

# Bring the action home

## World Championship Standard Decks

Mike Flores

Thursday, November 21, 2002

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- [Mike Flores Archive](#)

It's that time of year again. The time when the most iconic Standard decks from the World Championships are made immortal not just in the memories of **Magic** aficionados or by dusty links in cyberspace, but by ready-to-play commemorative decks specially printed by our friends in Renton, Washington. The World Championship Standard decks are chosen not simply for their efficacies of performance, but to showcase the various colors, strategies, and diversity of cards that were available at the 2002 Worlds. You can pick up one or all of the 2002 World Championship decks at your favorite gaming store and sling spells like the best players in the world.

### Carlos Romão

#### Blue-Black Psychatog



#### Main Deck

60 cards

2 <a href="#">Cephalid Coliseum</a>	3 <a href="#">Chainer's Edict</a>
1 <a href="#">Darkwater Catacombs</a>	3 <a href="#">Circular Logic</a>
10 <a href="#">Island</a>	4 <a href="#">Counterspell</a>
4 <a href="#">Salt Marsh</a>	3 <a href="#">Cunning Wish</a>
3 <a href="#">Swamp</a>	3 <a href="#">Deep Analysis</a>
4 <a href="#">Underground River</a>	3 <a href="#">Fact or Fiction</a>
_____	3 <a href="#">Memory Lapse</a>
24 lands	4 <a href="#">Repulse</a>
	2 <a href="#">Upheaval</a>
4 <a href="#">Nightscape Familiar</a>	_____
4 <a href="#">Psychatog</a>	28 other spells
_____	
8 creatures	<b>Sideboard</b>
	1 <a href="#">Coffin Purge</a>
	4 <a href="#">Duress</a>



- 1 [Fact or Fiction](#)
- 1 [Gainsay](#)
- 3 [Ghastly Demise](#)
- 1 [Hibernation](#)
- 1 [Mana Short](#)
- 1 [Recoil](#)
- 1 [Slay](#)
- 1 [Teferi's Response](#)

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15 sideboard cards

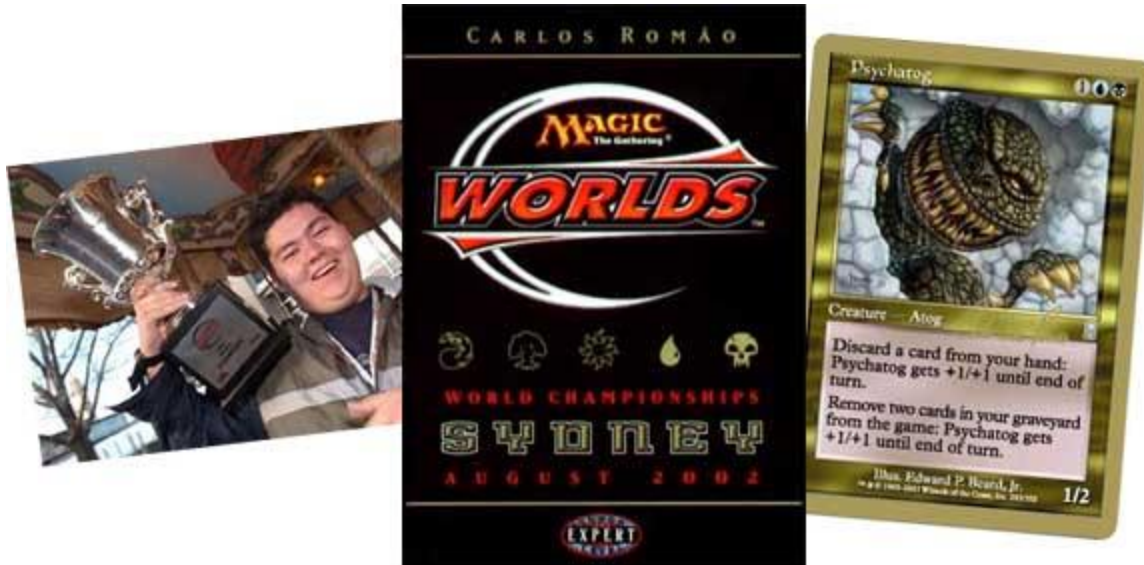


It's hard to argue that this wasn't the best deck of the 2002 World Championships. Carlos Romão went a perfect 6-0 in what may have been the most difficult Standard tournament of the year. Then, using the same deck, he won three more matches to take the title.

