

Space Cats Peace Turtles Twilight Imperium IV 2022 Finals

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u0mfWgfuGJs&t=20445s&ab_channel=SpaceCatsPeaceTurtles

Saturday 30.07.22, game duration: 11:20

Faction pool: Titans, Sol, Nomad, Yssaril, Mahact, Sardakk, Winnu, Arborec

Players: Codytct, nerfzerg, Mantis, Nerdy2k, Nekrodiestwice, Jonno (me)

The finals are here! I was very excited to play. This 616-person tournament had been running since January 1st, and my other two games were in March and the end of June. This write-up focuses on my played experience and does not attempt to capture the full detail of the game. I am sure there are inaccuracies but I think I captured the essence of what happened. I hope you enjoy reading it and if you have any questions or feedback please let me know.

Preparation

This was my 10th game of TI (including 3rd edition) so I imagined I was the least experienced player at the table by far. 24 hours before the game we received the slices and faction pool, which meant for me no time for a mock draft or a practice game. What I did do was get out my excel sheet and put in all the details for the slices, and looked at which factions liked which slices most. For each slice I looked at resource/influence split, planet numbers, types, and positions, tech skips, and which public and secret objectives each slice could easily achieve. This highlighted how amazing blue was and revealed that white was the only slice without at least 6 influence (without holding equidistants). This means white HAS to fight and hold the equidistant otherwise they only get 1 command counter each turn while everyone else gets at least 2, which could be a death sentence (unless they are Sol who gets a bonus token each turn).

In my excel sheet I also had all the public and secret objectives, exploration decks, action cards, and agendas in handy tables so I could keep track of what came out and what was left over. I pretty much only used this for the exploration decks in terms of seeing what my chances were to draw attachments. The other stuff was too overwhelming for me to track while playing so I didn't bother.

In the end I thought the draft would look like this:

- 1 - Blue, 2nd, Winnu/Sardakk/Arborec
- 2 - Purple, 3rd, whatever was left out of Titans, Yssaril, Mahact, Nomad
- 3 - Yellow, 4th, whatever was left out of Titans, Yssaril, Mahact, Nomad
- 4 - Red/Green, 5th, Titans/Yssaril/Mahact/Nomad
- 5 - Red/Green, 6th, Titans/Yssaril/Mahact/Nomad
- 6 - White, Speaker, Sol

Blue is by far the best slice, next is be Purple and closely behind is Yellow. Then Green/Red on roughly equal footing. White is so terrible that everyone will slice pick first. Sol can best survive White so 6th pick gets Speaker, Sol, White. Since the last to pick factions gets the choice of Sardakk, Winnu or Arborec I think everyone will go factions next, making 1st pick get one of these three factions in Blue with 2nd in speaker order. I am torn here, Sardakk is probably the best bet, but Winnu in Blue with 2nd pick sounds pretty ideal if I can stand the table heat. Arborec is also okish

with 2nd pick and Blue. What I'm having difficulty with is being 4th and 5th in the draft - I'll have the choice of Red and Green slices, and Titans, Yssaril, Mahact and Nomad, none of which finds either slice particularly amazing. Red has both wormholes so is open to winslaying, but green has a grav rift in front of mecatol which allows winslaying. Titans in red would plug the asteroid easier, and Lodor can be taken first turn from White. Both have 4 planet starts which are awkward for Mahact and Titans assuming Warfare gets stalled, which I think it generally should. Mahact probably prefers green for a biostims cruiser II start with a red skip, but I'll be 5th pick so probably can't grab Tech. Also Meer is great with the Mahact homesystem for 9 Influence per turn. Of the three choices, I have only ever played Mahact, and that only once. Yssaril seems the most reliable choice, then Nomad, then Titans.

I then took my above thoughts and messaged people in the community asking for their feedback and advice. As I had never met the other players I asked around about what they were like to play with. I also messaged the players directly to try to get to know them a little better and development some pre-game rapport. We're going to spend a long time playing together, the better we know each other the more fun we'll have. A big shout-out to those who helped me out (in no particular order): TheDeftPiper, Visioness, Aljce, Gamblor, Choclax, TerminusDT, BigAlCupAChino, Bananuel, Imsen, and Robofish. I found their experience and advice extremely valuable in my pre-game thoughts.

Draft

The actual draft, of course, went completely different to how I expected. I was 5th pick so was already nervous I would have to make some hard decisions.

codytct - 1st pick - Federation of Sol

NerfZerg - 2nd pick - Yssaril Tribes

Mantis - 3rd pick - Titans of UI

nerdY2K - 4th pick - The Nomad

Jonno - 5th pick - Hope's End slice

NekroDiesTwice - 6th pick - Speaker

NekroDiesTwice - 7th pick - Berga/Lirta slice

Jonno - 7th pick - 2nd position (all players before me had already taken factions so I still would get first pick of faction before NekroDiesTwice)

nerdY2K - 9th pick - Rigel slice

Mantis - 10th pick - Arinam/Meer slice

NerfZerg - 11th pick - Starpoint/NA slice

codytct - 12th pick - 3rd position

codytct - 13th pick - Lodor slice

NerfZerg - 14th pick - 4th position

Mantis - 15th pick - 5th position

nerdY2K - 16th pick - 6th position

Jonno - 17th pick - Mahact Gene-Sorcerers

NekroDiesTwice - 18th pick - Sardakk N'orr

I was quite surprised that the draft went faction first, letting me grab the clearly superior Hope's End slice, figuring I would get Speaker and choice of Sardakk, Winnu, or Arborec. NekroDiesTwice however didn't grab Mahact and slice (to avoid the white slice), but took Speaker and the Berga/Lirta slice, letting me get 2nd and Mahact. Overall I was very happy with the outcome. If I had not got Mahact I probably would have gone Sardakk. I thought Winnu was too risky with Sol and Mahact as neighbours as they could both push into my slice in round 2 without much resistance. Sardakk is generally great, especially with the two planets next to Mecatol and the free mechs, but they, like Arborec, are at mercy of the objectives and I didn't want to lose the finals because of dumb luck drawing the wrong card. Mahact have a lot of flexibility, the available commanders from the other factions are amazing, the mech is top tier defence, Benediction is possibly the best hero, the agent (with Yssaril) is top tier, and the three infantry start is fine in this slice although there was no tech skip next to home to use Biostims on directly. I did plan to grab and Biostims the blue skip next to Mecatol first turn using an agent swap with Yssaril, but it would probably be too late to use.

I drew up a little friendship ladder as a fun way of keeping track who had been nice to me, a fantastic idea I got from watching a game with Craiken (thanks!). Social pressure and positive reinforcement is a very powerful tool in encouraging wanted behaviour and people like to see the concrete results of their actions on relationships, especially when we're playing online and lose out on all the facial expressions and body language.

Sardakk to my right was Speaker and took Warfare to fill his slice out and grab both equidistants, hoping for attachments. I had no way to guarantee scoring first round without Warfare, but would get the Yssaril-copying-Mahact agent to fill my slice as long as I don't take Leadership (as the agent doesn't work there). I took Construction to be able to score next round, guarding against a 3rd non-scoreable objective. Obviously Construction is a sad early pick with Tech and Trade available, but I just couldn't risk not scoring two rounds in a row.

Sol took Leadership, Yssaril Politics, Titans Trade and Nomad Tech.

Action Phase

My two secrets were Monopolise Production (have 4 industrial planets – I had 2 in my slice but no others nearby) and Prove Endurance (be last to pass – which seems easy with my excess Influence as long as Yssaril doesn't stall me out every turn), so I chose that.

