

Phoenixborn Power Rankings – March 2022

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Top 12 Phoenixborn of Ashes Reborn

This is a community power ranking of the phoenixborn in Ashes Reborn. The community ranks the current list of PBs from best to worst where I take a mean and median average of these rankings and present them to the community. Phoenixborn are first ranked by a median with mean breaking any ties. As this is the first list, I will include some historical aspects of Ashes Reborn.

This write-up is a couple of weeks late as it is April 2nd and the poll was conducted early to mid-March. At the time of these rankings, the Widow rush was all the rage, primarily in Brennen and James. Widows were such a topic of contention that a debate on the chain list had sparked.

While Widows and Brennen were all the rage, 4-book variants of Lulu/Aradel were still topping, Maeoni's giant Snake deck stressed every deck builds, and Harold's incredible consistency was definitely not forgotten. This poll was also taken just before a new set of expansions, Hope and Dimona. As such, I will also provide my predictions.

Without further to do...

#1 - Maeoni Viper

Median Ranking: 2
Mean Ranking: 3.71

Kaile_Winner or type unknown

Maeoni has been a force since the introduction of Ashes Reborn. While some have tried to make Snakeless Maeoni work, that has not been seen as worthwhile. Maeoni is Snake, and Snake is more often than not inevitable. Two variants of Snake have emerged, both debuted very early on in Ashes International League Season 4.

The first of which was created by Matt Bauers, Meteor Snake. The general idea is to use large AOE's such as Meteor and Nature's Wrath to buff up Hydras and a Root Armored Silver Snake.

It is often supplemented with Bears and Massive Growth. This deck went on a strong run to award Matt the title of AIL4 champion.

The second variant is a sympathy Snake deck with explosive growth and a large package of fast tempo removal created by myself. That deck has won both Shufflebus Season 1 and 3.

However, that was not the end of Snake's run. In Shufflebus 5, Kaile Phelps took my Snake deck and made it his own. He swapped out on some of the fast tempo removals in favor of more protection and heavier reliance on the card Hypnotize.

One thing for certain is that Maeoni is not going anywhere. While her package can be seen as pretty one-dimensional, it is not an easy task to plan for all the small variations that the deck can bring. I project that she will remain in the top 3 with Hope possibly taking the number 1 spot.

#2 - Harold Westraven

Median Ranking: 3
Mean Ranking: 3.47

ChaosTheory's Invite Decklist or type unknown

This was incredibly close with Harold coming in first in the mean average and Maeoni coming in first in the median average. Harold is the definition of consistency. There have been multiple seasons of Shufflebus with multiple Harold tops. Harold was also a popular choice in top cuts of AIL4 and AIL5.

Harold is the expert at incremental advantage in a game where >50% of Ashes games is at its core a game of incremental advantage. It is very difficult to discuss a standard build of Harold, however, I will highlight 3.

ChaosTheory's Harold deck for Shufflebus Invitational was in its simplest form a tempo Gates Thrown Open Noah deck but good. This deck was one that innovated the flexibility of having options of a mid-range, double knight, or GTO swarm opening. In no small part, this is due to Harold's free but dominant battlefield ability.

Brian B and I both have a Harold variant that takes advantage of Sonic Swordsman's Sonic Pulse ability. Brian's is heavier in charm, while I'm heavier in nature. Sonic Swordsman is among the best of Knights and Harold makes it even better. Brian eventually went more towards using units that have the tame ability instead of focusing on triggering Sonic Pulse.

Inquisitor and his Harold deck are the only one to win a big event. It makes sense that it is titled "Pile of Good Cards" as Harold is basically the engineer of good trades. That deck traded super high potential interactions for an insane amount of first five flexibility.

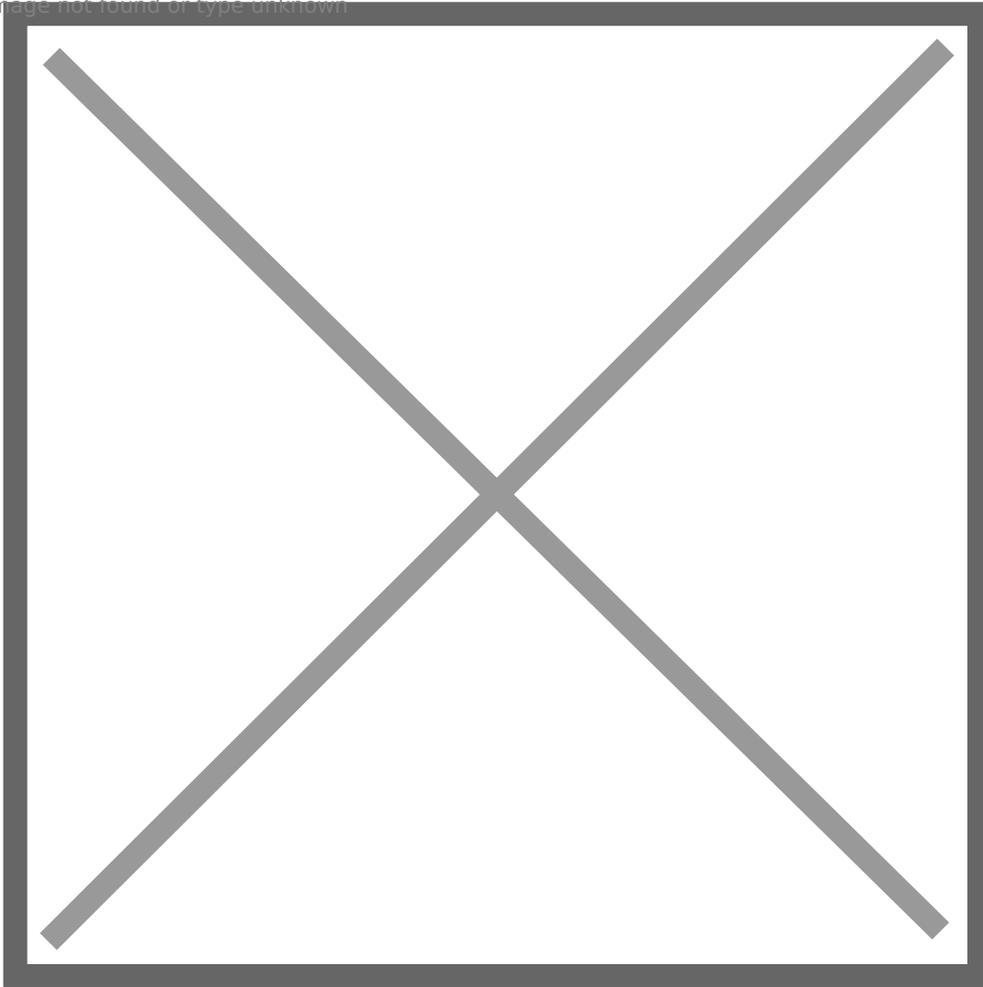
Overall, Harold continues to be a very high floor Phoenixborn but I have a hard time seeing that he will hold onto his 2nd placement in the next rankings. The game is going in a faster and smaller direction so using your ability and unit attack on big unit removal is seeming to be less valuable as we go forward.