The basic strategy of the deck is to set up one lethal attack with [Psychatog](#). Romão's deck can either counter opposing blockers or remove them from play with [Chainer's Edict](#), [Repulse](#), or one of the many instants that sit in the sideboard . . . but the classic [Psychatog](#) kill is to play [Upheaval](#) with eight available mana, float , re-play a land, and tap the land to play [Psychatog](#). Between excess cards discarded post-[Upheaval](#), a hand certain to be full at seven, and any incidental cards that had been put into the graveyard before that point, the [Psychatog](#) will almost always be able to attack for lethal damage the following turn. This play is even better when done with nine available mana, rather than eight. That way, the [Psychatog](#) can be played with  floating after paying for [Upheaval](#), so that you can then pass the turn with an untapped island. The untapped island will allow [Circular Logic](#) to be played via the [Psychatog](#) and the awesome power of madness, defending the [Psychatog](#) against potential one-mana blockers or removal spells.

In general, [Psychatog](#) decks have many advantages. This one can stall the early game with [Nightscape Familiar](#) and the various cheap answer cards. [Nightscape Familiar](#) is capable of blocking almost every

threat, from the quick [Wild Mongrel](#) to the expensive-but-dominating [Spiritmonger](#). At the same time, this efficient little Zombie makes all of your blue cards a little bit cheaper, allowing for some great synergies as early as the third turn. You can lead with a turn-two [Nightscape Familiar](#), and then follow up with [Deep Analysis](#) or [Fact or Fiction](#) the next turn. [Nightscape Familiar](#) makes each and every [Memory Lapse](#) cheaper, helping to win permission battles. More importantly, [Nightscape Familiar](#) also quickens your ability to set up the big [Upheaval](#) -[Psychatog](#) turn. You'll win almost every game in which [Upheaval](#) resolves and you follow up with the Atog with the winning smile immediately afterward.



Romão's [Psychatog](#) deck also features [Cunning Wish](#), which allows you to put any instant from outside the game directly into your hand. In serious play, this normally limits the selection process to cards in a deck's sideboard, but the ever-versatile [Psychatog](#) allows us to bend even that rule. Remember, you can play a quick answer like [Repulse](#), remove it and another card from the game by giving [Psychatog](#) +1/+1, and then be able to Wish for that [Repulse](#), even though there are no [Repulses](#) in the deck's sideboard! Also remember that, like the cards it is able to find, [Cunning Wish](#) is an instant. That means during combat or when a dangerous effect is on the stack, you can get the right card to ruin your opponent's day. There are several cards available in the sideboard that allow you to play tricks at instant speed. Just think, when your opponent targets your [Salt Marsh](#) with [Opposition](#), you can smash that annoying enchantment and draw two cards all at once with [Teferi's Response](#) ! When your opponent waves across the Red Zone with a lethal team of fliers, you can grab [Coffin Purge](#), remove his or her [Wonder](#) (allowing you to set up a good block), and maybe even shrink [Nimble Mongoose](#) and [Werebear](#) !

Obviously, there are a number of good reasons why this deck did so well. But that's not to say that you can't put the blank cards that come with the Romão [Psychatog](#) deck to good use. One possibility is to print your own [Wonders](#). While we usually think of [Wonder](#) as a card for a blue-green deck, it has a lot of synergy with both [Fact or Fiction](#) and [Psychatog](#). Considering that many of your opponents will have access to that most popular of Incarnations, [Wonder](#) may be necessary to keep you from getting beat down with unblockable threats. If your own [Psychatog](#) can fly, it can reduce the need to set up with [Upheaval](#) first . . . nothing is stopping you from giving your 'Tog that first +1/+1 to fly, then sending it over your opponent's blockers for an [Upheaval](#) -less win. At least one other competitor in the Worlds Top 8 thought [Wonder](#) was worth playing in blue-black [Psychatog](#) (the inimitable David Humpherys), so it might also serve you well.