My plan for the round was just to fill the slice the best I could and set up for a Mecatol steal next round. Unfortunately I only had a dread and a carrier with no way to get grav drive, so I wasn't able to get both planets next to Mecatol. Yssaril agreed to swap agents this turn which made sense for both of us.

After getting to refresh Hope's End with an explore I asked Nomad and Sol to stall Tech and Leadership in case I got \$2 to get both tech and 2 command tokens, but it didn't work out.

I took the cruiser with my carrier to Acceon in order to move to Titan's beta for trade purposes, assuming I would then take Atlas with the carrier.

Sardakk was desperate for the Atlas equidistant, which I could have taken from him, and so he sold me unlimited Tekklar Legion for each round that I agreed not to take Atlas, as well as sending an infantry at me at some point so I can get his commander. I was happy with this as I had enough other stuff to do, but Atlas was still very tempting.

Since I knew I could score 3 structures next turn I was happy to skip tech, if 2 tech in 2 colours comes out I would still be able to score it round 3 with the secondary of tech twice.

When I popped Construction I put the dock on Acceon so I could double dock there in case I needed 8 production in one system (which is a secret objective).

When Warfare popped I built 2 cruisers and 1 destroyer (as well as 2 infantry) as I wouldn't have a use for a carrier at home next round, and I wanted to reinforce my Mecatol fleet as well as be able to DET explore/gum later on. I should have built a second destroyer instead of the infantry for a more efficient explore/gum movement later, but I always like building a few infantry each turn to build up enough defence later. I also didn't want to have an empty home system with Sol getting movement 3 carriers next round and direct access to my homesystem. I wasn't sure how aggressive the other players might be, but thought an empty homesystem would be too tempting to not at least extort.

Titans sent a cruiser through the grav rift to Mecatol, but got eaten by the black hole. If he had Custodians it may have meant a round 4 win considering how amazingly hard to winslay Titans are.

Sardakk sold me his trade agreement for \$1 (\$2 for me if I get full value) to build a mech and two fighters on Bereg.

Scoring

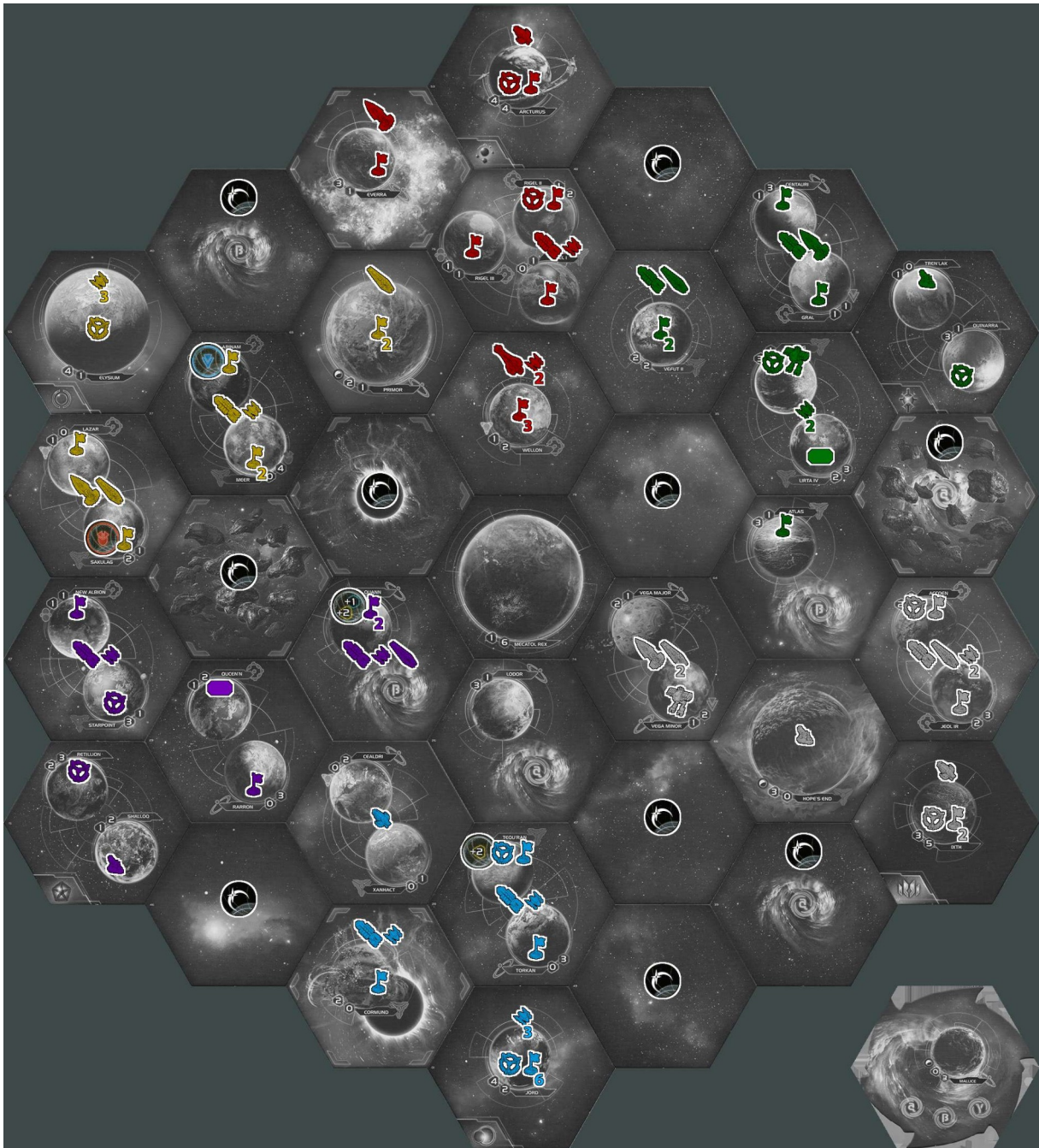
Only Titans scores a public, no secrets from anyone.

Sol	Yssaril	Titans	Nomad	Sardakk	Mahact
0	0	1	0	0	0

Next revealed objective: two tech in two colours!

Round 2

Open objectives: 2 attachments (I have 0/2), 3 structures out of home (possible with Construction secondary) and 2 in 2 colours (not possible without Tech). Secret: Prove Endurance – pass last.



Strategy Phase

Yssaril took Leadership, Titans Trade, Nomad Tech, Sardakk Politics, Sol Construction.

Sardakk initially took Construction, but then wanted to change his mind. As I had already started my discussion with Sol about my pick new information was in the game so he couldn't technically take it back, but I let him exchange his card for Politics on the condition that he gives himself Speaker and I get first pick, getting me Tech for 2 in 2 next round even if I don't tech a yellow or green this round as I wanted to get grav drive.

I took Imperial for the immediate Mecatol point at the cost of a secret draw, even though I couldn't score a second objective. Being on the 8 also gives me advantage with Proving Endurance. I tried to get the table to agree not to attack me in exchange for taking Imperial as that let everyone else draw a secret, but didn't get any firm agreement. I think these little above table discussions are important for maintaining goodwill, if I were later attacked I could always point out how I had been honest about my intentions and had asked the table for permission, giving the attacking player plenty of opportunity to voice disagreement about my plan. They could of course argue against that, but there's a good chance this would paint me as the victim and them as the uncommunicative aggressor. Getting permission also makes the game more fun and moves quicker as everyone can more easily predict what I am planning.

