

## Semis Game 4 – Friday 25.06.22

Pool: Jol-Nar, Nekro, Argent, Yin, Mentak, Sardakk, Arborec

Players: imsen, The HUMBLEST Checkmate, Visioness, fugas, ShadowFH

This is my write up from the fourth semis game. If you enjoy it let me know! This write up is entirely about my experience and lacks insight into the game overview or what the other players were doing or thinking. I apologize for any inaccuracies.

### Preparation

I knew I was the least experienced player (9<sup>th</sup> game total) here, so I couldn't rely on my intuition to prepare and had to do it manually. I made a spreadsheet with the slices and the factions, and made a list of which slice and faction combinations I would be happy with, and what pros and cons each had. I then wrote up the following thoughts on the draft, which I shared with a few players to get their feedback, which was invaluable.

I tried to start up some conversations about banning Nekro, but there was not much support. As a newcomer to the meta I tried talking about how people like to play, deal making meta etc, but again I wasn't able to find much out, so just had to wing it.

My first impressions on the map and draft pool:

The wormholes give more opportunities to winslay, raising the importance of single planet homesystems, strong pds, Lightwave and therefore Hololattice.

Jol-Nar, Nekro, and Mentak all require not being stalled out of warfare to take more than 2 planets in the first round. This should mean the warfare player gets paid bank to not stall them out, but they probably should stall them out anyway.

Jol-Nar is the only blue tech faction, so the alpha wormhole slices with two asteroids are in their favour, particularly In the Hall of the Asteroid King. Everyone else will be hungry for tech, so they should make lots of money if the table plays ball.

Nekro has fantastically good tech options - Jol-Nar, SWA2, Mirror Computing, Hololattice. With the wormholes they will get lots of options to nibble tech from other players. This could mean they are the greatest threat at the end of the game, and with Hololattice become potentially unassailable (flagship on homesystem is pretty strong). This should mean the table is mean to them, or restrict their own techs, but I don't know if the other players will be united enough to do that.

Argent with Hololattice on a planet on the wormhole effectively plugs the danger of wormholes next to home systems, and having pds 2 has more reach through the wormholes. They are also the only faction with a 2 movement start, and cannot be stalled out of warfare, so they will probably have the best start. This seems the most reliable choice to win. Three planet homesystem is bad, but hololattice and good pds network is strong.

Yin has lots of good options to get tech from other players thanks to Jol Nar being on the table. I also love their new hero, which is amazing. Their single planet homesystem with yin spinner and indoctrination should be hard to take.

Mentak has lots of pillage options thanks to the wormholes. Single planet homesystem is nice.

Sardakk and Arborec have no special advantages I can see, except that maybe with the wormholes giving homesystem pressure people may be more cautious, letting them take and hold mecatol more easily. Gomma Momma also sneaks under PDS, so might become important.

The slices are pretty even, except the Hall of the Asteroid King is good for 5 secret and 5 public objectives, whereas the next slices are good for 3 and 2 or 2 and 4, except Jeol Ir which only has 2 and 2. Each slice has 6 influence with optimal use except Mellon and Drunken. If I'm Jol Nar the alpha side is better because the asteroid wormhole, if not Jol Nar then beta is better as there two planets to take.

Overall faction tier on this map:

S – Nekro, Argent

A - Jol-nar, maybe Yin

B - Mentak

C - Sardakk

D - Arborec

I think my draft plan would be:

1. Argent in Drunken Saudor or Rift of the Valkyries, probably happy as first pick
2. Nekro in Jeol or Public Domain, possibly happy as first pick
3. Jol-Nar if the table is nice with warfare, can go best in Hall of the Asteroid King, then Drunken Saudor
4. Yin in the Hall, then Mellon or Drunken
5. Mentak in Mellon, then Rift
6. Sardakk in Jeol Ir, then Rift.
7. Not Arborec even though I love them

My ideal result would probably have been Yin in a good slice with Speaker, next to a friendly Sardakk so we could bully Jol Nar and Nekro with our superior warfare abilities and early game expansion. People rate late game factions over early game powerhouses because people let late game factions grow. Sardakk, if they unlock their commander round 2, can then take the systems next to Jol Nar, and there's just nothing Jol Nar can mechanically do about it. With Warfare, they can take their homesystem. This is an inherent faction ability of Sardakk, and I think doesn't get rated enough. Sardakk shouldn't be paying 3-4 dollars for Research Agreement when the alternative is that Sardakk takes Jol Nar's homesystem. On this map, I think the table would have supported Sardakk, as Jol Nar is clearly the bigger late game threat.