One of the few things that I disagreed with in the sideboard build was the inclusion of only one [Hibernation](#). In sideboarded games, it is often worthwhile to have one [Hibernation](#) in the deck while still keeping all three [Cunning Wish](#) es on active [Hibernation](#) duty. That way, it's almost like you have four [Hibernation](#) available while having to devote only two sideboard cards to that spell. [Hibernation](#) may be the most efficient answer this deck can muster against any number of opponents (including the other three World Championship decks). It prevents a ton of damage during combat, resets [Squirrel Nest](#), and utterly destroys any number of tokens, whether they represent Elephants, Squirrels, or even mighty Wurms.

## Sim Han How

### Squirrel Opposition



### Main Deck

*60 cards*

8 <a href="#">Forest</a>	4 <a href="#">Circular Logic</a>
5 <a href="#">Island</a>	3 <a href="#">Deep Analysis</a>
3 <a href="#">Karplusan Forest</a>	3 <a href="#">Fire // Ice</a>
2 <a href="#">Shivan Reef</a>	4 <a href="#">Opposition</a>
4 <a href="#">Yavimaya Coast</a>	3 <a href="#">Squirrel Nest</a>
<hr/>	
22 lands	17 other spells

4 <a href="#">Birds of Paradise</a>	<b>Sideboard</b>
3 <a href="#">Flametongue Kavu</a>	1 <a href="#">Flametongue Kavu</a>
3 <a href="#">Llanowar Elves</a>	3 <a href="#">Gainsay</a>
4 <a href="#">Merfolk Looter</a>	3 <a href="#">Quiet Speculation</a>
3 <a href="#">Phantom Centaur</a>	2 <a href="#">Ray of Revelation</a>
4 <a href="#">Wild Mongrel</a>	4 <a href="#">Roar of the Wurm</a>
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21 creatures	2 <a href="#">Simoon</a>
	15 sideboard cards



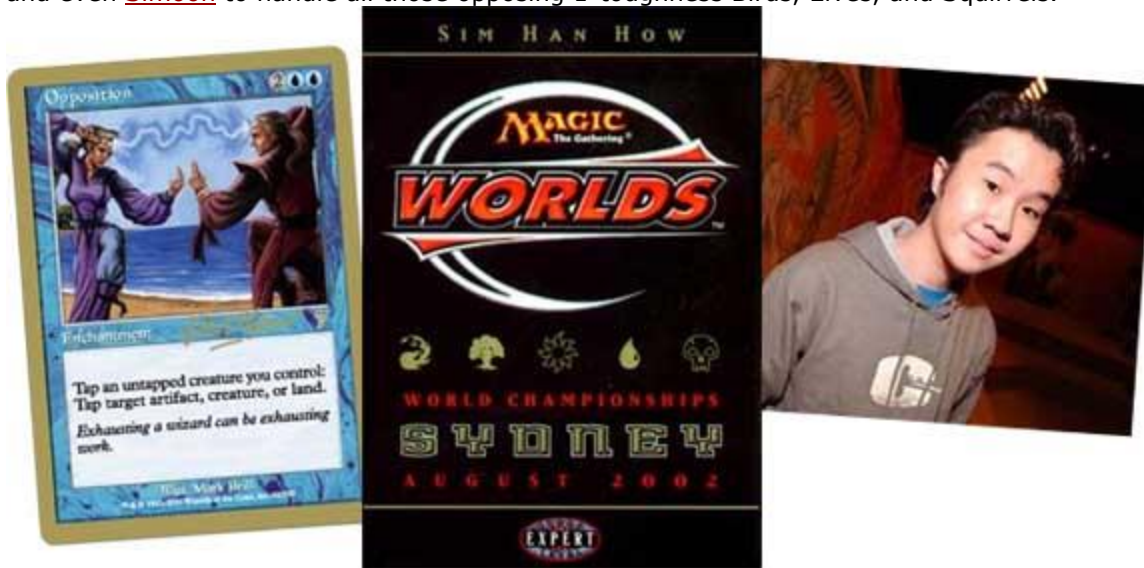
Sim Han How's "Squirrel Opposition" deck joined Carlos Romão's deck with a 6-0 performance at the end of Standard play. This powerful archetype has had many solid finishes, not the least of which was first place at this year's U.S. National Championship. The Opposition deck can play a number of different plans. It can run as a straight creature deck with many natural advantages, including mana acceleration ([Birds of Paradise](#) and [Llanowar Elves](#)), as well as some of the best creatures in the format ([Flametongue Kavu](#), [Merfolk Looter](#), and [Wild Mongrel](#)). With the right draw, it can overwhelm even the powerful [Psychatog](#) decks with threats that they can't block ([Phantom Centaur](#)). It doesn't just have the elements of a creature deck, though, with card drawing ([Deep Analysis](#), and [Merfolk Looter](#),) and permission ([Circular Logic](#) and [Gainsay](#)), it's like a control deck, too.

