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# Building the Good Decks - 1

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Learning Curve  
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The time for Regionals is almost upon us. Regionals, for those that don't know, is a series of Standard tournaments held on the same day all over the country (and on different days in other parts of the World). Just about anyone can play in them, and the top performers at each event get invited to their country's Magic national championships. You can do some more research on US Regionals [here](#) (other countries, check [here](#)), plus I'll be going over more details about the event as the month goes on.

If you plan to play in Regionals, or even if you just play smaller, local Standard tournaments (such as [Friday Night Magic](#)), you should have some awareness of what the very best decks available are. Our sister website, [Sideboard.com](#), often provides the latest decklists from high-level tournaments and goes over them in depth. Over the course of the next few weeks I am going to be discussing some of the dominant decks in the current Standard format with a focus on the more casual player as opposed to the top-notch pro. I will try to prioritize which rares you should be trading for and which ones can be replaced with more available cards while trying to preserve the deck's competitiveness. After a few weeks we will have compiled a pretty impressive array of decks. You can choose to use this array either as an arsenal of weapons or as a gauntlet to test decks of your own fiendish design against. Even if you are against the idea of copying someone else's deck, you should have an awareness of the existence of these decks and expect a certain percentage of your opponents in any Standard tournament to be playing with them. Know thy enemy!

## Red-Green Beatdown

The first deck we are going to look at was advocated [on the Sideboard](#) by the world's best Magic player, Kai Budde. When the world's best Magic player speaks, people clearly listen. Of the 175 competitors at the recent [Last Chance Qualifier](#) in Venice, more than one-quarter were running a deck very similar to the list Kai championed.

Red-Green Beatdown		Kai Budde	
Main Deck		Sideboard	
60 cards			
2 Barbarian Ring	4 Call of the Herd	3 Caller of the Claw	
6 Forest	4 Elephant Guide	4 Compost	
4 Karplusan Forest	4 Firebolt	4 Ensnaring Bridge	
2 Mossfire Valley	4 Violent Eruption	2 Naturalize	
4 Mountain	4 Volcanic Hammer	2 Phantom Centaur	
4 Wooded Foothills			
	20 other spells	15 sideboard cards	
22 lands			
4 Basking Rootwalla			
4 Grim Lavamancer			
4 Llanowar Elves			
2 Skirk Marauder			
4 Wild Mongrel			
18 creatures			

Even more impressive than the sheer volume of players utilizing the deck—which would seem to speak more to Kai's influence over the worldwide Magic community—is the fact that it occupied half of the brackets in the Top 8. Its not surprising though. The deck is fast, powerful and as easy to play as it gets for a top tier deck. The deck has a wide variety of super-fast draws that can leave an opponent back on his heels flailing to recover. Whether it is a second turn Wild Mongrel enchanted on turn three with Elephant Guide or a lowly Llanowar Elves powering up a turn-two Call of the Herd token followed by another on the next; this deck poses questions that must be answered very quickly.

Most current versions of the deck have opted to put Phantom Centaurs into the deck, edging out the Skirk Marauder. What does the deck you are



currently playing do about a turn three **Phantom Centaur**? Most decks have few answers and fewer turns than that to find them.

One of the things I find so interesting about this build is that for an aggressive beatdown deck it has tremendous card advantage built into it. **Call of the Herd** comes back for more as does the **Firebolt**. While **Elephant Guide** is not actually card advantage it does even out if your opponent deals with the enchanted creature as opposed to the traditional card *disadvantage* inherent to most creature enchantments. Every card in your graveyard helps to fuel your **Grim Lavamancers**. **Violent Eruption** pumps up your **Wild Mongrel** before it kills multiple creatures. The **Phantom Centaur** will often eat multiple creatures and spells before it finally goes to the graveyard and so on.



## What to Get

So which cards should you be trading for? Which ones can you do without?