Action Phase

Yssaril first action takes Custodians. When Trade popped Sardakk convinced Titans to refresh him, forgetting I had his Trade Agreement. I still paid Titans the X-1, as otherwise it would be a dirty move against Sardakk who I was trying to support. The more he likes me, the more he will push against Nomad instead of me.

I sent my dreadnought, 2 cruisers and a mech to Mecatol with the hopes that with the upcoming PDS and possible Hopes End new mechs I would be able to hold the capital for the rest of the game, if only for the Influence I needed to buy enough command tokens for my last turn commander parade. I tried to work out a way of saving Yssaril's carrier before moving just in case I rolled too many hits as a way of being nice. He retreated without injury which gained me my first fleet token and Yssaril's commander (1/5) which lets me look at someone's secrets when they activate my systems, a pretty powerful ability.

Sardakk made a huge play by moving into Nomad's slice, taking the Rigel with his space dock to infiltrate it, getting his 3rd structure to score. He is also then next to Nomad's homesystem, as well as Primor and Everta, which both had attachments. Sardakk was very good above table by talking to Nomad in an assertive but peace-seeking way before invading, reassuring that this did not have to mean a forever war.

Sol found a second attachment in his own slice to be able to score (now having that as well as 3 structures and 2 in 2 in the bag).

I finished filling out my slice, and sold two cultural fragments to Nomad for an industrial fragment and something I can't remember.

Even though I had a deal with Sardakk that he take Speaker, I let him sell it to Nomad on the condition that I still get first pick and that it used up a small favour that I owed Nomad, effectively getting me a small bonus for no cost unless Nomad betrays me.

I used the secondary of Construction to put a PDS on Mecatol because I wanted to keep control of those juicy juicy command tokens.

Titans drew the first relic, finding the Crown of Emphidia, without the Tomb yet on the board. Nomad then found JR, the relic agent that you pay to build structures, which was pretty important given the structure objective on the table.

I built at home to stall Imperial, reducing the chance people could act on their new secrets this round, or even set up for it next round. I felt safe on Mecatol so wasn't worried about stalling the point. Sol had already indicated he wasn't going DET so I was planning on getting it to catch up on the missed secret draw.

Sardakk openly extorted Sol and Yssaril \$2 each to not play Reactor Meltdown to destroy one of their space docks, Yssaril paid but Sol did not so he got hit. He had both other objectives scoreable so wasn't worried about catching up on structures.

Sol used Plagiarise to get Scanlink off Yssaril.

Nomad needed \$3 to use JR to build a structure, which I sold to him for his Trade Agreement (\$4) and the condition that if he doesn't take Trade next turn (which would give me the full value of the Trade Agreement) I will get the Cavalry (turning one of my ships into his flagship for one combat), which is what happened and turned out to be important later.

At around 2:34 Titans find the Tomb of Emphidia on Primor and they already have the Crown. If they score this point they will be so far ahead on tempo that the game may be over in round 4 – they scored round 1, they have all three revealed objectives locked down, and they are super hard to winslay. The table instantly entered a proper discussion on how to get Titans off Primor, and after some very long and detailed dealmaking we paid Nomad hand over fist to try to wrest control with their flagship and some Gomma Momma'd infantry. On the table we have Sol's Agent, Thundarian, Yssaril's Agent (who can also copy Titan's), Gomma Momma, and Tekklar Legion. Titans did well trying to deflect heat, raising the fact that both Yssaril and I had bonus points, but the table would not be diverted. I thought it important to let Titans get a fair space to counter offer, and found it great that Mantis didn't abuse it by trying to filibuster, he made his points then let the discussion go forward. Nomad ended up being paid: Gomma Momma, Trade Agreements from Sardakk and Yssaril, \$2 from me, and a secret deal with Sol (which turned out to be two fragments to score a secret and his Trade Agreement in exchange for the Nomad Alliance, giving Sol free flagships). I thought the battle was unlikely to win, but loved getting the table to give Nomad support and money, as Nomad was currently at risk of being eliminated and if they were out then they couldn't keep pressure on Titans, who would then run away with the game. If we did win, that would focus Titan's aggression onto Nomad and Sardakk, which is great for me as long as I can keep Sol in check. I paid the least in the deal quite deliberately, I would have given less if Sardakk hadn't rightly pointed out that I was only paying \$1 when everyone else was putting more in. This weakened every other player more than me, and drew heat and threat away from my forces on Mecatol. The space battle ended up being the Nomad flagship and two fighters against a dreadnought and a cruiser I. The PDS shot from Titans missed. Both fleets scored a hit, both sustained without Direct Hits coming out. Second roll gave Titans 1 hit and Nomads none, removing the fighter screen. They each hit again, this time absorbing the Titan's agent, leaving the Flagship and dreadnought alone, naked and sustained. Nomad had to use Thundarian to save the Memoria, which gave the Nomad the win.

On the ground Nomad had 4 infantry with Tekklar plus every agent against 3 infantry and a Hel-Titan I. The odds were pretty good for Team Table. It was so close, we used every agent possible, but in the

end all units were destroyed and Primor still belonged to the Titans. Close to success, but ultimately not bad for me – Titans is the bad guy now, Nomad is rich but weakened, and the rest of the table is now poorer which makes it harder for anyone to push me off Mecatol. I particularly wanted to weaken the Primor area because I still needed 2 attachments and 3 of them were next to that slice.

That was the end of my round so I had to pass.

Scoring

Everyone except Sardakk got an objective and a secret or Mecatol point. Titans scored the Crown/Tomb combo keeping them in the lead, with Yssaril and I on semi-equal tempo, and Sardakk behind on tempo and points.