### Draft

Draft result in speaker order: FH as Aborec (yellow), Humble as Mentak (red), Fugas as Argent (green), me as Nekro (white), Visioness as Sardakk (blue) and Imsen as Jol Nar (purple)

I got the first pick in the draft, so choose to go Nekro, and eventually got Rift of the Valkyries given to me. I took 4<sup>th</sup> position to force Imsen as Jol Nar to either be my neighbour or take 6<sup>th</sup> pick, which he did instead. He intended up in Hall in the Mountain King, which I think was best for him. Coming out of the draft I felt Imsen as Jol Nar was ahead.

The secrets I drew were “get elected” or “have 4 cultural planets”. The second I could do by taking Mallice and a planet from a neighbour, or even Mirage if it appears nearby. Getting elected feels way too random, especially since I couldn’t vote, so I took the second secret.

So as Nekro with a planet in my wormhole my vague plan was to get ahead in points, get Mirror Computing and Eres then switch to Hololattice later to prevent Lightwave attacks, and win in round 5 off the 2 pointer. If I could get Sardakk on side I would be well protected from the left, and if I get Gomma Momma my Hololattice system is safe from the ground.

Any good Nekro player should keep an overview of which techs the other players are getting, so they can plan ahead on how to get 2 in 2 colours, 4 in 1 colour, 2 in 4 colours, and 2+1 unit upgrades. I am not such a good player, and just got whatever was helpful at the time. Also, as I found out many hours into the game, the Nekro commander unlocks at 3 techs, so a good player would be drawing action cards with the third copied tech onwards.

## **Round 1**

Open objectives: spend 8 influence, have 2 unit upgrades. Secret: have 4 cultural planets

Ok, so off the bat I can’t score round 1 unless I get crazy money and someone takes Diplo. That meant just setting up for next turn, either getting the money and planets to spend 8 influence or getting ready to attack two players to get 2 unit upgrades.

### Strategy Phase

Arborec took Trade to score and buy RA and Tech, Argent got Politics for R2 Custodians. I wanted some else to take Warfare, but would be happy if no one did as then Jol Nar and Mentak would also get screwed. I took Leadership just to start stocking up on Command tokens and start starving the table out, especially with the 8 Influence objective in play. Construction was a close second, but I will probably have early speaker order next round so could grab it if needed next round.

### Action Phase

My first action as the first player on this table of TI legends is a mistake – I move my carrier towards Mecatol with a single infantry, thinking that no one had Warfare so I can only get two planets this round anyway. Jol Nar had in fact taken Warfare, which means I could have sent the carrier towards Argent right with 2 infantry, and sent the dreadnaught later towards Mecatol with a carrier escort off the Warfare build. I actually thought, ah good, I’ve lost the game already so now I can relax. Sometimes I need to handle my stress better when playing this lovely boardgame.

I tried to get Arborec and Sardakk to attack Jol Nar, as I felt we as the table needed early pressure, as they can each defeat early Jol Nar 1v1 without a problem in round 2. Unfortunately, Imsen managed to instead get them to pay him enough that he got to completely fill out his slice, get Grav Drive and Hyper AS WELL as score R1 – instead of being bullied into giving RA out for cheap, not score R1 and still losing the planets next to home round 2, which had been my hope. Humble as Mentak was probably seen as an aggressive threat which may have contributed to Arborec and Sardakk not being aggressive themselves for fear of counterattack from the Cruiser 2s.