But more than any of these possible paths to victory, Sim Han How's deck plays best when it has [Squirrel Nest](#) and [Opposition](#). While [Opposition](#) does nothing on its own, it gives each and every creature you control the power of the [Icy Manipulator](#). From the turn it comes into play, each creature, from the lowliest [Birds of Paradise](#) on up, can tap your opponent's permanents. While [Squirrel Nest](#) is strong by itself, its ability to create limitless 1/1 creatures makes that enchantment particularly strong in concert with [Opposition](#). When this deck has both enchantments in play for a couple of turns, your opponent usually ends up with a locked board, eventually unable to play any spells past his or her own upkeep.

The most common way for this style of deck to win is to tap all of your opponent's mana and then blockers, over the course of a couple of turns, untap, and then send over a lethal troop of Centaurs, Squirrels, and other attackers. It can, however, transform into a less elegant, but potentially more powerful, configuration with cards out of the sideboard. Against purely aggressive decks, it is sometimes worthwhile to bring in [Quiet Speculation](#) and [Roar of the Wurm](#). While [Quiet Speculation](#) has obvious synergy with [Deep Analysis](#), against creature decks, it is even better with [Roar of the Wurm](#). One [Quiet Speculation](#), as early as the second turn, can net three 6/6 monsters very quickly!

This transformation strategy is worthwhile against a couple of different types of opponents, not just pure attack decks. You will note that How's own sideboard runs multiple copies of [Ray of Revelation](#). In concert with [Birds of Paradise](#), each [Ray of Revelation](#) can handle two vital enchantments. With cards like [Opposition](#) and [Squirrel Nest](#) so central to this deck's machinery, it may be worthwhile to

sometimes remove the main -- and assumed -- baseline plan to become a vanilla (if strong) creature deck. That way, your opponent's hand may be flooded with useless cards like [Ray of Revelation](#), while you can go over the top against his or her creatures with 6/6 Wurms, the fourth [Flametonque Kavu](#), and even [Simoon](#) to handle all those opposing 1-toughness Birds, Elves, and Squirrels.



As I've detailed, the [Opposition](#) archetype has any number of natural advantages, but the best of these may be that it attacks with a "death of a thousand cuts." It can win with a focused combination of enchantments working together, or it can ape another strategy. Additionally, it can ride a single card to either a win or a number of additional turns. A card like [Flametonque Kavu](#) simultaneously erases your opponent's best creature and puts an imposing 4-power blocker into play. [Squirrel Nest](#), by itself, will bring a beatdown deck's offense to a standstill and can even contain the single most dangerous attacker in the format -- [Psychatog](#) -- indefinitely.

That being said, when you use the blank cards that come with Sim Han How's deck, one route you can take is to further explore the "many threats" strategy. The first card I would try out is [Static Orb](#). While it might not seem likely that any deck will beat [Opposition](#) backed up with creatures (especially with [Squirrel Nest](#) in play), against the right opponent with the right cards, the worst sometimes occurs. If you add [Static Orb](#) to the mix, the chances that your opponent will win are greatly reduced. With three creatures in play, you can tap whatever permanents your opponent untaps and still have a creature left over to tap your own [Static Orb](#), allowing you to untap.