Sol	Yssaril	Titans	Nomad	Sardakk	Mahact
2	2	3	2	1	2

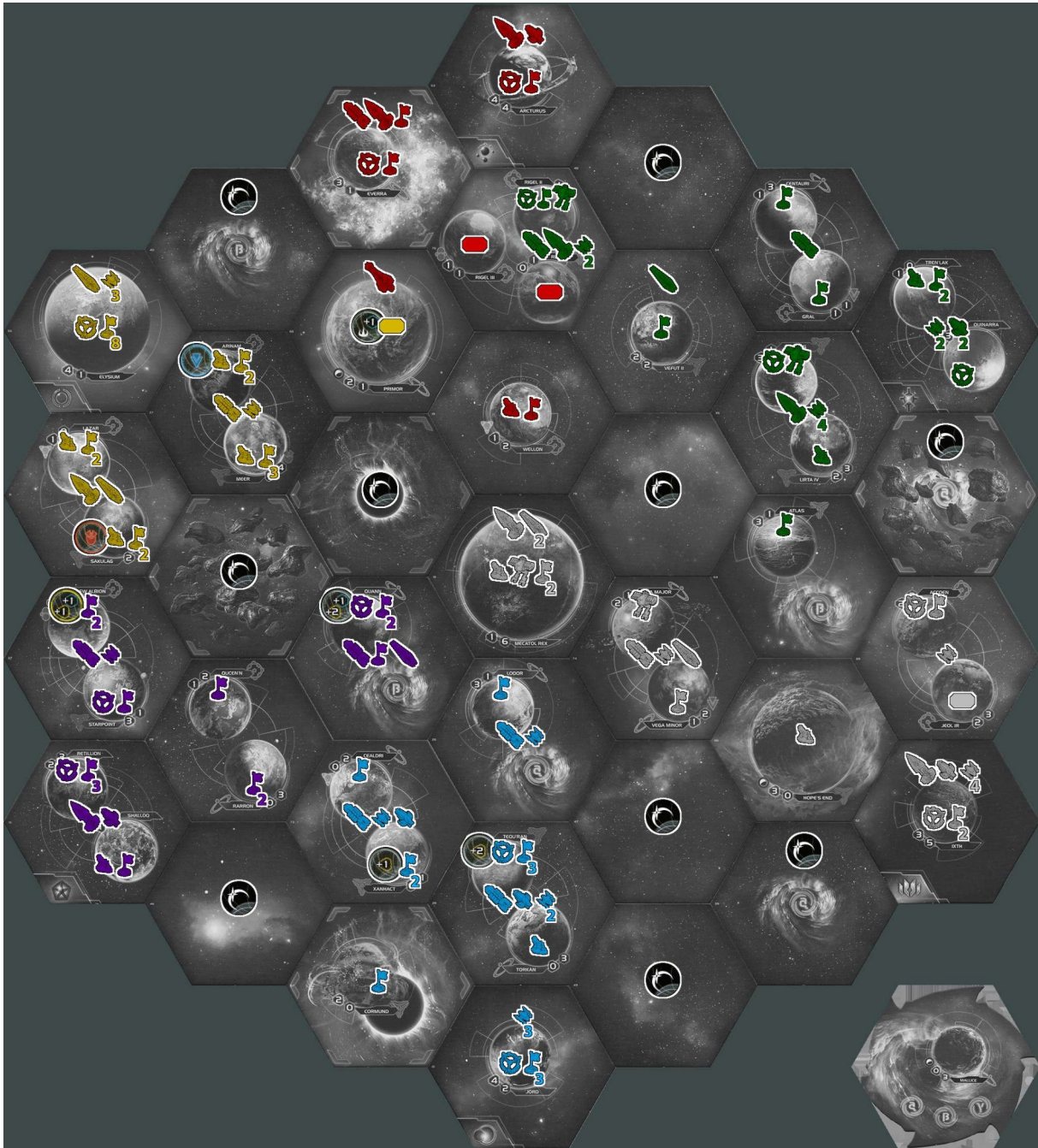
Agenda

Seed of an Empire (For: 1 point to the players with most points, Against: 1 point to the players with lowest points). As a table we agreed to just give it to Sardakk as they were behind and the objectives were against them. Yssaril put a Tech Rider on against. Since the table basically just abstained assumed we let Speaker decide it on the tie, so Titans tested Nomad to see if he could give him his Support, bump him to 3, and then get them both to 4. I jumped in to disrupt the bribe because if Titans got the point here I thought it would be game over with a Titans round 4 win even if the whole table grouped together. I was also keen for Sardakk to get the point as I needed them to not be out of the running for winslaying later, especially as Nomad was so weakened last round. In the end Nomad stayed pure, resisted the bribe, and Sardakk got the point.

Homeland Defence Act (For: You can put infinite PDS on a planet, Against: Everyone destroy 1 PDS). This didn't matter much to me; I didn't want the law in play, but I didn't want to lose a PDS if it could be helped. Titans put a Construction Rider against. The law passed For but didn't end up mattering later.

Round 3

Open objectives: 2 attachments, 2 techs in 2 colours, spend 8 influence. Secret: Prove Endurance – pass last.



Strategy Phase

Nomads took Imperial, Sardakk took Leadership, and I went greedy and took Tech to score 2 in 2 and save 8 Influence for next round. I could have taken Politics to secure another Imperial point next round but I hoped Sol would take Politics and sell me Speaker. Unfortunately they took Diplo instead, partly because it had \$5 on it from Titan's Manipulate Investments action card. Yssaril got Politics, so

Titans took Warfare. No Construction set the other players back as they hadn't scored the 3 structures yet.

Action Phase

Sardakk first action moved in on Primor to kill the Nomad Flagship and to move towards having 2 attachments, reinforcing the planet with his agent.

Yssaril popped Politics and sold Speaker to Sol, despite my attempts to buy it myself even with 3rd pick. Yssaril was uncomfortable selling me Speaker with me having Mecatol, which is fair. I followed Politics even though I had to then discard as I had some bad cards that I wanted to upgrade.

I popped Tech to get DET and Scanlink. I wanted to find two attachments to have a guaranteed score in round 5 with 2 in 2 if I can score that now or 8 Influence. I also wanted to gum up the space between Sol and I, which DET hopefully pays me back for. Spreading out also sets me up for a number of public and secret objectives. As I'm only the player with DET I get free reign of the 5 Frontier tokens near me, and since no one has Lightwave my gum is effective.

I liked spreading out my ships early as Mahact as my command token pool will jump up dramatically later on once I get my hands on other player's commanders, so I might surprise the other players later on by condensing my exploration fleets.

Nomad used Imperial to score 3 structures, and I drew the secret to have 4 mechs on separate planets which is easy peasy with Hope's End.

I followed my gut and offered a Support Swap to Yssaril which he took without problem. I think this was because as I wanted to be able to attack my neighbours later on, particularly Sol, and I didn't want Titans and Yssaril to swap. He then immediately Mageon'd me which was rude, but he took Spy instead of something more important to me. The Spy did come back to bite me, but probably did him more damage than I took.

My first DET explore got me Enigmatic Device (Action: Spend 6 resources to research a tech) which is pretty good in a niche situation – picking up an out of order Fleet Logistics, Lightwave or even Antimass can open unexpected avenues.

Nomad took his slice back and swapped Supports with Sol. This left Sardakk and Titans to swap if they wanted to, but they were currently warring at Primor.

Sol approached me for help with a secret by taking Joel Ir which I could have easily prevented. I agreed to sell it to him for a point later (unless it would end the game) as well as a Military Support right now. I love these kind of deals, but you do have to remember them, and other people have to honour them. This also draws one of his carriers into my slice where I can eat it later for his commander, preventing it from transporting 8 infantry against me later. Attacking me let me use Yssaril's commander to look at his secrets, which helped ensure the deal we just made as I could sell or threaten knowledge of his secrets if he betrays me later. I probably should have pushed for Ceasefire as payment but didn't think of it at the time.

I built at Acceon to explore (roughly 20% chance to find an attachment), get some Infantry, and my last mech. I was happy building infantry there because if I later needed them at home I could activate my homesystem and use a speed 2 carrier from home to grab them.

When Sol attacked Yssaril as part of a secret swap, I offered Yssaril to look at his action cards if I tell him Sol's secrets. This was me just straight up currying favour as well as trading for someone else's

secret knowledge later – I really didn't want him to Mageon me anymore as I had Parley and Flank Speed in hand.

Finally I got an attachment on Hope's End (roughly 20% chance) which let me focus on exploring Industrial and Cultural as the Hazardous Deck had no attachments left.

Sol drew the Gamma Wormhole next to his homesystem, finally giving the table access to Mallice.

Titans brought their fleet to Primor without trying for the ground, just pushing the threat of Sardakk ships out of his slice. Sardakk revealed that he had the secret to destroy a flagship WHICH HE FORGOT TO SCORE on the first action of this round when he blew up Nomad's flagship. Brutal.

I found the Ion Storm next to home, which was almost useless. I choose the beta wormhole so I could strike at the DET token next to Titans/Primor/Everra for a second attachment. My next explore got me 2 command tokens which was great. On Vega Minor I found a second cultural fragment. I explored the token in the grav rift next to Mecatol to block it and found 2 action cards, forcing a discard. The exploration parade let me score Prove Endurance (which turns out is an action phase secret) as I was the last to pass.

