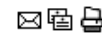
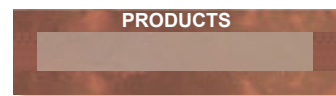


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A Deck for doctorjay

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House of Cards
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PRO TOUR-VALENCIA

Back in [mid-December](#), I started the process of building my next *Magic Online* Standard deck. I brainstormed a list of 100 cards—4 of each color in *Seventh Edition*, *Odyssey*, *Torment*, *Judgment*, and *Onslaught*—and asked you to vote for which card you would like to see as the centerpiece of my new deck. Over the last three weeks, I have slowly (dang you, *Legions* previews!) unveiled vote-getters 100 through 4. Here are the top 3:

In third place, with 517 votes, was *Scalpelexis*. Apparently the lure of running an opponent out of cards is still alive and well. Maybe someday soon I can dedicate an article to *Millstone*-like deck strategies.

The runner-up, with 579 votes, was *Clone*. I'm actually thankful that *Clone* wasn't chosen, even though I voted for it myself (shhhh! I vote in my own polls!). The number of decks would have been ridiculous, and I'm not sure any of them would truly use *Clone* as a *centerpiece* as much as a fun trick. Still, it would have been a great ride.

Which brings us to the winner, with a whopping 663 votes: *Kamahl, Fist of Krosa*.

Qty	Card Name	Type	Mana Cost
4	Kamahl's Desire	Enchant Creature	1
4	Kamahl's Sledge	Sorcery	5
7	Kamahl's Summons	Sorcery	3
4	Kamahl, Fist of Krosa	Creature	4
4	Kamahl, Pit Fighter	Creature	4

The rest of today's article concerns the great green Kamahl. I am using a slightly different style—more structure and an overabundance of bullet points—because I have a lot to say before getting you to the deck-vote at the end of the article. Thank you in advance for sticking with me during this longer-than-usual House of Cards installment.

Step 1: Know Thyself

First off, let me just say that I'm thrilled. *Kamahl, Fist of Krosa* is an interesting, beefy card that lends itself to lots of distinctly different deck ideas. Beyond that, it's green which as we all know by now is my favorite *Magic* color. Although I was very geared up to make decks around something like *Earnest Fellowship*, I love that the winner is Kamahl.

So okay, let's say for a moment that you have, through luck or conniving, ended up with four copies of *Kamahl, Fist of Krosa* and you desperately want to use them in a deck. Owning four copies of an interesting card is certainly the genesis of many, many decks out there.

(Incidentally, go [here](#) to see a discussion of deck genesis. I wrote it right after the release of *Planeshift*, and if I could make this old article a prerequisite for the one you're reading, I would. Luckily for you I suck at enforcing rules. So I'll just say that the cool people you know already read it.)

Clearly, four copies of a card do not make a deck. So where do you begin?

Here are some questions I think any deck with *Kamahl, Fist of Krosa* needs to answer in order to be successful. Given any card you want to make a centerpiece, you should generate a similar list based on possible uses for the card, its strengths, its potential weaknesses, and the strategy (or strategies) in which it fits. For Kamahl, I think a good preliminary list goes something like...

- Do I want to animate lands? If so, do I want to animate my lands, my opponent's lands, or both?
- Do I have enough other creatures to make Kamahl's built-in "Overrun" ability a legitimate threat?
- How do I load my deck with mana to reliably reach 4GGG to cast Kamahl and to use his dual abilities each turn?
- What do I do with extra copies of Kamahl that end up in my hand, since he is a Legend?

These questions are Kamahl-specific, and should influence what kind of deck you make and what cards you eventually include in your deck. Other questions—for example, "Is my strategy aggressive, combo, or control-oriented?" "How do I deal with opposing creatures?" "How do I deal with opposing enchantments and/or artifacts?"—are a natural part of deckbuilding and should dictate your card choices as much if not more than the card-specific ones.



