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The Goblinablers

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PRO TOUR-VALENCIA

I made up a word this week: Goblinabler. I wanted something to describe non-Goblin cards that promote Goblin decks. Cards like **Reckless One**, **Goblin Pyromancer**, and **Goblin Taskmaster** obviously suggest that Goblin decks are again possible in Standard. But what I find interesting are those *non*-Goblin cards that also promote the use of Goblins. Goblinablers of old are cards like **Goblin King**, **Goblin Grenade**, and **Dralnu's Crusade**. These cards aren't Goblins themselves, but they require a deck with good Goblins.

Just so I'm clear: A Goblinabler has to promote the use of Goblins, not just any strategy using small, red creatures. **Reckless Charge** is a great card, but it isn't a Goblinabler. Neither is **Goblin Bombardment**, even though it has "Goblin" in its name and complements a deck with a lot of creatures. **Custody Battle** is a quirky, fun card with Goblins in its artwork, but it isn't a Goblinabler. **Goblin Trenches** makes Goblins, but it doesn't require the use of more Goblins, so it isn't a Goblinabler either. **Goblin Caves** . . . now there's a fine example of a Goblinabler.

You're probably wondering *why* I want a name for those few non-Goblin Goblin cards. Well, it's because **Onslaught** contains four particularly interesting Goblinablers. These cards throw interesting wrinkles into an otherwise normal Goblin deck and suggest weird deck creations as a result. If there is one thing I've shown in the past ten months, it is a love for weird deck creations.

Best of all, these four cards aren't rare. Recently, I've received numerous requests for more "lite" articles, asking me to show creative, fun deck ideas on a budget. As a result of your requests, expect a steady stream of lite articles in the coming months, much like today's article. The Goblinablers in **Onslaught** provide a terrific basis for lite decks, and really . . . shouldn't Goblin decks be affordable? They're *Goblins*, for crying out loud!



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Goblin Burrows

Goblin Burrows is probably the most obvious Goblinabler, because it speeds up speedy Goblin decks. In fact, I would say that **Goblin Burrows** probably belongs in almost every true Goblin deck in almost every format that uses cards from **Onslaught**. It's that good.

I also think that, due to its ubiquity, **Goblin Burrows** is the least interesting of the **Onslaught** Goblinablers. That is, I don't think it promotes any unique or particularly interesting deck ideas on its own. Oh, I suppose you could figure out a way to continually untap **Goblin Burrows** to produce enough mana for a 103/1 **Raging Goblin** with **Bloodshot Cyclops** on the table, but that sounds really complicated. For now, let's just say that **Goblin Burrows** fits well into any self-respecting Goblin deck, and as a result will consistently show up in this article's decklists.

Airdrop Condor

Now **Airdrop Condor**, on the other hand, is a really difficult card to fit into a Goblin deck (mostly because the thing is prohibitively expensive). Paying 4 for a 2/2 flier is pretty bad no matter how long you stare at it. It is one fewer mana than the aforementioned **Bloodshot Cyclops**, and you can use its ability multiple times in a turn, which is all in **Airdrop Condor's** favor. But its hefty price is incongruous with the way Goblin decks are built. Goblin decks usually consist of fast, cheap, aggressive creatures along with a lot of red burn to remove blockers and end the game. **Airdrop Condor** is simply too slow for these traditional strategies.



To use **Airdrop Condor**, then, you must resort to nontraditional Goblin strategies. Besides being quick, Goblins also have a nice tendency to pump their critters' powers to explosive heights. Consider **Flamestick Courier**, **Goblin Sledder**, **Goblin Taskmaster**, and, of course, **Goblin Burrows**. These cards make Goblins bigger. With **Airdrop Condor**, you can attack with your temporarily big Goblin and then chuck it directly at your opponent's

head before the pumping effect has worn off. This strategy also allows you to incorporate into your deck cards like **Goblin Sky Raider** and **Goblin Glider** -- Goblins that aren't aggressive enough to fit into normal Goblin decks - because evasion makes them perfect for a deck running so many ways to make them bigger.

Here's an example:

Goblin Droppings <i>Lite!</i>		
Standard Airdrop Condor deck		
Main Deck 60 cards		
20 Mountain	4 Goblin Taskmaster	4 Firebolt
4 Goblin Burrows	4 Goblin Glider	4 Reckless Charge
24 lands	4 Goblin Sky Raider	4 Browbeat
	4 Reckless One	2 Granite Grip
	3 Flamestick Courier	14 other spells
	3 Airdrop Condor	
	22 creatures	

If you want to add rares, cards like **Goblin King**, **Goblin Piledriver**, and **Goblin Pyromancer** fit this strategy perfectly. My favorite addition, however, is a Goblin that normally sits neglected in your trade binder -- you can use **Okk!** How cool is that?

