

Fatties with haste, what could be better?

Deconstructing Fires

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Do you remember when tournament **Magic** was dominated by a multicolor card with a converted mana cost of 3? No, I'm not talking about the Psychatog deck at last week's Friday Night **Magic**! I'm talking about "Fires." You know Fires . . . as in [Fires of Yavimaya](#)? A  enchantment from *Invasion*? All of your creatures get haste? Sacrifice Fires to give target creature +2/+2?

I know the word "haste" is cleaner and--more importantly--easier to type than "This creature is unaffected by summoning sickness." Still, something about the latter

wording really works for me. I guess haste sounds drearily

like what it is--a mechanic--while the idea of a creature unaffected by summoning sickness harkens back to my early **Magic** days, when I still thought of the game as two planeswalkers duking it out high above Dominia . . . umm . . . Dominaria . . . er, where's Ben Bleiweiss when you really need him?

FOUR OF EIGHT

Fires started burning up the competitive **Magic** scene during the 2000 State Championships. It really came into its own at 2000 Pro Tour - Chicago, where it took four of the Top 8 spots. It didn't win, but it did go on to dominate Standard until key cards from Masques block rotated out of the format.

Because of the variety of builds that did well, I couldn't choose which deck to break down, so I took a look at all four of them.

Jon Finkel's Fires

Pro Tour - Chicago 2000



Main Deck

60 cards

4 [Brushland](#)

4 [Chimeric Idol](#)

- | | | | |
|---|----------------------------------|---|-----------------------------------|
| 2 | City of Brass | 4 | Fires of Yavimaya |
| 6 | Forest | 4 | Saproling Burst |
| 4 | Karplusan Forest | 3 | Urza's Rage |
| 3 | Mountain | 2 | Wax // Wane |
| 4 | Rishadan Port | | |

23 lands

- | | |
|---|------------------------------------|
| 2 | Ancient Hydra |
| 4 | Birds of Paradise |
| 4 | Blastoderm |
| 2 | Kavu Chameleon |
| 4 | Llanowar Elves |
| 1 | Rith, the Awakener |
| 3 | River Boa |

20 creatures

17 other spells

Sideboard

- | | |
|---|------------------------------------|
| 2 | Aura Mutation |
| 3 | Earthquake |
| 2 | Flashfires |
| 2 | Hurricane |
| 1 | Kavu Chameleon |
| 2 | Obliterate |
| 1 | Rith, the Awakener |
| 2 | Tangle |

15 sideboard cards



Michael Pustilnik's Fires

Pro Tour - Chicago 2000



Main Deck

60 cards

- | | |
|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 4 Brushland | 3 Aura Mutation |
| 1 Elfame Palace | 4 Chimeric Idol |
| 6 Forest | 3 Earthquake |
| 4 Karplusan Forest | 3 Fires of Yavimaya |
| 4 Mountain | 3 Ghitu Fire |
| 2 Rishadan Port | 4 Saproling Burst |
| 1 Shivan Oasis | |

22 lands

- | |
|-------------------------------------|
| 4 Birds of Paradise |
| 4 Blastoderm |
| 3 Kavu Titan |
| 3 Llanowar Elves |
| 4 River Boa |

18 creatures

20 other spells

Sideboard

- | |
|-----------------------------------|
| 2 Blood Oath |
| 4 Boil |
| 1 Earthquake |
| 3 Flashfires |
| 1 Lumbering Satyr |
| 4 Simoon |

15 sideboard cards



Zvi Mowshowitz's Fires

Pro Tour - Chicago 2000



Main Deck

60 cards

2 Dust Bowl	4 Assault // Battery
10 Forest	4 Chimeric Idol
4 Karplusan Forest	1 Earthquake
5 Mountain	4 Fires of Yavimaya
4 Rishadan Port	4 Saproling Burst

