

Mark Gottlieb

Thursday, April 10, 2003

Hiya! I've been reading my mail, and I've gotta say that you folks are great — you're as bonkers as I am. I respect that. I've learned a lot from my correspondence. For example, I learned that Katie, a 12-year-old British girl, has a friend Samantha who thinks I'm "pretty cute." Right on! (Hey, it's better than I did when I was 12 myself.) Sam, in oh, let's say, 9 years, I'm all yours.

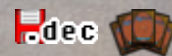
But aside from using this column as my personal dating service (Ladies, I'm a cat person and I enjoy romantic walks from my computer room to my TV room), I've found it's also a pretty good place to dish out steaming helpings of **Magic** wackiness. This week, I thought I'd share with you some of the great deck ideas that some of you have shared with me.

Echoes Tracer

Today's first deck was one that I had the great pleasure of being trounced by on **Magic Online**. I often test my decks for this column in the Casual Constructed room under the username Doctor Wombat, and a couple of weeks ago I unwittingly sat down opposite the (apparently) maddeningly brilliant Guillaume Daoust. In this game, he played Mana Echoes on turn 4 and Mana Echoes on turn 5. On turn 6, with only five mountains, he played Goblin Taskmaster (which has been replaced by Gempalm Incinerator in his latest decklist), Goblin Matron, Goblin Matron, Goblin Matron, Skirk Prospector, and a face-down Warbreak Trumpeter that he flipped on the same turn for ten extra Goblins. He had to sac a Matron to the Prospector to do that, but that's still 0 to 15 1/1 Goblins in a single turn. Had he had the finisher in his hand, Guillaume could have Blazed me for a nice round 300 damage(!) or created that many hasty Firecat tokens. Alas, he had to settle for a weenie onrush for two turns to take the game. Needless to say, I was impressed and amused. Here's the deck (which I took the liberty of naming):



Echoing Trumpet



Main Deck

60 cards

24 Mountain

24 lands

4 Gempalm Incinerator

3 Goblin Matron

4 Goblin Sledder

4 Skirk Prospector

4 Warbreak Trumpeter

19 creatures

3 Blaze

3 Fire Diamond

4 Firecat Blitz

4 Mana Echoes

1 Riptide Replicator

2 Slate of Ancestry

17 other spells

Guillaume's comments:

"Incinerators are late additions and they help you survive the early game against creature decks while cycling to the important puzzle pieces. As you saw, the deck can sometimes go off on turn 4 or 5 creating an enormous amount of mana. The main problem is that without Echoes, it just feels like a really bad Goblin deck. And splashing to help the consistency would mean negating the powerful effect of flashing back Blitz."

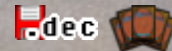
So sometimes the combo won't come, but the rest of the time it's all kinds of fun. Thanks, Guillaume!

Tim, Power Gamer

The next deck in today's showcase comes from Bryan Berghorn. From what I know about him, which is nothing, he's not one to prattle on and on about his accomplishments. In fact, all he had to say about the deck he sent me was "Very fun to play." Which is the jackpot phrase, really. Bryan's deck is a "Draw-Go" variant: pure blue control that sits back and does nothing but counter your spells. This wouldn't be all that remarkable except for two striking features: the deck has no rare cards, and its victory condition is four copies of Prodigal Sorcerer. That's it. The original little Wizard comes packing pockets full of countermagic and bounce, and he bets, with the help of Arcane Lab, that he can hold you off for twenty turns. It's a gutsy game Bryan's playing, and I've gotta hand it to him for the premise.



Tim's Revenge *Lite!*



Main Deck 60 cards

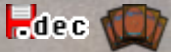
21 Island	4 Prodigal Sorcerer	4 Aether Burst
21 lands	4 creatures	4 Arcane Laboratory
		4 Boomerang
		4 Circular Logic
		3 Compulsion
		4 Counterspell
		3 Force Spike
		3 Memory Lapse
		3 Obsessive Search
		3 Syncopate
		35 other spells

My own preferences would be to have some more land, and I think Lonely Sandbars are necessary here. Complicate would probably help too. But tuning this up to tournament caliber misses the point.

If any of you new players out there want to give an old-school control deck a try just to see how it works, this is a nice, low-cost place to start. Thanks, Bryan!

Land Locked

Let's get weird, shall we? Come to think of it, I'm reasonably sure we're all already weird. So we're in good shape for the next deck. Here's what its creator, Matt Bartmus, has to say: "Basically, I came up with a joke of a combo: Use Nature's Revolt to make all the lands creatures, then use Callous Oppressor to steal your opponent's lands (they have no creature type), then sacrifice them to the Sylvan Safekeeper. I had a Terravore, so it seemed like a fun thing to do. I added some other stuff like Squirrel Nest/Opposition for backup and Think Tank for card advantage, and finally Seedborn Muse sped up the lockdown." I don't know about this whole Squirrel Opposition lockdown, Matt; I have to take off some rogue points there. But Revolt/Oppressor/Safekeeper is a thing of beauty.

