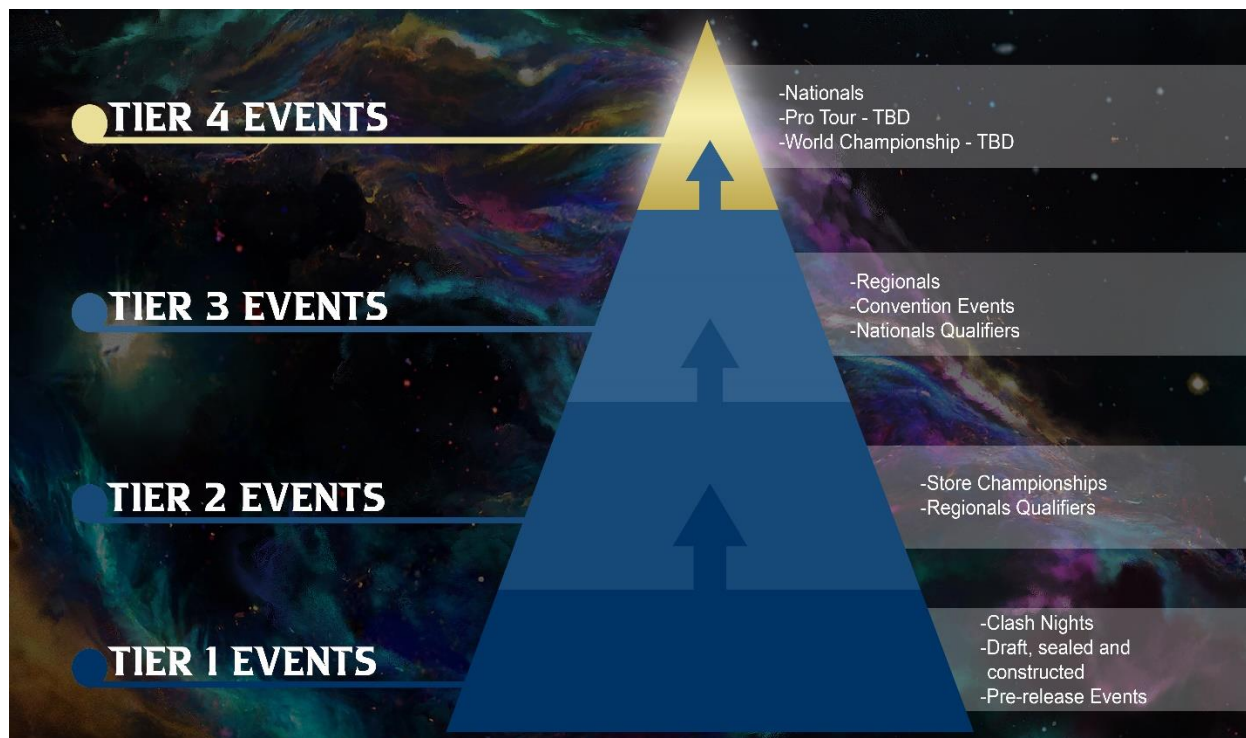


The Road to Nationals – Tiers of Play and the Different Levels of Alpha Clash TCG Events

By David DeBates



The idea of professional level, or highly competitive, gameplay is something that has excited players all over the world for a large part of TCG history. Being able to play a game you love professionally is a dream many of us have on the playgrounds, or at our local game stores. Rising Empire Studios is keenly aware of those dreams, and we want to give people the opportunity to make those dreams a reality as they reach the highest tiers of play that we can make available!

With multiple tiers of play and competitiveness, we hope that players can find the niche that works best for them! If a player wants to focus on grinding tournaments, and tweaking their decks to perfection, there is a space for that! If a player wants to hang out at locals and have a fun time with deckbuilding and the overall environment of the game, well Tier 1 events are the

place for them! With multiple levels for multiple wants and desires, we can create environments that are fun and engaging for whoever wants to participate, because everyone will be on the same page!