Scoring

As Diplo was taken I was able to buy tokens and still flip Mecatol and Ixth to score 8 influence. For my secret I scored 4 mechs on 4 planets. This let me keep 2 in 2 colours for later, if the next objective were scoreable I would have 2 in 2 colours locked down for an unblockable round 5 one pointer. Pretty much everyone else scored keeping the pack roughly together. Titans and Sardakk hadn't swapped yet. Titans, Yssaril and I are the only ones with bonus points.

Sol	Yssaril	Titans	Nomad	Sardakk	Mahact
4	5	4	6	4	6

The next objective revealed was spend 8 resources, easy for everyone. I particularly liked it because it reduces how much people would tech and build ships, strengthening my hold on Mecatol and the power of my gum to prevent winslaying against me later.

Agenda

Titans hit me with a Diplomatic Pressure so I gave him Nomad's Trade Agreement instead of my own. I'm not really sure why I did that, as Nomad's is \$4 and mine is \$3, but maybe it was because then I didn't have to rely on Nomad getting himself refreshed.

Minister of Peace – Elect a player: That player can end someone's turn after they activate a system, effectively stopping an attack. I was happy to give this to Sardakk as I felt they were the furthest behind pointwise and he was a very sensible player (in terms of him using it for the winslay later on). He ended up showing me his secret objectives and agreed to suicide an infantry at me to give me his alliance in order to buy enough votes to beat Sol. This scored Sardakk the secret to get elected, which I was still happy with.

Enforced Travel Ban – For: Alpha and betas have no effect. Against: Destroy all PDS next to wormholes (pretty much every PDS including my PDS on Mecatol). I was unsure here – less PDS is

Strategy Phase

Sol took Politics (he already had Speaker, so now I or Sardakk would be getting it), Yssaril Imperial, Titans Leadership, Nomad Trade, Sardakk Construction, so I took Diplo for buying command tokens (11 influence between Mecatol and Ixth) and discouraging Sol from nibbling my slice. I didn't want Tech in the game to reduce the chance of Lightwave, strengthening my gum. Sardakk took Construction so Sol would give them Speaker (they needed the secondary to score the public and a secret).

Action Phase

I was thinking about what paths people had (assuming no 2 pointer as they are so random if they're scoreable), and saw that I needed another bonus point to win so wanted to double down looking for Shard/Obsidian. I could possibly draw 3 relics if I find/buy enough fragments especially with a few DET tokens still available.

I got Sol's permission to use Uprising to exhaust one of his planets for \$4 by giving \$2 to him.

Sol opened up Mallice and then swapped Supports with Titans.

Finally DET paid off by giving me a secret – letting me discard “have units in the wormhole nexus” for “discard 5 action cards”. I already had 7 cards with Hope's End unused, so even if I get Mageon'd twice and hit with the Yssaril hero I would be ok this round. Unfortunately I had to move a ship already gummed for this explore which is inefficient, I hadn't built enough Destroyers or Cruisers in the earlier rounds.

Sardakk attacked my gum in front of Mecatol to open a path to the capital, which let me look at his secrets. He could bring two mechs and two infantry, while I had a mech and four infantry (five with Sol's commander) which is an impressive 78% chance for Sardakk to win given that he is outnumbered. We made some deal that I would move off Mecatol without a fight, but I can't remember it anymore.

Yssaril wanted to exhaust Hope's End for \$4, which I tried to get him to give me his green fragment for but couldn't get, but talked it down to one of the Vegas so he only got \$2 and I got to keep the use of Hope's End.

On Aceon I found my third green fragment and took back Jeol Ir to get Sol's commander (2/5) and unlocking my own, using Tekklar to get the hit.

Sardakk took Mecatol despite having agreed to go only after Leadership popped, losing me the Mecatol Influence, two infantry and a dreadnaught. I now realise writing this I completely forgot that Crimson Legionnaires give or convert you commodities when they die! I never used it the whole game. I made this kind of mistake in my other tournament games by misunderstanding Saar space docks and Nekro's commander unlock – I really need to learn to read the ALL the faction components again after the draft.

Titans attacked Sardakk at Atlas so I used my Unexpected Action to take it back from them, grabbing their commander (3/5). I wanted to move my dreadnought and carrier out to somewhere they could reach something useful in round 5, as well as blocking access to my largely undefended slice. The ground combat was my sustained mech and 2 infantry with Tekklar against his 3 infantry. He paid for Sol's agent and eventually Thundarian but unfortunately for him the dice just didn't agree and I took the planet without losing a unit.

Titans drew their relic, getting a useless Prophet's Tears.

I built at home then passed.

Scoring

Since I lost Mecatol I needed to spend my other planets for tokens as I was concerned about a Leadership stall next round. I chose to build at home instead of paying 8 resources to score as unlocked ships are super useful in round 5, and I already had \$7 so could score anyway next round no problem. I discarded 5 action cards for my final secret. Everyone else scored and got at least one secret scored.

Sol	Yssaril	Titans	Nomad	Sardakk	Mahact
7	8	8	7	7	8

Next objective revealed: spend 16 influence (2 pointer). Yssaril and Titans were the only factions without 16 Influence already available so it was anyone's game!

Agenda

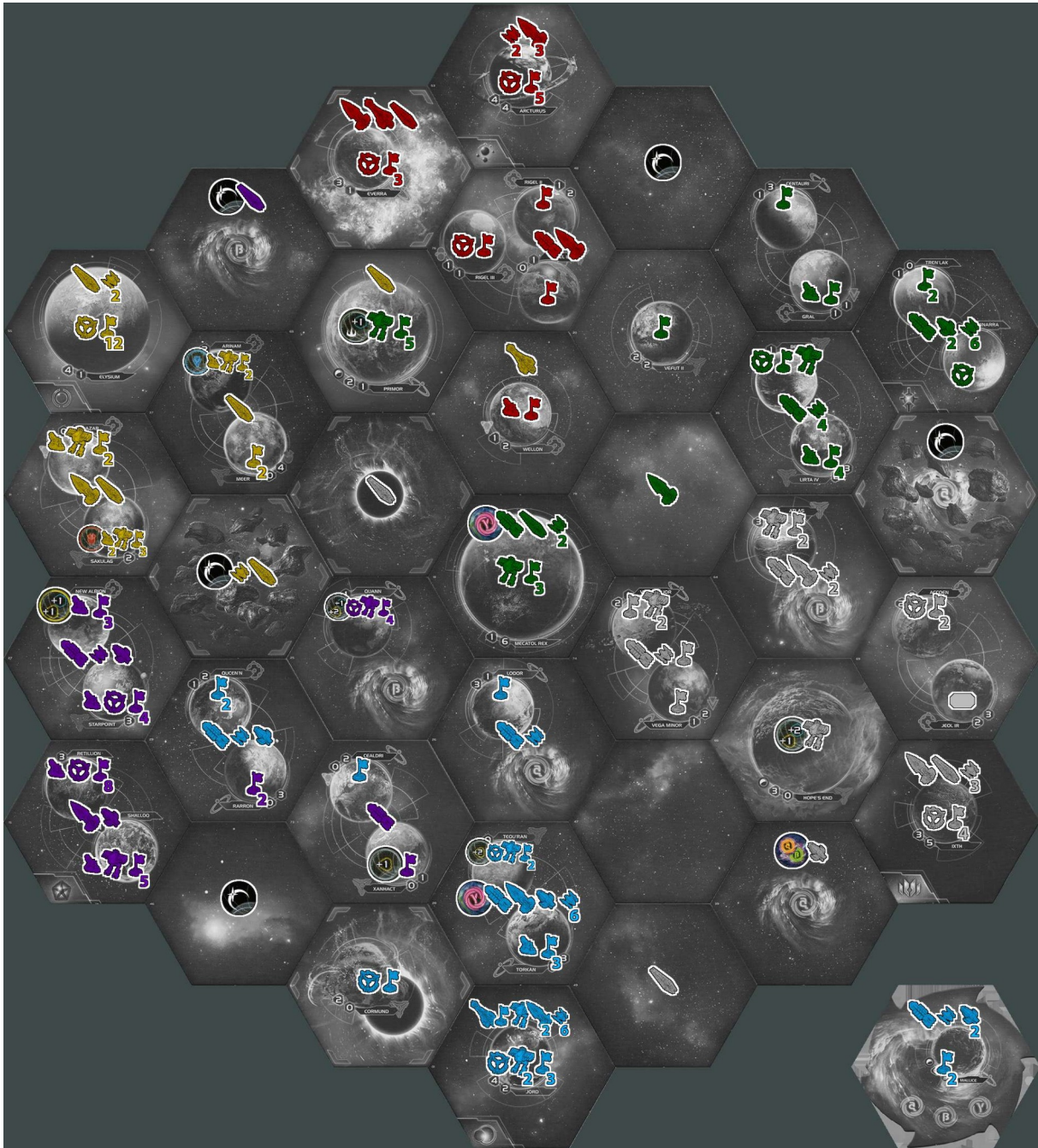
Nexus Sovereignty – For: Alpha and Beta wormholes in the Wormhole Nexus have no effect during movement, Against: Place a Gamma Wormhole token in the Mecatol Rex System.