Another card you might want to try is [Upheaval](#). I've always liked [Upheaval](#) as a catchall answer to various types of threats. It is a one-card strategy that can destroy an opponent's board position, no matter how favorable. It can undo combinations. It does not discriminate. Artifacts, creatures, enchantments, and lands all return to the grip with equal enthusiasm; token creatures like Squirrels and Wurms will never find their way back into play. At its most basic, [Upheaval](#) can set up a [Wild Mongrel](#) attack for at least 10 damage the next turn -- more than enough to win most games -- and often with [Circular Logic](#) backup.

Additional options include [Bearscape](#) and [Call of the Herd](#), cards that have similar effects to [Squirrel Nest](#) and [Roar of the Wurm](#), but have different upsides and reduced worst-case scenarios. Against many of the decks where [Squirrel Nest](#) is at its best -- specifically [Psychatog](#) and black-based control decks -- the fact that it sits on a land makes that card a potential liability against common answers like [Aura Graft](#), [Rancid Earth](#), or [Recoil](#). [Bearscape](#) can sometimes create even more [Opposition](#)-ready tokens, build bigger ones in any case, and also hold off [Psychatog](#) for several turns. [Call of the Herd](#), while less devastating than [Roar of the Wurm](#) for the average creature deck, will often serve when

your deck isn't quite doing what it's told. Against many aggressive decks, you will win on the basis of [Wild Mongrel](#), just by playing [Wild Mongrel](#). That means that if you have [Roar of the Wurm](#), you will just win more easily. But given the fact that you might not draw [Quiet Speculation](#), and [Merfolk Looter](#) is awfully easy to get rid of, it is sometimes better to be able to put out a 3/3 blocker on turns three and four (or, in this deck, two and three!), regardless of whatever else you drew. [Roar of the Wurm](#) is a lot less impressive when you have no way of putting it in the graveyard.

## Brian Kibler

### Red Zone 2K2



### Main Deck

60 cards

4 <a href="#">Brushland</a>	4 <a href="#">Call of the Herd</a>
2 <a href="#">City of Brass</a>	3 <a href="#">Fire // Ice</a>
7 <a href="#">Forest</a>	3 <a href="#">Living Wish</a>
4 <a href="#">Karplusan Forest</a>	2 <a href="#">Wax // Wane</a>
2 <a href="#">Mountain</a>	
3 <a href="#">Plains</a>	12 other spells

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22 lands

4 <a href="#">Anurid Brushhopper</a>
4 <a href="#">Birds of Paradise</a>
4 <a href="#">Flametongue Kavu</a>
3 <a href="#">Glory</a>
3 <a href="#">Llanowar Elves</a>
4 <a href="#">Phantom Centaur</a>
4 <a href="#">Wild Mongrel</a>

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26 creatures

### Sideboard

1 <a href="#">City of Brass</a>
1 <a href="#">Genesis</a>
2 <a href="#">Global Ruin</a>
1 <a href="#">Glory</a>
1 <a href="#">Intrepid Hero</a>
1 <a href="#">Phantom Nishoba</a>
3 <a href="#">Reprisal</a>
2 <a href="#">Simoon</a>
1 <a href="#">Sylvan Safekeeper</a>
1 <a href="#">Thornscape Battlemage</a>
1 <a href="#">Thunderscape Battlemage</a>