25 lands

17 other spells

4 Birds of Paradise
4 Blastoderm
3 Jade Leech
4 Llanowar Elves
3 Two-Headed Dragon

18 creatures

Sideboard

3 Earthquake
3 Flashfires
4 Kavu Chameleon
1 Obliterate
2 Reverent Silence
2 Tangle

15 sideboard cards



Robert Dougherty's Fires

Pro Tour - Chicago 2000



Main Deck

60 cards

- | | |
|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 11 Forest | 4 Chimeric Idol |
| 4 Karplusan Forest | 2 Earthquake |
| 5 Mountain | 4 Fires of Yavimaya |
| 3 Rishadan Port | 4 Rhystic Lightning |
| _____ | 4 Saproling Burst |

23 lands

- | |
|-------------------------------------|
| 1 Ancient Hydra |
| 4 Birds of Paradise |
| 4 Blastoderm |
| 2 Jade Leech |
| 4 Llanowar Elves |
| 4 River Boa |

19 creatures

18 other spells

Sideboard

- | |
|----------------------------------|
| 2 Calming Verse |
| 2 Earthquake |
| 2 Flashfires |
| 2 Hurricane |
| 4 Kavu Chameleon |
| 3 Tangle |

15 sideboard cards



Of these builds, only Rob Dougherty's advanced past the Top 8, but it was still clear from this showing that Fires was a deck to be reckoned with.

The decks have several elements in common. With the lone exception of Pustilnik's version, all of the decks have four [Llanowar Elves](#) and four [Birds of Paradise](#)--Mike's deck is one Elf short. Mana

acceleration was one of the cornerstones of Fires. A turn-one Elf or Birds made for very explosive--and often potent--turns three, four, and five. This would allow you to play [Fires of Yavimaya](#) on the second turn, which in turn enabled you to drop hasty bombs on your opponent every subsequent turn.

[Blastoderm](#) is a 5/5 untargetable creature for 2♣♣ that has fading 3. Normally, this would mean you could get in three attacks in with the 'Derm before it ran out of fading counters. But with a Fires in play, you got four. This alone was devastating against a slower deck. I don't think I have ever seen a Fires deck not run the maximum allowable number of those guys.

Even more unfair was [Saproling Burst](#). An enchantment for 4♣ with fading 7, the Burst allowed you to remove a fading counter to put a green creature token into play with power/toughness equal to the number of fading counters left on [Saproling Burst](#). At the end of an opponent's turn, you would put three 4/4 tokens into play; on your upkeep they would fade to 3/3 and you would attack for 9, with them fading to 2/2

on the next turn. The problem was that your opponent had too many chances to find an answer, so the card rarely saw tournament play. This was generally thought of as only an okay card in Limited card until Fires was printed. With Fires in the mix, you made three 4/4 creatures with haste that attacked for 12--often by turn four! Fires and fourth-turn [Saproling Bursts](#) quickly became known as "The Fix" because players almost felt like cheaters when the combo went off. While you would occasionally see decks with fewer than four Bursts, that was only because it was the most in-demand rare during Fires's reign.

Each of the decks had four copies of [Chimeric Idol](#), as well. Three generic mana gave you an artifact that could be turned into a 3/3 creature if all of your lands were tapped--not a problem for a deck that tapped out every turn to play huge monsters that were--I don't care, I'm going to say it--unaffected by summoning sickness. The Idol was also impossible to destroy with a sorcery unless its controller activated it on an opponent's turn. [Wrath of God](#)? Okay, untap and attack you for 3.

Three of the four decks ran [River Boas](#), with Zvi Mowshowitz as the conscientious objector. But the Boa was where the decks' similarities ended. The remaining cards were a cocktail of fatties and burn spells mixed to the taste of each individual player.

Jon Finkel was in second place after the Swiss rounds, his deck full of uncounterable spells. Ironically, he lost to finalist Kamiel Cornelisson's "Counter-Rebel" deck in the quarterfinals. His choice of burn was the *Invasion* chase rare, [Urza's Rage](#). An uncounterable [Lightning Bolt](#) for 2♣, it also has kicker 8♣ that ups the damage dealt to 10 and also makes it unpreventable. He also had two [Kavu Chameleons](#) in his main deck as part of his fattie collection. A 4/4 creature for 3♣♣ that can't be countered, the Chameleon can also change color for ♣. Jon also had a couple of [Ancient Hydras](#) and one [Rith, the Awakener](#) that he played off a white splash. That splash also let him use the white half of [Wax/Wane](#) for nasty enchantments like [Parallax Wave](#) and the inevitable [Saproling Burst](#) in the mirror match.






