

The Running Man

Another look at Pirate Broadcast

Pirate Broadcast

Prep - 1*

Make a run on each data fort. Score 1 agenda point if all the runs are successful. Forgo your next action if any of the runs are not successful.

"Its scary how ineffective the law is these days. It used to be that we could turn corporate dirt over to the Feds, and let them do the rest of the network. Nowadays we have to do everything ourselves." -Digital Dana

Upon mention of Pirate Broadcast many players immediately think of HYHAD. Sure, it is very effective in that deck and is sometimes the only reason the Runner can deliver enough socket counters on the limited income Loans provide. Runners quickly dismiss its applications in other plans, paling at the number of bits all the runs will take and the action loss if just one fails. However, the final installment of Frisky's Corner mentioned experimenting with Pirate Broadcast in other capacities and that got me thinking. If it is so strong in HYHAD it has to have some application for other decks.

Pirate Broadcast potentially offers two extremely useful benefits. The first always occurs, granting multiple runs during one action. Extra actions, even those dedicated to running, are almost always useful. Despite that, the only extra action cards to see widespread use are Valu-Pak Software Bundle, Bodyweight Data Creche, and Preying Mantis. The rest mostly are either too limited or have a too large drawback to be successful. Sure, Broadcast does have a drawback if all the runs are not successful. In most cases, the Runner can gather enough bits and time the Broadcast so all the runs will succeed. But even if one fails, it is still not that bad. The Corp always has the three central data forts, at worst resulting in three runs at the cost of two actions. So at worst the performance matches the number of runs a Data Creche can attempt in two actions. It is likely that the Corp usually has at least one SDF so even upon failing, the results are better than what the Creche can do. Perhaps the worst case occurs when the Corp has an empty SDF with ICE already rezzed, forcing the decision to wade through ICE pointlessly or to give up the next action. The reason why the Creche appears more often than Pirate Broadcast is that when the both are performing three runs in two actions, the Creche user gets to choose which forts to run on instead of being forced to hit each fort.

The extra agenda point is icing on top of the cake if all the runs succeed. Not only did you get a look at all of the Corp's plans, you get the agenda bonus. The bonus can swing many games in the Runner's favor which is why Promises, Promises shows up in so many decks. It is a lot easier when you just have to steal two Corporate Wars or World Dominations and gain an extra point than to have to steal three of either of them. The same thinking applies if the Corp is only running two or one point agendas. Unfortunately, an extra point doesn't help much against Tycho Extension (excepting AP scored tiebreaks). Unlike Promises, Broadcast doesn't become useless against Tychos since it still has multiple run ability. It also has the flexibility of being playable as you are about to score a known agenda, after you have scored the agenda, or as a recon run without knowing if there is an

agenda to steal. It is frustrating to draw Promises after scoring 6AP, rendering it useless. Of course, Promises does have the benefit of chaining multiples together for a big AP bonus in the same run which you cannot do (and probably cannot afford in one turn) with Broadcast. That does not prevent the plan of playing one or more Promises before a Broadcast run to make it more lucrative.

Perhaps the best thing about Broadcast is that the Corp does not expect a huge burst of runs and may not be able to deal with it very well. An early Broadcast run can help exert pressure keeping the Corp poor. Since the Corp often can only rez one piece of ICE early on, getting him to rez it, allows you to grab the right breaker and make an easy Broadcast run. A Runner that can Score!, Score!, install a Self-Modifying Code, and then Broadcast consistently on the first turn will often be starting the game with an extra AP. Later, Broadcast really hurts any Corp that relies on having many SDFs. Newsgroup Taunting, poison pill/shell game, and Nasty Code Gate all suffer. Siren plans probably cannot deal with having to redirect all of those runs and even if they are all diverted, the chances of one getting through and destroying the setup is pretty good even if Rio is employed. In the end game, Broadcast can give the seventh AP while the Corp is trying to sneak through a fast advance.

Playing with Broadcast forces some choices as the Runner due to the expense of running all those forts. Krash gets thrown out right away. Bartmoss is probably not the best choice either since there is more ICE for it to blow up on. Most other suites can probably deal with making one Broadcast run a game without too much trouble, especially if its played when a run would be made anyway. The interesting thing is that the really important run usually costs a lot but the other forts are usually fairly cheap to run on, there just is not enough time to waste actions running on them. So the Broadcast run probably won't be adding too much cost to the main run. In really aggressive Broadcasting plans, the breakers probably need to be very cheap or free against most ICE. Such suites include Bozomatic and Zamboni. With either one, you could get set up and then Junkyard a Broadcast until you win. A less intensive plan follows what Frisco suggested and uses the detect and Broadcast plan. Locate an agenda with either a Technician Lover or a Mouse, then steal it on the Broadcast run, get the extra point, and hope to steal some more agendas from the other forts. Broadcast also helps you to periodically check the archives without having to spend an action to do so. The Proteus hidden resources also are preferable with Broadcast than using other make a run preps. A really fun Broadcast run could include a Credit Subversion to drain the Corp of bits to rez ICE on other forts, a Death from Above to take out an SDF with a multiply advanced card that may be an ambush, a run on archives to steal anything that might of been in the SDF, and a R&D Mole dig into R&D. Broadcast helps to negate the number of actions it took to install all of those resources. Mercenary Subcontract works well due to all of the chances you get accessing cards. Databroker would be an interesting bit engine choice to work with Broadcast. Broadcast provides the AP cost that Databroker needs which in turn provides the bits for more Broadcast runs.

Pirate Broadcast can also serve as an effective virus delivery system. Its most famous use is with Viral Pipeline of course but it can serve other purposes. If both HQ and R&D virii are being delivered, it can speed up the process. Broadcast and perhaps All Nighter may be just what those Skiviss/Gremlin runners need. Otherwise, Broadcast delivers the virus to the target fort while letting the Runner keep tabs on the others, making it harder for the Corp to sneak something through.

Due to the number of runs Pirate Broadcast provides, there are a few important tidbits of the nature of runs that you should be sure to know. The first, and most important to Broadcast, is that you cannot jack out before encountering the first piece of ICE on the fort. So if there is a rezzed Colonel Failure as the outermost piece on a fort, you better be sure that you are willing to break it before playing the Broadcast. Luckily, the same doesn't apply to nodes if there is no ICE on the fort. As long as you jack out before allowing the Corp to rez it, you don't have to risk hitting an ambush. However, in that case the run won't be considered successful so you will suffer Broadcast's penalty. Also remember if you score 7AP and win the game in the middle of a Broadcast, you immediately stop and don't finish the remaining runs.

Pirate Broadcast is interesting and strong enough to show up in decks for purposes other than as a Viral Pipeline delivery system. At worst, it can be an interesting replacement to Blackmail or Promises, Promises. For many Runners it can help improve the all-important concept of efficiency of actions. Are a couple extra runs and possibly an agenda point worth a bit and a card? I'd say yes.