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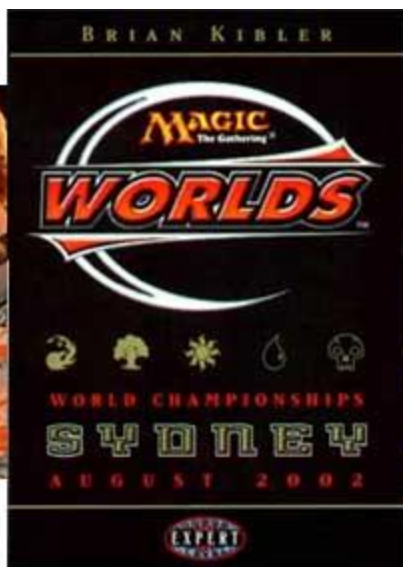
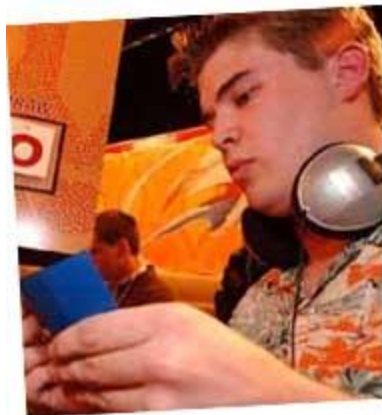
15 sideboard cards



"Red Zone 2K2" takes its name from Brian Kibler's previous best effort, the original Red Zone, which, in the autumn of 2000, took him to a Top 4 finish where he met his match at the hands of eventual Pro Tour - Chicago Champion Kai Budde. Despite the fact that that current number-one player on the planet chose not to run Red Zone 2K2 (he doesn't like creature-based decks), many of the game's finest declared this the best deck in the format.

Red Zone 2K2 has two primary advantages against other decks. The first is that, overall, it boasts the best aggressive-creature quality in the format. Accelerated into play by the traditional [Birds of Paradise](#) and [Llanowar Elves](#), Red Zone 2K2 launches its offense with turn-two [Call of the Herd](#) or [Anurid Brushhopper](#), turn-three [Phantom Centaur](#) or [Flametongue Kavu](#), and keeps up the pressure with a host of potential threats. Red Zone 2K2 runs some of the most efficient creature removal (read: blocker removal) available in [Fire/Ice](#) and the aforementioned [Flametongue Kavu](#) and can also defend its own creatures with [Glory](#). Once [Glory](#) is in the graveyard, this deck can laugh off all sorts of spot removal or wave across the board with a team of unblockable attackers.

The other major advantage of Red Zone 2K2 is in its use of [Living Wish](#). [Living Wish](#) enables this deck's specialized sideboard, which includes the fourth [Glory](#), an extra land, and a number of "silver bullet" Wish targets -- one for every occasion. Want to protect your [Phantom Centaur](#) from [Repulse](#) (the [Psychatog](#) opponent certainly isn't going to block it)? Why not grab [Sylvan Safekeeper](#)? Does your opponent have a ton of 6/6 Wurm tokens and a [Phantom Centaur](#)? [Intrepid Hero](#) might be just the ticket. Want to win an attrition war or race against another creature deck? Both [Genesis](#) and [Phantom Nishoba](#) seem like reasonable ways to take those games.



Red Zone 2K2 will almost always mount a faster offense than your opponent. While the other decks we've looked at so far can draw more cards with [Deep Analysis](#) or counter potentially game-winning threats with [Circular Logic](#), those decks need time and mana to get their strategies going. At its best, Red Zone 2K2 won't let your opponent have the time he or she needs to battle back. As I've said, this deck deploys the most powerful offensive creatures available, as quickly as they're drawn. Your opponent has a limited amount of time to draw the proper answer or a reasonable blocker, and even then, he or she might see a defender tapped with [Ice](#) or smashed with [Flametongue Kavu](#). Your opponent might think that a [Squirrel Nest](#) or [Opposition](#) is going to help stabilize his or her defenses, only to see that expensive basket of eggs removed with a one-mana [Wane](#). Even the most powerful card in all of Standard -- [Upheaval](#) -- is somewhat contained by the power of [Anurid Brushhopper](#). Red Zone 2K2 didn't post quite the same record as some of the other decks we're looking at today; nevertheless, it has an answer for almost every situation. Against mana-hungry board-control decks, Red Zone 2K2 can destroy all the lands with [Global Ruin](#) (leaving its own [Birds of Paradise](#) and [Llanowar Elves](#) alone, of course).