Mike Pustilnik--known for his eccentric and highly successful deckbuilding choices--played only three copies of Fires in addition to the seven aforementioned mana accelerators. Mike chose to play with \times spells for his burn component--three copies each of [Ghitu Fire](#) and [Earthquake](#). Interestingly, Mike often used [Ghitu Fire](#) for 1 or 2 to pick off an opponent's mana creatures or Rebels. His other creature choice was [Kavu Titan](#). The 1 R $2/2$ Titan had a kicker 2 R that made it a 5/5 trampler. Mike also had access to a [Disenchant](#) in the form of [Aura Mutation](#). This was a clever addition: For R , [Aura Mutation](#) destroys target enchantment and puts X 1/1 Saproling creature tokens into play, where X is the converted mana cost of the enchantment. Even if Mike's opponents didn't have enchantments, he could still Mutate his [Saproling Burst](#) when it was about to fade away for five little beaters! Mike lost to Rob Dougherty's Fires deck in the quarterfinals.

Zvi Mowshowitz played the most widely known version of the deck, thanks to his endless iterations of the "My Fires" series on the Internet. Zvi's decision not to play with the islandwalking [River Boa](#) was regarded as highly controversial. On the other hand, his inclusion of [Two-Headed Dragon](#) was viewed as savvy in a Rebel-heavy field. There were a number of red Dragons in the tournament, but Two-Head was the only one that could not be stopped by a lone prored [Thermal Glider](#). Zvi lost to Brian Kibler, who was playing a red-green-white deck that became very popular for its inclusion of Rith. The lone Fires semifinalist was Rob Dougherty. Rob's deck was straight red-green with no white mana for disenchantments or Dragons. He ran the 5/5 for 2 R G G [Jade Leech](#) that made all of his green spells cost one more G . Rob's burn choice was [Rhystic Lightning](#), which does 4 damage for 2 R unless an opponent pays two, in which case it deals only 2. It was posited that Rob wanted a way to take out [Blinding Angel](#), even if that way was situational. Rob went on to lose to Finkel-slayer Kamiel in the semifinals.

Although [Fires of Yavimaya](#) is still in the current Standard environment, it has not seen much play since [Blastoderm](#) and [Saproling Burst](#) rotated out. The current cycle of Incarnations from *Judgment*--one obvious card in particular--got me thinking about trying to create a Firesesque deck using only *Odyssey* block cards.

YOU WON'T LIKE ME WHEN I'M ANGRY

The card that inspired me is, of course, [Anger](#). An underwhelming 2/2 creature with haste for  ,[Anger](#) doesn't really shine until it is in your graveyard. At that point, provided you have a mountain in play, all of your creatures--I'm going to say it again--are unaffected by summoning sickness. The first deck I built around this card ended up being very similar to the one Mike Flores built for his [Fledgling Dragon preview](#). It used [Mental Note](#), [Careful Study](#), and [Compulsion](#) to gain threshold and hopefully get an [Anger](#) into your 'yard for a 5/5 hasty [Fledgling Dragon](#) on turn four or five. Then I saw someone discard [Anger](#) to a [Wild Mongrel](#) on turn two. . . .

