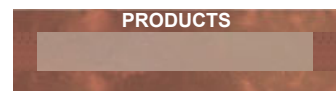


Home > Games > Magic > Magicthegathering.com > Columns



A Card for doctorjay

Jay Moldenhauer-Salazar
 House of Cards
 Thursday, December 12, 2002



PRO TOUR-VALENCIA



Today marks the fiftieth "House of Cards" article, of which I'm quite proud. Several weeks ago, I decided I wanted to do something different and cool for #50. I thought about getting a guest columnist or loading the article with decklists or maybe doing another Deck Challenge. None of these options felt quite right, though.

As I look back on this past year, the only thing I've wanted to do and haven't done is provide a window into the evolution of a deck—from initial idea to polished decklist (understanding that "polished" means that you feel happy with the deck, not necessarily that it will win you fame and fortune). I haven't yet circled back to an initial deck idea and shown how the deck changed through playing. In fact, my numerous "House of Cards" first drafts never make it to a second draft, much less a final draft.

My focus on early deck ideas makes sense given the goals of this column. As I've said several times, I hope to fuel your imagination to make you *want* to build decks. I believe that **Magic** is a better game when people make their own decks instead of copy them from their neighbors.

That said, I think the evolution of a deck is both an important part of deckbuilding and a fascinating thing to behold. None of the decks I love look anything like

they did when I first scribbled the decklist onto a restaurant napkin.

As a result, today begins a three-step journey of which the final destination is a deck that you all helped me to create. Today, you are going to decide the focus of my next **Magic: The Gathering Online** deck.

THE PROBLEM

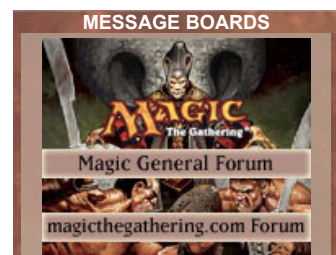
Like most people, when I first started playing **Magic Online** I was forced to make a very weird deck based on my very small virtual card collection. At the time, **Magic Online** had just been released and offered only *Seventh Edition*, *Invasion* block, *Odyssey*, and *Torment*. I had participated in the beta test, so I got a free theme deck when I signed up.

The deck I picked was "Insanity" from the *Torment* set. I'm not entirely sure why I picked it. Looking back, I guess I liked the rares (Nantuko Blightcutter and Nantuko Cultivator) and the uncommons (the two Arrogant Wurms, two Sylvan Mights, and two Tainted Woods in particular). Three Wild Mongrels were nice too. If you're looking for a decklist and description, go [here](#).

Anyway, I started playing Booster Draft and Sealed Deck (I'm a big fan of the **Magic Online** Sealed-Deck Leagues) and slowly adding cards to my Insanity deck. The green was already strong and soon took over the decklist. When I got a few Gorilla Titans, they became the deck's focus, and I eventually had a nearly monogreen flashback and madness deck:



Final Wrap-up
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King Kong

Pre-Judgment Odyssey Block Constructed deck

Main Deck
60 cards

19 Forest	2 Arrogant Wurm	2 Beast Attack
4 Mountain	4 Basking Rootwalla	3 Deep Reconnaissance
	2 Druid Lyrist	2 Firebolt
23 lands	3 Gorilla Titan	2 Howling Gale

1 Nantuko Mentor	2 Moment's Peace
4 Wild Mongrel	2 Reckless Charge
	2 Roar of the Wurm
16 creatures	1 Seize the Day
	1 Steamclaw
	4 Sylvan Might
	21 other spells

Unfortunately, the cards I was buying at the time were mostly *Seventh Edition* and *Invasion* block, which did very little to help out my fledgling madness and flashback deck. I realized that I needed an entirely different focus. So I abandoned my green-red thing and traded cards to build an approximation of a deck from my "[Basic Training](#)" article. It took awhile, but I was able to build the following:

Big Stick		
Pre-Judgment Standard deck		
Main Deck 60 cards		
11 Swamp	4 Nightscape Familiar	4 Duress
7 Mountain	4 Flametongue Kavu	4 Firebolt
2 Sulfurous Springs	4 Shivan Dragon	4 Chainer's Edict
2 Urborg Volcano	12 creatures	3 Urza's Rage
4 Tainted Peak		4 Void
26 lands		3 Addle
		22 other spells

I played this deck until the release of *Judgment*, and then I decided it was time for something new. I had managed to snag four copies of *Lord of Atlantis* in a trade, and three *Wonders* in my first week of playing the new set. As a result, I decided it was time to put away my *Shivan Dragons* and focus instead on a "flying fish" Merfolk deck. Ironically, the deck ended up losing all copies of *Wonder* and *Keep Watch*, its only cards from *Judgment*. I did have four copies of *Grip of Amnesia* in the sideboard, though.