### Scoring

Jol Nar pays 8 Influence, no one else scores, a foreboding start ☹️

## Round 2

Open objectives –8 influence, 2 unit upgrades, 4 structures. Secret: 4 cultural planets

Another easy score for Jol Nar – they already have 4 structures.

### Strategy Phase

Argent takes Leadership to get Custodians, which lets me take Construction to score. I probably should have taken Warfare to get Mecatol this round, and found a way to spend 8 Influence. I was confident Visioness as Sardakk would trade me her commander as we had been in discussion about it since the start of the game, so thought I could take Mecatol later with a 2v1 infantry battle. Sardakk takes Politics, which means I can buy Speaker and get my Imperial swing round next round.

### Action Phase

I stalled Construction because I wanted to pop it next to Mecatol to join the PDS2 hell over the centre of the board. I built at home and used Argent's agent to correct my error last round, getting to build the infantry on the planet on the way to Mecatol so I could still take the two planets there.

I pretty much had nothing else sensible to do as my fleets were too weak to attack my neighbours and there were no good nibble opportunities, so I had to pass early.

### Agenda Phase

Swords to Ploughshares (For: destroy half of infantry, get \$1 for each, or Against: get 1 infantry everywhere). I thought everyone would want the extra infantry, so used the Nekro ability on Against. The table voted against, so I got to pick up Mirror Computing from Mentak (Humble fulfilled his deal here, despite wanting initially to play a rider instead).

Elect player – They get a point, but can't play action cards – we gave it to Arborec as they were furthest from winning. I was keen on it, but my action cards were great (Flank Speed, Sabotage, Trade Rider), so was happy to get to someone else (as long as not Jol Nar or Argent).

### Scoring

4 structures scored, but no secret

## Round 3

Open objectives – 8 influence, 2 unit upgrades, ships in 2 system next to Mecatol. Secret: 4 cultural planets, Betray a Friend.

### Strategy Phase

I took Imperial for the swing round, planning on taking Mecatol with Gomma Momma (and score 8 influence and 2 unit upgrades)

### Action Phase

Sardakk and I made our support swap, and then planned to swap commanders the next turn. Unfortunately I was convinced by Arborec to temporarily give him my commander for the two cards from the double tech, and then get it back when he sends me a Destroyer to nibble for Letani II. He claims we didn't agree on him sending the ship, regardless of the details the outcome was that he never did send the ship and kept my commander pretty much all game.

Luckily I did still get Gomma Momma, so launched a risky attack on Mecatol to get my Guac point from Imperial. If I got Mecatol I would probably keep it the whole game due to the PDS hell, Dacxive, and having Parley and Gomma Momma. I was confident to win from the front due to already having Support swapped, Nekros flagship and single homesystem, as well as having Parley in my hand. I COMPLETELY forgot to buy Tekklar Legion, which watching the video back would have made a difference and got me the point. Instead, it was a draw, letting Sardakk take Mecatol uncontested, not a terrible outcome for my support partner.

#### Agenda Phase

Checks and Balances (you give strategy cards out instead of taking them) – I incorrectly Nekro'd For as I thought the whole point of Visioness putting it on top was that she wanted it to pass, and she was Speaker with the power. It went against.

New Constitution – Discard a law (the point on Arborec). This did not pass.

#### Scoring

8 influence, 2 unit upgrades, no secret

### **Round 4**

Open objectives – ships in 2 system next to Mecatol, flagship or warsun on the board. Secrets: 4 cultural planets, Betray a Friend, Antifighter barrage

#### Strategy Phase

6<sup>th</sup> pick always sucks, and I went Diplo over Construction, partly due to my weak fleets as well as the 4-5 trade goods on the card (doubled by Mirror Computing). It would also allow me to attack someone without fear of reprisal.

#### Action Phase

I built next to Mecatol to be able to force the ships in 2 systems next to Mecatol next round, and planned to just score flagship at home this round. I was really struggling to see a path to get my secrets and win, every alliance was already bought so getting Betray a Friend could only be against Sardakk, who was my support partner making it tricky to negotiate.

