

Five writers, five lists

Onslaught Top 10 Lists

MagicTheGathering.com Staff

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We're a team here at MagicTheGathering.com. Each writer contributes equally to make this a great site to read about the **Magic** game. In the ten months that we've all been together, we've never really done an article in which everyone contributed equally to the one piece. Mark's splashed a little from each of the writers in his [introduction column](#), and Jay recently held a [deckbuilding contest](#) for the writers on this site, but that's about it.

We thought it was about time for us to collaborate on a piece. Out of that came this piece with our picks for the top ten *Onslaught* cards; however, these aren't just any old top ten lists. Each writer took on a different category near and dear to his heart. Without further ado, we present to you MagicTheGathering.com's top ten *Onslaught* cards lists.



Anthony Alongi: Top Ten Multiplayer Cards

I think my list is the most fun of all my colleagues, mainly because I don't worry about power level between colors or remember what so-and-so said during design. I just look at the cards, imagine the rubble bouncing, and share my vision.

I do offer some thoughts, where appropriate, using the multiplayer "animal elements" I've made up to help readers think about group cards. For review:

- Rattlesnakes: warn and protect

- Gorillas: pound and sweep
- Spiders: bait and surprise
- Pigeons: mooch
- Plankton: feed the world
- Cockroaches: endure (yes, I changed from wildebeest, due to excellent reader feedback!)

Many good cards were left off (red alone had about ten solid entries to consider). Ah well, the hazards of a large set. I'll entertain varying "how could you miss . . ." opinions that are thoughtful enough to tell me what card(s) they'd take off this list and why, but don't expect to persuade me from my choices. See, I'm *never* wrong, because I employ entirely objective methods and **Magic** is a game of quantifiable science. Lucky me.



10. Gratuitous Violence

Your own personal [Furnace of Rath](#) won't affect direct damage, but in return it does double the damage from your creature sources. Good deal. Not exactly for your creatureless creation, [Gratuitous Violence](#) will benefit at least three deck styles: mass weenie (such as Goblins or token creatures), [Pandemonium](#) (try it with [Viashino Sandstalker](#) and its brethren), or sackables (see [Cinder Elemental](#)). It's not entirely coincidence that all of these decks favor red.

From an "animal" perspective, [Gratuitous Violence](#) blends a heavy dose of rattlesnake poison with some gorilla tonic -- you're threatening heavy punishment.

9. Kamahl, Fist of Krosa

[Kamahl, Fist of Krosa](#)'s [Overrun](#) ability alone acts like [Gratuitous Violence](#): A big warning that you can dish out more pounds than the Bank of England. The land-changing bit could be just about anything -- a planktonlike assist to a player who needs blockers, an evil twist on a [Warmonger](#), or more fodder for your [Overrun](#) machine.

Oh yeah, [Kamahl](#)'s also a 7/6 trampler. (Don't kid yourself; this guy's never *not* using its own ability. It'd be like Josh Bennett writing without funky metaphors.) If you don't want to pay six mana for this, no problem. I will.

8. Arcanis the Omnipotent

Has there ever been a creature that gives you *this* much card advantage? Cockroach heaven. It multiplies your resources, survives most removal, and can even stand fairly tall in combat. Untapping effects -- we'll only go as far back as *Odyssey* to find Puppeteer, but there are many blue and green cards that spell insanity -- are a plus.

Arcanis is so good that I'm letting it represent the entire cycle of 3CCC "hero" Legends. Visara the Dreadful or Jareth, Leonine Titan would look almost as nifty in this spot.



7. Chain of Acid

I've been dying for a mass-removal card that kills everything but creatures. And wouldn't you know, they got it right and gave it to green! This anti - Wrath of God will work best once you have clear creature superiority -- quantity and/or quality. Otherwise, this Creeping Mold will usually cost you your favorite land, which isn't awful, but it's hardly top ten material.

Used with creature advantage, the Chain is a gutsy statement about your feelings as to how the game's going. It won't always end in complete Armageddon-Tranquility-Shatterstorm, but it will get fairly far down that road. Heavy on the gorilla, heavy on the plankton, heavy on the pigeon (how sweet is a back-and-forth dispute among nine different interests?), and with just enough rattlesnake to taste like . . . a game of chicken.