Brightstone Ritual

Brightstone Ritual is another "Huh?" card. It is virtually impossible to get a Turn 1 mana boost from the Ritual. Instead, **Brightstone Ritual** ensures that later in the game, when you have access to a lot of Goblins, you will have access to a lot of mana. Like **Airdrop Condor**, this idea doesn't fit perfectly well into the traditional idea of speedy Goblin decks. It promotes a decent way to empty your hand of Goblins on Turns 2 and 3. I suppose **Brightstone Ritual** could fuel a game-ending **Urza's Rage**, but most people would rather use four **Shocks** in a Goblin deck instead of the Ritual.

So what can you do with a lot of Goblin-fueled mana? The obvious answer is to use red "X" spells like **Blaze** and **Firecat Blitz**. You can drop your usual horde of 1- and 2-cost Goblins onto the table, and just when you are about to run out of steam . . . WHAM! It's time to end the game with a big doozy of a card. Or, as I've tried below, you can use Goblins that largely replace themselves -- like **Goblin Matron** and **Embermage Goblin** -- to ensure your steady stream of Goblins:



Mmmm... Shiny <i>Lite!</i>		
Standard Brightstone Ritual deck		
Main Deck 60 cards		
19 Mountain	4 Skirk Prospector	4 Brightstone Ritual
2 Goblin Burrows	4 Goblin Matron	4 Fire Diamond
21 lands	4 Embermage Goblin	3 Blaze
	3 Goblin Raider	3 Firecat Blitz
	2 Goblin Machinist	2 Recoup
	1 Goblin Digging Team	1 Shower of Coals
	1 Sparksmith	17 other spells
	1 Goblin Spelunkers	
	1 Nosy Goblin	
	1 Reckless One	
	22 creatures	

When adding rares, your options start to get silly. **Mana Echoes** can help produce additional mana for cards like **Gratuitous Violence**, **Aggravated Assault**, **Shivan Dragon**, or **Volley of Boulders**. **Riptide Replicator** actually has some nice synergy with a deck built around **Brightstone Ritual**. And of course you can always use **Overmaster** to make sure your big WHAM! resolves against a blue mage.

Cabal Slaver



Cabal Slaver is probably my favorite Goblinabler in *Onslaught*. I like that it turns Goblin decks into something other than mono-red, and I like how dangerous it makes even a 1/1 **Raging Goblin**. I also like that it lets me use **Festering Goblin**, the lone nonred Goblin in Standard right now. Poor **Festering Goblin**.

There isn't a lot of subtlety when using **Cabal Slaver**. In fact, **Cabal Slaver** allows normal speedy Goblin decks to act like normal speedy black-red decks: A lot of disruption in the form of discard and creature removal, with a lot of aggressive critters to end the game. The real trick is figuring out which non-Goblin cards to use, as both red and black have some killer choices. Some examples of cards to consider are **Shock**, **Firebolt**, **Volcanic Hammer**, **Smother**, **Chainer's Edict**, **Duress**, **Cabal Therapy**, **Chain of Plasma**, **Chain of Smog**, **Unholy Strength**, and **Mesmeric Fiend**. Your choice will depend on the kinds of decks your friends tend to play and what suits your style. Pick any two or three off the list above, though, and you have a solid support strategy for your enslaved Goblins.

In the deck below, I have gone a little overboard trying to ensure my Goblins won't get blocked. The decks in "House of Cards" are meant to push this kind of mental envelope, but you should obviously try what you think is best.

Chain of Fools Lite!
Standard Cabal Slaver deck

Main Deck
60 cards

9 Mountain 9 Swamp 2 Goblin Burrows <hr/> 20 lands	4 Festering Goblin 4 Goblin Taskmaster 4 Goblin Raider 4 Goblin Glider 4 Cabal Slaver 4 Goblin Chariot <hr/> 24 creatures	4 Chain of Plasma 4 Chainer's Edict 4 Smother 4 Dirge of Dread <hr/> 16 other spells
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If this article were discussing rares, I might discuss the fifth and final Goblinabler in *Onslaught*: **Tribal Golem**. Suffice it to say, a Goblin deck with **Tribal Golem** won't resemble a normal Goblin deck either.

Other creature types get just as many "enablers" in *Onslaught*, and all of them can lead to some really wacky decks. Just look at **Wirewood Savage**, **Thoughtbound Primoc**, or **Gangrenous Goliath** as examples. I hope my discussion of Goblinablers today has helped you begin to not only think about "tribal" decks like Goblins, but to think about affordable, creative, and nontraditional decks, as well. Sure your buddy can bust out his . . . yaaaawwwn . . . ultraquick Goblin deck, but won't he be surprised when your big **Goblin Glider** ends the game thanks to **Airdrop Condor**? Wheeee!

Next week: The results of Deck Challenge 3!

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