

# Take control until the 1/1's arrive

## Deconstructing Counter-Post

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In the beginning, there were creature decks. Everyone was attacking with [Craw Wurms](#), [Gray Ogres](#), and [Nightmares](#)--all in the same decks. Then those decks started to lose to more-tuned one- and two-color decks with lower - mana cost creatures, such as [Kird Ape](#), [Savannah Lions](#), and the [White](#) and [Black Knights](#).

Then the blue-white control decks came.

*The Kjeldoran Outpost, or "Dude Ranch,"* cranks out Soldier tokens. And they never left.

A typical blue-white control deck has answers for every situation. You play [Armageddon](#) . . . they counter. You attack with [Ball Lightning](#) . . . they [Swords to Plowshares](#) it. You play [Stasis](#) . . . they [Disenchant](#) it. You get out an early creature swarm . . . they play [Wrath of God](#). Just when you think maybe you can get back into the game, the blue-white player starts drawing more cards than you. [Jayemdae Tome](#). [Whispers of the Muse](#). [Browse](#). Finally, they play a threat, with [Serra Angel](#), [Mishra's Factory](#), and [Kjeldoran Outpost](#) as just a few of the ways blue-white control decks got around to defeating their opponents.

### 'Posting Victories

We're going to take a look at a deck that relied on [Kjeldoran Outpost](#)--or "The Dude Ranch" as it was known at the time--as its win condition (although its primary win condition may have been the man who played it--Jon Finkel). In 1997, Finkel went to Nationals unqualified to compete, hoping to win that opportunity through a grueling Open tournament prior to the main event. He won that tournament with the following deck and then went on to pilot it to a Top 8 finish at Nationals.

### "Finkel-Post" Deck



### Main Deck

60 cards

4 [Adarkar Wastes](#)  
8 [Island](#)

4 [Abeyance](#)  
4 [Brainstorm](#)

### Sideboard

1 [Circle of Protection: Black](#)  
1 [Disenchant](#)

2 [Kjeldoran Outpost](#)  
4 [Plains](#)  
4 [Thawing Glaciers](#)

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22 lands

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0 creatures

3 [Browse](#)  
1 [Circle of Protection: Black](#)  
4 [Counterspell](#)  
3 [Disenchant](#)  
2 [Dissipate](#)  
2 [Force of Will](#)  
1 [Gerrard's Wisdom](#)  
4 [Impulse](#)  
1 [Political Trickery](#)  
1 [Soldevi Digger](#)  
4 [Swords to Plowshares](#)  
4 [Wrath of God](#)

2 [Disrupting Scepter](#)  
2 [Dust to Dust](#)  
1 [Gerrard's Wisdom](#)  
2 [Karma](#)  
2 [Political Trickery](#)  
2 [Serrated Arrows](#)  
2 [Sleight of Mind](#)

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15 sideboard cards

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38 other spells



Looking back on the deck, it's surprising to see a control deck running only twenty-two lands--four that don't even make mana and two that require that you sacrifice a plains when each comes into play.

[Thawing Glaciers](#) may not have produced mana itself, but it was a critical card in Finkel's deck. While the Glaciers's mechanic can be cumbersome in the early game, every land you "thaw" out of your deck is one less land for you to draw. By the mid- to late-game, every card you draw does something other than tap for mana.

[Thawing Glaciers](#) also works well with cards like [Brainstorm](#), which allows you to draw three cards and put two cards from your hand on top of your library. When combined with the shuffling after each search for land, [Brainstorm](#) allows you to essentially shuffle two cards you don't need from your hand into your deck, all the while looking at fresh cards.

The staple cards, such as the suite of [Counterspells](#), [Wrath of God](#), [Disenchant](#), [Swords to Plowshares](#), and [Impulse](#), don't need to be discussed in detail. Instead let's look at the two cards that make this deck purr: [Browse](#) and [Soldevi Digger](#).

[Browse](#) allows you to look at the top five cards of your library and choose one and put it in your hand. The other four are removed from the game. [Soldevi Digger](#) allows you put a card from your graveyard on the bottom of your library. Together, these cards create a powerful engine that can put your opponent into a soft lock.