6. KABOOM!

This makes my list on title alone. No whining. It's my list, and I use the criteria I want. The fact that you can adjust KABOOM! to nail any number of opponents (or teammates, if that's the way you think) is gravy on the gorilla. This, incidentally, annoys the gorilla.

5. Death Match

If Pandemonium were black, what would it look like? I got word from R&D that this was on the verge of being worth -4/-4 per arrival. I think they made the right call. Token generators like Kjeldoran

[Outpost](#) (and don't forget [Dragon Roost!](#)) are probably the way to go. And yes, many players will use creatures like [Llanowar Knight](#) and [Spirit of the Night](#). (It's not difficult to figure out why!)

I do seem to like the gorilla cards, don't I? I love board impact. The fact that [Death Match](#) warns off too much retaliation and affects only the board occasionally makes this a superior choice to Pandemonium. (At least you won't be getting burned out of the game with [Multani, Maro-Sorcerer!](#))

4. [Biorhythm](#)

All four top cards on this list are powerful sorceries that -- you guessed it -- love bananas. [Biorhythm](#) starts us off, and it's a unique green card in that it does unpreventable "damage" to everyone. The bane of creatureless decks, [Biorhythm](#) is an amazing counter-strategy to life gain. Red damage, black drain, or simple combat maneuvers should finish off whoever's left.

You will play an occasional game in which you actually *help* someone by casting [Biorhythm](#) -- and the more opponents you have, the more likely you'll happen upon that humorous moment. For that, the pigeon and plankton elements of this card are also fairly high.

3. [Insurrection](#)

I honestly don't think this is a finisher in multiplayer -- not as often as you may immediately think. But it *is* a herd-thinner. Its gorilla impact comes, not in affecting the board -- really, when you think about it, you're barely touching it -- but in two other respects.

First, you're going to knock at least one guy out of the game. And second, you're going to tap an awful lot of creatures. Like [Thieves' Auction](#) and [Thundermare](#), [Insurrection](#) is a red card that the player to your left loves and the player to your right despises.

And yes, you can sack your new army to various enchantments and artifacts.

2. [Blatant Thievery](#)

See my [preview article](#) a couple of weeks ago on this one.



1. [Akroma's Vengeance](#)

I hereby dub thee "Nevinyrral's Cycle." White gets a decent multiplayer boost in *Onslaught*, and this card is the clearest champion for that color's interests. Preserving all players' mana bases in multiplayer makes this ultimate gorilla card go down a bit easier with your friends -- hey, if they don't have anything to play, then they overextended themselves, right? It's a good lesson for them. So in a way, you're doing them a favor! Make sure you tell them that.

Akroma is a nice enough Angel to allow for regeneration. Blend it with [Broken Fall](#) for super-style points. (Not too many cards can use [Broken Fall](#) to get super-style points, so take your victories when you can get them.)

Aaron wanted me to make a deck that used all ten of these cards, but I think he was kidding. So instead, I did up a [Biorhythm](#) deck. It's a unique card and it's probably the most interesting card on the list. The deck is designed to withstand spells such as [Rout](#) or [Fault Line](#) that someone may cast in response to your [Biorhythm](#).

Token Medics



Main Deck

60 cards

8 Forest	2 Assault // Battery
2 Forgotten Cave	4 Biorhythm
6 Mountain	2 Chain of Acid
4 Tranquil Thicket	3 Chimeric Idol
4 Wooded Foothills	2 Midsummer Revel
-----	4 Mob Justice
24 lands	2 Night Soil
	2 Squirrel Nest
2 Cockatrice	-----
4 Elvish Warrior	21 other spells
1 Goblin Marshal	
3 Penumbra Bobcat	
1 Penumbra Wurm	
2 Rukh Egg	
1 Symbiotic Beast	
1 Verdant Force	

15 creatures	



Ben Bleiweiss: Top Ten Type 1 Cards

As I'm the history guy, let's talk history. This set contains a lot of hits for Type 1 (that oft-maligned format with all the Moxes and Lotuses and Squires). Let's take a look at what *Onslaught* has to add to the largest pool of **Magic** cards.



10. Weathered Wayfarer

While fragile as a 1/1, this dude can fish *any* land out of your deck while you're behind on the land count. Being able to tutor for [Library of Alexandria](#), [Tolarian Academy](#) and [Strip Mine](#) is not an ability to be discounted lightly.

