

## Deck Deconstruction Seminar: Rebels and Mono-Blue

Featuring Randy Buehler, former Pro Tour player and all around M:TC expert

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**WizO\_Unicorn:** Come one, come all to Randy Buehler's Deck Deconstruction Seminar. Tonight Randy discusses the Rebel Deck and Mono-blue!

**WotC\_Randy:** I think I'll talk a bit about the Rebel deck first, and then I'll field questions about both decks (or whatever else anyone wants to ask). Thanks to the cards in *Nemesis*, I think the Rebel deck is here for a while. Lin Sivvi is simply amazing—1/3 for 1WW isn't exactly easy to kill, and both of her abilities are really useful. Throw in the Defiant Falcon, a Lightbringer and a Lawbringer. You'll see Lin Sivvi on the table a lot for the next two years.

There are actually a couple of different ways to build the Rebel deck, although they're all going to share the same core: Mother of Runes and the 1-mana Sergeant. Throw in Birds/Lieutenants at two mana along with some combination of Longbow Archers, Steadfast Guards, and Fresh Volunteers. Then you want four Lin Sivvis at three mana...yes, I said four.

**Squee\_the\_goblin:** Why four?

**knobz3:** Four?

**Chuck4391:** Four?

**WotC\_Randy:** I don't care if she's a legend—you still play four. If one is in play, you're usually winning so it won't matter if one or two more are stuck in your hand

**Squee\_the\_goblin:** But I thought that two legends of the same kind ought to be the most to have in a deck.

**ErtaiTheGreat:** Three is good, four is better!

**WotC\_Randy:** Well said, Ertai. Now on top of that, you'll want Masticore, of course. Masticore is particularly nice in this Rebel deck because you'll want to run Gaea's Cradle; recruiting out a bunch of Rebels really fires up the Cradle and allows Masticore to go nuts! Also, the recruiting makes Masticore's discard less painful, but you don't need me to tell you that Masticore is a good card.

One interesting decision is Crusade versus Glorious Anthem. I think it comes down to a metagame call: Crusade is the better card, but if everyone else is playing white then Glorious Anthem is better.

**guest50:** I would choose Anthem.

**WotC\_Randy:** So you have to predict how many other Rebel decks you expect to see. If you expect a large Rebel presence, play Glorious Anthem. If you expect only a few, go with Crusade.

**ErtaiTheGreat:** Would you sideboard Glorious Anthem to switch with Crusade when you play against a white deck?

**WwotC\_Randy:** Also notice that Anthem helps your 'Core whereas Crusade doesn't. It's probably not worth the sideboard space to have access to both, though. A mix is best, but if you can pin down the metagame (i.e., accurately predict it) then play according to that information. If no one else runs white, Crusade is a lot more efficient. Some other interesting decisions you have to make: a) Should you play Poachers and Deranged Hermits?

**Chuck4391:** I am working on a blue/white counterspell deck—what would you suggest? please keep in mind I mostly have 6th edition cards.

**WotC\_Randy:** That deck sounds like fun, but if you are in a position to gate those things out, you're already winning.

**mike\_online:** Randy...the Lin Sivvi and others you were mentioning—is this a mono-white deck?

**WotC\_Randy:** I think the deck should be mono-white, but it should use Gaea's Cradle anyway just for massive amounts of colorless mana. I have also seen some peopel experiment with Enlightened Tutors, but that doesn't sound worth it to me.

**guest50:** What do you think about Snake Baskets in a Cradle Rebel deck?

**WotC\_Randy:** Snake Baskets seems like another card that is great if you're already winning, but isn't going to turn many losses into wins. Given that, I don't think I'd run them. The Jhovall Queen is probably worth it—so are one of each Glider and I personally like Defiant Vanguard. All in all, I think Rebels make for a damn solid deck. It may not be the best deck in a combo heavy environment, but it's still OK and it'll stay good well into the future.

**guest52:** I run two Tutors, I think it could work.

**WotC\_Randy:** If you run Enlightened Tutors then having one Wave is worth it. The Wave seems pretty situational, but Tutors allow you to go get situation cards when the time is perfect. However, I'm not a huge fan of Tutors in the Rebel deck so I would say probably don't run it.

**Chuck4391:** Please give me some tips on a Blue/White counterspell deck. I have mostly 4th, 5th , and 6th edition cards.

**WotC\_Randy:** I actually like Wall of Air and Glacial Wall in Blue/White control...you can go the creatureless route with Wrath of God if you own a few, but if not you can do OK with Walls and big fliers. Make sure to include card drawing cards liek Jayemdae Tome.

