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Building the Good Decks - 2

Brian David-Marshall
Learning Curve
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Last week I began a look at Standard decks that will continue up until the weekend of US Regionals. You may want to play one of the decks in a major event like Regionals or even in a local Friday Night Magic tournament. One of the goals of this series is to look at the high-end rares in each deck and give you some sort of prioritized list of which cards you should be trading for and, where possible, which cards can be replaced with more common alternatives. If you are loathe to play a deck that is not your own unique creation then I hope you use the decks as a litmus test to make sure your deck can handle the known entities of the environment.

Reanimator

One deck that has really had my attention since the Masters Gateway in Chicago is Reanimator—although it was called "Ignition" at the time. The deck was designed by Pro player Ben Seck and tuned by Bob Maher, Jr. and Dave Williams. The deck failed to capture a Masters berth but it captured the hearts and minds of players both in attendance and following the event online.

Ignition is based around getting a powerful, expensive creature into your graveyard and bringing it into play with either **Doomed Necromancer** or one of two reanimation spells—**Zombify** or the threshold-dependent **Stitch Together**. Creatures can be put into the graveyard with **Buried Alive**, which performs multiple tasks here. Not only is it putting the creatures you want in play into your graveyard but it is also tossing in an **Anger** as well. **Anger** makes for a hasty **Visara** or **Phantom Nishoba**—not to mention putting a spring in the step of the **Doomed Necromancer**. **Buried Alive** also brings you 4/7 of the way to threshold all by itself, making **Stitch Together** better.

If you happen to draw a key creature, the deck has multiple methods to discard it, such as **Last Rites** and **Sickening Dreams**. Once again, these cards are also instrumental in getting you to threshold.

One of the most powerful cards in the deck is **Burning Wish**. The deck plays an extra copy of **Buried Alive**, **Cabal Therapy**, **Zombify**, **Stitch Together**, and **Sickening Dreams** in the sideboard, giving it virtually more than four copies of any of those cards. It also plays some situationally powerful spells such as **Overmaster**, **Haunting Echoes**, and **Earthquake**. With **Burning Wish** there is no need to clog up your deck with cards that might not be right in every situation. This allows the Ignition player to get the card he needs when needed.



Ignition		
PT Chicago Masters Gateway 2003 - Ben Seck		
Main Deck	Sideboard	
60 cards		
4 Barren Moor	3 Buried Alive	1 Buried Alive
4 Bloodstained Mire	4 Burning Wish	1 Cabal Therapy
6 Mountain	2 Cabal Therapy	1 Decompose
11 Swamp	4 Duress	1 Demolish
25 lands	1 Last Rites	1 Haunting Echoes
	3 Sickening Dreams	1 Innocent Blood
	2 Stitch Together	1 Overmaster
	2 Zombify	1 Patriarch's Bidding
2 Anger	21 other spells	1 Recoup
1 Arcanis the Omnipotent		1 Sickening Dreams
4 Doomed Necromancer		3 Smother
1 Faceless Butcher		1 Stitch Together
1 Guiltfeeder		1 Zombify
1 Petradon		
1 Phantom Nishoba		15 sideboard cards
1 Symbiotic Wurm		
1 Undead Gladiator		
1 Visara the Dreadful		

The deck has since come to be known simply as "Reanimator" and recently took the blue ribbon at a Nationals Qualifier in Belgium. *Legions* introduced the Reanimator to its bride—*Akroma, Angel of Wrath*. Allow me to head a number of you off at the pass—creatures do not have protection from a color while they are in your deck or in your graveyard. *Buried Alive*, *Doomed Necromancer*, *Zombify*, and *Stitch Together* all play nicely with the Angel.

Main Deck		Sideboard
60 cards		
4 <i>Barren Moor</i>	3 <i>Buried Alive</i>	1 <i>Aven Cloudchaser</i>
4 <i>Bloodstained Mire</i>	4 <i>Burning Wish</i>	1 <i>Buried Alive</i>
7 <i>Mountain</i>	4 <i>Duress</i>	3 <i>Cabal Therapy</i>
1 <i>Sulfurous Springs</i>	3 <i>Last Rites</i>	1 <i>Chainer's Edict</i>
9 <i>Swamp</i>	3 <i>Sickening Dreams</i>	1 <i>Demolish</i>
25 lands	3 <i>Smother</i>	1 <i>Earthquake</i>
	3 <i>Stitch Together</i>	1 <i>Guiltfeeder</i>
	1 <i>Zombify</i>	1 <i>Haunting Echoes</i>
1 <i>Akroma, Angel of Wrath</i>	24 other spells	1 <i>Patriarch's Bidding</i>
1 <i>Anger</i>		1 <i>Recoup</i>
1 <i>Arcanis the Omnipotent</i>		1 <i>Sickening Dreams</i>
1 <i>Ashen Firebeast</i>		1 <i>Stitch Together</i>
4 <i>Doomed Necromancer</i>		1 <i>Withered Wretch</i>
1 <i>Phantom Nishoba</i>		
1 <i>Symbiotic Wurm</i>		
1 <i>Undead Gladiator</i>		
11 creatures		15 sideboard cards

Replacing the Rares

It is very difficult to build a rareless version of this deck. In fact, I think it is next to impossible. If you don't have the fatties or are unwilling to trade for them, this is not going to be the deck for you. These are your first priority if you are going to play this deck. Fortunately, you only need to have one each of the big fat creatures.