Priority number one has to be **Call of the Herd**. There is not really a suitable replacement for your two Elephants. With only **Wild Mongrel** as a discard method you cannot count on **Roar of the Wurm** being in your graveyard on turn three/four. Besides, **Roar of the Wurm** does not *really* provide you with two creatures since its hard casting cost is an impossible seven mana. **Beast Attack** is another option with a more reasonable initial casting cost but, at five mana, it is still turns and turns worse than **Call of the Herd**. It is an instant but it just does not cut the mustard here. I think the closest you can come to replacing the Calls is to play four maindeck **Phantom Centaurs** and replace the slot they occupied with something else. If you can only get a few Calls I definitely recommend upping the Centaurs to fill their shoes. Unfortunately, if you are unable to get any **Call of the Herds** you might want to look at another deck because the speed of the deck will take a critical hit.

**Your Red-Green Priority List**

**What Rares to trade for (in order)**

1. Call of the Herd
2. Wooded Foothills
3. Karplusan Forest
4. Grim Lavamancer

**Wooded Foothills** is a must-have, not just for this deck but for any respectable deckbuilding collection. The new fetch lands are going to part of the **Magic** landscape for a loooong time. They already see play in every constructed format and will be a fixture in Standard for the next year and half. Not only do they fix your mana but they provide fodder for your **Grim Lavamancer** and thin your deck of lands increasing the likelihood of drawing threats in the mid to late game. Don't get me wrong, if you don't have these lands, the deck will still work. In fact, their contribution is quite subtle but take my word for it, they are worth the effort to acquire.

**Karplusan Forest** is a card you should have as a deckbuilding staple and you cannot go wrong trading for these. Even outside of Standard, they will still see play in Extended and other formats. If you have a mix of **Mossfire Valleys** and **Karplusans** you can mix and match those six lands. If you own **Birds of Paradise** you can play with those in place of **Llanowar Elves** to make up for a shortfall of "dual lands." **Birds** might actually be the right call if you are expecting a lot of mirror matches. A **Bird** enchanted with an **Elephant Guide** can break a gummed-up ground battle pretty quickly!

**Grim Lavamancer** is the remaining maindeck rare that we need to discuss. I think we have the widest array of options here, but be aware that none will really replicate the efficiency and card advantage of this 1/1 for 2. You could attempt to replace him with more removal. I would look to **Lava Dart** here. It also finishes off creatures that are too big for your removal spells and you can reuse it. **Shock**, **Fiery Temper**, and even **Flame Burst** can all occupy this slot as well but I think they will all come up short.



If you are running **Skirk Marauders** maybe **Sparksmith** is an option. Maybe but unlikely—he does not take aim at your opponent and you really don't have enough Goblins, even with the Marauder, for him to be efficient. You can also choose to run the Marauder itself in that spot. To me, the creature that seems like the likeliest candidate to assume the duties of the Lavamancer goes all the way back to Alpha—the **Orcish Artillery**. You might need to play with your mana a little to support the 2 in the casting cost but the Artillery is solid man with a reasonable toughness. The three damage he does to you is a small price to pay for the flexibility of killing creatures or finishing off your opponent—plus, he's only an uncommon!

So a rareless version of deck listed above might look something like this:

**Red-Green Beatdown Lite!** H.dec

**Main Deck**  
60 cards

4 <b>Barbarian Ring</b>	4 <b>Basking Rootwalla</b>	4 <b>Elephant Guide</b>
11 <b>Forest</b>	4 <b>Llanowar Elves</b>	4 <b>Firebolt</b>
7 <b>Mountain</b>	4 <b>Orcish Artillery</b>	4 <b>Violent Eruption</b>
22 lands	4 <b>Phantom Centaur</b>	4 <b>Volcanic Hammer</b>
		16 other spells

2 Skirk Marauder  
4 Wild Mongrel

22 creatures

Please remember that you don't need to run out and get all these cards right away. You can proxy some of the key cards and test it out with friends to see what is to your liking. Besides, I will be looking at some other decks in the coming weeks and you might find you like what's waiting around the next Learning Curve even better!

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Brian David-Marshall has been involved in **Magic** since 1994 when he was violently shaken by someone searching for the game. He has organized tournaments, run a store, and is currently the Pro Tour Historian. His latest venture is [Top8Magic.com](http://Top8Magic.com), the publishing house that is releasing Michael J. Flores: Deckade.



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