9. [Tempting Wurm](#)

This guy will always be a big "if." Letting your opponent [Eureka](#) for free is a mighty big drawback; however, there will be times when your opponent has nothing relevant in his or her hand and this 5/5 is much bigger than anything else in the two-drop slot for Stompy. Besides, the best decks put all their mana on the table in one turn, anyway.

7. [Chain of Plasma](#)

More burn for the burn deck. [Chain of Plasma](#) costs one more than [Chain Lightning](#), but it's upgraded from a sorcery to an instant, and changes the bounce cost from 🗑️🗑️ to discarding a card. Your opponents are more likely to have cards to discard than mana to pay, but can they afford to keep pitching cards while you hammer away at them with the same spell?

7. [Blistering Firecat](#)

[Ball Lightnings](#) five through eight for Sligh. Might be just a tad too expensive for that deck, but also might be too good *not* to play.

6. [Complicate](#)

This isn't the greatest counterspell by any means, but when cycled, it's an uncounterable counterspell. Is [Force Void](#) any good with that added bonus?

5. [Read the Runes](#)

Draw X cards at instant speed. Not super-terrific in Type 1 (this is my pick for the best card in Standard until *Odyssey* block rotates out), but you can never discount a cheaper [Stroke of Genius](#).

4. [Blackmail](#)

[Duresses](#) five through eight for black. [Duress](#) is a good card, and this gives you yet another one mana cost discard spell to follow up [Dark Ritual/Hymn to Tourach](#).

3. [Grinning Demon](#)

[Juzam Djinn](#)s five through eight. Unlike [Blistering Firecat](#), the mana cost remains the same.



2. Future Sight

A bit costly at $2\text{ } \{B\}\{B\}\{B\}$, Future Sight is a potential game breaker nonetheless. Sometimes it will strictly be a personal Howling Mine, when you have land after land on top. Other times it will chain a ton of Moxes, let you play a free land every turn, or sit a Mana Drain on top of your library.

1. The five fetch-lands

Bloodstained Mire, Flooded Strand, Polluted Delta, Windswept Heath, and Wooded Foothills might not be one card (so I cheated a little), but they all fetch dual lands. Because each dual land pairs off with another color, these can get any two of the five colors in **Magic** at once. These cards are very powerful because they thin the deck, come into play untapped, bring your lands into play untapped, and only require a one-time investment of a single life.

Jay Moldenhauer-Salazar: Top Ten Most Interesting Cards to Build Decks Around

This list is obviously saturated with subjectivity. With that in mind, I'm hoping to capture the most interesting cards in *Onslaught* for deckbuilding -- not necessarily the most challenging and certainly not the most powerful. Also, I'm looking at cards that fill the role of deck centerpiece, not cool complements.

Enough caveats. Here are some cards to make you scratch your chin:



10. **Shade's Breath**

Any card that does so many things at once holds potential for neat tricks. Despite the offensive boost it gives a monoblack deck, the real question is, can you make having black creatures or [Shade's Breath](#) important? If so, then you'll have yourself one freaky deck.

9. **Sigil of the New Dawn**

Creature recursion has, at best, always been a minor theme for white, but white's reanimation cards are always intriguing. What keeps [Sigil of the New Dawn](#) low on this list is its relatively high cost and an activation too expensive to reliably use with board sweepers like [Wrath of God](#). Still, that white-black Cleric deck with [Rotlung Reanimator](#) just keeps looking better and better . . .

8. **Ixidor, Reality Sculptor**

He's a lord for nameless, typeless creatures, which is cool enough on its own. He also happens to allow you to play any morph creature without worrying about color, morph cost, and so on. Neat. Here's a rough example:

Mr. Mxyzptlk



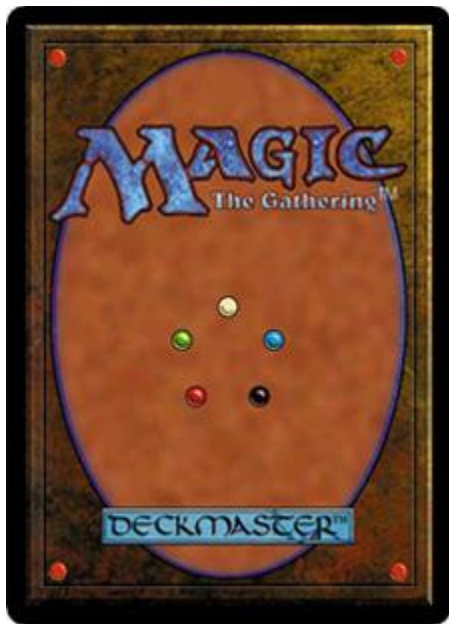
Main Deck

60 cards

4 Grand Coliseum	4 Boomerang
4 City of Brass	4 Deep Analysis
14 Island	4 Sky Diamond
_____	4 Sleight of Hand
22 lands	_____
4 Clone	16 other spells

- 4 [Exalted Angel](#)
- 3 [Grinning Demon](#)
- 4 [Ixidor, Reality Sculptor](#)
- 3 [Krosan Colossus](#)
- 4 [Quicksilver Dragon](#)

22 creatures



7. **Doomed Necromancer**

Any card that puts creatures directly into play is worth building a deck around. When the card is black it gets much more interesting. When the card is reusable -- especially with something like [Dawn of the Dead](#), [Genesis](#), or [Oversold Cemetery](#) -- sign me up!

6. **Animal Magnetism**

[Animal Magnetism](#), [Riptide Shapeshifter](#), and [Erratic Explosion](#) all have similar attributes for being the centerpiece of a deck: They all have you start searching for the best cards off the top of your library. To me, [Animal Magnetism](#) is the most interesting of the three because it also dumps cards into your graveyard. Consider using it with threshold and flashback cards (and of course beefy critters). Here's an example of a monogreen deck with no additional library manipulation:

Magnetic Green



Main Deck *60 cards*

15 [Forest](#)

4 [Animal Magnetism](#)

4 [Windswept Heath](#)

4 [Wooded Foothills](#)

23 lands

4 [Gigapede](#)

4 [Krosan Beast](#)

4 [Krosan Tusker](#)

1 [Silvos, Rogue Elemental](#)

4 [Werebear](#)

17 creatures

4 [Beast Attack](#)

4 [Far Wanderings](#)

4 [Moment's Peace](#)

4 [Wild Growth](#)

20 other spells



5. [Imagecrafter](#)



Consider [Imagecrafter](#) as a placeholder for all of *Onslaught*'s blue "change creature" cards like [Artificial Evolution](#), [Mistform Mutant](#), [Standardize](#), and [Trickery Charm](#). These cards form the foundation of a billion ideas. For instance, wouldn't a blue-green deck with [Wirewood Savage](#) and/or [Elvish Vanguard](#) be fun? Doesn't [Lord of Atlantis](#) deserve to be a Merfolk? Shouldn't [Engineered Plague](#) be more powerful? Oh, the possibilities!

4. [Oversold Cemetery](#)

Anyone who loves [Oath of Ghouls](#) should see potential in [Oversold Cemetery](#). Black has no trouble getting creatures into the graveyard (especially with cycling creatures like [Undead Gladiator](#).) or making a horde of opportunities for decks based around comes-into-play, leaves-play, discard, and other effects.

3. [Astral Slide](#)

Speaking of comes-into-play effects, [Astral Slide](#) is a real gem. Essentially, as long as you can reliably produce a handful of cards with cycling, you have a handful of uncounterable Liberates. Well, sort of. It triggers when any player cycles, it can target opposing creatures, and you get to draw a card from any cycling you do. Somewhere amid this weirdness is a terrific opportunity for a deck.



2. [Skirk Fire Marshal](#)

As I've said several times, I love *Onslaught's* focus on creature themes and its new Avatars, Lords, and so on. [Skirk Fire Marshal](#) is the most intriguing from a design perspective, because his ability is more or less a one-shot endeavor. [Keeper of Kookus](#) comes to mind as a good complement to the Fire Marshal. So does [Broodhatch Nantuko](#). So does [Mogg Maniac](#). You get the idea . . .

