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# Driving with the Top Down

Brian David-Marshall  
Learning Curve  
Wednesday, June 11, 2003



I was doing so well, too.

At Grand Prix - Pittsburgh I even managed to shock Aaron Forsythe. He mentioned that he would be back in the office the following Tuesday and would need my article for the next day's update in his box that morning. The two points of damage came when I explained that I had sent in the article before leaving for Pittsburgh.

Like I said, I was doing so well.

Then along comes a theme week to kick me square in the... Ahh, theme weeks.

Top-Down Week is probably more difficult for Anthony and I to write about than the other three regular columnists, all of whom work at Wizards as opposed to freelancing for them. I spent some time talking to Mark, trying to get a handle on it but it was still unclear. He would give me an example of a "top-down" card and I would understand what he meant but I still had trouble identifying such cards on my own. Mark's example of **Frozen Solid** finally drilled the concept into my coconut but I was still without a column.



Finally it came to me—as most things do—during a draft. I was playing at Neutral Ground in a draft with some friends when I should have been home working on this column. I was sitting next to a friend who has done quite well for himself on the Pro Tour and is one of the better players in my area. I opened my Scourge pack and was pleased to find a **Day of the Dragons** waiting for me. I was already in blue and was excited to have an opportunity to play with the powerful enchantment for the first time. I had plenty of experience losing to the card and was glad to have it on my side for once. Two picks later I nearly fell out of my chair when my friend passed me a second **Day of the Dragons**—and foil to boot!

My deck ended up being an extremely tricky blue/black deck with multiple **Skinthinners**, **Backslides**, and **Chain of Vapor** to get me to a point where I could finish my opponent off with **Day of the Dragons**. I ended up going 3-0 in the draft and my team won. After dominating my first two matches with the enchantment I was fantasizing about building a constructed deck with it. That fantasy came to an abrupt end when I played against my friend and I asked him why he passed me the potentially game-breaking card. He explained that with all of the enchantments in **Scourge** he highly prioritizes enchantment removal in draft and felt he had plenty of ways to deal with it—and he did, although I did win the match.

So what does this have to do with Top-Down Week? I mentioned that I was playing around with the idea of a **Day of the Dragons** constructed deck. I was taking a "top-down" approach to the design of the deck. The idea was to build a blue-green deck that generated a swarm of Insect tokens and topped out by having them metamorphose from gnats to dragons. I became caught up in the idea and even started to convince myself of the deck's viability. **Wirewood Symbiote** and **Wirewood Hivemaster** were in my stack of cards from a previous draft along with a **Wirewood Channeler**. The deck was building itself...

Until my friend pointed out with his off-hand remark that what I was really building was a house of cards that could be blown over by a single **Disenchant**. Even worse than that, what if someone played **Wrath of God** after you played your enchantment? Or before you played it for that matter? Sure, the deck would be fun to play but it wouldn't be competitive. Which seemed to bring into focus for me the great schism between competitive **Magic** players and a more casual brand of player.

When you begin to think about the cards as abstract pieces you need to manipulate in order to win the game, tournament, PTQ, etc., you can get out of touch with the more imaginative aspects for the game. If you live in fear of a **Disenchant** or **Counterspell**—the bane of the "top-down" deck



designer—you lose out on an important aspect of this great game.

With that in mind I set out to defy enchantment removal, counterspells and global creature removal and nurture a swarm of insects into a storm of dragons. ("Storm of dragons" has a nice ring to it, like "murder of crows." Is there actually a correct term for a group of dragons?) (How about a *scourge* of dragons? --Aaron)

### Suddenly, Dragons

OBC Day of the Dragons deck

**Main Deck**  
60 cards

11 Forest	4 Stonewood Invoker	4 Complicate
4 Grand Coliseum	4 Tribal Forcemage	4 Day of the Dragons
9 Island	4 Wirewood Channeler	4 Explosive Vegetation
24 lands	4 Wirewood Elf	12 other spells
	4 Wirewood Hivemaster	
	4 Wirewood Symbiote	
	24 creatures	

Before anyone writes in and suggests that I add *Llanowar Elves* or *Ambassador Laquatus* let me point out that the deck is *Onslaught* Block Constructed meaning it only uses cards from *Onslaught*, *Legions*, and *Scourge*. Almost every deck I am building these days is for that format. I am not going to even attempt a Standard deck until after the *Eighth Edition* rotation.

Thanks for bearing with me. Next week I'll share some reader suggestions for deck names in response to last week's column. I will also be taking a closer look at *Onslaught* Block Constructed decks as I prepare to attempt to qualify for the Pro Tour during the next PTQ season.

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



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