

Interview of Jennifer Clarke Wilkes, Goblin Editor, Netrunner Promotions Coordinator

Words collected by Emmanuel Estournet

NetRunnerFrance: : Hello Jennifer, and welcome to France. We are highly honored and moved you could come. We were all eager to meet you, but worried because of your illness. Have you fully recovered ?

Jennifer Clarke Wilkes : Oh, yes. I was mostly worn out after working for months on the Monster Manual, and I caught some sort of a cold. After a week or so of rest, I was back at work. I'm still a little tired, though.



NETFR: Have you enjoyed being in Paris, even though you had almost no time to visit the town fully ? What do you want to say about the French way of life ?

JCW : I really did enjoy my trip, brief as it was. I did a " whirlwind tour " of the major tourist attractions : the Louvre here, the Bastille monument there, etc. :-)

The little I saw of Paris left a few strong impressions : It is very heavily urbanized, more than I am used to in North America. It is also lively, with widely varying shops packed along the sidewalks, and people on the street at all hours, talking and enjoying a drink or a cigarette at a café. There certainly is a lot of smoking in France ! Paris, as you probably know, has a reputation for rudeness-to some extent it was justified (le Procope) comes to mind :-), and drivers are terrifying, but I found the gamers to be outgoing and friendly. I was also treated with courtesy and patience by the Metro clerk while I was trying to purchase a day pass.

NETFR: What were your general feelings about this tournament ? What were the ups and downs ? Did you manage to meet players and chat with them ?

JCW : I thought it was quite a good-sized event. It's rare to get 25 players at Netrunner tournaments, even though I understand the organizers were disappointed by the numbers. It seemed like a well-run tournament, with lots of prize support from the organizers and from Ostelen and WotC. I was somewhat unprepared to participate and surprised to find people were expecting me to play. I hadn't had time to construct decks, but at least I was able to get into the sealed-deck event (and did quite well). I must say, though, that I find the 1-in-15 format unappealing. It's hard to make a deck that can focus on a style of play that way.

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I did talk to a few of the players and was impressed by the international character of the competition, with people from Netherlands and Belgium there.

NETFR: This Open de Paris 2000 was the first big French event in years containing a no-limit session. What did you think of decks and quality of play in no-limit ?

JCW : I didn't watch too much of the no-limit play, but I did observe some of the Final Four games. Your Drone-Priority Wreck deck is a thing of beauty. I'm not sure how I'd counter it. I was amused by Karim's (the winner's) variation on an ASD-Corp War deck, heavily spiced with Dieters (**24 indeed !**). Yannick and his silly Corp deck were one of the most fun things I've seen in years !

NETFR: What is your feeling about the 1/15 format ? Some people in France (of which I belong) begin to think it is too much restrictive. Have you heard of the 1/10 ? Have you any opinion on it ?

JCW : As I mentioned above, I am not fond of the " flavorless " feel to the 1-in-15 format. It's possible that 1-in-10 could help this a bit, but it is still difficult to create a focused deck that contains fewer than 6 of a key card, in my opinion. I would be interested in hearing how 1-in-10 games are working out.

NETFR: What do you think of the no-limit format and its inherent possibilities of degenerate decks (like Previnga Mantis-Poisoned Water Supply, or a 10 TRC bit

engine deck for rich players) ?

JCW : There is no question that degenerate deck types exist in an unlimited environment. In an actively supported game, this is mitigated by frequent changes in the card mix so that play does not stagnate. With Netrunner, it is going to be more important to look closely at formats or even limitations on some powerful combinations-but that is now the province of Netrunner France and the TRC, since the DCI will no longer be managing tournaments.

NETFR: Do you think it is a good thing to play in different formats ? What about a " 2 people team-sealed " : 2 double starters and 6 boosters (2 of each), the team having to built 2 Corp and Runner decks with all the cards ?

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JCW : I think a major tournament must use a number of formats, if only to reduce the effect of degenerate constructed decks. I like that idea of a " two-headed " sealed event. I've played such things in Magic and found them pretty fun.

NETFR: We've been informed that WotC has stopped any support in Classic games, such as Netrunner, Vampire, Battletech, etc. For the future, what can be done ? Will these games licences be sold in order for them to start again ? What about Netrunner ?

JCW : The license for Vampire has in fact expired, and the game was recently returned to White Wolf, which will be issuing a revamped edition of The Sabbath later this year. I am not familiar with the status of our other licenses, except that I have been told the R. Talsorian license is not about to expire anytime soon. I am asking our Legal department and the brand manager about the possibility of either obtaining a sublicense or transferring the license to an outside group. It might be possible, but I haven't got much information back yet.

NETFR: What are your means to support Netrunner in the future ?

JCW : There is still some product available for me to give out as prize support, at least for a while. I don't think WotC minds my doing so-anything that reduces inventory is helpful.

NETFR: What do you think of the quality of the different virtual expansions (Chrysalid Matrix, Winterdawn, Repeat Intrusion Pattern, etc.) ? Is there any possibility to have some new cards printed by someone else than WotC ?

JCW : I saw so little of Chrysalid Matrix that I can't really offer an opinion (I took myself out of the playtest loop to be safe), and I never even heard of Winterdawn. Is that Neal's expansion ? **(no, Neal's expansion are Rogues et Dangerous Allies)** I rather liked RIP, though there were some obviously broken cards in the set as it existed a year ago. Since then it may have changed quite a lot in playtesting.

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As for printing the cards, it would require a sublicense or permission, neither of which would come cheaply. A virtual expansion online in text is one thing, but printed cards are a trademark and copyright infringement, even if there is no intention to sell them. I hope we can find some way for fan-generated sets to be produced with a legal blessing, but I am still looking into that.

NETFR: Do you plan to visit us again ? Shall we have the pleasure to see you at the French National Championship (around October 2000) or for the next Open de Paris (in 2001) ?

JCW : That's an interesting idea. I would like to return and spend more time, and a more relaxed trip, preferably with my husband this time. However, I'm not sure I can spare the time or the funds for another trip for a while.

NETFR: What did you like most during your sojourn in Paris ? What did you like least ?

JCW : I liked waking early in the morning, before sunrise, or standing at a balcony after sunset, and hearing a thrush sing across the roofs. Even though the city is crowded, that sound was

very peaceful and made everything seem so quiet. I liked staying with my friends, Fanny and Xavier, in the heart of the city instead of some expensive and cold hotel. I liked watching the men play petanque in a city park across from Ostelen. I also enjoyed drinking strong coffee and eating hot waffles at the tournament !

I hate the traffic in Paris ! *(so do we !)* I could never drive there, as I am neither pushy enough nor fearless enough to survive. The Metro is fine for me. I was also put off by the dog poop everywhere . And then, of course, there was Procope . . . (though I very much enjoyed our dinner there).

NETFR: What would you say as a conclusion ? Any message ?

JCW : I was very impressed by the level of enthusiasm and support Netrunner has in Paris, and especially with the facilities and support at Ostelen. If I can return to Paris, I would do so again without hesitation.

NETFR: Thank you very much, Jennifer, for what you've done so far for Netrunner. Speaking for all players, we're all in your debt and grateful to you, considering that this game would no longer exist without you.

JCW : It takes players to keep a game alive, far more than one person's efforts. Players like those in Paris are Netrunner's greatest asset.

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