1. [Words of Wilding](#)

All the Words hold terrific combo potential, but [Words of Wilding](#) seems like it has the most mind-boggling ramifications because green can easily ramp its mana up to accommodate the activation cost. Use [Words of Wilding](#) in a monogreen deck with [Sylvan Library](#), [Hystrodon](#), [Howling Mine](#), and so on, or easily combine it with blue's many card-drawing engines and let the Bears roll. *Onslaught* also breaks the door wide open for a serious Bear theme deck. Any card with so much tournament, casual, and theme potential gets my vote as the most interesting deck centerpiece of the set.

Mark Rosewater: Top Ten Most Innovative Cards

Here are my picks for the top ten most innovative cards in *Onslaught* (in alphabetical order):



1. **Astral Slide**

One thing we played around with in *Onslaught* was finding new ways to tweak cycling. This is my favorite of the new cycling cards because it mixes "cycling triggers" (cards that trigger off card cycling) with [Flicker](#), an old mechanic close to my heart. This card provides tricks galore and will allow players to use cycling cards in a very different way.

2. **Biorhythm**

One of the hardest parts of design is trying to create cards that embody the philosophies of the colors. This card is not only innovative, but it gets across a nice green message: Your welfare is intricately tied to the world around you.

3. **Blackmail**

Too often, the focus of a new set is on the new splashy cards. Well, despite [Blackmail](#)'s simplicity, it's a thing of beauty. While clearly being a discard card, it has a lot of new subtleties on both sides. The victim has to choose what to reveal while the caster has to figure out what that revealed information means. I believe this card will prove to be a lot like [Fact or Fiction](#) in that it will be very powerful in the hands of the better players.

4. **Catapult Squad**

Onslaught challenged the designers to find new ways to create "tribal" (creature race matters) cards. The beauty of this card is that it has great flavor but also pushes a player to include more Soldiers in his or her deck.



5. Future Sight

In every set, we try to make a "hit it out of the ballpark, Johnny's jaw is going to drop when he first sees it" card. This one's for Johnny, and Spike will like it, too!

6. Goblin Pyromancer

This is developer Worth Wollpert's favorite *Onslaught* card. All through development he championed it, afraid that at any moment, the development team would say, "You can't print this." This made my list, not for its power level, but because it's a Goblin card that just oozes flavor.

7. Goblin Sharpshooter

Richard Garfield designed this card during *Odyssey* design. But he really wanted it to be a Goblin, so we had to wait for *Onslaught*. This card has a very elegant design that you can't truly appreciate until you play it. Try it; you'll like it.

8. Oversold Cemetery

My favorite thing about this card is that it just cries out to have a deck made around it. But not just any deck. It's the type of card that makes a player really think as he or she builds a deck with it. I love cards like that.

9. Riptide Shapeshifter

When this card was turned in from design, it merely turned into the next creature in your deck. During development, I suggested that we change it so you name a creature type. I suggested this because I felt *Onslaught* should have a few cards that encourage decks to be built in which all the creatures were purposely of different creature types.

10. Words of Wilding

This card started out in *Odyssey* as a card called [Endless Bears](#). R&D liked the mechanic so much that we decided to hold it off until *Onslaught* so we could build a whole cycle around it. This one is still my favorite as it offers an interesting choice each turn: Do a want a card or another Bear?

The Always-Brief Randy Buehler: Top Eleven (Cheater!) Signs That the Times Are Changing



11. Sandskin

[Gaseous Form](#) is now seen as a damage prevention mechanic.

10. Kamahl, Fist of Krosa

The hero of the storyline changed colors.

9. Crafty Pathmage

Unblockability is a blue ability.

8. Severed Legion and Gluttonous Zombie

Fear is now a keyworded ability.

7. Annex

Blue traded away [Ray of Command](#) for [Conquer](#) and a third-round draft pick.

6. Embermage Goblin

Tim is red.



5. **Grinning Demon**

Demons are back, just as Brady promised.

4. **Clone**

The new [reprint policy](#) in action. For a while, the card in the file was known as "[PLACENAME] Clone" and priced at 2.66. Then once the results of the [poll](#) I did came in, we changed it to be just plain "[Clone](#)." I guess that makes this some weird sort of "You Make the Card" prequel.

3. **Exalted Angel**

Good white fliers are in the house.

2. **Skirk Prospector** and **Brightstone Ritual**

Temporary mana (a.k.a. [Dark Ritual](#)) is red now.

1. **Naturalize**

[Disenchant](#) moves to green.

Send questions and comments to editor@wizards.com.