#3 - Odette Odinstar

Median Ranking: 4

Mean Ranking: 5

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At number 3, Odette brings the most efficient package of removal into the game. She has a strong built-in answer to both Owls and Knights with a small weakness to fast swarms.

Odette is often a pick for a lot of jank lists due to her efficiency. However, like Maeoni, Odette has two competitive styles of decks.

The first is an Odette that utilizes Massive Growth and Hydra. Odette can use her ability to directly buff the Hydra for a total of +2 attack and +2 Terrifying. This strategy was first used in my build of "Hail Hydra," the deck that created the chain list by winning in round 1. After multiple parts of this deck became chained it was put away for a small time until Matt Bauers picked up a Hydra Odette and made it work to a top 4 placement in Shufflebus Season 1.

The deck has been silent since Kailie Phelps has won SB Invitational with a Hydra Odette.

The second, and likely more popular, Odette is an Odette burn list. This list is one that Jesse created and piloted to the top 4 of Shufflebus 3. It is an Odette that uses her efficient removal to get an early head start in the damage race and then finishes it off with burn. Matt Bauers refined a list very similar to this and made another top cut with it.

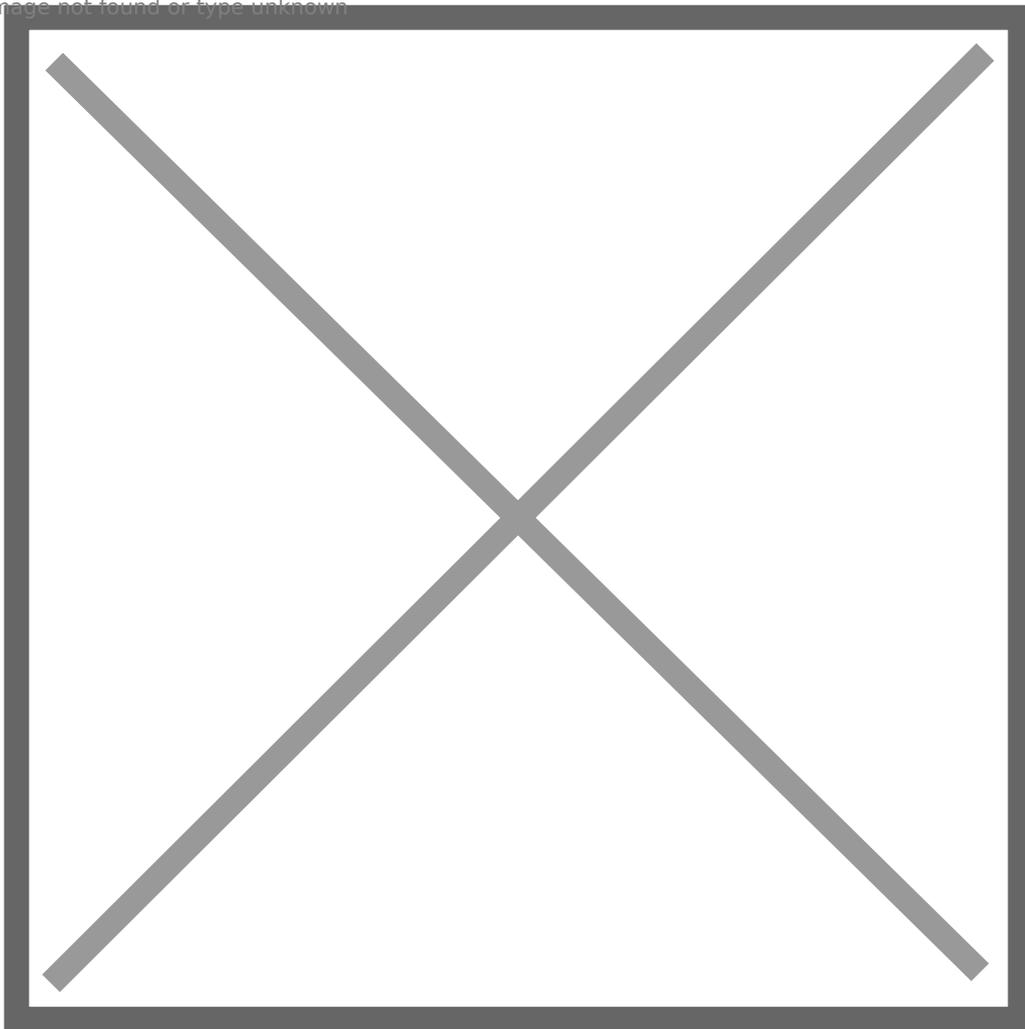
I project Odette to continue to be ranked highly but could drop a bit. She has a great matchup with the newer Echo decks but would need to build for her swarm weaknesses.