When you make use of the blank cards that come with Red Zone 2K2, there are a couple of different strategies you can take. One thing you can do is print more creatures to improve your [Living Wishes](#). While Kibler was limited to a fifteen-card sideboard, there may be additional creatures you'll want to try. You may need more [Thunderscape Battlemage](#)s against Sim Han How's Opposition deck. You may want even more [Flametongue Kavu](#) power. While you can't play more actual [Flametongue Kavus](#), [Thornscape Battlemage](#) is still available to do much the same work -- and help out against artifacts to boot.

The other route is to play more utility cards. Kibler originally had [Seedtime](#) before he converted his choice to a [Living Wish](#) deck with a creature-based sideboard. [Seedtime](#) is obviously powerful against both permission spells and blue defensive cards like [Repulse](#) and [Aether Burst](#). Just as [Seedtime](#) pulls a lot of the punch out of some blue instants, you can go for powerful graveyard-based cards like [Glory](#) and [Anger](#) with [Krosan Reclamation](#), or smash tons of land with [Boil](#). After all the islands are in the graveyard, it's not likely that you'll get many cards countered, and incidentally, [Wonder](#) stops helping your opponent as well.

## Raphael Levy

## Le Wonder Goose



## Main Deck

60 cards

8 [Forest](#)  
10 [Island](#)  
4 [Yavimaya Coast](#)  
-----  
22 lands

2 [Genesis](#)  
4 [Nimble Mongoose](#)  
3 [Seton's Scout](#)  
4 [Werebear](#)  
4 [Wild Mongrel](#)  
4 [Wonder](#)  
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21 creatures

4 [Breakthrough](#)  
4 [Careful Study](#)  
4 [Mental Note](#)  
4 [Roar of the Wurm](#)  
1 [Rushing River](#)  
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17 other spells

### Sideboard

4 [Compost](#)  
3 [Disrupt](#)  
3 [Phantom Centaur](#)  
2 [Ray of Revelation](#)  
2 [Repulse](#)  
1 [Rushing River](#)  
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15 sideboard cards

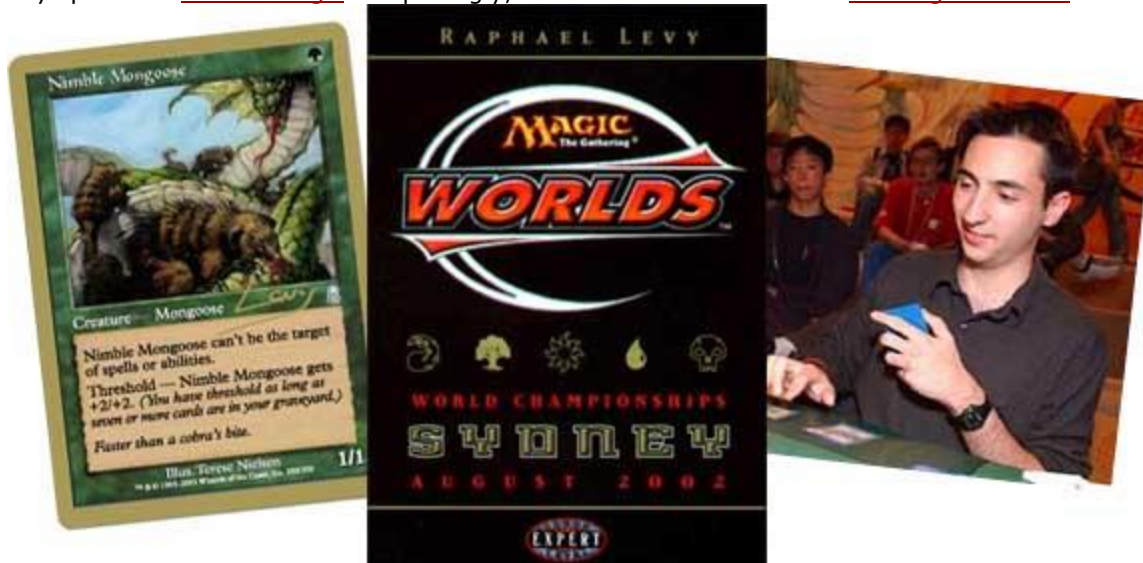


Levy's deck is all about speed and offense. It's like Kibler's deck -- if Red Zone 2K2 traded away all of its tricks and versatility for a pure and focused attack based on cheap creatures that pack more punch than you might expect and can sometimes even fly.