*Browse/Digger can distill your library to just the essentials.*

[Browse](#) can quickly reduce your library to no cards. The Digger then allows you to put the top card of your graveyard onto the bottom of your library, eventually making your library a small stack of just the cards you want. It's important to remember that [Browse](#) says "look at the top five cards and choose one." If you have only one card in your library, then you just put that card into your hand when you activate [Browse](#); since there is no actual "card draw" involved, you don't lose the game. There have been decks that relied on this combination and a single [Lightning Bolt](#) for the win. With this deck, you simply Dig and draw your [Counterspells](#) to protect your win condition. If necessary, you can Dig up a [Disenchant](#) or a Wrath. It's almost impossible to conceive of a player losing from that position.

If--like me--you like to play with your food, there's a protracted and agonizing way to steal all of your opponent's land with [Political Trickery](#). Trickery mandates that you and your opponent exchange two lands of your choosing. If the land you choose to give him or her is a [Thawing Glaciers](#) that has been activated on your turn, you will get one of his or her lands and your Glaciers will return to your hand at the end of the turn. Two Glaciers and a Digger will allow you to continue doing this until your opponent finally concedes. (I'm fairly certain, however, that Finkel had the Trickery in his deck for other [Kjeldoran Outposts](#) and not for recursive silliness.)

[Kjeldoran Outpost](#) was Finkel's primary win condition--although he could deck an opponent with the Digger. The Outpost was from a cycle of *Alliances* lands that each required that you sacrifice a specific basic land type when they came into play--in this case a plains. In exchange, you got a land that matched the sacrificed land's mana output with the additional ability to generate 1/1 Soldier tokens. This may not seem like much, but when you can draw a Wrath or [Counterspell](#) at will, it's pretty hard for your opponent to summon much resistance to your ever-growing swarm of dorks. The Outpost also serves as early defense while you search for your Wrath or Swords. Each turn, you can make a chump blocker to jump in the way of a nasty [Erhnam Djinn](#) or pump Knight.

## One Solitary Deck

While working on this article, I was also working on an *Odyssey* Block Constructed [Solitary Confinement](#) deck for the ongoing Pro Tour Qualifier season. Although a version had won a Qualifier in Harrisburg, and Matt Linde had reasonable success with his at Worlds, I was unhappy with both decks and looked to Finkel's creation from 1997 for inspiration.

## Confinement-Post



## Main Deck

## 60 cards

16 [Island](#)  
4 [Riftstone Portal](#)  
4 [Sungrass Prairie](#)

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24 lands

1 [Genesis](#)

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1 creature

4 [Aether Burst](#)  
4 [Circular Logic](#)  
4 [Compulsion](#)  
4 [Concentrate](#)  
2 [Envelop](#)  
2 [Flash of Insight](#)  
2 [Kirtar's Wrath](#)  
3 [Living Wish](#)  
4 [Obsessive Search](#)  
4 [Solitary Confinement](#)  
2 [Spirit Cairn](#)

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35 other spells

### Sideboard

1 [Ambassador Laquatus](#)  
1 [Auramancer](#)  
1 [Battlefield Scrounger](#)  
1 [Cephalid Looter](#)  
1 [Dogged Hunter](#)  
1 [Genesis](#)  
1 [Mystic Enforcer](#)  
1 [Nullmage Advocate](#)  
1 [Silver Seraph](#)  
1 [Spurnmage Advocate](#)

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10 sideboard cards




[Solitary Confinement](#) says you may not be the target of spells or abilities and all damage done to you is prevented. You also skip your draw step and must discard a card during your upkeep or sacrifice the enchantment.

Confinement's drawback is less painful if you have [Genesis](#) in your graveyard. Some people have actually told me that [Genesis](#) actually has a mana cost as well as power and toughness, but I don't believe them. I am concerned only with having [Genesis](#) in my graveyard. If it's there, you have the ability to return target creature card from your graveyard to your hand. Basically, you can upkeep your Confinement for  $2\text{C}$ --although you will never draw another card.