These tiers of play will dictate the overall feeling each type of event should have and show where the overall focus should be. Everyone competes to try to win, but what happens around that, and the level at which rules are strictly enforced, will vary from tier to tier.

Tier 1 Events – Casual

Tier 1 events are those typically held at the local level, organized by local game stores or similar tournament organizers. These events can include weekly locals, learn to play events, pre-release events or other things of similar nature.

These events put a stronger emphasis on creating a fun, enjoyable atmosphere, rather than putting the onus solely on winning. These events allow players a chance to connect with other members of the community, build rapport and build a community. The tournament rules are still constantly in effect, but there is a stronger emphasis on learning and teaching than simply being right or wrong, and any chance to issue a warning rather than a stronger penalty should be taken when appropriate.

Tournament Staff, including Tournament Organizers and Judges, may compete in the events they help manage at this level, provided they do not use their position for an advantage in any game or match.

Clash Nights

Clash Nights are a weekly chance for players to gather and test their skills against other Contenders in the area. These nights can be hosted with a variety of formats, including Constructed Standard, and eventually Draft or Sealed. As more formats are introduced to the game, tournament organizers will be able to host whichever events they and the local players want to see.

Prerelease

Prerelease events are a player's first chance to get their hands on the newest cards from the newest set. Typically held within a week before the release of a set, these events are a way to challenge players both in gameplay and deckbuilding. Since players will be playing cards and

seeing new mechanics for the first time, these events should be a fun way to help build the community, rather than simply focused on competition.

Prerelease events are always held as Sealed events, with every product a player is given being used in deck construction and gameplay. Certain deckbuilding restrictions are lifted during this process, so be sure to familiarize yourself with the rules for Sealed gameplay in our Advanced Rulebook, Tournament Rules Manual, and Playing a Prerelease documents.

Tier 2 - Competitive

Tier 2 events are where we begin more highly competitive gameplay, and it is also the first step on the road to Nationals or above. These events include local Store Championships, which offer more impressive promos and prizing support, and Regional Qualifiers, which qualify top placers for Regional Championships.

Competitive level events, like all events sponsored by Rising Empire Studios, still hold an emphasis on fun and enjoyment, but the focus here begins shifting towards high level gameplay and stricter rules enforcement. While all players are welcome to join these events, they will begin to be held to a higher standard of rules understanding and will be held more responsible for their gameplay or tournament errors.

Starting at Tier 2, tournament staff are forbidden from playing in any event they are a part of. Any staff member found competing in events of this tier or higher can face penalties both as a judge or tournament organizer but also as a player.

Store Championships

Store Championships allow for the highest level of play at the local level. These events offer more exciting promos and prizes while remaining familiar to a Clash Night! Store Championships are intended to foster healthy competition within a local scene, allowing for friendly games to take on a slightly more serious edge!

Regional Qualifiers

Regional Qualifiers act as the first step on the path to Nationals and professional gameplay. These events will gather everyone from the local area to one place for the chance to show they truly have what it takes to win the Alpha Clash. These events will typically be much larger than a Store Championship and have more at stake as well.

Top placers of Regional Qualifiers will move on to Regionals, which take players from across the surrounding area, and from there players can advance to Nationals to try and prove who the Champion of the Gambit truly is!

Tier 3 – Competitive

Tier 3 events are held at the same level of competition as Tier 2. The thing that sets these apart from the events of the tier below is their sheer size. While Store Championships might support 32 people, and a Regional Qualifier might have around 64, Tier 3 events are expected to have hundreds of players and potentially last an entire weekend rather than a single day. These events bring the community at large together for intense competition and provide an exciting opportunity regardless of event results.

Regional Championships

Regional Championships are the events directly above Regional Qualifiers. These events are invitationals, with only top placers in the events below them. These players from across predetermined regions will gather for a chance to compete for invitations to Nationals. While these events can be quite large, their capacity is inevitably determined by the number of people who qualify and can thus range in overall size from one region to another, or even one season to another in the same region.

