

The Claymore Carrier

The Dindrenzi Carrier gets a lot of hate, which is kind of unfortunate. I have now used it as my only Tier One choice for three Patrol Fleets; each with Cruiser accompaniments. So I have... Some experience using it in a game. Two of those games went very well for me (one because I had the Carrier); the latest game it did nothing but die. This article is written from this perspective on using the Carrier as your only Tier 1 in a Patrol Fleet.

So first, the Carrier itself. Personally I think the correct way to look at this model is as a heavy Gunship, which happens to have Wing Capacity. It has slightly higher CR, HP, and Torpedoes than a Gunship, the Forward Fixed is identical, but the Port/Starboard weapons are significantly weaker... particularly after a few points of damage. The Carrier also has 4 Mn, which can be important.

By themselves, none of these weapons are very good. Thus, the Carrier relies heavily on a fairly small Wing Capacity to be relevant. Unfortunately, DR 5 and 8HP isn't that hard to hurt, so a savvy opponent will probably destroy the Carrier if you are using Bombers or Assault Craft... particularly if your Admiral is on board.

Interceptors are probably the best choice for a lone Carrier. Doing so makes it a dedicated support vessel, and an annoying one at that. It, and anything nearby, will essentially be immune to Torpedoes, SRS, and Boarding, unless it is dealt with. And who wants to go through 8HP to destroy something with no real offense?

Fighters are not a bad option either, for two reasons. One, they are not nearly as threatening as Bombers (making the carrier less of a threat) and two, their extended range means you can attack one turn sooner. In addition, Fighters are perfectly happy killing Smalls, and confronting your opponents SRS. Bombers are wasted doing either task, which discourages you from doing so.

If you put the Carrier into Reserve, then suddenly Bombers and Assault Craft are far more viable. 90% of the time, the Carrier would Shunt-in, placing it 8" from its target. Even if the target activates first, it probably won't be able to get away, allowing you to hit it with a full-strength Token. However, this also places your Admiral in Reserve until Turn 3 most games, and Dindrenzi generally need to be winning at this point... and the loss of TACs and the difficulty for Command Checks probably makes this unusable. But for 150 points, it's a good second Tier 1.

Finally, the hidden advantage for taking a Carrier as your Admiral is the cost. With 6 Wings and nothing else, you're only spending 140 points. That's far cheaper than the Battleships, which may allow you to field some powerful combinations in the rest of your fleet.

Accompaniments

The real strength of the Dindrenzi Carrier comes from its Accompaniments. I'll try to break down why for each option.

Gunships

These are the most obvious choice for the Heavy Gunship disguised as a Carrier; the synergy here is amazing. Essentially, for 50-60 points, you upgrade one Gunship in the Squadron, sacrificing about half of the total Port/Starboard firepower for a 6-wing Token and an 11AD Torpedo volley. This alteration gives the squadron near immunity to Torpedoes early game, and makes them very strong and more versatile up close. You can also drop a 4 AD Mine as well.

This is probably the only time I would consider using the Movement Hardpoint, as I don't want to slow down the Squadron. You probably don't need +2 Wing Capacity, but it's hard to say no to Ablative Removal for your Admiral. For a non-Admiral, the Movement should be a no-brainer, particularly if you start them on the table.

The only downside is the cost. With 6 Wings, +1" Mv, and Deck Crews, this Squadron costs 335 points... That's Dreadnought levels of expensive, and about half of your Patrol MFV. This makes it nearly cost-prohibitive, but potentially Scenario dominating. The rest of the Fleet and TACs needs to be built around it.

Escorts

Dindrenzi are blessed/cursed with gun-toting Escorts. These are a great option if you're taking a 4-6 Interceptor support Carrier, because it converts the Carrier into a semi-offensive threat, while keeping cost down to about 200 points. Torpedoes generally like to kill Escorts, but the Token keeps them alive. If your opponent shoots them with Direct-fire weapons; great! That's firepower not hitting your Support Carrier.

The Escorts can't be ignored either. If you place them 5"-6" ahead of the Carrier, you could roll up to 12 AD on at target 14"-22" away from the Carrier; that's enough to Crit most Cruisers. The Escorts themselves can link together to kill a Small, or potentially, the Carrier can link with each Escort and roll 5-8 AD against three different targets in one Activation. Finally, for any Smalls that get too close, the Squadron can launch a 6AD Assault and drop that 4 AD Mine. Many a Corvette has died this way.