**Chuck4391:** How many Wrath of Gods might I need? I have just one.

**WotC\_Randy:** if you play any, you'll want four—and no creatures. If you have creatures, you want zero Wrath of Gods.

**ErtaiTheGreat:** Should I run Cho Manno and Ramosian Sky Marshals in my Rebel deck? If so, how many?

**WotC\_Randy:** You would not want more than one of each. Secondly, I'm not sure the Sky Marshal adds enough—there aren't a lot of situations where you'll want to get it. Cho Manno, on the other hand, is pretty good. He's an invincible blocker against Stompy and if you really want to you can play with Pariah.

**guest47:** In a my white and blue deck I have nine Plains, ten Islands, three Mother Of Runes, three Wall Of Glare, two Cloud Of Faries, two Peregrine Drake, one Pariah, two Cho-Manno's Blessing, four Pacifism, two Inviolability, two Disenchant, two Abduction, four Counterspells, Diplomatic Immunity, Boomerang, Confiscate, two Curfews, two Rewinds, two Spellblasts, and a Thwart. What should I add or take out?

**WotC\_Randy:** I think you should try to focus your deck a little. here's what I'd do: Try to decide which are the best cards in your deck, and then almost always play four of each of those. You also have to decide what your deck is trying to do. Is it a creature swarm or a control deck, for example? Your deck looks like a blue/white control deck that wants to block on the ground and fly over for the win in the air. That's fine, but take out the cards that don't help that theme (like Curfew, Inviolability, Diplomatic Immunity). I would replace those with better fliers and permission spells.

**mike\_online:** So if I want to build a good Rebel deck I need Lin Sivvi, Mother of Runes, Sergeant, Longbow Archers, Steadfast Guards, Fresh Volunteers, Masticore, Gaea's Cradle, Crusade, and what else...?

**WotC\_Randy:** Hmmm...that's it for rares except for maybe one Cho manno and one Rappelling Scouts. You'll also need some of the 2-mana Rebels that search for either Lieutenants (from *Masques*) or Falcons (from *Nemesis*). The Scouts can block anyone, and since they can gain pro-color, they also break through any stalemate and attack. Another stalemate breaker that is particularly good in the mirror matchup (Rebels vs. Rebels) is Reverent Mantra. Just say "white" and attack for a bunch!

**guest52:** Do you think two Mantra's is too much?

**WotC\_Randy:** Two Mantras main deck is reasonable, especially since they can save your creatures from direct damage. I wouldn't run more. I might have a third one in the sideboard, though.

**guest50:** Which is better, Ramosian Lieutenant or Defiant Falcon?

**WotC\_Randy:** That's a toughy...the Lieutenant can survive Dread of Night and you only need one Crusade/Anthem for him to survive Massacre. I think that's enough to outweigh the flying ability of the Falcon, but I'm honestly not positive either way.

**knobz3:** I want to make a Rising Waters deck—should I have white in it?

**WotC\_Randy:** I keep trying to figure out the best way to make a Rising Waters deck and I haven't come up with a really good one. I'm not sure how to answer—if you figure out a really good way to build it then you

can probably win some tournaments. However, I don't know what the right decklist is.

**Chuck4391:** When you placed Twelfth in the 1998 Seattle World Championships (the Rath cycle) what type of deck did you beat to get into Twelfth place?

**WotC\_Randy:** My deck for the Rath cycle format (day 3) was a bizarre Earthcraft/Recurring Nightmare combo deck called "Horsecraft." In the last round of the Swiss I went up against Steve O'Mahoney-Schwartz, who was playing Living Death and I took him down in what amounted to a \$2000 ante match! Worlds usually has about 300 people and they use three different formats over three days, by the way (and then the finals are Standard, which is also the format for day 2).

**quest56:** How much good can Circles/Runes of Protection do?

**WotC\_Randy:** I think Story Circle is the best of the Circle/Rune cards. If you run into a mono-color deck without any enchantment removal, the game just ends! The other Circles are basically just sideboard cards. CoP: red is one of my favorites for the sideboard. Story Circle, though, is very main deckable.

**mike\_online:** How about a Blue question. Why was Deflection banned from Standard play?

**WotC\_Randy:** Cards can only be played in Standard if they are in one of the current two stand alone blocks or in the basic set. So right now you can use cards from 6E, Urza's block, Masques, and Nemesis. Deflection was illegal in Standard a while ago because it wasn't in a current set, but since it is in 6th Edition, it's perfectly legal in Standard right now.

**quest52:** Should I put in two Story Circles?

**WotC\_Randy:** It depends on your deck...in a Rebel deck I would say probably not—you're better off using Masticore as your creature removal. However, if you're playing some sort of blue/white control deck then I would say run three standard! Rebels want four.

