

Interview of Patrice Gross, 1999 NetRunner France Champion

NetRunnerFrance: May we have some details on the man who hides behind the 1999 French Champion ?

Patrice Gross: 47 years old, engineer, bachelor.

Studies : Ecole centrale de Paris, and more recently post graduate degree in safety and major technological risks prevention.

Leisure : computers, Stock Exchange.

I programmed, some years ago, a Stock Exchange software for my own purposes. I called it « Diamond ». It was then natural for me to choose that name as a Netrunner nickname, because diamond is also the most useful tool for cutting ice.



NETFR: How and when did you discover NetRunner

PG: In 1997, when I read the Casus Belli n°18 magazine, special issue about the CCGs.

NETFR: What are your feelings about this game ?

PG: I like : the rules straightforwardness and stability, the fact that each player plays a different character, the cards layout and art.

I dislike, or deplore : no french translation for Proteus and Classic expansions.

NETFR: How much are you playing ? Do you play in clubs ?

PG: I use to play Netrunner once a week on average. Sometimes in a club, a shop called Crazy Mouse Game, in Paris.

NETFR: From your fortunate point of view, how did you fare during this France championship ?

PG: I was satisfied with the organization, and the fair prizes, considering the relatively modest number of players registered for this Netrunner tournament.

I've no precise remembering of the games played, but for the TOP4 ones (semifinals and final).

First day (sealed deck tournament) :

Corp Deck :

I got only 2 rares, Laser Wire and Executive Extraction ; and among others some uncommons : ACME Savings and Loan, Overtimes Incentives. and Rescheduler. No Tycho Extension, no Corporate War, few punishment cards against Runner, but plenty of Operations, bits-generating Nodes and Agendas to set up a good defence for the Corp forts. It was thus a classic strategy. Build up well protected forts and try to make Runner coming a cropper on these forts, by encountering ice, or accessing a trap or an Agenda with a Red Herring.

Runner deck:

I got the 5 following rares : Airport Locker, Armageddon, Mystery Box, Organ Donor, N.E.T.O. ; and among others the uncommons : Cascade, Dropp, Loan from Chiba, On the Fast Track, Junkyard BBS, Taxman, Butcher Boy.

I built up a strategy based on virus, hoping to delay the Corp until I install Junkyard BBS, which would allow me to recycle the most useful cards, like Rush Hour or Score!. The game issue when playing Runner was greatly dependant on the first deck shuffle, but I succeed several times in putting some Cascade or Armageddon counters.

At the end of the day, I came sixth, but until the last second, I was dubious about my participation on the second day. Indeed, in terms of constructed tournament, I did not have a good Runner deck yet : my first bad pub deck was suffering too much of a lack of certain rares cards...

It was then this very evening that I've conceived my Taxman deck. This deck contains 4

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icebreakers : Pile Driver, Cyfermaster, AI Boon, Jackhammer. These were backed up by Enterprise Inc. Shields, Startup Immolator, Shredder Uplink Protocol, to break the Corp's defences.

The novelty of this deck is the Lucidrine Booster Drug + Swiss Bank Account + Liberated Savings Account combo, that gains 16 bits with 3 cards. If the combo does not come quickly, there is still the Organ Donor and the 3 Score! With 2 MIT West Tier, you can use the combo up to 6 times... Therefore, the Runner have the weapons to keep a Corp bankrupted (Taxman, Credit Subversion, and in another way the ice-melting programs and preps).

Second Day (constructed 1/15 tournament) :

My Fast Investment Corp deck gets good results. The dedicated icebreakers installation time impedes my Runner deck. Nevertheless, to my surprise, I manage to obtain a good ranking for this second day, and I'm qualified for the TOP4.

