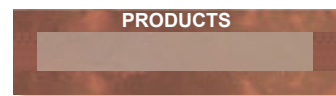


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Here There Be Dragons

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House of Cards
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PRO TOUR-VALENCIA

A couple of weeks ago, my wife noticed me staring at the ceiling in thought and tapping my lip.

"What are you doing?" she asked.
 "Thinking about my second *Onslaught* preview card," I answered.
 "What is it called?"
 "Dragon Roost."
 "Cool name."
 "Yeah."
 "What does it do?"
 "Makes dragon tokens."
 "Really? That's cool too."
 "Yeah."
 "Is there a downside?"
 "It's pretty expensive."
 "Who cares? You're making DRAGONS!"



The Dragon Token will be available through the Player Rewards Program shortly.

Exactly.

Dragon Roost itself conjures up vivid images of a lonely spire circled by winged wyrms. Better yet, it is the first card with an ability to create multiple dragons (*Volrath's Laboratory* notwithstanding) with which to batter an opponent. For any lover of dragons, these two qualities make it an immensely attractive card.

Hard-core tournament players sniff derisively and point out that *Dragon Roost* is a very, very expensive enchantment to use. For six mana, you expect a card that will utterly dominate the board. Add another seven mana for each activation and you have a nigh-worthless piece of cardboard. And it's true: Your first dragon--a 5/5 flying token--costs you a whopping 9 to bring into play, with another 5 for every dragon thereafter. *Dragon Roost* is slow. *Dragon Roost* is expensive. *Dragon Roost* will often be far too little and way too late.

Thankfully, the less hard-core tournament player to the Friday Night Magic mainstay to the multiplayer I-Want-To-Marry-Alongi-Shirt-Wearing loony to the theme deck creator to the beginner and everyone in between should rejoice at *Dragon Roost's* existence. It is a freakin' spire with freakin' wyrms flying around it. Cool.

Today I look at *Dragon Roost's* possibilities in using recent sets. If you play with older expansions, the tenets here should be easy to apply to your larger cardpool. After next week, I'll focus on other formats in addition to Standard.

Before I discuss what each color in Standard has to offer a deck built around *Dragon Roost*, here are two criteria that apply to every deck using such an expensive win condition:

1) YOUR DECK NEEDS MANA

A lot of it, actually. You are probably not going to get away with 20 or 22 land in a 60 card deck if you're using *Dragon Roost*. Ways of accelerating mana like *Birds of Paradise*, *Fire Diamond*, *Rampant Growth*, *Mirari's Wake*, etc. are going to be *Dragon Roost's* lifeblood. Get as much mana into play as quickly as you can in order to both cast and activate *Dragon Roost*.

A corollary here is that your deck can often take advantage of lots of mana in ways other than just creating dragons. Cards like, for example, *Firecat Blitz*, *Ivy Elemental*, *Nature's Revolt*, and *Aladdin's Ring* will probably work well alongside your Roost.



Producing tokens is a costly hobby, at seven mana per.

2) YOUR DECK NEEDS DEFENSE

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RULES

Dragon Roost is no fun if you are dead on or before Turn 7. Look for any ways available to you that slows the game down and keeps you alive. Walls and other high-toughness creatures are good. Mass creature removal like **Wrath of God** and **Mutilate** is very good (especially since you can always make more dragons). Excessive lifegain like **Ancestral Tribute** can be good. Land destruction like **Pillage** may be also be an effective way to slow down the game as long as you have ways to deal with early threats. Whatever the case, try to ensure that you will be alive several turns after **Dragon Roost** hits the table so that your dragons can do their business without needing to defend you.

Armed with these two criteria, here is how I might start delving into the five colors for ways to support my **Dragon Roost** deck:

RED DRAGONS

Imagine a world with **Onslaught**. It is a world in which 2/2 nameless creatures run rampant and shapechange into all manner of craziness. If you don't believe me, type "Morph" into the Orb of Insight. In this world, **Shock**, **Firebolt**, and **Pyroclasm** look like pretty good removal. Even better, **AEther Flash** prevents any card from entering play in its nameless form. Dragon lovers will also note that you can have **two AEther Flashes** on the table before it prevents dragons from entering play.

Pitchstone Wall is one of the best cost-to-toughness creatures around and provides excellent defense. **Wall of Fire** isn't terrible either. You don't want to load too much on defensive creatures, however, since **Breaking Point** offers you board-clearing possibilities. **Molten Influence** and **Browbeat** are other "punisher" cards that support **Dragon Roost** well.

On the offensive side of things, I have already mentioned **Firecat Blitz**. **Anger** and **Reckless Charge** can make **Dragon Roost** even more scary when it starts producing dragons. And there is no reason to be stingy with your dragons; Let **Shivan Dragon** or **Fledgling Dragon** join the fun too.



Earthquake and **Wildfire** are interesting because both are superb once you have already started creating dragons. Before that, though, they get you closer to losing and farther from the mana you need. *Anger can assist in speeding up the wyrm beats.* For these reasons, I say skip them.

Here is one of many ways you can go in monored:

Red Rooster		
Standard Dragon Roost deck		
Main Deck 60 cards		
22 Mountain	4 Patchwork Gnomes	4 Shock
2 Barbarian Ring	4 Pitchstone Wall	4 Fire Diamond
24 lands	4 Anger	4 Browbeat
	1 Shivan Dragon	4 Breaking Point
	13 creatures	4 AEther Flash
		3 Dragon Roost
		23 other spells

GREEN DRAGONS

Green's best addition to **Dragon Roost** is its explosiveness in mana production. Mana-producing creatures like **Birds of Paradise** and **Werebear** combine with both "land-thinners" like **Rampant Growth**, **Deep Reconnaissance**, and **Diligent Farmhand** and enchantments like **Vernal Bloom** and **Wild Growth** to give you exactly one bazillion ways to quickly make dragons. If you dip heavily into green you also have a way to diversify mana, meaning that your **Dragon Roost** deck can use more than two colors.