Cruisers

The most confusing Accompaniments are Cruisers, as there is no apparent synergy here... Which is why I tried them out in three games. Here's what I've learned:

Torpedoes: 10 AD Torpedoes aren't particularly impressive within Armada, but it's very high for Dindrenzi. In fact, the only way Dindrenzi can use more Torpedoes is with the Carrier/Gunship combo or a Dreadnought. So this is important to keep in mind.

Forward-Fixed: The squadron has a potential 14AD Forward-Fixed Kinetic weapon, which is pretty potent. It's the same firepower as the Praetorian Battleship. Perhaps more importantly, the Squadron could potentially fire an 8AD and 11AD Volley. That should do 3HP damage to a Medium Squadron, or knock out two Smalls. Follow with those Torpedoes, and...

Port/Starboard Weapons: While not substantial, the Squadron has four guns to bring to bear on one side, which can help.

Mines: The squadron has the same Mining options as a normal Cruiser Squadron; this needs to be maximized by working with another Squadron. More on that later.

Finally, the Carrier serves as a very tough upgrade unit for a Cruiser Squadron... Tougher than a Heavy Cruiser. If you think Heavy Cruisers are a viable addition to Cruisers, you may really enjoy upgrading further to a Carrier. The important upgrade here is the Wings. I have had great success with Assault Shuttles, but I think Interceptors might be a better way to go, because of the following...

Supporting your Carrier Admiral with the rest of your Fleet

However you choose to arm your Carrier, the rest of your fleet needs to be built to support it effectively. Assume you'll be facing a Battleship, and you're starting your Carrier Admiral on the board.

The last thing you want is for your opponent's Battleship to line up on your fragile Carrier, and I've found two ways to do this... If possible, employ both.

1) Activations: Looking back, I'm pretty sure I was successful with my Carrier Admiral because I had more activations than my opponent. This allowed me to ensure my Carrier could be placed last during deployment, allowing me to avoid the most dangerous unit from board placement, and dictate engagement distance during the game.

2) Threat Profile: A Dindrenzi Admiral Carrier has a huge "Shoot Me!" sign hanging on it. But if there's something on the table with a high Threat Profile, something your opponent can't afford to ignore, then your Carrier is less tempting as a target.

Getting an Activation Advantage with Dindrenzi is pretty easy; bring as many Smalls as possible. 9 Frigates is 270 points, which is only ~25% of an 800 MFV Patrol Fleet. Plenty to go hog-wild with your Carrier and field the mandatory Tier 2.

Getting something with a high Threat Profile is trickier. A Battleship can do it, but it is also tougher, so an opponent would probably shoot the softer, tempting Admiral Carrier instead. So, here are some good options (and they all have Mines, which is important).

Cruisers: If you don't know what these guys can do, I don't think there is any help for you. 16AD at 24" for 180 points, plus Mines.

Heavy Cruisers: Generally discounted for being the same price as Gunships, but the same 16AD at 24" as Cruisers, these guys bring a lot to the table when working with a Carrier. And unlike Cruisers, many underestimate how potent these guys are up-close, or their overall toughness. If your opponent ignores them to shoot the Carrier, they will quickly learn their mistake as strong Gunracks and Kinetics rip them apart.

Battlecruiser: Nothing is really more threatening than a Glass Cannon, and while not exactly made of glass, a Battlecruiser is still all Cannon. Who wants to ignore one of these, ever?

Finally, about those Mines. I think it's really important that, however you go, there should be a second unit laying Mines along with the Carrier. Two units can, in two turns, create a huge minefield behind your Carrier, protecting it from those annoying Smalls arriving from Reserve in your Carrier's rear arc. It'll protect your Carrier's buddy Squadron as well.

Putting it all together

So, here's an 800 point list that should give my opponents fits at the [Michigan GT](#):

90 Frigates
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80 Corvettes
180 Cruisers
150 Carrier (6 Interceptors, Ablative Removal)
210 Battlecruiser (-1" TL, High Energy, Double Mines, 2 Frigates)

Ok, I'd have to acquire 2 more Frigates to field this, so probably not... but this feels like a solid list to me. Fielding two squishy Tier 1 Choices may not be a good idea either, but up to 6 Activations will go a long way to mitigating it.

-Ryjak