#4 - Aradel Summergaard

Median: 5

Mean: 4.82

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Being near but not at the top is no unfamiliar territory for Aradel. Always a very good choice and would love to have her but not the best. Aradel 4-book is a tried and true Ashes deck that will never go away. Gilder+Water Blast is one of the most feared sequences of removal that Ashes presents.

In Ashes Reborn, it was first topped by Philly followed by Matt G. Lately, Aradel presents the most efficient long game ability, the most efficient long game strategy with her 4 books, strong battlefield presence, and a favorite to win via fatigue; however, Aradel has shown some struggles

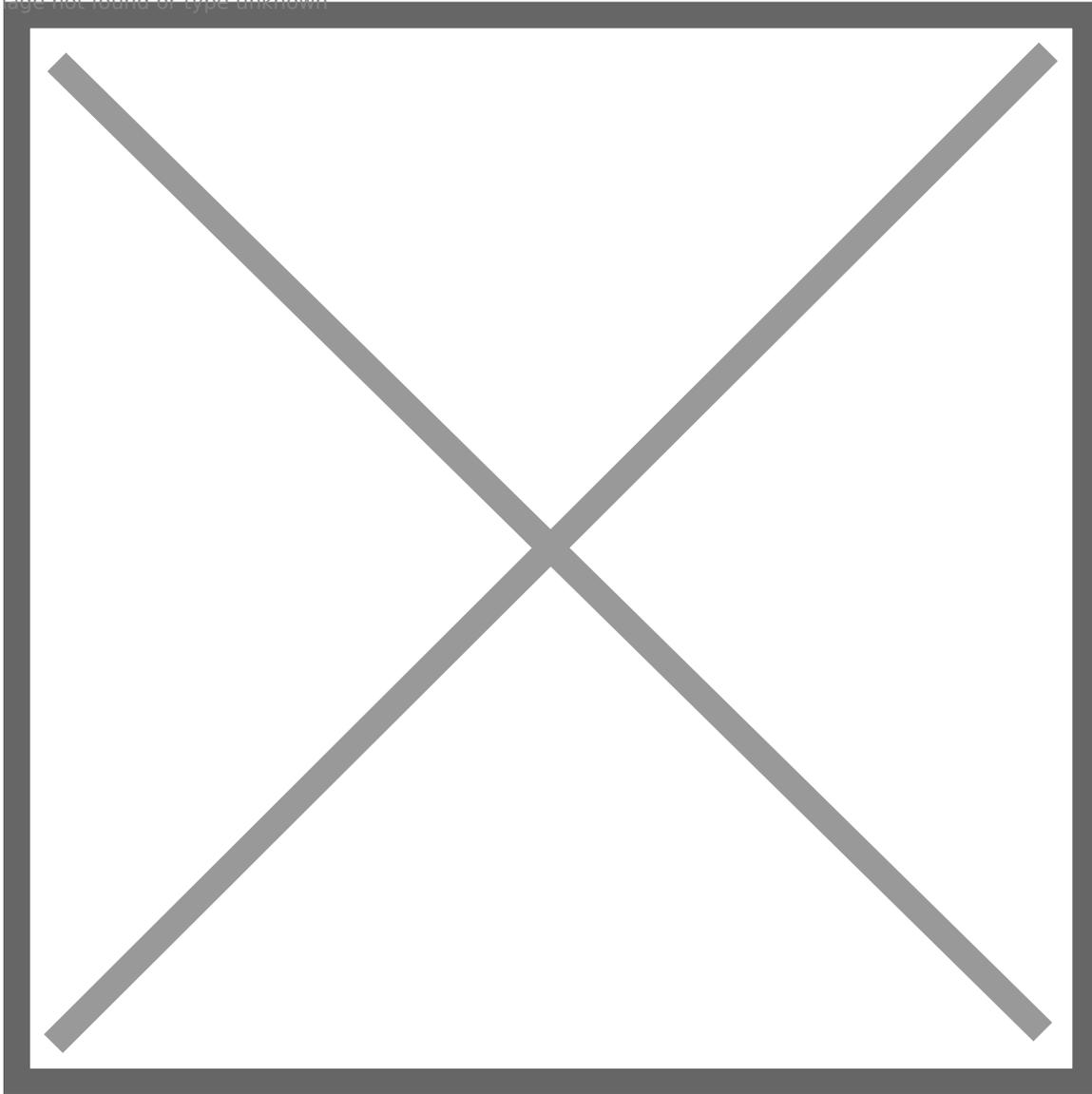
against the tempo play of Widows. I foresee that she will soon figure that out and will continue to be near but not at the top of the list of Phoenixborn.

#5 - Lulu Firestone

Median: 5

Mean: 5

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Like Aradel, Lulu is a powerhouse as a 4-book Phoenixborn. There are a lot of similarities but I would sum up their differences as a floor vs ceiling approach. You can never go wrong with either but Lulu has a much higher floor but also a much lower ceiling. While I would hand many new players Aradel, I would not do the same with Lulu. Lulu has a slightly harder time dealing with Owls

and is not as efficient as a baseline but her builds more than makeup for that.