Claim Jumper				
Main Deck <i>60 cards</i>				
15 Forest	4 Birds of Paradise	4 Nature's Revolt		
10 Island	4 Callous Oppressor	3 Opposition		
<hr/>	3 Nantuko Cultivator	4 Squirrel Nest		
25 lands	2 Seedborn Muse	4 Think Tank		
	4 Sylvan Safekeeper	<hr/>		
	3 Terravore	15 other spells		
	<hr/>			
	20 creatures			

Matt continues: "The thing is that I thought I would get laughs from friends, but instead they were smashed to a pulp from the games." In order to "fix" that, I'd consider pulling the Nests and Oppositions in favor of strengthening the land theft combo. Chamber of Manipulation is another way to steal animated lands, and Cephalid Scout is another way to dispose of them while getting back the card you pitched to the Chamber. Not that pulpifying your friends is bad, of course! And backing up your goofy combo with a proven combo is a strong strategy. I'm just presenting the option of going all-out with the goofy combo. Thanks, Matt!

Foreigner Language

Frank D. sent me this week's final deck. It's a pure thematic construction based on, of all things, titles of Foreigner songs. Yeah, I didn't believe it either. Here's what he had to say: "Fill your eyes with Double Vision! Now you can have all the powers of '70s supergroup Foreigner. I thought this up the first time I saw Head Games. I've been trying to come up with a decent decklist ever since." Wow. I tweaked his decklist a bit, adding in such things as Bloodfire Infusion (too perfect for "Hot Blooded") and Glowrider (the perfect "Spellbinder" that complements both Frank's Cleric theme and his land destruction theme.) There's a lot of leeway here, and all you Foreigner fans can take this deck and run with it in a few different directions.

Though Frank named his deck after the song "Dirty White Boy," I'm going to exercise my I'm-the-author prerogative and change the name to a different Foreigner song. After each card is the song

title it's based on. (Bonus points for getting a basic land to tie in as well; usually those are freebies in theme decks.) So next up on station WOTC, chill out with our **Magic** block of classic rock . . . here's Foreigner!

I'm Gonna Win

Main Deck
60 cards

4 Mountain (Mountain of Love) 9 Plains 2 Starlit Sanctum (Starrider) 9 Swamp <hr style="width: 20%; margin: 5px 0;"/> 24 lands	4 Cabal Archon (The Damage Is Done) 2 Enslaved Dwarf (Prisoner of Love) 4 Fallen Cleric (Dirty White Boy) 1 Glowrider (Spellbinder) 2 Guard Dogs (Big Dog) 2 Headhunter (Headknocker) 4 True Believer (I Keep Hoping) 1 Visara the Dreadful (Woman in Black) <hr style="width: 20%; margin: 5px 0;"/> 20 creatures	1 Bloodfire Infusion (Hot Blooded) 2 Festering Wound (Flesh Wound) 2 Head Games (Head Games) 1 Heartstone (Heart Turns to Stone) 2 Icequake (Cold as Ice) 2 Misery Charm (I Don't Want to Live Without You) 2 Rain of Tears (Rain) 2 Sigil of the New Dawn (The Modern Day) 1 Soul Feast (Hole in My Soul) 1 Tooth and Claw (Tooth and Nail) <hr style="width: 20%; margin: 5px 0;"/> 16 other spells
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Thanks for the deck, Frank. I like the concept so much that I'm using it as the launching point for my first Deck Challenge right . . . about . . . now.

Rock & Roll Deck Challenge

The premise is simple: Send me a 60-card deck like the one above whose theme is a famous rock band. Every card in the deck must tie in to the band somehow. It's up to you how to draw the connections (maybe the card names are suggested by songs, as above; maybe the art is relevant; maybe there's an overarching motif). Here's the important thing: **You must explain the connections.** I don't know every song by every band, so you have to tell me why you included the cards you did. Here's the other important thing: **The deck must work.** Frank had a Cleric deck backed up with land destruction. Your deck doesn't have to be great, but it has to make sense. In your submission, explain the premise of your deck in a short paragraph. You can use cards from any set, but I'm more likely to include Standard-legal stuff in the column. Please: only one entry per person, put "ROCK DECK" in the subject line, and submit your deck by May 1. (The column with the results won't appear until after *Scourge* previews are over.) Be creative, and have fun!



-Mark

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