.
	Base (x5)	0	I'm not that big a fan of these as they don't have enough life to support the attack value they can end up with. And you're not getting any magic for the kills they make (while running the risk of giving it to the opponent). At least not until you kill it off yourself. They are however the highest health common, so they make good Ret-Talus guards.
	Base (x3)	W	
	Reinf	-1	She has an excellent ability that will make her a prime target if summoned. This easily offsets her relatively low dice. Each magic stolen is basically a minor magic drain. Because she's such a prime target you can often use her to allow Elut-Bal and / or Skhull to do much more damage while still getting one or two Spirit Drain's off with her.

Card	Deck	SSCF*	Notes
	Reinf (x5)	-1	This unit can shift the game completely as it can take control of any champion or high cost commons. If only the fear it causes the other player so he'll play more cautiously. One thing I didn't realize initially is that you get both a chance at control and an attack. Don't base your game around these, but instead use them situational and primarily for the low summoning cost. Also note that you *have* to use a move to use their ability so you can't use them effectively with Raise the Dead.
	Reinf (x5)	-1	Another magic denying special. This time it only has 33% chance to get revived. I prefer to summon these only through Legions of the Dead. Interesting is that they can either teleport to / around the attacking unit. It makes for an interesting blocker.
	Reinf (x5)	-1	It's pretty costly and will often get killed very quickly. And I don't like it's special very much for it's cost. However, fallen kingdom really lacks two attack value units and it's special is huge against low health factions or against champions or summoners that are forced to attack it. And it works from ranged. One of the few two cost Fallen Kingdom units I might summon from my hand.

* SSSCF = Super Simple 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 Fallen Kingdom 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 and I got the images from there)
- Summoner Wars on iOS by Playdek (I played some test games here)