Spoiler alert, Brennan is number 6. It frankly makes sense that Lulu is slotted between Aradel and Brennan. Lulu is a mix of the battlefield powerhouse that Aradel is and the explosive burn that Brennan is. This is shown no better than in JK's Lulu deck that made the top 4 of SB5 and a variant of JK's deck that Matt ran to a top 8 in SB6. Both those decks ran a full burn package, a widow start, and an option of a 4-book start.

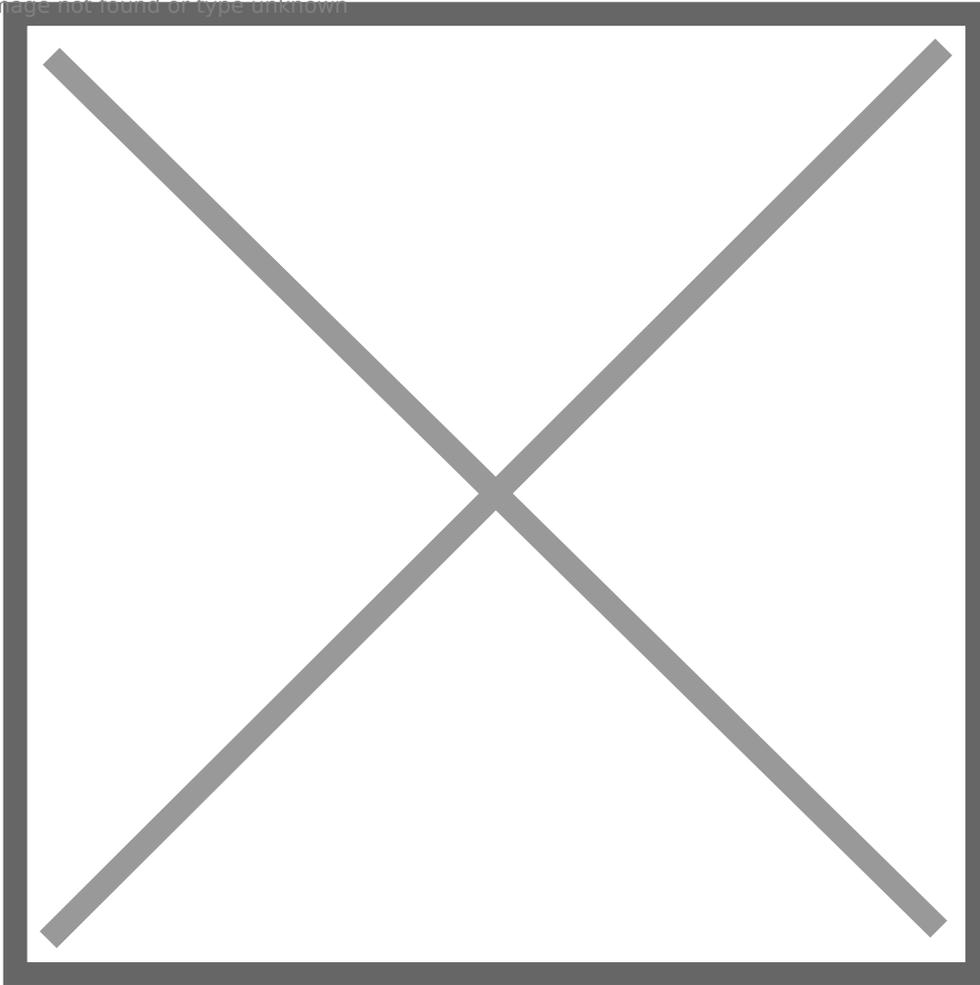
That said, my personal favorite use of Lulu is making use of one of the most efficient cards in the game, Rile the Meek. Lulu can run 0 attack units such as Lizard, Gilder, and Ruby Cobra in an aggressive deck better than anyone. This in turn makes Rile the Meek a fairly consistent 3 damage spell for 1 die. This was shown in my top 4 SB6 deck.

#6 - Brennan Blackcloud

Median: 6

Mean: 6.53

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I'm not sure if number 6 is a high or low first showing of Brennen considering this poll was done on the tail end of a lot of Widow chain talk. Outside of Aradel, Brennen is one that I would recommend most to new players.

It has a straightforward strategy and wincon. The threat of Brennen always loomed large in Ashes.

Outside of Brian B's impressive season 3 finalist deck with Vampire Bat swarms, Brennen saw mostly mixed success. Brennen as always was a huge threat but it was thought that feat was much more on Brian than it was on Brennen.

The mixed success stopped with Asterix. Asterix perfected his Brennen deck over the course of multiple seasons of SB and AIL. He and JK both made the finals of SB6 with Brennen, with JK winning.

They did this by being multiple and flexible in the first round. Taking what was once seen as a straightforward threat and making them unpredictable is no small feat. I project Brennen will continue to place in the mid-single digits in these rankings. While Brennen will be built for more in future decks, I don't see the innovations of Brennen decks as complete.

#7 - Xander Heartsblood

Median: 7

Mean: 6.29

Bill's Shufflebus Invite Deck

The top-ranked Phoenixborn in the ShufflebusNeil and ShufflebusJesse's rankings places in at a respectable 7 in the community poll. Xander has so much potential but such a low floor. This is bound to happen with such a low-impact ability and such a high-impact unique card. Xander is extremely strong when he gets the draws he needs but meditating an Earthquake far too many times can put him in trouble. Luckily he has a beastly high life he can fall back on.

Xander has topped an impressive number of times, most notably by ImpossibleGerman and Bill P. Bill in particular has topped with Xander multiple times and has given a home to some fringe competitive cards such as Power Through and Cerasaurus Mount.