Semifinal :

I fear this match, because I remember the bad performance made against Cyrille de Foucaud, fought earlier this day. I begin as the Corp, and score Tycho Extension on turn 2, even if this weakens my defence potential for a time (note that i've still got a Employee Empowerment in HQ). Later, I observe Cyrille playing Organ Donor, trashing Precision Bribery in the process. I react immediately by creating a subsidiary data fort to prevent the lock. I've only to wait for the bits to come and a Project Consultants to draw to be able to score Employee Empowerment. I've been lucky, because during the fifth turn, Cyrille made 2 successful runs on HQ (with Shredder Uplink Protocol), and does not access my agenda whereas accessing 2 cards at a time. I win the following turn with Project Consultants brought back from the Archives with an Off-site Backups.

On the Runner side, the game ends shortly with my accessing Corporate Downsizing on the first turn. Cyrille resigned...

Final

I begin as Runner. Fred Vasseur plays a Dreff deck, containing cheap ice like Marionnette or Twisty Passages, and fearsome pieces of ice like Colonel Failure. By running repeatedly and mainly on HQ to put some Taxman counters, I force the Corp to spend bits to protect its forts. I steal in this way several Agendas, and trash the cards accessed if possible. The Corp had then to use an Off-Site Backups to bring back a Dr Dreff from the Archives. The Corp ended up in trashing its own Agendas, and my runs on HQ became agenda-less. But each run costs a lot to the Corp, which must pay to prevent its ice uninstallation. Since the beginning, the Corp had not scored any Agenda, lacking the good protection of its subsidiary forts. At turn 25, the Corp installed 2 cards, one in an existing subsidiary fort (joining another face down card) protected by rezzed pieces of ice, the other one in a new subsidiary fort. The Corp had 9 bits at the end of turn. I've a Lucidrine Booster Drug in hand, but I decided not to use it because I had not the hidden resources at my disposal that would have permitted to gain definitely the lucidrine bits. I made a run on the protected fort. I got 5 on the die roll for AI Boon, and pass the last piece of ice with 6 bits left in my pool. The Corp rezzed then a Dr Dreff, and forced me to encounter a Colonel Failure (spending all its bits in the process). I spend my remaining bits to break the subroutines on Colonel Failure with AI Boon, and I access Tycho Extension : I won 10/0, quite happy to win with a rather experimental Runner deck.

Considering the previous result, the return made me feel comfortable, above all with a fast investment deck. The only thing to do is not being locked by Runner. And indeed, having no need to keep my bits for the middle-game, I managed to score quickly an Agenda with Project Consultants.

NETFR: I've heard some players criticizing you because of your ultra-classical Corp deck. What would you answer to them ?

PG: For the tournament, I've tried to build up the most efficient deck with the cards at my disposal. The result was a fast investment based on 3 Tycho Extension and 2 Employee Empowerment. You win with 2 Agendas scored (unless you're incredibly unlucky), and that is a strength against the Runner decks based on Bartmoss Memorial Icebreaker and using often virus. The only rares are ice : 3 Haunting Inquisition and 2 Laser Wire. You want here to delay Runner using Bartmoss (mainly with Haunting Inquisition, which has a very good cost/efficiency ratio). Anyway, these rares are easily replaced by other ice cards ; for example : Mazer and Digiconda...

participation on the second day..."

"...At turn 25 (...) I access Tycho Extension: I win 10/0..."

NETFR: Analyzing your Runner deck, it appears that you were almost alone not to play Bartmoss Memorial Icebreaker, can you explain your choice ?

PG: At that time, I had neither Bartmoss Memorial Icebreaker, nor Joan of Arc. Therefore, I built up my Runner deck with dedicated icebreakers, not too expensive to run with in order to put some Taxman counters. This deck is far from being well-tuned; but if I were to modify it, it would not be by replacing the icebreaker suite with Bartmoss.

NETFR: What are your strategies to build a sealed or constructed deck ?

PG: To build a sealed deck, you must have a good general view of all the cards you've got, to be able to end up with a playable strategy. I try to build a 45 cards deck, either Corp or Runner. On the Corp side, I start by selecting the Agendas, choosing those that give the maximum agenda points for the minimum difficulty. I use to discard all Agenda with a difficulty greater than 5. Later, I consider the special abilities of the chosen Agendas to build the rest of the deck.