[Compulsion](#) is the *Odyssey* Block Constructed equivalent of [Browse](#). This powerful enchantment allows you to pay  $1\text{C}$  and discard a card from your hand to draw a card. This is not card drawing but card selection . . . unless you [Living Wish](#) for a second [Genesis](#). Then you can cycle the second [Genesis](#) each turn to draw a card. Granted, this will cost you eight mana a turn, but it's there if you need it. Mostly


you just rip through your deck looking for counters or cards that let you draw more cards, such as [Concentrate](#), [Flash of Insight](#), and [Obsessive Search](#).




Thanks to [Living Wish](#), you can create a Digger-Browse combo with a [Battlefield Scrounger](#) from the sideboard. The Scrounger's threshold ability allows you to put three cards from your graveyard on the bottom of your deck. Not only does this allow you to tear through your deck and maintain the perfect hand thanks to [Compulsion](#), but it also means that you cannot get decked if it should come to that. [Aether Burst](#) is there primarily to stall for time while you look for your combo. I have considered playing with [Chastise](#) (it also feels more like [Swords to Plowshares](#) from Finkel's deck) to have real removal and for the life-gain. Taking out a 6/6 [Roar of the Wurm](#) token is good either way, but the Bursts are more mana efficient and allow you to use your other mana to keep digging through your deck, so I stuck with them.



Many versions of this deck use [Moment's Peace](#) to buy extra turns against creature swarms. I decided on [Kirtar's Wrath](#) for a more permanent solution.  is a little pricey for a [Wrath of God](#), but it's the best Wrath we've got to work with. It does come with a nifty bonus that gives you two 1/1 flying Spirit tokens if you have threshold when you play it.

## The Return of the 1/1 Army

## *Confinement/Cairn can fill the skies with Spirits.*

Originally, this deck relied on [Ambassador Laquatus](#) as its primary win condition. The Ambassador allows you to put the top three cards from target player's library into his or her graveyard. While this strategy remains possible with [Living Wish](#), it's no longer my first choice. Instead, I added [Spirit Cairn](#), an enchantment that allows you to pay  to put a 1/1 flying Spirit token into play whenever any player discards a card.

Each turn as you upkeep [Solitary Confinement](#), you can pay an additional  and make a 1/1 flier. This is great with [Compulsion](#): Instead of simply ripping through your deck for , you can now get a 1/1 flier for another measley . While using the [Compulsion](#)-Cairn engine essentially costs the same as [Kjeldoran Outpost](#), you can use the former as many times as you can pay the mana. You'll be marshalling a formidable air force while creating the perfect hand.

The most important land in the deck is [Riftstone Portal](#). It produces only colorless mana when in play, but like [Genesis](#) it really shines in your graveyard. If you can get a Portal into your graveyard, all of your mana-producing lands will tap for  or  in addition to their natural mana--making all of your islands into tri-lands. Most of the time, you'll be able to Compulse the Portal away, but I have found that a fourth-turn [Concentrate](#) will often leave me with eight cards in hand, allowing me to discard a Portal.

I have a number of utility creatures in the sideboard and one silly one. The [Silver Seraph](#) is there mostly for style points, and you may want to remove it to make room for something more useful, like a basic land. There are still multiple slots left open in the 'board that will be dictated by the preferences of your local play group. [Ray of Revelation](#), additional Wraths, or the aforementioned [Chastise](#) may be appropriate.

As always, give the deck a whirl and let me know what you think. Thanks to everyone who wrote in about my "[Deconstructing Fires](#)" article. It's obvious from the response that there is a large portion of the **Magic** community that believes there's a way to make that deck work in OBC despite the dominance of blue-green and monoblack. One card that I have added to the deck--which will surprise no one who has read my *Sideboard* articles--is [Grizzly Fate](#). I can't believe I missed the card when I originally wrote the piece; it's so close in flavor to [Saproling Burst](#). I hope you enjoy this deck just as much!

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