I drew Become the Gatekeeper (have a ship over an alpha and a beta), and traded it for 4 cultural planets – I would only need to get the beta in front of Sardakk and my own alpha, or just Mallice.

Jol Nar traded no PDS shots to let his fighter get the Frontier Token next to my home so I could nibble it later. This would also let me Antifighter Barrage it for the secret, so I was all aboard.

I paid Argent a dollar to let me nibble his Destroyer, netting me Dread 2 for 3 unit upgrades as well as the movement (I still didn't have Grav Drive).

I then launched an attack on Mallice with a weak force (forgetting Tekklar Legion again! It would have made 2 hits in the first round!) to push Argent back and get a stall. I picked up Plasma Scoring to strengthen the PDS. Humble then came and pushed me off Mallice for two of his secrets.

I made a play to get ships in 2 systems next to Mecatol, but didn't survive the Destroyer before it retreated.

Visioness then did the best play of the game, launching her bugs from her homesystem directly into Jol Nar's homesystem with her hero, demonstrating the power of the Sardakk side. She then played

Political Stability to keep Imperial to get the 2<sup>nd</sup> Mecatol Guac. I didn't Sabotage her as she was my support partner, we work together.

### Scoring

Flagship at home, no secret.

### Agenda Phase

Classified Document Leak – Make a secret a public. We made it Spark a Rebellion (win a fight against the leader). This is great, because then people attack the leaders more, and I was behind.

Clandestine Operations - For: Lose a fleet token, Against: lose 2 tokens. I played Nekro For to encourage Against, as not many people had tokens except me (and Jol Nar). To score ships next to Mecatol I would need to stall people out so they couldn't counter attack. It went against, which honestly I was surprised at, considering how few tokens everyone had.

## **Round 5**

Open objectives – ships in 2 systems next to Mecatol, 2 pointer – have units in 4 systems with Mecatol, legends or anomalies. Secrets: Betray a friend, Antifighter, alpha and beta wormholes.

### Strategy Phase

Imsen as Jol Nar took Leadership, promising a massive stall for the table which would eventually catch everyone except me. I took Tech to buy 6 tokens and avoid the stall.

### Action Phase

Imsen is now going for the 2 pointer to hit 8, as long as he can get his homesystem back.

I manage to Antifighter Barrage the Jol Nar fighter chilling next to my homesystem for a secret. Now I just needed to Betray a Friend against Sardakk, get my Support back, Spark against someone (Argent or Sardakk at this point), become the Gatekeeper AND have ships in 2 systems next to Mecatol to win on the 7. If Humble as Mentak or FH as Arborec scored an action phase secret I could Spark against them too.

For ships in 2 systems next to Mecatol I wanted to take Ang, getting Antimass from Jol Nar and Betray a Friend against Sardakk (I could have used my carrier from home with grav drive). I would need to stall this out, as if I take a system next to PDS they will shoot me twice, once when I activate and again when they activate me, which I wouldn't survive. Jol Nar had something like 4-5 rerollable PDS shots, thanks to the Argent commander and promissory.

I present Visioness the plan to Spark against each other, and give Supports back (she has to give mine back so she can Spark against me), but she was really keen not to lose Ang for reasons I couldn't see. I sent my carrier instead to Centauri and won the battle, hoping to lose the battle on the other planet so she could Spark, which unfortunately we drew. My plan was to instead Betray a Friend, and then Spark someone else. Unfortunately in the moment I misplayed and scored the Spark instead. We kept our deal and I let her Spark me next to Mecatol with the Support swap honoured. We did also agree to get me another secret scored, but as I got too close to win she backed out and I didn't force it. I then popped my hero over Centauri for Lightwave, finally having a tech skip planet under my ships.