Convention Events

At large conventions like TCG Con, Gen Con, Collect-a-con, and many others, tournament organizers will sometimes arrange large events as somewhat of main events. These events, while they award fewer or no larger tournament invitations, will typically offer tremendous cash prizes or other materials as incentives for competing. These events have open eligibility, meaning that anyone can enter without an invitation. Although they are open to the public, due to space restrictions of the hosting convention, the event might have a limit on the tickets able to be sold and might require a purchase of a convention ticket in addition to the event to enter.

National Qualifiers

While the rest of the events in this tier are self-explanatory, being large events for Nationals invitations and/or cash prizes. National Qualifiers are where things get a little tricky. These

events are one-off competitions that award a small number of invitations to National championships, can vary in size, and have open eligibility.

National Qualifiers exist outside of the normal progression path from Regional Qualifiers to Nationals. Players don't have to climb the ladder all the way to the top, but rather can use these events to jumpstart their journey. While a shorter path though, this path will not be an easier one. The best of the best players will be using these events to do the same, so make sure you bring your A-game!

Stores and tournament organizers will be granted permission to host events that offer National invitations. This will allow for a larger player base than what can be provided from Regional winners alone and provide many players with their first introduction to the extremely competitive atmosphere that they might expect at larger tournaments.

Tier 4 – Professional

Tier 4 events are the peak of competitive Alpha Clash, the final moment – The Gambit! These events represent the pinnacle of competition and the height of skill and perseverance within the community. They are invitation only and will only occur a small handful of times per year but will showcase the culmination of effort leading up to each one.

These events are also the strictest when it comes to rules enforcement. With so much on the line, players will be held to a high standard of play, with much more explicitly said and done and no shortcuts taken. This will make sure that the game is played in its ideal state and so that any victory or loss comes down to nothing other than skill and gameplay.

National Championship

This is the end of the road for players entering Regional Qualifiers and Championships, as well as the National Qualifiers. All the players who receive invitations for this event will travel for one final event, across two days. Each country that hosts the game will have their chance to host a national event, with smaller areas potentially combining into a multi-national tournament to allow for adequate participation.

The winners of these events will be deemed national champions and win an invitation to the following event in addition to any other prizes provided. Other top placers will automatically qualify for their respective Regional Championships, skipping the need to qualify once more.

World Championships and the Pro Tour

Looking to the future, National Championships will eventually give way to bigger and better events, as we all reach even further than before for the sake of the spirit of the game and competition. This future will eventually manifest as World Championships or a Pro Tour. Both will offer an even further opportunity for players to test their abilities, and each will provide their own challenges and benefits.

The Pro Tour will behave like a circuit of events that players can qualify for by performing well at Regional and National Championships or previous Pro Tour events. Placing well in these circuits will allow players to routinely qualify for Regionals or Nationals, and winning these events will qualify a player for the world stage.

At the global level, Rising Empire Studios wants to institute a World Championship, an invitation-only event, where the best players from around the world come together and face off in the absolute summit of skill. This event will be fed by players performing well in the Pro Tour, as well as top placers at each National Championship across the world, or the top placers of the previous championship. Additionally, like other events, top placers at Worlds will automatically qualify for respective lower tiered events without needing to go through qualifiers yet again.

More details on these events will be released in the future, as the game grows, and the competitive scene becomes more fleshed out across the globe. These events will take time to establish, as currently there are far fewer ways to qualify until players can begin utilizing their past successes to fuel future opportunities. For now, Nationals will represent the pinnacle of gameplay for Alpha Clash, but we believe that the game will become so large that not even a global stage will be enough to truly capture it.

Until then, be sure to start your Alpha Clash journey wherever you can. From the local game stores to National Championships, there are so many games to be played and clashes to be won. Make sure you bring your best performance and show everyone you have what it takes to win the Alpha Clash. Remember to have a good time while you strive to be the best player you can. Good luck, have fun, and above all...

IT'S TIME TO CLASH!