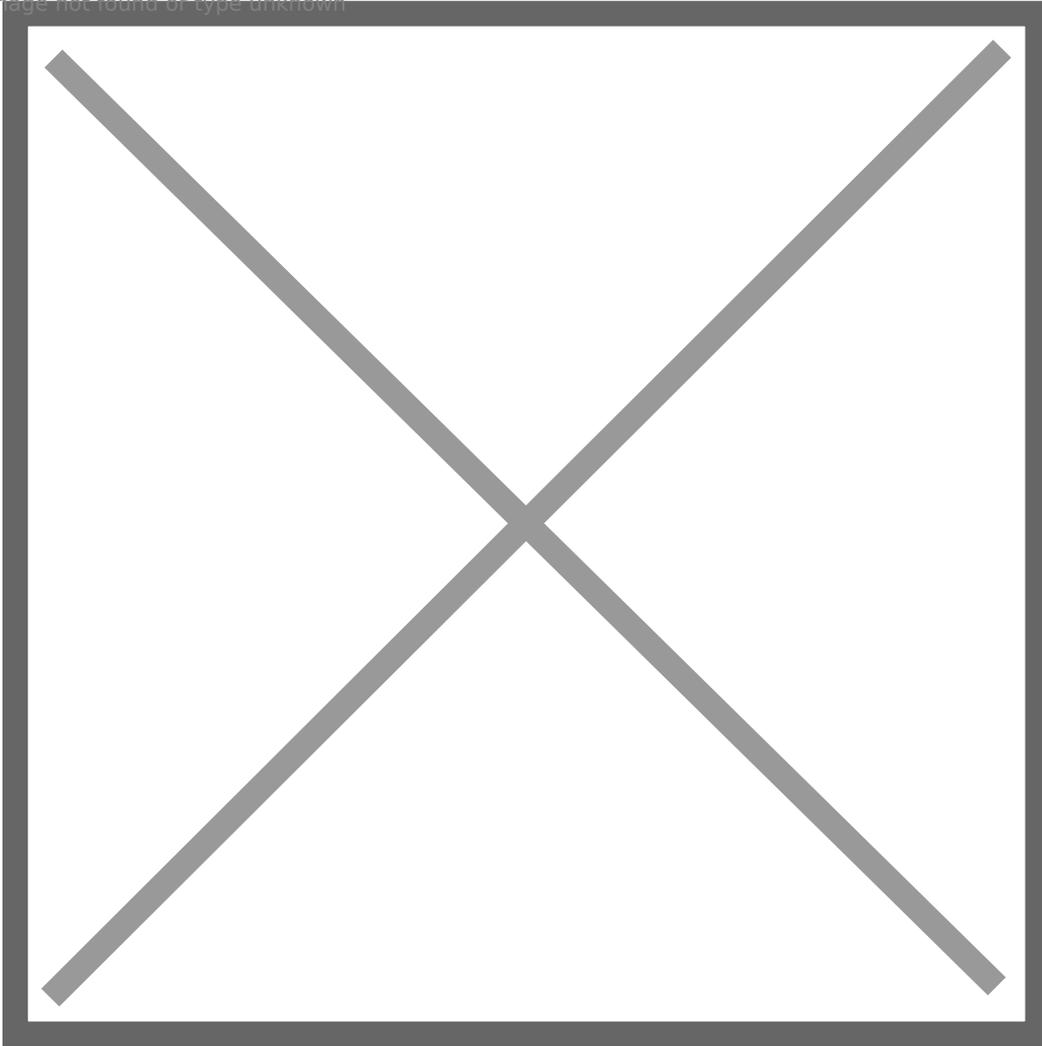
I project Xander to drop slightly but will continue to be a strong life. As Golden Veil is used less and decks are relying on a swarm of 1 life units with 1 or two beefy units, Earthquake can find a place in the meta.

#8 - Echo Greystorm

Median: 7

Mean: 6.88

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Like Xander, Echo is also a very high-potential PB with a lowish floor compared to the other top-tier choices. Echo, along with Coal, is the PB that received the most help in the new expansions. Realm Walker in particular is going to be a strong edition. However, remember this is a poll done before the new cards took effect.

