

POWER PROGRESSION

MERCENARIES

FOUR STAR SYNDICATE

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Despite being a player of many factions, it might surprise some to hear me say that I consider Mercenaries to be my most competitive faction. Over the last eight years, I've dabbled in every faction in WARMACHINE and HORDES. Though my attention has come and gone for many, there are a few that I stick with for various reasons, be it for the background, painting and aesthetic value, playstyle preference, or some combination of the three. Then there are a few factions I keep primarily because I find them to be ideal choices for competitive play.

There are a few disgruntled voices out there that will belabor the old point, "Mercenaries aren't a real faction." Well, being an old hand at the game and no stranger to taking the contracts for spins at convention-run Hardcore events with appreciable levels of success, I can say with confidence that anyone who doesn't give Mercs their respect as a full-blown competitive force replete with a wide array of effective models and combinations is kidding themselves. When it comes to the secret of Mercenary success, it's all about cohesive army composition. The mercenary contracts may not have selection rosters as broad as some armies do, but that doesn't put the various contracts at any kind of disadvantage. There are more than enough choices to carefully construct efficient, competitive forces from any of the contracts. The Four Star Syndicate is no exception.

The Four Star Syndicate takes its choice of Mercenary models from those available to Cryx and Khador, plus a few others. At the time of this writing, a Four Star army has access to seven warcasters, fifteen warjacks, sixteen units (including four attachments), a litany of solos, and even a couple warbeasts. For this installment of Power Progression, I'm going to use the wicked Thamarite Fiona the Black as the starting point for a versatile and effective Four Star Syndicate list. This list is ideal for someone new to Mercs or for an old vet looking for a new list to try out. I'll start with the





equivalent point value of a battlegroup box set, and from there, I'll work my way up through the point levels, adding army selections that make the most of Fiona's abilities.

Phase I: Battlegroup

Mercenaries don't have a battlegroup box set, but they've got plenty of great warjacks to choose from when making a comparable Mangled Metal army list. I set a target point cost of 11 points to match the point cost of most WARMACHINE battlegroup box sets. I also chose to mirror the Cygnar and Protectorate of Menoth battlegroups with two light warjacks and one heavy. These battlegroup box sets include one light warjack with a ranged attack, a light with an arc node, and a beat-down melee heavy. For the ranged light, I chose the venerable Vanguard light warjack. With a solid offense, solid defense, strong weapon abilities, and the ability to take the occasional shot meant for one of its allies thanks to Shield Guard, the Vanguard is a choice model for most any Mercenary warcaster. Fiona does not have access to an arc node, but the economical and reliable Talon stands in for Fiona's arc node just fine. With

her Telgesch Mark spell, it nearly rivals a Lancer or Revenger but at a significant discount in points. That leaves me just enough points for the battlegroup's heavy hitter, the chain-balling Mangler sporting Reach and Thresher. With that final selection, I've got an exceptionally sturdy battlegroup with either a buckler or a shield on each warjack.

At the battlegroup level, Fiona probably won't have an opportunity to make full use of a few of her spells and abilities. Influence and Roth's Mercy require warrior models, and Soulfire becomes a pure damage spell since its secondary effect won't trigger against warjacks. Affliction and Nonokrion Brand both have their uses at the battlegroup level, whether to allow the lightest shield bash to penetrate Khadoran armor or to open up the Vanguard's line of sight to an opposing warcaster. Mostly, though, the warjacks will be using a great deal of Fiona's focus at the battlegroup level and rely on their own solid stats and abilities. The real key to victory in a battlegroup game with Fiona is a timely use of her feat to claim a substantial advantage. Dark Omen can really turn the tide of a battle, and will blunt the enemy's offense substantially. By means of example, a charging heavy warjack from one of the other WARMACHINE battlegroup box sets will miss the Vanguard on an average roll even if it boosts the attack roll. Even a lucky hit will deal minimal damage thanks to the Dark Omen effect in conjunction with the Shield. In the end, however, these smaller games are more about learning than competing, so have fun building a strong Fiona foundation to get a feel for her rules and order of activations.

List 1: Fiona Battlegroup List

Model	Point Cost	Notes
Fiona the Black	+6 warjack pts.	
Mangler	8	
Talon	4	
Vanguard	5	
Total	11	