Two other benefits from green exist as well. The first is that green *loves* using its gluttonous mana for big, beefy creatures. Pick your favorite and I'm sure it will fit in a **Dragon Roost** deck. The second benefit is a myriad of **Fog** cards that can buy you time. The best of these in Standard is probably **Moment's Peace**.

Dragon Blitz		
Standard Dragon Roost deck		
Main Deck 60 cards		
10 Forest	4 Birds of Paradise	4 Moment's Peace

8 Mountain	4 Hystrodon	4 Rampant Growth
4 Karplusan Forest		4 Browbeat
22 lands	8 creatures	4 Deep Reconnaissance
		4 Breaking Point
		3 Firecat Blitz
		3 Far Wanderings
		3 Dragon Roost
		1 Crush of Wurms
		30 other spells

Yes, I know this deck has 22 land. It also has 37 cards dedicated to mana (he says defensively).

BLACK DRAGONS

Black has a more proactive view of defense than many other colors. You can load your Dragon Roost deck with creature removal like *Chainer's Edict*, *Mutilate*, *Dark Banishing*, and *Smother* thanks to black, and you can strip important cards from an opponent's hand via discard. Black/red decks are also fairly good at land destruction as a way of keeping an opposing player from playing *anything*. In addition, black has more traditional defense via regenerators like *Drudge Skeletons*. *Void* is no longer in Standard when *Onslaught* arrives, but I feel the need to point out my desire to use both *Dragon Roost* and *Void* in a deck.

Cards like *Corrupt*, *Faceless Butcher*, and *Cabal Coffers* can be tremendously useful in a *Dragon Roost* deck if the focus is heavily on black. Thanks to *Torment*, any dragon deck dipping into black probably should consider doing so heavily.

Vampire Roost		
Standard Dragon Roost deck		
Main Deck 60 cards		
12 Swamp	4 Pitchstone Wall	4 Duress
4 Mountain	4 Faceless Butcher	4 Chainer's Edict
4 Sulfurous Springs	1 Vampiric Dragon	4 Smother
4 Tainted Peak		4 Rancid Earth
2 Shadowblood Ridge	9 creatures	2 Shadowblood Egg
26 lands		2 Mutilate
		2 Dragon Roost
		1 Skeletal Scrying
		1 Recoup
		1 Diabolic Tutor
		25 other spells

WHITE DRAGONS

White's claim to fame is board-sweeping effects and defense. *Wrath of God* and *Kirtar's Wrath* fit wonderfully in a *Dragon Roost* deck (although that is a lot of expensive spells, so load up on land). *Wall of Swords* may be the most difficult wall to stop, and cards like *Beloved Chaplain* and *Pacifism* keep attackers away from you. Any myriad of lifegain cards, from *Life Burst* to *Gerrard's Wisdom*, can also buy you time to cast *Dragon Roost*.

Another benefit of white is its access to enchantment removal (this is true for green as well). *Dragon Roost* grinds to a halt with *Worship* or *Circle of Protection: Red* on the table, and white gives you an answer to these annoying cards.

A Dragon's Life		
Standard Dragon Roost deck		
Main Deck 60 cards		
19 Plains	4 Spurnmage Advocate	4 Fire Diamond
7 Mountain	2 Glory	4 Howling Mine
26 lands	6 creatures	4 Life Burst
		4 Wrath of God
		3 Gerrard's Wisdom
		3 Kirtar's Wrath
		3 Dragon Roost
		2 Marble Diamond
		1 Ancestral Tribute
		28 other spells

BLUE DRAGONS

Blue has traditionally been the best support color to *any* strategy because of its combination of card-drawing, countermagic and general trickiness. Indeed, cards like **Deep Analysis**, **Merfolk Looter**, and **Counterspell** can do a lot to both find **Dragon Roost** reliably and protect it. From a purely defensive standpoint, bounce like **AEther Burst**, walls like **Wall of Air**, and grind-to-a-halt cards like **Web of Inertia**, **Opposition**, and **Mist of Stagnation** can keep you alive long enough for **Dragon Roost** to make an appearance. In addition, the combination of **Cunning Wish** and **Burning Wish** gives you potential answers to almost any opposing threat.

I don't know if a deck like this would work, but here is a guess at blue/red dragon deck...

Dragon Mist

Standard Dragon Roost deck

Main Deck
60 cards

17 Island	4 Wall of Air	4 Shock
9 Mountain	4 creatures	4 Grip of Amnesia
26 lands		4 Web of Inertia
		4 Deep Analysis
		3 Counterspell
		3 Mist of Stagnation
		2 Lost in Thought
		2 Burning Wish
		2 Cunning Wish
		2 Dragon Roost
		30 other spells

Hopefully I have at least begun to stimulate your dragon tastebuds. **Dragon Roost** is a difficult card to use, which is appropriate given what it does. If you are a fantasy geek like me, though, the idea of summoning an endless stream of dragons to hack an opponent limb from limb is enough to overcome a silly disability like "too expensive." The sheer volume of cool figurines you can use as tokens should drive true dragon lovers to use the Roost as well. And the sound effects you can use when attacking! Ooooooo... I can't wait!

Or, to put it another way: Who cares? You're making DRAGONS!

Next week: Holy clerics, Batman!

-j

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