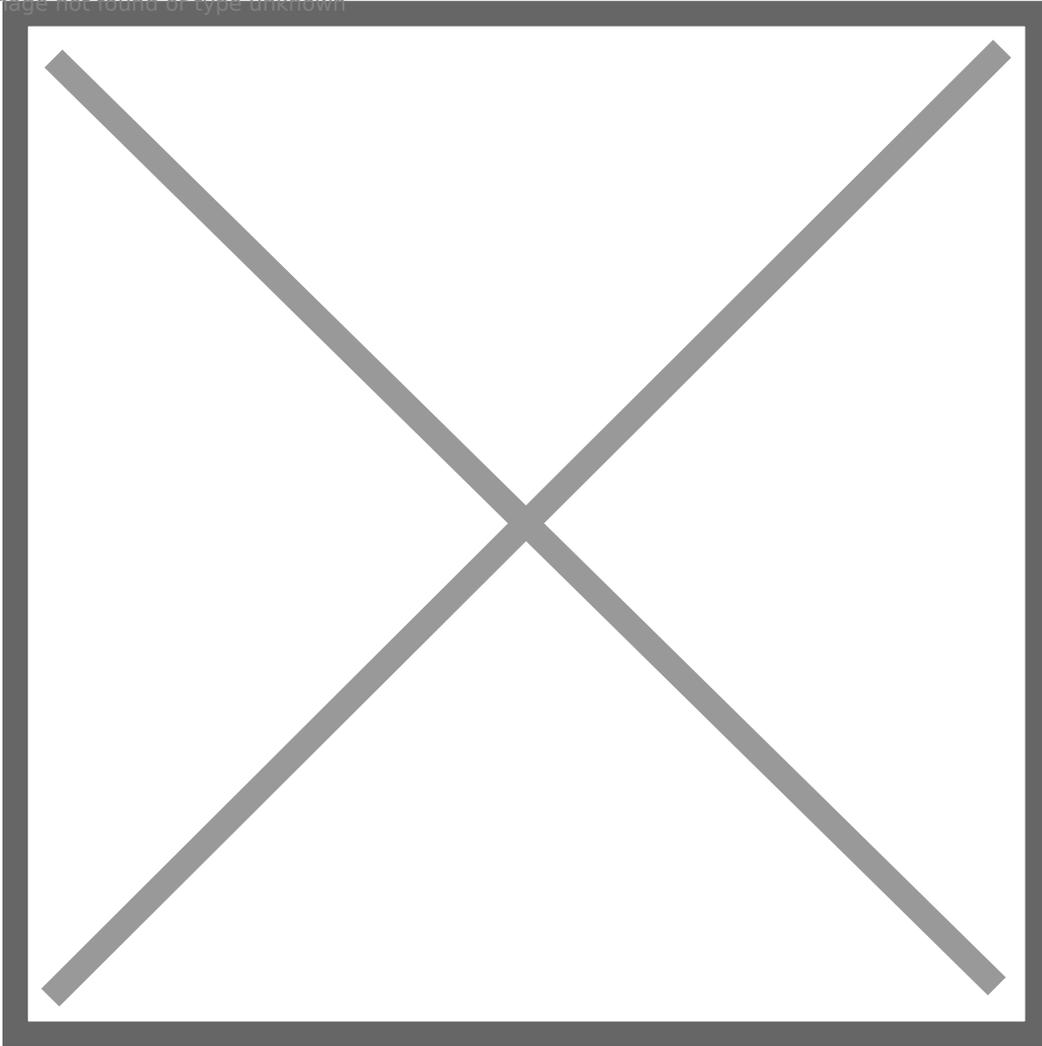
Still, I am surprised to see Echo beneath Xander. I find that Chaos Gravity is better than Earthquake. Also if all loyalty cards are lost to meditation, I would rather have Gravity Flux as a fallback than the 1 extra life that Xander provides. Given all that, Echo has not won and has rarely topped prior to these new cards. I project Echo to be top 5 in the next ranking.

#9 - James Endersight

Median: 10

Mean: 9.41

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James is one that can have very large highs but has not seen the most consistent success. It does have two popular builds. Fallen Meteor created by Matt Bauers and Raptor/Widow rush piloted by great success by both Kaukomieli and Inquisitor. Kaukomieli took it to a top 4 finish and along with JK has innovated using Bear as a flex option where usual explosive openings aren't possible. Inquisitor chose this to run in the finals of AIL5, winning him the title.

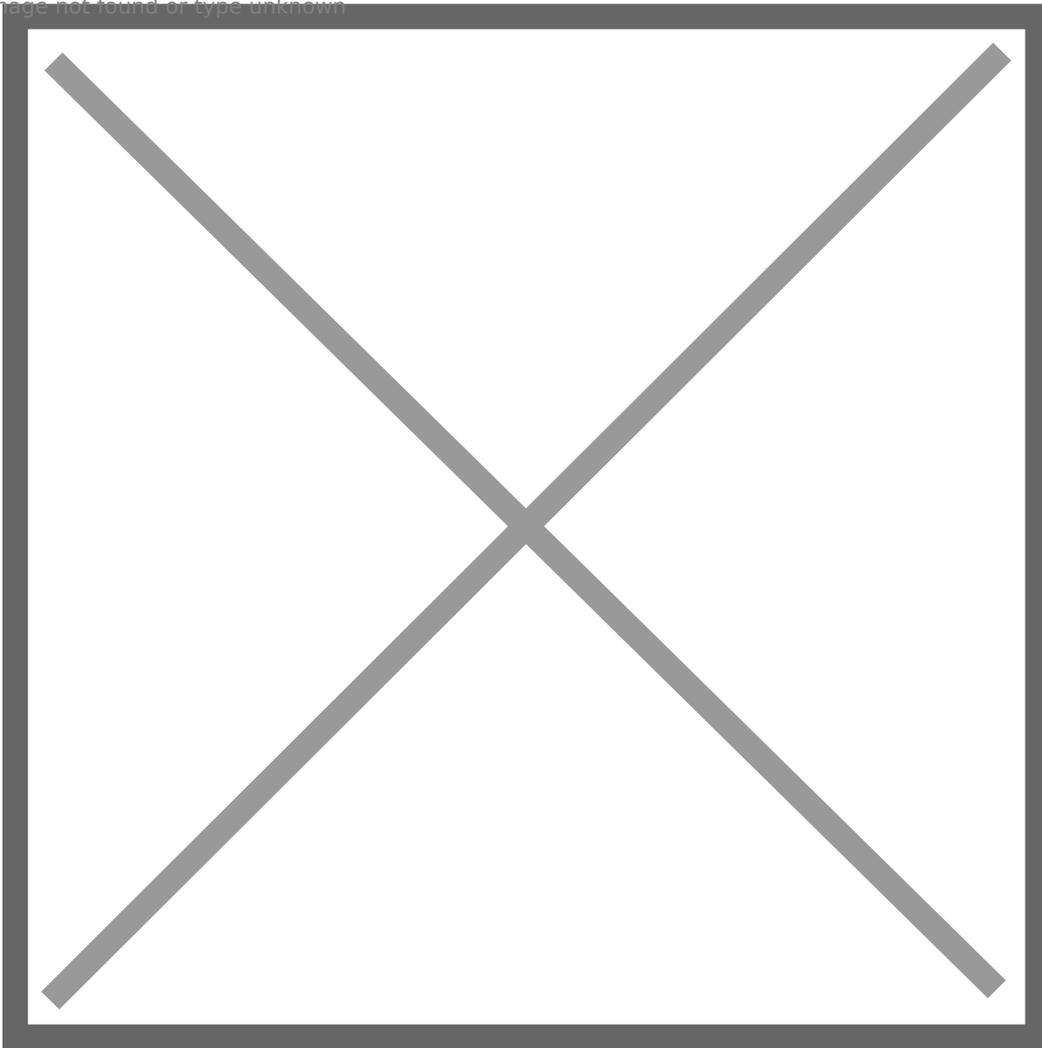
James, along with Jericho, hurt the most from the chain of River Skald. River Skald was so oppressive in James builds. James will also likely lose some of his niche to Hope. The more people prepare for Brennen and Hope, the worse James gets hit in the crossfires. I suspect James will drop as these rankings continue.

