

Epic Struggle and Test of Endurance Completing the Winning Cycle

Alex Shvartsman

Friday, May 17, 2002



- [Alex Shvartsman Archive](#)

Wizards' R&D has long wanted to make the game even more diverse by introducing new ways to defeat your opponent. However, printing cards that say "you win the game" is tricky business. Make the card too good and you can unbalance the game. Make it too weak, and it will join the ranks of [Pale Moon](#) and [Purelace](#) in your cat's litter box.

When a decision to publish such a card was finally made, it resulted in [Coalition Victory](#) -- a rare from *Invasion*. At eight mana cost and with harsh conditions to satisfy, it was not exactly slated for greatness. Yet [Coalition Victory](#) saw a fair amount of play, even some at tournament level. This encouraged a whole new cycle of "You Win" cards -- one for each color.

The five alternate-win-condition cards are spread throughout the *Odyssey* block. Two cards of the cycle (including its greatest hit so far -- [Battle of Wits](#)) were printed in *Odyssey* proper. *Torment* followed up with [Mortal Combat](#). *Judgment* is going to complete the cycle, introducing (drumroll please) [Test of Endurance](#), and [Epic Struggle](#)! Like [Battle of Wits](#), both of these cards are quite playable, if you are willing to build your deck around one of them. Let's take a look at [Epic Struggle](#) first.

THAT'S A LOT OF GUYS

The greatest argument *against* using it is that in most situations you can win the game just by attacking any time you manage to get twenty creatures in play and keep them alive for a turn. However, your opponent may have an army of their own built up, or be hiding behind cards like [Worship](#) or [Teferi's Moat](#). [Epic Struggle](#) lets you get around cards that are otherwise the green mage's worst nightmare.

So how do we get twenty creatures in play reasonably fast? Think token generators. With a sufficient mana base, a pair of [Snake Baskets](#) can release enough reptiles. [Squirrel Nest](#) can help put a 1/1 token into play every turn, or even work overtime when combined with [Deserted Temple](#). My personal favorite though, is the little-used *Odyssey* rare [Nantuko Shrine](#).

Count Your Eggs...



Main Deck
60 cards

6 Forest	2 Epic Struggle
10 Island	4 Fact or Fiction
4 Yavimaya Coast	4 Moment's Peace
<hr/>	
20 lands	4 Mossfire Egg
	4 Nantuko Shrine
	4 Opt
2 Nantuko Cultivator	4 Skycloud Egg
<hr/>	
2 creatures	4 Sleight of Hand
	4 Sungrass Egg
	4 Words of Wisdom
<hr/>	
	38 other spells



Although the deck is a bit complicated to play, it is very inexpensive and easy to put together -- and once you master it, it is also incredibly fun. The concept here is that you will burn through your deck a lot faster than your opponent does, thus gaining far more of a benefit from [Nantuko Shrines](#).

With so much card drawing, it's easy to get stuck with a handful of land. [Nantuko Cultivator](#) to the rescue -- it lets you pitch the lands and will usually come into play large enough to be afraid of. Even if you are throwing squirrels in front of the attacking creatures, you should be able to get enough of them in play in short order. Then just drop [Epic Struggle](#), and watch the fireworks!

The Egg deck is also a very nice surprise to spring upon your multiplayer group -- though it will probably only work once. With spells like [Nantuko Shrine](#) and [Words of Wisdom](#), your neighbors are going to love you, and with few early threats in play, they will likely direct their troops elsewhere. Then spring the [Epic Struggle](#) on them and watch them scramble to deal with it quickly -- or pack up their cards.

WINNING WITH LIFE

Multiplayer games is also where the white alternative win condition card shines best. [Test of Endurance](#) seems tailor-made to play along with [Congregate](#) -- the card loved, or hated, by multiplayer mages for years! A single [Congregate](#) can put you over fifty life points -- especially if one of your opponents is playing the Egg deck!

Making [Test of Endurance](#) work in individual games is much more of a challenge. Cards like [Life Burst](#) just don't cut it for this purpose. As you are throwing away cards to gain a few life points, your opponent will use his to knock your life total back down. One way to go about it would be to build a blue-white control deck that can survive long enough to cast a pair of [Ancestral Tributes](#). Another would be to shut down your opponent's attackers to the point where you can gain that much life, while fending off your opponent's attacks.

Get A Life



Main Deck

60 cards

4 Brushland	4 Armadillo Cloak
4 Forest	4 Spirit Link
8 Plains	2 Test of Endurance
4 Savannah	_____
_____	10 other spells
20 lands	

4 Radiant's Dragoons
4 Soul Warden
4 Spike Feeder
2 Spike Weaver
4 Staunch Defenders
4 Teroh's Faithful
4 Venerable Monk
4 Wall of Essence

30 creatures



If you're short on older rares, try [Sungrass Prairie](#) or [Elfhome Palace](#) instead of [Savannah](#), and [Wall of Blossoms](#) for [Spike Weaver](#).

Guaranteed to frustrate any opponent that is relying on fast damage or simply brute creature strength to win, this deck will also annihilate anyone fond of burn. Note that there are only two copies of [Test of Endurance](#) in the deck -- just like there are only two [Epic Struggles](#) in the deck above it. Although these cards are the premier win condition, you also do not want to draw them early in the game, nor do you really want to draw multiples.

There are great many fun things to try in Judgment, but if you are in the mood for something really different, be sure to give these two cards a shot.

Send your comments and suggestions to Alex at ashv80@hotmail.com.