Anger



Main Deck

60 cards

10 Forest	4 Browbeat
4 Mossfire Valley	4 Call of the Herd
10 Mountain	4 Violent Eruption
<hr/>	
24 lands	12 other spells

4 Anger
4 Arrogant Wurm
4 Barbarian Bully
4 Basking Rootwalla
4 Phantom Centaur
4 Wild Mongrel

24 creatures



This deck is capable of some explosive early turns if you draw [Anger](#). If you don't draw [Anger](#), you still have good cards like [Wild Mongrel](#), [Basking Rootwalla](#), and [Arrogant Wurm](#). This deck's version of The Fix would go something like this: Play a forest on turn one. Turn two is where the fun starts. Play a mountain and [Wild Mongrel](#). Activate the Mongrel and discard a Rootwalla into play with madness and discard an [Anger](#). Your Rootwalla and 4/4 Mongrel now have haste and you attack for 5. On turn three, discard an [Arrogant Wurm](#) into play and attack for 8. Add a [Phantom Centaur](#) on turn 4 and you'll be shuffling up for the next game.



Most of the cards here are pretty self-explanatory. Originally, my deck had only [Wild Mongrel](#) as a discard mechanism, and the deck wasn't going off as consistently. I have seen some versions of this deck that use [Rites of Spring](#), but I really want the deck to be playing creatures every turn, so I settled on [Barbarian Bully](#). A 2/2 for 2 , the Bully allows you to randomly discard a card to give it +2/+2 once a turn. Your opponent may pay 4 life to counter this ability--although you still have to

discard the card, which is fine in this deck! I really like the subtlety this creature brings to combat. If your opponent sends a 3/3 at you with an untapped Bully across the fence, you can activate the Bully before blockers are declared. Now your opponent has to decide whether to pay 4 life or lose his or her "[Hill Giant](#)." And you might just get the added bonus of a creature in play, a [Violent Eruption](#) that wipes out your opponent's team, or an [Anger](#) in your graveyard. Hey, if you don't like it, play with [Rites of Spring](#).

[Phantom Centaur](#) has been called the new [Blastoderm](#), but I'm not sure that [Blastoderm](#) won't be called the old [Phantom Centaur](#) before long. For the same 2GG cost, you get a protection from black 2/0 creature with three +1/+1 counters on it. Any time the Centaur takes damage, you remove a counter and prevent all of the damage. The Centaur will often end up taking three of your opponent's creatures with it by the time it's done. Oddly enough, this fearsome creature is terrified of Squirrels. [Browbeat](#) has excellent synergy in this deck. Preliminary playtesting showed that the deck mounted a fierce early game, but that it would often run out of steam with the opponent clinging on by a precious last few points of life. For 2GG , your opponent decides to take 5 damage or allow you to draw three cards. Each time opponents deny you cards, it costs them one-fourth of their starting life. If they let you draw the cards. . . .



[Arrogant Wurm](#), [Basking Rootwalla](#), and [Violent Eruption](#) are all madness cards that take advantage of the discard abilities of [Wild Mongrel](#) and [Barbarian Bully](#). Normally 3GG , the Wurm is a 4/4 trampler that you can play as an instant for 2GG if you discard it. A heinous combat trick becomes even more lethal when it is played and attacks on the third turn! [Basking Rootwalla](#) costs 1G for a 1/1 that can pump once a turn to 3/3 for 1G . If you discard the Rootwalla, you can play it for free. [Violent Eruption](#) does 4 damage split however you see fit among up to four

targets for 1GGGG . When discarded, it costs only 1GGG . It's a devastating spell either way you pay for it.

I included [Call of the Herd](#) in the final spot because it kind of feels like [Saproling Burst](#) in this deck. Who am I kidding? Call is one of the best cards in the set. For 2GG , it puts a 3/3 green Elephant token into play--and it flashes back for 3G . An excellent follow-up to the turn 2 Angry Mongrel combo, [Call of the Herd](#) guarantees that you can keep the pressure on for the next two turns.

Like the Chicago Fires decks, there are a lot of other ways you can build this deck. Instead of [Browbeat](#), you can up the madness count with four [Fiery Tempers](#). You can add [Genesis](#) to the deck for a never-ending supply of creatures. [Roar of the Wurm](#) also goes nicely in this deck. I imagine that [Fledgling Dragon](#) might make an appearance or two in different versions. Whatever you decide to do, let me know how it goes.

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