Sol played a Politics Rider against, which would bring Speaker forward 2 places (jumping over me). Everyone except Sardakk and I wanted this to happen as they would get better Speaker position. Despite trying to find a solution with Sardakk it still went against, opening up Mecatol with a Gamma Wormhole and taking me from 2nd best Speaker position (either Leadership or Imperial, both great options) to dead last speaker position, which threw my plans out the window.

Prophecy of Ixth – Sol put a Leadership Rider on Sardakk (who had 19 votes, Nomad had 1, everyone else had none), and Yssaril put a Diplo Rider on himself. Nomad then Assassinated Sardakk, allowing him the only vote to give himself the Prophecy and avoid the riders. Yssaril played a Confounding Legal Text to give it to himself with the Diplo Rider. This which would have been game over if he Diplos his homesystem as he would score on the 1 with Leadership and he already had the 1 pointer locked up and one secret remaining. After some discussion Nomad Sabotaged it.

Round 5

Open objectives: spend 8 resources, have 2 attachments, spend 16 influence (2 pointer). No secrets remaining.



Strategy Phase

The other players very quickly took strategy cards in direct ascending order of who would win first, except Sardakk who skipped Construction on the 4 for Trade on the 5. I was pretty frazzled here, so after a short break away from the computer I sat down and wrote out the possible paths to win on a piece of paper :

Sol (Imperial 8) – Use Imperial while holding Mecatol to win immediately by scoring the 2 pointer (without losing any planets). Otherwise use Imperial to score the 2 pointer (without losing any planets) get to 9 and score the 1 pointer (already locked in) in the status phase to win on the 8. Sol's Hero removes command tokens and he has Dominus Orb which lets him move out of a locked system so he has some flexibility here.

Yssaril (Leadership 1) – Score 2 in 2 colours (locked in) and their secret to win in the status phase on the 1. They need to have their secret blocked or lose their homesystem to not win, except if Sol gets the Mecatol point in the action phase.

Titans (Diplo 2) – They need to find \$5 and not lose any planets to score the 2 pointer, or score their last secret/draw Shard and score 2 in 2 colours to win on the 2. They don't have 2 in 2 techs, so that meant I shouldn't take Tech.

Nomad (Politics 3) – Need to score their secret and score the 2 pointer (locked in as they had more than \$16) to win on the 3. Their secret needs to be blocked or they need to lose their homesystem otherwise they beat me in speaker order. Nomad showed their secret (4 techs in 1 colour) which was unscorable at this point, but he would draw another one when Imperial pops.

Sardakk (Trade 5) – They need to score their secret and then not lose 7 Influence worth of planets to score the 2 pointer and win on the 5.

I had a look at my table of secrets, trying to see what the chances of drawing something scorable or which ones I needed to block. I was pretty tired though so couldn't really keep it in my head, and decided to just follow my gut and let the other players figure out who had which secrets.

Me – My best bet was scoring the 2 pointer by spending 16 influence as I have \$7 and plenty of Influence, so pretty much only need to hold on to my homesystem (5 Influence) and one other planet. If I had remembered Crimson Legionnaire (which make money by dying) I could have used that as a path. I did remember that I had the Titans Commander which makes \$1 each time I produce. With the Mahact Commander which unlocks systems if I activate them a second time I could produce plenty of times (as long as I used planets I am going to lose, or planets without influence as otherwise it would not be a net gain).

Otherwise I could spend 8 resources/have 2 attachments and find either Shard or Obsidian and draw a scorable secret (unlikely). I had 3 green and 2 blue fragments, so if I get lucky with 2 DET tokens I could draw a white fragment or even a relic directly, giving me up to 3 attempts to draw Shard/Obsidian.

Ok, so every single person needs to be winslaid before me unless I take Construction in which case I don't have to winslay Sardakk. Taking Tech gives me access to Lightwave/Antimass which gives me access to 2 more DET tokens. This would also give other players Lightwave which might help winslaying, but it gives Titans 2 in 2 and the win, and winslaying Titans is almost impossible here. I thought about it a good while before going with my gut and taking Warfare over Construction for the extra flexibility it gave me, especially considering the incoming Yssaril Leadership stall. It also put me last in the winslay chain, hopefully encouraging Sardakk to get out there and attack someone other than me.

Action Phase

Now we see the winslay chain come into action. The only people that really have access to Yssaril's homesystem are Sol and Nomad, which is pretty much the only battle that matters at this stage.

Yssaril refused to show us his secret, forcing us to assume it was already locked in which meant we HAD to take his homesystem unless we could win in the action phase. Nomad pointed out that eliminating me would also remove my Support for the Throne and dock Yssaril a point. I was not in favour of this plan.

I had 3 action cards – Parley (stop an invasion and end the turn), Flank Speed (+1 speed to each ship) and Political Stability (keep your strategy card for next round). If Yssaril picked Parley out of my hand before we attacked then it would probably be game over, someone would have to be able to invade twice. Yssaril had two uses of Mageon and his hero available so I was sweating about how to not let him get the card.

Every player had only two tokens in their tactics pool, except Nomad with four, so Yssaril had the power to stall us out with Leadership by using his eleven action cards. This severely reduced the scope of play as we had to plan out the winslaying chain into such a tight window.

Since so much happened in the last round I've written out the full play by play with every suspenseful turn in this crazy round:

Yssaril – Activated home to build and put 11 infantry on the planet with the space dock and 9 infantry and 1 mech on the other. Mantis raised the idea that his secret is having 9 ground forces on a planet without a space dock which seemed likely.