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RULES



You should also at least think about your own boundaries for deckbuilding. Are you making a deck for Friday Night Magic? If so, you had better use Standard-legal cards. Are you on a limited budget? Have you vowed never to make a deck with **Wonder**? Do you *need* to beat your sister's monoblack deck?

For me, these boundaries look something like this:

- The deck is going to be Standard, because Standard is my favorite format. Since I also want to use *Legions* cards, the deck will be Standard post-*Legions*.
- I am not particularly enamored with trading my soul for the land in my deck, so I want the deck to be no more than two colors. If I can get away with it being monogreen, I will.
- Similarly, a set of four *Birds of Paradise* continue to elude me on *Magic Online*. In order to not slow my playtesting—and so other people can reasonably create the deck—no *Birds of Paradise* for me.
- I'm committed to keeping **Kamahl, Fist of Krosa** the deck centerpiece. If the deck starts to evolve away from Kamahl, it's time to rethink my deck.
- I want this deck to be unique, so I'll shy away from ideas I think might "drift" into a popular archetype through playtesting (many blue/green decks come to mind).
- The goal here is a fun deck to play, not necessarily a tournament-winning deck. I am not going to take the Pro Tour by storm with **Kamahl, Fist of Krosa**. But I sure can laugh my butt off when I beat my friends with it.

Admittedly, this is a pretty weird boundary list, and slanted heavily towards making this experiment an entertaining experience to read about. Then again, if your friend mocks you by saying "Kilnmouth Dragon is for losers. Now my unbeatable **Astral Slide** deck..." your list of boundaries would look pretty weird too. We live weird lives, you and I.

Step 2: Brainstorm, Baby

Now it's time to start scribbling decks onto a piece of paper, writing card names on your extra lands, or booting up *Magic Online*—however it is you make first-draft deck ideas. I prefer the old pen-and-paper routine.

Here is what I did to generate this list of decks:

- I looked at every single card legal in Standard and asked myself, "How would this work with Kamahl?"
- If I had a deck idea, I scribbled the idea down on a piece of paper.
- When I was done looking through the cards, I started at the top of my list and started writing down decklists.
- If a new idea popped up mid-list, I made sure to write it down.
- When I was finished making decklists, I looked to see if I had every two-color green/X combination covered. I then challenged myself to think of ideas in the missing color combinations.
- I carried around my decklists for a few days, looking at them in idle moments and making changes (based solely on theory at this point).
- I tossed out the ideas I didn't like.



The result is seven initial decklists I might enjoy developing further. In the real world, I would probably gravitate towards 1-2 of these decklists and start there. Today, though, I've decided to let *you* decide which deck idea I pursue.

Below are my deck ideas, including a brief description of the idea and a first-draft decklist. I feel the need to point out that *the decklist will drastically change through playtesting*. So as much as possible, focus on the deck *idea* first, and the specific *decklist* second. The idea will dictate the final deck a lot more than my silly first draft.

Deck 1: Elf Beatdown

A six-mana-Legend-**Overrun**-on-a-stick is weird in that it suggests both an aggressive focus and a lot of mana. Luckily, some creature themes allow for a deck that is both mana-intensive and creature-focused. Back in the days of *Urza's Saga*, a deck called Elf-Ball surfaced that either used lots of Elf mana via **Priest of Titania** to fuel a big **Fireball** or smashed face with **Coat of Arms**. Since Elves are back with *Onslaught* (albeit without **Priest of Titania**), a similar deck can probably work well with Kamahl. The goal here is to get Elves out for early damage and mid-game mana to let Kamahl do his thing.

