Archetypes

Archetypes in Ashes Reborn are a fairly contentious topic, and there is no one defined set of archetypes or terminologies that the playerbase agrees upon. However, many common terms from Magic: The Gathering have informed the ideas about archetypes, including "burn" (direct damage to Phoenixborn), "mill" (early fatigue damage triggered by discarding from your opponent's deck), and "swing" (winning by using units on the battlefield to push damage through). Because Ashes is so battlefield-centric, there are additionally different aspects of "swing" decks that arguably stand as unique archetypes.

A seminal article for framing Ashes Reborn archetypes is Archetypal strategies in Ashes: Reborn.

There has also been a lot of chatter throughout the Discord's history on Archetypes, including a riff on the original "butt post":

Swarm swing: lots of little butts will bury your butt
Efficiency / value / mid-range / 4-book swing: a decent number of perfectly-sized butts will eventually outweigh your butt
Bypass swing: a small number of big butts will hit you really hard in the butt
Burn: not very threatening butts...except they will light your butt on fire
Fatigue / mill: sit your butt down!

Right down to extended analogies about milkshakes (copypasta from a post by Discord member Skaak)...

The Milkshake Analogy

Apparently media exploded today because people are arguing about archetypes in Ashes. I shall now explain Ashes archetypes using the universal metaphor of milkshakes.

So, you know there's that kind of janky hamburger joint that you don't visit all that often because it's a little out of the way (and kind of grungy), but once in a blue moon you go by because they have these just amazing milkshakes and there's like a million flavors?

But then after you've bought a few milkshakes you realize: wait, all of these flavors are actually vanilla but with fruit preserves or syrup or whatever mixed in. And sometimes the new hire makes it, and you can literally see the swirls of vanilla with just the occasional shading of chocolate syrup.

Well, that's Ashes deck archetypes. Swing decks are vanilla. Burn is chocolate. Mill is chocolate-peanut-butter (you either love it or hate it). Control/removal is the malt extract that you can add to any milkshake for a little extra, but it doesn't always work out and if you add too much you can't taste anything else and you have to just toss it in the bin.

Granted, there's this crazy long-term employee named Redd King who sneaks in non-vanilla ice creams and will mix up a batch with those as a base if you ask nicely, but mostly it's just flavored vanilla.

Doesn't mean that a chocolate milk shake isn't chocolate flavored, though, even if they didn't add all that much chocolate this time around.

Deck Cores

* Swarm/tempo swing: James Widows, Redking's Noah, most Hope decks. Characterized by fragile units with high burst potential, often accompanied by high tempo removal or bypass, like Light Bringer, Stand Still or Clashing Tempers.
* Value swing: 4-book and the vast majority of "mid-range" swing decks. Aims to leverage value trades to win.
* Bypass swing: Maeoni Snake, Hydra/Massive Bear. Tends to deal burst damage from a small number of units that can't be easily blocked.
* Stall: Monk's prisons, Ninja's Astrea deck. Aims to effectively shut battlefield damage out of the game.

Deck Flavors

* Burn: inevitability through burn spells.
* Mill: inevitability through permanently removing their deck/options (usually on the back of fatigue or something like Orrick).
* Control: perfect answers for your opponent's threats, which allows your damage to push through faster.
* Synergy/engine (e.g. "combo", but I think that term is toxic for understanding how Ashes tends to actually work): card effects and abilities that combine into something greater than the sum of their parts.

Deck "Speeds"

* Aggro/fast: favors allies (or burn or both) over spellboard and aims to push so much damage so fast that the other deck doesn't have a chance to bring its strengths to bear. Probably aiming for R2/top of R3 wins.
* Mid-range(?)/default: balances spellboard and allies to start strong and convert ongoing value trades into an eventual win. Probably aiming for R3/R4 wins.
* Defensive/long game: higher up-front costs that amortize into long-term advantage (typically heavier on utility spellboard cards).

Pick one entry from each menu sub-section, and you've got yourself a milkshake.

The "punchy" to "birdy" continuum

Another method for describing decks at a high level is the "punchy" to "birdy" continuum. These terms are thankfully self-explanatory, unlike most of the rest of the nonsense that gets thrown around when talking archetypes.

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