**quest50:** Do you think Distorting Lens is a good card in a Rebel deck, and would you run four of each 'Bringer?

**WotC\_Randy:** If you already have 'Bringers then Distorting Lens is amazing, yes. But here's the thing...you have to ask yourself if these cards are good on their own. I usually only run "combos" in my deck if both cards are at least reasonable on their own. Distorting Lens isn't really very good unless you have the 'Bringers. Now in block constructed the environment is slow enough that you might have time to set up this killer combo, however, with combo decks and Stompy decks ruining rampant in Standard, I don't think you'll have time. So I wouldn't put either in (well, I might have a 'Bringer or two in my SB) in Standard. In block constructed, though, all bets are off and that combo could easily show up in the next PTQ round.

**quest53:** I have a Stompy deck with one Cradle. I can trade it for lots of other rares or try to get more Cradles (those are some expensive,

hard to get cards). Which do you think would be better? If trading, what sort of rares would be best? Oh yeah, there is a lot of Red burn/Sligh in my environment.

**WotC\_Randy:** Green is pretty good against Sligh so it makes sense to stick to green, unless you're tired/bored with it. If you want to beat up on Sligh decks, then try to trade for two more Cradles. If you just want to mess around and have fun, though, then trade the Cradle and build something new. Either way you get to have fun playing **Magic**, right?

I think the broken cards in the deck are Rancor, Cradle, Boa, and Troll. Those are the critical cards, in my opinion. I wouldn't play Stompy with less than three Cradles.

**quest57:** My deck uses early Vine Trellis then overlaid terrain w/ groundskeeper, then lays down some fattys. Will this be viable in type 2 before or after Urza's?

**WotC\_Randy:** I wonder if you wouldn't be better off taking out the Groundskeeper and Overlaid Terrain in order to play with some of green's amazing cheap creatures. I understand that the fatties look good, but Rover Boa and Albino Troll are more efficient. They come out so fast and they're so hard to deal with that they would probably be better.

Hehehe...That deck looks pretty tempting, but I think it costs too much. If you can set it up, though then you want Volataic Keys and Grim Monoliths and in you can come up with, what is it, 15 mana? Then you can take infinite turns!

**quest56:** How much good would a Magistrate's Scepter do?

**WotC\_Randy:** If the Scepter didn't have to tap for its second ability then it might be doable, but I think that's too hard to set up and the infinite turns deck isn't going to make the cut in tournaments. It's still probably a fun deck though.

**quest56:** You'd need, like, four Voltaic Keys...

**WotC\_Randy:** Four Keys and four Dynamos would do it—no problem!

**quest56:** What sets are those from

**WotC\_Randy:** Keys=*Saga*, Monolith=*Legacy*, Thran Dynamo=*Destiny*.

**quest56:** Urza block, basically

**WotC\_Randy:** If you do build that deck you might consider splashing Blue for Tinker (a *Legacy* card) which allows you to search for whichever artifact you need.

**knobz3:** Do you have any good combos for Parallax Tide and what about Topple in Rebel decks?

**WotC\_Randy:** Topple is a nice way to kill enemy Masticores, but I can't see why it's better than Reprisal. I think a lot of people have

forgotten that Reprisal is in 6th and I think it might be worth trying out as Masticore defense. As far as Tide goes, the best way to use it is probably in a Replenish deck. There's a bunch of articles up at [newwave.org](http://newwave.org) and [meridianmagic.com](http://meridianmagic.com) talking about new Parallax Replenish decks. I don't have anything better than those—those Replenish decks look pretty scary, actually.

**mike\_online:** What poop did you want to say about the mono Blue? I thought that won the poll for tonight's topic?

**WotC\_Randy:** When I checked the poll last night and again this morning, the Rebels were ahead so that's what I spent my preparation time on. However, Mono-Blue is certainly a good deck and the best way to play it is almost certainly as "Accelerated Blue." You use Grim Monoliths to bust out fast Morphlings, Palinchrons, and Treacheries, season to taste with permission and card-drawing and make sure you play *lots* of land (probably 28).

**Chuck4391:** What would the best deck type be against a Rebel deck? I've noticed those decks are getting more common and are really annoying to play against...

**WotC\_Randy:** Unfortunately, the best anti-Rebel deck is probably a combo. Either Replenish or Bargain are pretty good against it. Blue loses to Rebels because it can't counterspell all the recruiters and any one of them can bring out a whole army. And everyone else has trouble busting through on the ground. I know combo isn't much fun to play, but it's probably the best anti-Rebel strategy.

**WizO\_Unicorn:** Thanks Randy! Great chat!

**WizO\_Bilbo:** Thanks for coming tonight, Randy!

**WotC\_Randy:** You can read more of my ramblings if you tune in the *Sideboard* Online this weekend—I'll be in New York covering feature matches at the Pro Tour (which starts on Friday).

I enjoyed talking to everyone and I hope you come back next month!