On the Runner side, my first thought is to select the draw or search cards that make a Runner deck work, and I try to get an infinite bit engine, like Newsgroup Filter or Account Receivable with Junkyard BBS (3 bits in 2 actions, with the BBS installed).

The quantity and choosing of icebreakers are dependant on the available resources and on cards that accelerate the programs installation. I often select icebreakers with a low installation cost, like Codecracker, Jackhammer, Pile Driver, Raptor.

In terms of constructed deck, it is difficult to speak about strategy. I begun by downloading some constructed deck listings on the Web. I've then selected those with a strategy I liked, provided I was able to adapt these to the cards I owned. I add also sometimes a few innovative ideas I test by simulating games against my most powerful decks (but that leads often to eliminate the original ideas).

NETFR: What do you think of the different game formats ?

PG: I prefer playing the sealed deck format.

I do not like very much the 1/15 format, because this restriction leads often to uninteresting decks based on over powerful cards like Precision Bribery with Time to Collect. And it prevents some fun decks like those based on a huge quantity of Newsgroup Taunting or Setup! The revised format is truly more interesting, but I'm not used to it yet. Nevertheless, I deplore the banning of certain cards, instead of having corrected their text.

For example, adding a new text on Tycho Extension, like :

"When you score Tycho Extension, put 4 Tycho counters on it. At the start of each of your turns, remove a Tycho counter. Remove a Tycho counter when Runner steal an Agenda, and Runner score one additional agenda point."

NETFR: How have you heard of NetrunnerFrance ? What is your opinion on us ?

PG: To tell you the truth, I did not know NetrunnerFrance before this interview.

The web site layout looks great. What a pity that the proposed Goodies are for the owners of the last version of the Microsoft softwares. Speaking now about NetrunnerFrance purposes, I can do nothing but approve all initiatives contributing to promote this excellent game.

NETFR: Have you anything to say as a conclusion ?

PG: Yes. Netrunner is one of the best CCG I know. Don't hesitate to buy it in french and to play it !

"... I often select icebreakers with a low installation cost ..."

"...I deplore the banning of certain cards..."

1 x Enterprise Inc Shields
1 x Startup Immolator
1 x Zetatech Software Installer
1 x Succubus
1 x Shredded Uplink Protocol
1 x Jackhammer
1 x Pile Driver
1 x Cyfermaster
1 x AI Boon
2 x Taxman

2 x Zetatech MEM Chip
1 x HQ Interface
3 x Militech MEM Chip
1 x Bodyweight Data Creche

1 x Danshi Second ID
1 x The Short Circuit
1 x Junkyard BBS
1 x Umbrella Policy
1 x Code Viral Cache
1 x Technician Lover
1 x Time to Collect
3 x Swiss Bank Account
1 x Expandable Family Member
1 x Credit Subversion
1 x Airport Locker
2 x Liberated Savings Account

1 x Core Command Jettison Ice
3 x Cruising for Netwatch
3 x Jack'n'Joe
2 x Lucidrine Booster Drug
1 x Organ Donor
1 x Security Code WORM Chip
1 x Gideon's Pawnshop
1 x Terrorist Reprisals
3 x Bodyweight Synthetic Blood
2 x MIT West Tier
1 x Synchronised Attack on HQ
3 x Score!

3 x Tycho Extension
2 x Employee Empowerment

2 x ACME Savings and Loan
1 x Rescheduler
1 x Syd Meyer Superstore
2 x BBS Whispering Campaign
1 x Chicago Branch

3 x Efficiency Experts
3 x Off-Site Backups
1 x Planning Consultants
3 x Edgerunner Inc Temps
3 x Accounts Receivable
2 x Credit Consolidation
2 x Projects Consultants

1 x Misleading Access Menus
3 x Filter
1 x Nerve Labyrinth
3 x Haunting Inquisition
1 x Data Wall
2 x Laser Wire
1x Rock is Strong
2 x Shock.r
1 x Zombie
1 x Naga Virtuel