While most of this deck's creatures are not exactly earth-shattering to begin with, once threshold is achieved, [Nimble Mongoose](#) becomes one of the most efficient creatures you could ask for. For just one mana, it's not only a 3/3, but has no fear of creature removal. In the same way, [Werebear](#) can play the role of a slow [Llanowar Elves](#), pumping out [Roar of the Wurm](#) tokens or fueling [Breakthrough](#). . . or it can dominate the board as a 4/4 beater for just two mana.

In this deck, [Breakthrough](#), [Careful Study](#), and [Mental Note](#) are pure enablers: they're there to make the aggressive cards better. Once in a while you might net a card or two with [Breakthrough](#), but for the most part, these cards are supposed to dump Incarnations into the graveyard to enhance team morale and to transform ordinary green creatures into superstars. Once this deck gets going, its creatures can run with those of any other deck. They sometimes win fights because they're bigger. They sometimes avoid fights altogether.

The converse is, this deck doesn't do anything else but attack. Unlike a lot of blue-green decks, it doesn't run any madness cards. Though it has even more madness enablers than most -- [Breakthrough](#), [Careful Study](#), and [Wild Mongrel](#) -- it can't defend its board position or push through a key spell with [Circular Logic](#). Surprisingly, this deck doesn't even run [Basking Rootwalla](#)s.



If things start to go south for the Levy deck, it has to rely on Incarnations to win. Either it has to generate good trades and then recoup its creatures with [Genesis](#), or it has to use [Wonder](#) to fly over for the win. If, for example, it starts to fall behind against an [Opposition](#) deck, there is but a lone [Rushing River](#) to dig it out of trouble.

On the other hand, this deck has a ton of sideboard cards against black control. [Compost](#), [Phantom Centaur](#), and even [Disrupt](#) can demolish that style of deck. Against [Opposition](#), you can bring in an additional [Rushing River](#) and a pair of [Ray of Revelation](#)s to try to handle enchantments.

Joining [Rushing River](#) as a catchall answer to creatures is [Repulse](#). This card is good in a variety of situations, both on defense and in defending one's own permanents. You can pick up some card advantage with [Repulse](#) against a spot removal spell or in a creature fight, after damage is on the stack.

Because Levy's deck is so light on answers, the way to win is to seize the initiative in the game and never let go. Attack, attack, attack in the air. Drop a 6/6 before passing the turn; make it rough for your opponent to attack back. Come in so aggressively that your opponent has to spend his or her turn putting out blockers rather than furthering his or her strategy. Use whatever tricks you have to keep the initiative when it seems like the tide is turning the other way.

More than any other deck in this series, the Levy deck's blank cards can be defined by what the deck does *not* give you to begin with. There are several cards we would normally associate with blue-green creature decks that simply aren't here. You might want to check out the classics: the [Merfolk Looter](#), the [Basking Rootwalla](#), the [Arrogant Wurm](#). You might also try out a card or two to disrupt your opponent's strategy. While the Levy deck has all kinds of questions for your opponent to answer, it doesn't have very much to say about his or her spells at all. [Aura Graft](#), [Gainsay](#), and [Jungle Barrier](#) are just three different looks at three different types of permanents your opponent might send your way. On the other hand, you can forward Levy's own offensive overload strategy, trying out different fast beatdown creatures. [Gaea's Skyfolk](#) is a cheap beater in its own right, with 2 power and evasion built in. You could also venture into the heretofore-ignored three-mana slot, investigating how good 3-power creatures are with [Call of the Herd](#) and [Spellbane Centaur](#). The options are many. I hope this was an informative introduction to this year's chosen four. Grab a copy or two at your favorite gaming store and relive the excitement of the 2002 World Championships!

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Send questions and comments to [editor@wizards.com](mailto:editor@wizards.com).