The Elf Deck		
Standard-legal Kamahl deck		
Main Deck 60 cards		
20 Forest	4 Llanowar Elf	4 Elvish Guidance

2 Wirewood Lodge	4 Elvish Vanguard	3 Slate of Ancestry
22 lands	4 Stonewood Invoker	
	4 Wirewood Hivemaster	7 other spells
	4 Wirewood Channeler	
	4 Kamahl, Fist of Krosa	
	3 Elvish Lyrist	
	2 Elvish Soultiller	
	2 Voice of the Woods	
	31 creatures	

Deck 2: Goblin Beatdown

Oddly enough, *Onslaught* also provides means for Goblins to generate explosive mana. Unlike the Elves, Goblins rely on one-shot bursts of mana that better kill a lot of stuff—preferably your opponent—before the dust settles. This may make Goblins appear an inferior strategy, except that Elves will never give you: **Goblin Machinist**, which is another mana-sink like Kamahl; **Goblin Sharpshooter**, which can kill off opposing animated land (more on this in Deck #4), and **Goblin Goon**, which shines when Kamahl animates your own land. Squee would be so proud.

The Goblin Deck		
Standard-legal Kamahl deck		
Main Deck 60 cards		
10 Forest	4 Wall of Mulch	4 Brightstone Ritual
10 Mountain	4 Goblin Goon	3 Naturalize
4 Karplusan Forest	4 Goblin Clearcutter	3 Explosive Vegetation
24 lands	4 Kamahl, Fist of Krosa	1 Riptide Replicator
	3 Goblin Sharpshooter	11 other spells
	3 Goblin Machinist	
	2 Goblin Matron	
	1 Warbreak Trumpeter	
	25 creatures	

Deck 3: Druid Beatdown

The final “tribe” deck I offer up is based directly on Kamahl himself. He is a Legend, but he is a Druid Legend. Thanks to **Seton, Krosan Protector**, the Druids have their own Elf-Ball feel to them. In fact, **Druid Lyrist** can do everything that Elvish Lyrist can do, **Werebear** with threshold can kick **Llanowar Elf**'s butt, and **Nantuko Tracer** helps combat those annoying **Wonders** and **Roars of the Wurm**. My favorite aspect of Druids, though, is **Broodhatch Nantuko**, which interacts with a built-in **Overrun** in very fun ways. For theme purists, a Druid Deck lets Kamahl hang out with his own people *and* his best buddy from the *Odyssey* storyline.

The Druid Deck		
Standard-legal Kamahl deck		
Main Deck 60 cards		
23 Forest	4 Druid Lyrist	4 Insist
23 lands	4 Broodhatch Nantuko	3 Steely Resolve
	4 Nantuko Tracer	7 other spells
	4 Werebear	
	4 Seton, Krosan Protector	
	4 Gigapede	
	4 Kamahl, Fist of Krosa	
	2 Nantuko Vigilante	
	30 creatures	

Deck 4: Sharpshooter LD

When I mentioned **Goblin Sharpshooter** and Kamahl, you may have said “!” I don't usually like to play land-destruction (LD) decks for two reasons: 1) They tend to be un-fun to play against, so it's hard to find repeat opponents, and 2) They either work wonderfully or fall flat on their faces with no middle ground. So in the past I have only liked LD decks if they were quirky and destroyed land in unique ways. I think the Sharpshooter-Kamahl trick, **Price of Glory**, and **Custody Battle** definitely qualifies as quirky. Heck, it might be the most fun way to lose to LD I have ever seen.

The Goblin Sharpshooter Deck		
Standard-legal Kamahl deck		
Main Deck 62 cards		
12 Forest	4 Goblin Sharpshooter	4 Custody Battle
12 Mountain	4 Kamahl, Fist of Krosa	4 Stone Rain
4 Karplusan Forest	3 Wall of Mulch	4 Explosive Vegetation
28 lands	3 Terravore	4 Creeping Mold
	14 creatures	3 Price of Glory
		1 Mirari
		20 other spells

Deck 5: Last Laugh LD

I thought of a second quirky LD strategy in [Last Laugh](#). [Last Laugh](#) has always had that BOOM! aspect to it, setting off a chain reaction that eventually cleared the table of creatures. With Kamahl, though, those “creatures” can also be opposing land (I thought to use [Screams of the Damned](#) for this same trick, but liked the feel with [Last Laugh](#) better). This deck, more than the others, probably needs the most revision right out of the gates to be competitive, but the idea is to make opponents’ land into creatures and then blow up the world. Or, at least, their side of the world. As a [Last Laugh](#) player might say, Tee Hee!