Moldy Fish		
Pre-Onslaught Standard deck		
Main Deck 60 cards		
22 Island	1 Ambassador Laquatus	4 AEther Burst
22 lands	4 Coral Merfolk	4 Counterspell
	4 Lord of Atlantis	3 Deep Analysis
	2 Mahamoti Djinn	3 Obsessive Search
	4 Merfolk Looter	2 Standstill
	3 Reef Shaman	16 other spells
	4 Vodalian Merchant	
	22 creatures	

Now *Onslaught* is here and it's time for me to pick a new deck with which to tinker; however, I have been entirely paralyzed with choice. My collection is now too big for me to have a clear direction, and too small for me to easily build any of the 100,000 decks in my head. For some deckbuilders out there, this problem may sound familiar.

THE SOLUTION

At the bottom of the page, there is a list of 100 cards, four of each color for each set currently legal in Standard. The list represents cards that fit, I think, into the spirit of "House of Cards." For the most part, they are also cards that fit my particular playing and deckbuilding style which means they

- emphasize the use of creatures
- are impressive and splashy
- are underused or overlooked
- seem like loads of fun to play

I am going to make the card that gets the most votes the focus of my next *Magic Online* deck. In fact, my first draft of the deck will use *four* copies of the chosen card (even if it's a Legend), and the deck will be built to maximize the card's impact throughout the ensuing versions.

This means you can vote for a card for any number of reasons.

- It's your favorite card.
- You have four copies of the card and can't figure out how to use it.
- You think the card is particularly fun to build a deck around.

- You think the card is particularly challenging to build a deck around.
- You have always wanted to build a deck around the card.
- You think the card deserves a deck built around it.
- You would laugh playing against a deck built around the card.

Even if a card on the list currently shows up in popular tournament decks, don't necessarily shy away from picking it. Knowing me, whatever deck I play will have a unique twist.

In three weeks, I'll announce the winning card and provide a number of deck ideas along with first-draft decklists for each idea. You'll then vote on your favorite deck, I'll trade for the cards, and then I'll hang out in the **Casual Constructed Games** room in *Magic Online* playing the deck. Before the *Legions* release at the beginning of February, I'll check in with an article that describes the many ways the deck has evolved through playing.

But I'm getting ahead of myself. For now, peruse the list below and pick five cards you want to see as the focus of my next deck. The vote leader after a week is my new best friend.

Pick me something fun!

—j

Card

- Auramancer
- Aven Brigadier
- Balthor the Defiled
- Balthor the Stout
- Book Burning
- Breath of Life
- Broodhatch Nantuko
- Cabal Patriarch
- Cephalid Constable
- Cephalid Vandal
- Chainer, Dementia Master
- Clone
- Cognivore
- Confiscate
- Crush of Wurms
- Cultural Exchange
- Dawn of the Dead
- Devastating Dreams
- Doomed Necromancer
- Druid's Call
- Dwarven Bloodboiler
- Earnest Fellowship
- Elephant Guide
- Epicenter
- Equal Treatment
- Equilibrium
- Erhnam Djinn
- Erratic Explosion
- Gorilla Titan
- Greed
- Grave Consequences
- Gravespawn Sovereign
- Gurzigost
- Hypnox
- Hypochondria
- Improvised Armor
- Inferno
- Ivy Elemental

- Ixidor, Reality Sculptor
- Jareth, Leonine Titan
- Kamahl, Fist of Krosa
- Kamahl, Pit Fighter
- Kirtar's Wrath
- Llawan, Cephalid Empress
- Malevolent Awakening
- Maro
- Masked Gorgon
- Mistform Dreamer
- Mortivore
- Mythic Proportions
- Nantuko Cultivator
- Nature's Revolt
- Nightmare
- Nomad Mythmaker
- Okk
- Patriarch's Bidding
- Pedantic Learning
- Phantom Nantuko
- Plagiarize
- Possessed Aven
- Possessed Barbarian
- Possessed Centaur
- Possessed Nomad
- Pulsating Illusion
- Pulsemage Advocate
- Radiate
- Reborn Hero
- Resilient Wanderer
- Reprocess
- Revenant
- Rolling Stones
- Rorix Bladewing
- Scalpelexis
- Seismic Assault
- Sengir Vampire
- Serra Angel
- Serra's Embrace
- Shivan Dragon
- Sigil of the New Dawn
- Silent Specter
- Silver Seraph
- Skirk Fire Marshal
- Soulgorger Orgg
- Spelljack
- Steam Vines
- Sutured Ghoul
- Tephra-derm
- Terravore
- Test of Endurance
- Tolarian Winds

- Uktabi Wildcats
- Voice of the Woods
- Volley of Boulders
- Wall of Wonder
- Wheel and Deal
- Worldgorger Dragon
- Wormfang Behemoth
- Yavimaya Enchantress
- Zombie Infestation
- Zoologist

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