Titans – Attacked Yssaril next to their homesystem and scored Turn Fleets to Dust. Now they need to either get Shard/Obsidian or still score the 2 pointer. They dropped a mech on each planet, taking an empty planet with a PDS and loses the other combat but killing one infantry thanks to Tekklar.

Nomad – Used Impersonation to draw a new secret which he didn't show us, claiming it was scoreable but not easy. He then immediately used Fleet Logistics to build at home which made us very suspicious that his secret was already scored. This made the winslay chain a lot more complicated as now Sol wasn't motivated to try to win on the 8 if Nomad wasn't slain off winning on the 3.

Sardakk – Insubordination on Yssaril (removing his only command token from his tactics pool, preventing any movement before Leadership, hopefully bringing the end of the stall forward and preventing any action phase secrets).

Me – I had no good options and wanted to stall attacking anyone in the winslay chain so I wouldn't hurt anyone's chances attacking Yssaril. Sardakk proposed a good use of Benediction which would let him take Nomad's homesystem which I was open to. I ended up attacking Titans at Primor to open the grav rift for other players, and letting Titans play Rout to stop Yssaril from getting it. Our cruisers killed each other, leaving the airspace open.

Sol – Played Plague on Yssaril, which was Sabotaged, "confirming" for us that his secret is having 9 ground forces on a planet without a space dock. He then played another action card to no effect (as a stall).

Yssaril – Mageon on Sol (phew!).

Titans – Used his last command token to Scanlink (looking for money) but found a new command token.

Nomad – Used JR as a stall to build a structure.

Sardakk – Played an action card to steal one of my three green fragments, preventing me from drawing a relic directly. This put him in a pretty powerful bargaining position as I really wanted that 1/10 chance to draw Shard.

Me – We opened the discussion again trying to get Sol to agree to attack Yssaril. He was quite reluctant as Nomad had built at home, implying that he was going to win on the 3, which would be before Sol winning on the 8 unless he can get the action phase win with Mecatol. This meant he doesn't want to bother attacking Yssaril. Sardakk brought up a path to take Nomad's homesystem by using his hero and Benediction.

In the end we didn't get any agreement so I used Enigmatic Device to research Carrier 2. I could have gone Sling Relay (with Biotims) for 2 stalls, or Antimass for the last available 2 DET tokens. I took Carrier 2 for the reach it would give me against Sardakk or Sol.

Sol – Orbital Drop at home (1 strategy token for 2 infantry).

Yssaril – Stall tactics, building a mech at home.

Titans – Diplomacy.

Nomad – Moved a small fleet onto the beta wormhole, attacking a Yssaril cruiser which managed to retreat back through the wormhole to his slice to gum. Yssaril told us Nomad's secret was have units in the wormhole nexus which was now possible for Nomad after taking the wormhole.

Sardakk – He was thinking about attacking me at the Vegas next to Mecatol which I would have loved in order to get rid of Parley, but instead he moved his fleet towards Nomad to set up for the Benediction into Hero into Nomad homesystem play. I thought about trying to convince him to stick to his plan and attack, but thought it was too risky to give any clues that I had Parley.

Me – With not much more to do, I attacked Nomad's flagship at the beta wormhole so I could explore the DET and reduce Nomad's chances by blocking him from getting to the wormhole nexus (getting Sol to be more confident in his win so would attack Yssaril). This effectively slayed Nomad in my mind. I spent the Flank Speed just to get it away from Yssaril. With DET I got some commodities which is completely useless UNLESS you know you are Mahact with Crimson Legionnaire, which I still forgot. I also picked up the Nomad commander (4/5) – almost there for the full set.

Sol – Activated Mecatol Rex so Sardakk spent Minister of Peace to end the turn.

Yssaril – Stall tactics, building a mech at home.

Titans – Scanlink to search for money, finding a command token again – the Titans cannot be out stalled!

Nomad - Sling Relay to build his Flagship in the Rigels, giving him an outside chance to get to Mallice.

Sardakk – Used Trade, offered Nomad an X-1 but it was refused.

Me – After lots of discussion I used Benediction to move the Titan's flagship onto Mecatol against a Sardakk cruiser, hoping to then be able to block Sol from activating it without losing his Support. I knew Sardakk had the secret to destroy a flagship, but even if he scored it he would still need the 2 pointer to win. On the first roll both ships hit and Titans did NOT use Sustain Damage, forcing Yssaril to use their agent to copy his agent to block the hit. If he didn't, Sol could just take Mecatol and win in the action phase. Yssaril declined, but Nomad used Thundarian to reroll, but it still died anyway. This revealed that Yssaril had a structure secret (4 PDS since 3 space docks was already scored by

Sol), as he needed his agent for JR now that Titans had knocked out his 4th PDS. As Sardakk destroyed the flagship he scored his secret so I definitely needed to take enough planets from him to prevent the 2 pointer and win on the 5.

Sol – Sol used his Hero to remove the command token from Mecatol.

Yssaril – He immediately played Signal Jamming on Mecatol, putting the Sol command token back down.

Titans – Stalled by activating an empty system.

Nomad – Popped Politics to draw action cards which I unfortunately couldn't follow. I was saving my agent to help Sol attack Yssaril.

Sardakk - Activates Mecatol to use his agent to put 2 infantry down, getting at total of 5 on the capital.

Me – I then attacked Sardakk at Mecatol to start removing influence as part of the winslay chain. My 2 mechs and 2 infantry hit the ground against his 5 infantry, and in the end my 2 mechs survived but both were sustained. This picked up my fifth and last foreign commander, Gomma Momma, completing my collection.

Sol – Tried to pop Imperial to score the 2 pointer, but it got hit with Coup d'Etat from Yssaril (forcing a skipped turn without the card going off).

Yssaril – Hero time! We all have to give him one action card, he could either keep it or give it back and force us to discard 3 cards. I gave him Political Stability (my other card was Parley), which he took - if it got to another round he would still have Leadership for the win.

Titans – Passes.

Nomad – Activated the Rigels to build and reinforce. Thanks to his hero his flagship can still move out of activated systems so if a path opens to the wormhole he still has a chance for his secret.

Sardakk – Passes.

Me – Warfare to get the command token back from Mecatol.

Sol – Uses Imperial to score the 2 pointer getting to 9 with the 2 techs in 2 colours objective on lock, and looks at a secret (to help know the table's options). Nomad had a look at a secret, but didn't keep it.

Yssaril – Mageon'd Sardakk which was a big sigh of relief from me - Parley being the only card in my hand which I now get to use in case Sol attacks me.

Titans – Passed.

Nomad – Passes.

Sardakk – Passed.

Me – The possibilities were now the following:

- If Sol doesn't take Yssaril's homesystem, Yssaril wins.
- If Sol stops Yssaril and draws Shard or Obsidian into a scoreable secret, Sol wins.

- If Sol stops Yssaril and doesn't find the last point, Sardakk wins on the 5.

- If Sol stops Yssaril and doesn't find the last point, and I winslay Sardakk, I win on the 6, assuming Sol can't winslay me.

During the entire round the main point of discussion from Sardakk and I was how to get Sol to attack Yssaril. Eventually the three of us came to an agreement that Sardakk and I would give him three green fragments when he invades Yssaril's homesystem – he is at 9 points so this gives him a chance to draw Shard or Obsidian to instantly win. Given that he couldn't otherwise win in the action phase anymore, and Sardakk or I would win before him in the status phase, taking this deal was his only real chance at victory.