The Last Laugh Deck		
Standard-legal Kamahl deck		
Main Deck 60 cards		
13 Swamp	4 Wild Mongrel	4 Explosive Vegetation
8 Forest	4 Crypt Rats	4 Last Laugh
4 Tainted Forest	4 Kamahl, Fist of Krosa	3 Smother
25 lands	3 Withered Wretch	2 Naturalize
	3 Shambling Swarm	2 Diabolic Tutor
	2 Caller of the Claw	15 other spells
	20 creatures	

Deck 6: Land Deck

Many moons ago—or October 24th—I discussed a particular kind of mana-intensive deck I called a [Land Deck](#). Land Decks make me happy; They get lots of land onto the table while thinning land from your library so that later in the game you are casting big spells with big effects. Kamahl is a big spell, big effect kind of guy who happens to love land enough to attack with it. It should come as a surprise to no one, then, that a Kamahl Land Deck was my first deck idea in this brainstorming exercise. I particularly like splashing white for [Mirari's Wake](#), which has tons of synergy with Kamahl.

The Land Deck		
Standard-legal Kamahl deck		
Main Deck 60 cards		
17 Forest	4 Diligent Farmhand	4 Deep Reconnaissance
4 Plains	4 Kamahl, Fist of Krosa	4 Explosive Vegetation
3 Nantuko Monastery	4 Krosan Tusker	4 Centaur Glade
2 Krosan Verge	2 Seedborn Muse	4 Mirari's Wake
26 lands	14 creatures	2 Slate of Ancestry
		1 Riptide Replicator
		1 Aladdin's Ring
		20 other spells

Deck 7: Wall-Wonder

Lastly, there is a different tactic to take with Kamahl. Rather than trying to accelerate my mana, I could instead focus on defending myself from harm while allowing my mana base to develop normally. This strategy means dropping Walls early and bouncing away threats via [AEther Burst](#). With enough mana, it is then time to swing to the offensive strategy and beat down with a big, trampling, flying (thanks to [Wonder](#)) army. I worry that this deck might become a normal [Wild Mongrel](#) blue/green creation, so the card choices might vary dramatically later. For

now, though, the idea of attacking with huge flying Walls makes me kind of giddy. (*Where is Wall of Wonder? – Aaron*)

The Wall Deck

Standard-legal Kamahl deck

Main Deck
60 cards


12 Forest	4 Broodhatch Nantuko	4 AEther Burst
12 Island	4 Wall of Deceit	4 Deep Analysis
<hr/>		
24 lands	4 Wall of Mulch	8 other spells
	4 Wild Mongrel	
	4 Mistform Wall	
	4 Wonder	
	4 Kamahl, Fist of Krosa	
<hr/>		
28 creatures		

Just so you get a sense of the breadth of my brainstorming, here are some other ideas that I decided, for various reasons, not to pursue:

- A **Seedborn Muse** deck
- Squirrel beatdown
- A **Fallen Angel/Nantuko Husk** deck
- An **Opposition** deck
- A **Beast of Burden** deck
- An **Epic Struggle** deck
- Bird beatdown
- A **Wayward Angel** deck
- Beast beatdown
- A **Meekstone** or **Ensnaring Bridge** deck
- Green/black reanimator

Cast Your Vote!

Okay, now that you have picked my deck centerpiece, it is now time to pick where I start my journey. Which idea would you like to see me pursue? Vote for one deck idea, and I will start my Magic Online building and playing. In a month or two, I'll check in to show you how the deck changed through playtesting and how my first-draft deck evolved into a final, fun deck.

Which deck idea would you like to see Jay develop further? 

- The Elf Deck
- The Goblin Deck
- The Druid Deck
- The Goblin Sharpshooter Deck
- The Last Laugh Deck
- The Land Deck
- The Wall Deck

Next Week: I am one with the feather.

-j

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