FH as Arborec attacks Sardakk at Cormund to try to Brave the Void/Spark, narrowly drawing the battle and NOT getting a point. If he had, I could have Sparked against him which would have made

everything with Visioness easier. He then sends his Arborec fleet over my alpha wormhole, dashing my hopes for Gatekeeper. However, he needs to win a fight in an anomaly for a secret, and as Imsen needs anomalies FH agrees to retreat to Cormund if I attack him over the alpha, giving me a path.

As FH was next to my home, we thought he was positioning for the secret where you have to be next to a homesystem. I managed to get Imsen to give me enough trade goods to build units to push him off, but really I needed the money to play the action card that gives me a tech, giving me 3 tokens (it needs 4 trade goods, not just the value of that, so Mirror didn't help). However, when Leadership popped I already had all my command tokens – I couldn't buy anymore! I have never had that happen. I should have seen that coming and not played that action card for the tech, as I had the influence planets.

To get Gatekeeper I plan to attack the Jol Nar fighter (to get Antimass) over the beta in Sardakk's slice, and push Arborec back off my alpha with my flagship. Unfortunately I lose a cruiser through the grav drive, and don't kill the fighter so don't get Antimass, but still manage to hold the wormhole. Having Antimass and Lightwave would have allowed me to late round snipe the two asteroid fields in front of Jol Nar as I had Flank Speed and would send my fleet from next to Mecatol (stopping my win this round, but blocking the 2 pointer from Jol Nar).

After all the stalling I finally go for Intimidate and send two ships to sit next to Mecatol in Mentak's slice, and manage to survive the combat. This also nets me Sarween tools, finishing my 2 in 4 colour tech collection.

Then I sent my flagship with 7 infantry to the beta to push Arborec into Cormund to help defend it, and give me Gatekeeper.

Jol Nar attacks Mentak at Mallice with a Warsun, but forgot that the hero hadn't popped, which swings the battle back for Mentak, forcing him to attack Arborec over Primor for the fourth system and the two pointer. Unfortunately for him he couldn't wrest his home system back from Sardakk, and so was stuck on 6 at the end of the round.

### Scoring

Intimidate the Council and Gatekeeper, getting me to 9. If I had correctly Betrayed and Sparked, I would have won here. Fugas as Argent was the only other one on 9, with Arborec at 8, Mentak on 6, Imsen as Jol Nar on 6 and Sardakk on 8.

I was completely legitimate in my wish to end the game there, by rolling or otherwise, as it was 6am and I had 0% interest in playing another 2-4 hours. If the other players had agreed I would have been on board. Not everyone wanted to stop however, so we kept going.

### Agenda Phase

Miscout Disclosed – this would allow us to give Arborec's point to either Argent or I. I thought we would do a Survivor style speech system then just vote and end the game, but instead Imsen got the point, and then Sarkdakk took it with Confounding Legal Text, getting her to 9. I choose not to Sabo as we were Support partners, better her to win than anyone else.

## **Round 6!**

Open objectives – 2 techs in 4 colours, Secrets: Betray a Friend

### Strategy Phase

Mentak went for Leadership, which someone tried to stop with an action card, but I Sabo'd it because I was worried he might take Imperial instead. Argent took Diplo for Speaker order to get Spark on the first move, so I took Imperial to win on the first action as I had the 2 pointer already.

#### Action Phase

Now I just had to survive the first action from each player. I had one Sabo left, Parley, and Shields Holding, with no one having any obvious threats to my homesystem, so I was pretty confident. First action, Mentak builds at home. Argent takes his chance to win by sending with two Destroyers and a fighter against my carrier next to Mecatol for Spark, but my PDS shot him down with 3 hits. Jol Nar pops Construction, which I follow to put a PDS down just in case someone else attacked me. Sardakk activates Ang and builds her Warsun to loom menacingly over Mecatol. Arborec plays Lucky Shot to hurt Jol Nar over Primor, which means I get to play Imperial to score the win.

What a game! Everyone on the table was well within striking distance of the win, many times over it was anyone's game. Thanks to Matt and Elspeth for commentating and everyone who watched the game. I look forward to the finals.

If you have any comments or questions about my choices, deals, or this report just hit me up. Thanks for reading!