This was my last action so I had to attack Sardakk right now for the winslay. Sardakk very sensibly proposed giving Sol the fragments before we know the outcome of this battle as otherwise one of us would have no incentive to follow the deal after we knew which of the two of us was winning in the status phase. I used grav drive and the extra movement from carrier II to bring 2 carriers and 1 fighter against his 1 PDS and 2 fighters. His PDS hit, killing my fighter. The space battle would have been an almost even coin flip between the carriers and the fighters, but I played THE CAVALRY, sending help back from the future to transform one of my carriers into the Memoria I with an Anti-fighter Barrage x3 on 8s, a combat value of 7 with 2 rolls, and Sustain Damage. All AFB hit, but Sardakk played Scramble Frequency and all the rerolls missed. He got a hit which I sustained without a Direct Hit, and I got two hits to win the fight. Phew! To ground combat – my 4 mechs (2 are sustained) and 2 infantry against his 3 infantry. In the first roll I got 3 hits and the winslay was complete – now Sardakk has only 15 Influence available, 1 shy of the 16 needed for the 2 pointer.

Sol – He had the fragments in hand and could have betrayed us to try and draw Shard now, sparing the battle against Yssaril. He chose to uphold his end of the deal by attacking Yssaril directly, bringing his flagship, 2 destroyers, 2 carriers and 5 fighters, most of which had to go through the grav rift. Luckily, every ship passed the rift without problem. Yssaril had a dreadnought and carrier, but played Skilled Retreat to save plastic on the off chance it would matter later. Sol landed everything on Retillion as it did not have a space dock.

Ground combat for the game – Sol had 4 mechs and 10 infantry against Yssaril's 3 mechs, 8 infantry and a PDS, which hit. I knew Yssaril did not have Parley because I had it in my hand. Yssaril uses Morale Boost and gets 4 hits, but Sol hits 8 times – Yssaril uses his agent for Thundarian, this time getting 5 hits, but Sol got 9 hits. Next round Yssaril gets 3 hits, but Sol finishes him off with 8 hits. Sol are super scary it turns out. NerfZerg very rightly said "I died" – now that Yssaril has lost a homesystem he is knocked out to win this round.

Yssaril – Played the Spy he took from me hours ago to take my one card out of my hand – Parley, seconds too late to be useful.

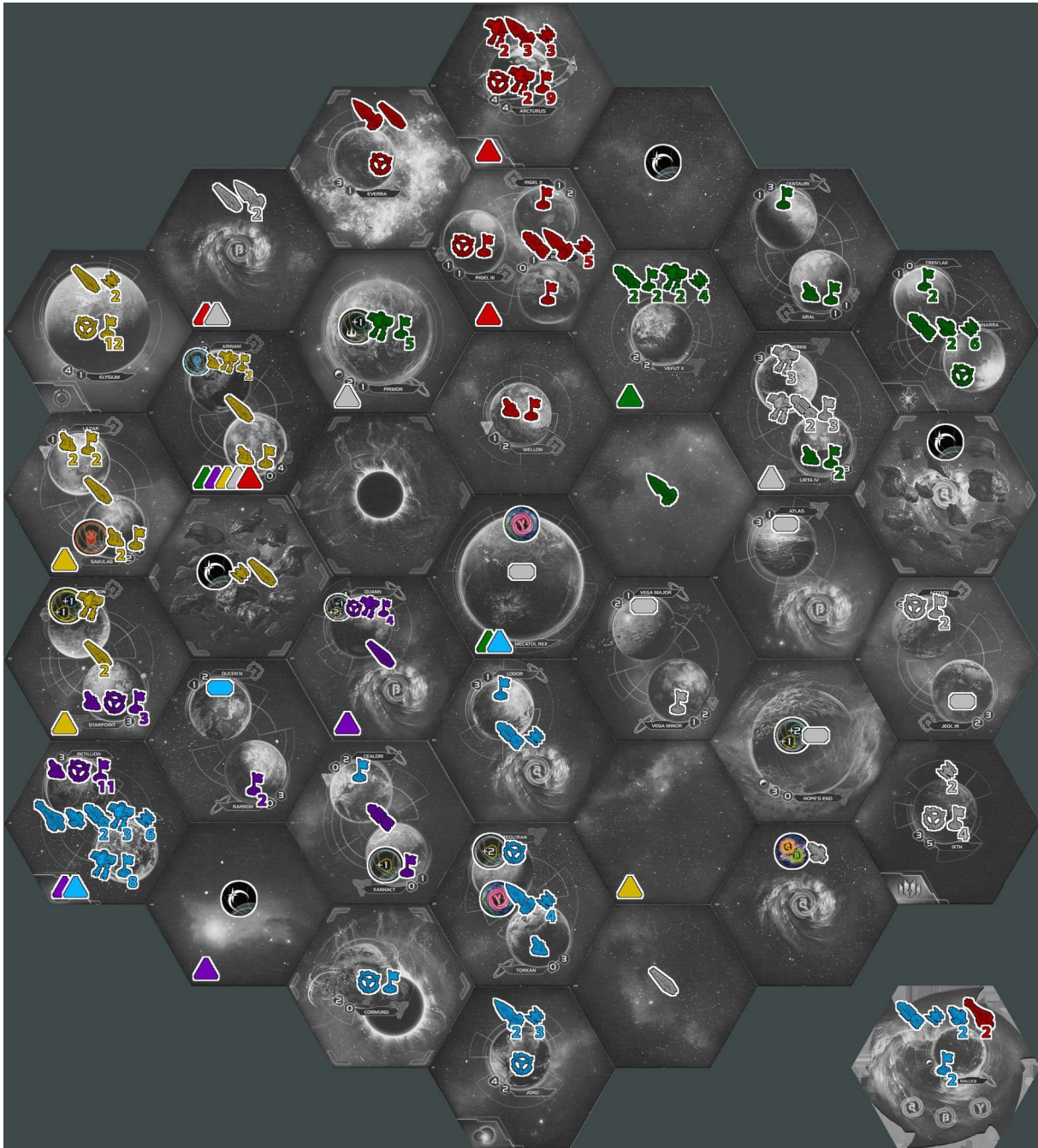
Me – I cross my fingers and pass.

Sol – Purged his three green fragments to draw a Relic, getting The Obsidian! He now gets to draw a Secret Objective – Darken the Skies! (Win a combat in another player's homesystem) If had drawn it BEFORE the attack on Yssaril, he would have won immediately. Crushing.

Yssaril – Played Scuttle to stall, gaining \$6, which would have let him score the 2 pointer if he hadn't lost his homesystem. He could have chosen to pop Leadership to give Sol a chance to winslay me and let Sol win on the 8, but didn't.

Sol – Passed.

Yssaril – Popped Leadership then passed.



End of game positions.

Scoring

Yssaril – Can't score the public as they lost their homesystem, can't score the secret as they lost their 4th PDS and used their agent on Thundarian to try and save their home. 8 points

Titans – Has 14 Influence, needed 16 to win. 9 points

Nomads – Scores the 2 pointer with 16 Influence, but couldn't score their secret. 9 points

Sardakk – Had 15 of the 16 Influence required for the two pointer, ends on 8 points.

Me – I pay the 16 Influence and hit 10 for the win!

What an amazing game! Every player did an amazing job making themselves very real paths to win and if it were not for a dice roll or a coin flip it could have been anyone else's game. I had such a fun time with this group, I loved the deals, the drama, the joy. We worked together well and fought with no hard feelings. I couldn't have wished for a better finals and I hoped you had fun watching it and reading this.

If you have any questions or feedback please let me know!