#10 - Leo Sunshadow

Median: 10

Mean: 10.06

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Leo is sitting in a rough spot. His biggest strength is the mill pressure that Glow Finch provides yet he really never claimed the best spot in a mill. It turns out that having efficient removal as your package and splashing into mill options is much more effective than Leo's efficient mill package while needing to find other options to control the battlefield.

In turn this leads to Leo's best build being a burn build. Killercactus's top 8 finish using a burn Leo is very impressive. However, if you are in burn, the question is why wouldn't you rather be in Lulu, Brennen or a more aggressive phoenixborn.

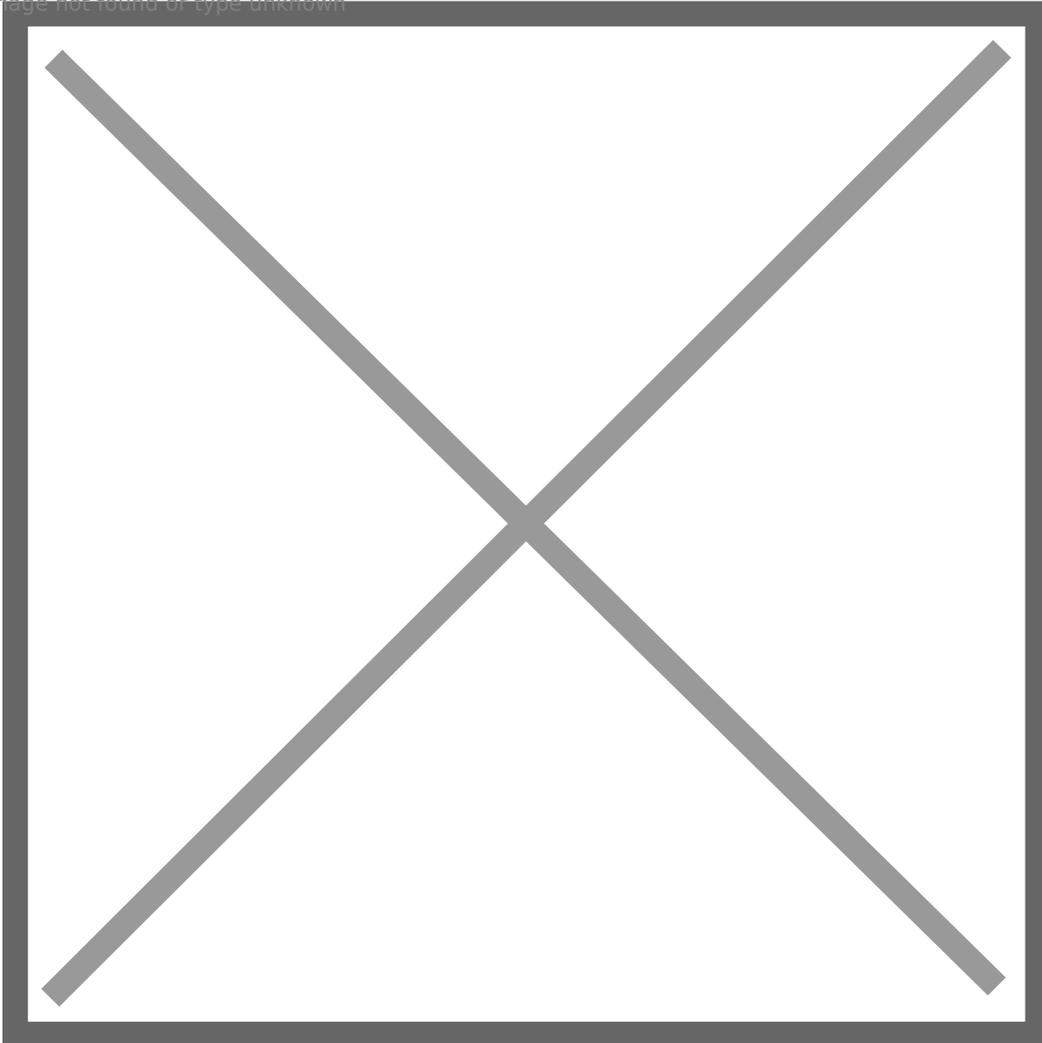
There has been thoughts of Leo+Sunshield being a hard counter to some of the Hope and Brennen decks running around. However, it loses hard to Realm Walker Echo and would likely get out done by more efficient builds. I suspect Leo to drop in the next ranking.

#11 - Jessa Na Ni

Median: 10

Mean: 10.59

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Jessa is a highly devisive phoenixborn. The debate of her ability being strong or not is a fair question but she has a lot going for her. She has Fear, a card that many rank as the best unique in the game. She also can close games better than anyone. One thing is certain, you don't want to get behind in life against Jessa. All that said, Jessa is a very tricky one to pilot. Her 4 battlefield limit, a unique that requires a unit to sac, and an ability that can be a trap to use are all major factors in the reason why many consider Jessa the hardest to play correctly.