I am pretty confused as to why there is no *Visara* in Pavlos' deck. That would be the first creature included in any of my builds, right alongside *Akroma*. The *Ashen Firebeast* is also quite good and should not be hard to trade for since he is unlikely to be played in any deck but Reanimator. His built in "Tremor" effect will wreak havoc on any weenie strategy and is surprisingly effective against *Phantom Centaur*—each time you activate the *Firebeast*, the *Centaur* loses a +1/+1 counter.

You can mix and match fatties here based on availability. The three must-haves are *Visara*, the *Dreadful*—although we have just seen that the deck can win without her!—*Akroma, Angel of Wrath*; and *Phantom Nishoba*. *Ashen Firebeast* is pretty important but not critical—if you are running into a lot of *Phantom Centaurs* or aggressive weenie strategies like *Elves* and *Goblins* then move him up in the line. I am not the biggest fan of *Arcanis the Omnipotent*—if you are going to go through all the trouble of reanimating a creature, it should be used to kill your opponent and not to draw more cards. *Symbiotic Wurm* is good if you expect opponents to be playing with lots of black removal like *Innocent Blood* and *Chainer's Edict*. You can opt for *Petradon* in his place, or the missing *Visara*. *Undead Gladiator* is also a nice addition to the deck. It helps you get to threshold and provides another mechanism for discarding any fatties you draw.

So try to get your hands on *Akroma*, *Visara*, *Phantom Nishoba*, and *Ashen Firebeast*. Between those four cards you should be able to find an answer for almost any situation. You can add one or two other creatures based on the availability of your collection. *Arcanis*, *Symbiotic Wurm*, *Petradon*—even *Iridescent Angel* or *Shivan Dragon* could be possibilities. I think the *Undead Gladiator* is a good addition and if you have one available you should certainly add it to this deck but it should be fairly low on your list of priorities.

Burning Wish is pretty key to this deck. You can get by with less than four but you will need to adjust the numbers of your key spells so that you have at least three of each and one in the sideboard. *Burning Wish* is going to be a factor in a variety of formats and you can't go wrong having these available in your deckbuilding arsenal.

You can get by without *Bloodstained Mires*. *Sulfurous Springs* can mix and match here based on availability but understand it is not in the same class as the fetch land. Not only does the *Mire* thin your deck and help push you toward threshold but it gets you a *Mountain*, which is important

Your Reanimator Priority List

What rares to trade for (in order)

Visara the Dreadful
Akroma, Angel of Wrath
Phantom Nishoba
Burning Wish
Ashen Firebeast
Bloodstained Mire
Symbiotic Wurm
Undead Gladiator
Doomed Necromancer
Arcanis the Omnipotent
Guiltfeeder
Sulfurous Springs

when you are counting on abusing Anger. Again, **Bloodstained Mire** and all of the fetch lands are going to be an integral part of every constructed format they are legal for. You will find many more uses for these than any other card in this deck. They are probably in the middle of the priority list for this deck but they should be at the top of your overall "must-have" list.

The one card I think you can do with fewer of—or possibly even without all together—is the **Doomed Necromancer**. I see no reason you can't play more copies of the uncommon **Stitch Together** and **Zombify** to make up for any shortfalls you might have in the rare Cleric Mercenary department. You often wait until turn four to cast and activate the **Doomed Necromancer** anyway—**Zombify** is the same overall cost to activate and you don't need to worry about whether or not **Anger** is in your graveyard AND whether or not you have a Mountain in play. If you were willing to give up on **Anger** all together—**Akroma** already has haste built in—you could up the number of swamps you play and use **Tainted Peaks** but I would try to avoid that if possible.



The Really Cheap Version

If the above deck is way outside of your collection's ability to build, you might want to try this almost rareless version. The only rares in this deck are the five big creatures, which are the focal point of the deck. The trick here is replacing the red element of the original Reanimator deck with a much more common-based blue element that focuses on drawing and discarding cards. You could conceivably still play **Anger** if you put four **Bloodstained Mires** and a Mountain in the place of the **Barren Moors** and a Swamp.

Blue-Black Reanimator

Five rare version i.d.ec

Main Deck 60 cards		
4 Barren Moor 8 Island 4 Lonely Sandbar 8 Swamp <hr/> 24 lands	1 Akroma, Angel of Wrath 1 Arcanis the Omnipotent 1 Faceless Butcher 1 Phantom Nishoba 1 Symbiotic Wurm 1 Visara, the Dreadful <hr/> 6 creatures	4 Buried Alive 2 Cabal Therapy 4 Careful Study 4 Duress 4 Mental Note 4 Smother 4 Stitch Together 4 Zombify <hr/> 30 other spells

That's all for this week but next week look for two scoops of Learning Curve. The first will be the scoop on a couple of decks that "rarely" need rares in the first place, and the other will contain all the information you need to prepare for your Regional competition.

Brian may be reached at learningcurve@wizards.com.

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, the publishing house that is releasing Michael J. Flores: Deckade.



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