This isn't to say that Jessa has not seen success. Nick Conley's "Fear the Hunt" is one of the most

well put together decks in Ashes. It synergies every part of Jessa's package into a well oiled machine.

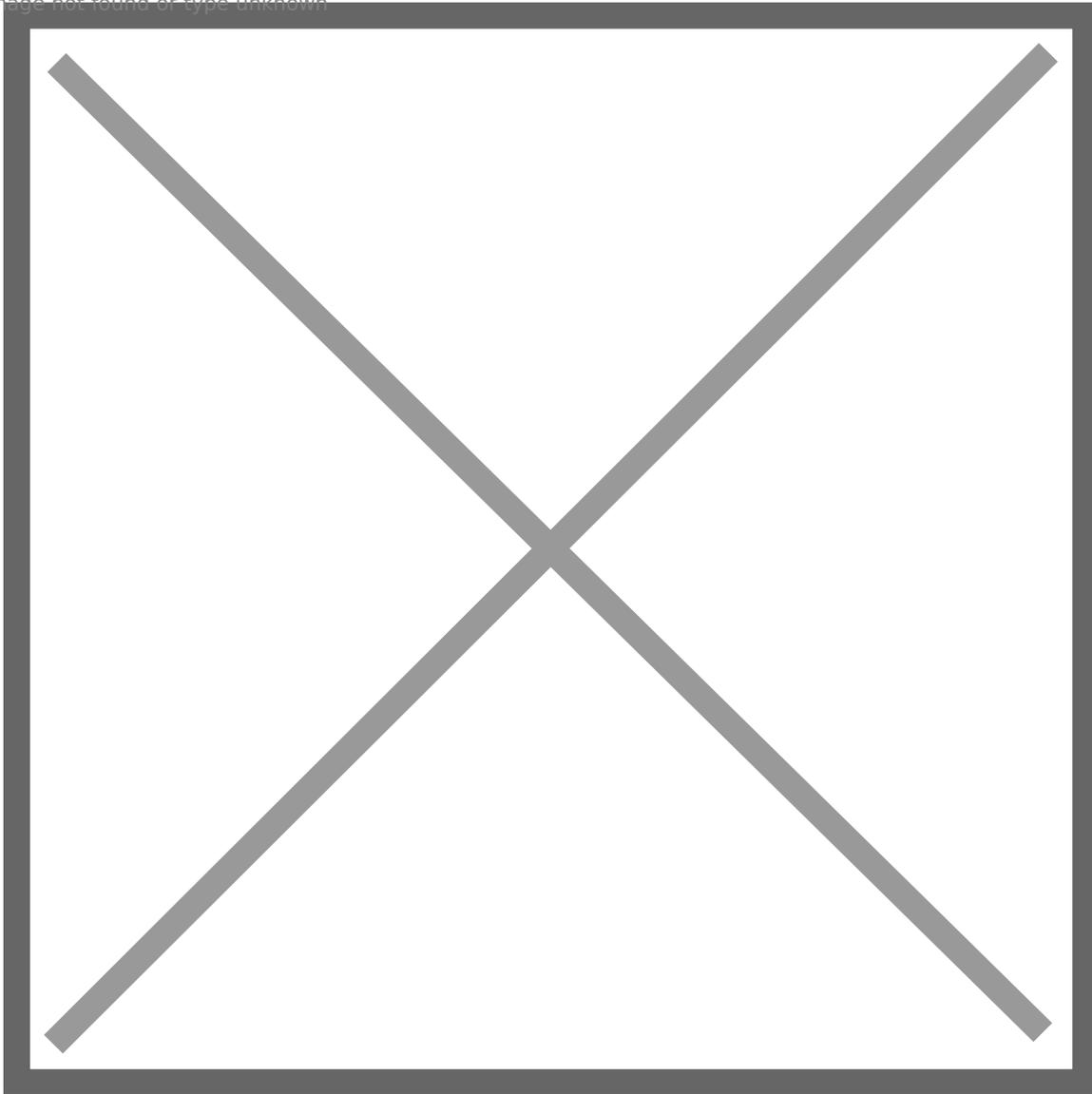
I personally don't see Jessa going much higher in the rankings but I think Jessa is one of the best in the game for the new meta. Fear just wrecks double down and Creepers and will always be strong against knights. She can attempt to out race Brennen as well as anyone. Jessa is the one PB that when I saw her ranking I was shocked but understood it. If Jessa is going to drop anymore, having a PB strong this low is good for Ashes diversity.

#12 - Coal Roarkwin

Median: 12

Mean: 11.82

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Fitting that Coal and Jessa slot near each other. They are both very strong phoenixborn and also both considered difficult to play. In my opinion, a well piloted Coal is one of the scariest things in Ashes. I experienced just that in losing in the finals to Matt B's Shufflebus Season 2 Coal. His use of gates thrown open, fester, and burn was strong and hard to stop.

While Matt is a strong player, the deck isn't given the credit it deserves. He made some strong deck building choices such as running To Shadows as Root Armor coverage on Knights.

Coal presents the most efficient removal in the game. Slash+Fester, Slash+100 Blades, and heck just Slash in general presents some scary threats when trying to keep on board. However, something scarier than Matt piloting that Coal is that the new style Coals are even better without needing Fester. While Real Walker Echo and Creeper Hope are getting all the buzz my number 1 contender deck is Wishing Wing Coal.

I project Coal jumping into the top 5 in the next rankings, but it would be no surprise if he doesn't. Coal is the most disrespected phoenixborn in all of Argaia.

Revision #1

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