



HYBRID WEEK

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Asked and Answered

Brian David-Marshall
Learning Curve
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It seems like all I have been doing this week is answering my email—and I still have about 200 pieces that sit in my inbox unanswered. I try to respond to each piece, even if it is just with a "Thanks for writing!" but I am lagging behind very badly. Clearly the **Magic** playing community loves decks that feature **islands** and **forests** working together because my last two weeks of columns—each featuring blue-green decks—have provoked more reader response than any month of columns I can remember.

The way things normally work is that you the readers write in and ask me questions, but for the past two weeks I have reversed that trend and asked for your input and feedback.

Naming that Combo

Two weeks ago I wrote about an Extended deck that used **Intruder Alarm** and a Block deck that used the **Wirewood Channeler** - **Pemmin's Aura** combo. In the article I mentioned that both decks were in need of decent names and I looked to the MagicTheGathering.com readership to help out.

Jonathan Sheets did not offer any suggestions but did send in a Standard version of the deck that he found on a message board at Brainburst.com. He preferred this version because...:



"This seems more combo to me. It has multiple ways to win + the inclusion of actual disruption. The whole idea is to have infinite mana, and go... 'Cunning Wish for Cunning Wish.' About fifty billion times. And then play Brain Freeze. And then giggle like a school girl. Not really, but if you want to, then hey, that's your deal.

"I like the idea of backing the combo with control elements rather than with a whole lotta little dorks that don't stay little for very long. That, and its a little easier to play with. You don't have to deal with floating enough blue mana to be able to untap it after you get enough green to activate Kamahl X times. It would just get very confusing in my opinion. This, just go for blue, and more blue. *shrugs*

"The Tradewind deck is cool. I might give it a whirl some time. Well, just my input."

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Pemmin Flavored Ice		
Julay Standard deck		
Main Deck	Sideboard	
60 cards		
3 City of Brass	2 Circular Logic	1 Brain Freeze
8 Forests	3 Compulsion	3 Compost
11 Islands	4 Counterspell	1 Cunning Wish
22 lands	3 Cunning Wish	1 Flash of Insight
	2 Long-Term Plans	1 Hunting Pack
	4 Memory Lapse	1 Krosan Reclamation
4 Elvish Pioneer	4 Pemmin's Aura	1 Mana Short
4 Llanowar Elves	4 Sleight of Hand	3 Moment's Peace
4 Wirewood Channeler	26 other spells	1 Naturalize
12 creatures		1 Read the Runes
		1 Stifle
		15 sideboard cards

Nathan Buchanan wrote in to share some of his experiences building a similar deck among a group of players from mIRC channel #mtgwacky. In addition to his suggestion for a name, Nathan was one of many players that pointed out that **Flamewave Invoker** is an alternative kill mechanism to **Kamah!**. I actually like having both cards as an option giving you an answer to both **Wing Shards** and **Gilded Light**.

"We also named the deck, calling it '**Tight Pants**' based on the nature of Aura being a creature enchantment ('Morphling pants') and because it was using Future Sight at the time (and Future Sight's favourite deck is called 'Tight Sight') ... So popularizing 'Tight Pants' might be a good idea, as I find it to be a funny name."

There was, of course, the ubiquitous suggestion to build the deck using **Ambassador Laquatus** from Mark Wallsten:

"Instead of Kamah!, using Ambassador Laquatus is a little more interesting and creates a marvelous deck name: **Wirewood Mill**."

I have suggested to Aaron and Mark the idea of doing a reader-driven **Magic** card Hall of Fame for the 10th anniversary of **Magic**. I am convinced—based on the volume of emails surrounding the merfolk diplomat—that **Ambassador Laquatus** would land in the top 10 cards as voted by MagicGathering.com readers!

There were a number of suggestions that played off of the **Pemmin's Aura** card name, which is an anagram for "I am Superman." A great number of readers suggested calling the deck that with no alteration but there were some more creative suggestions. Stephen Sloboda wrote:

"I believe the commonly used name for the Wirewood Channeler and Pemmin's Aura combo is '**Pemmin's Channeler**.' Also, since the letters in Pemmin's Aura also spell 'I am Superman' (a reference to Morphling, aka Superman), the deck might also be called '**I am Superelf**.'"

Paul Martin wrote in to explain that he used **Compulsion** in a Standard version of the deck and a single copy of **Blaze** as his kill card. **Compulsion** is an excellent companion for the combo as it comes down early and helps you dig for combo pieces. Once you have the combo you can use your infinite mana to "cycle" through your deck and find whatever cards you ultimately kill with. Paul went on to offer his suggested deck name:

"I guess I mostly wrote in to give you a possible name for the deck. Since 'Pemmin's Aura' is an anagram for 'I am Superman,' and the whole point is to use it on the Channeler, we called our deck '**The Super Channeler**' because the Channeler was getting the Superman enchantment."

Jennifer Douglas was one of the first readers to include a name for my Extended deck as well. Plus, she referenced one of my all time favorite video games as an added bonus!

"You'll probably be getting tons of suggestions for deck names so I thought I'd throw in my two cents worth."

"Tradewind-Intruder Alarm: **Intruder Alert**

"Channeler Aura: **The Pemmin Effect** -or- **Pemmin's Pinnacle**"

Tommy Lueker was an occasional customer of mine back in my Neutral Ground days with a penchant for "punny" deck names. He could not resist the lure of this deck and came in with the following suggestion, which also offers a commentary on how many **Magic** players feel about combo decks.

"Personally I wouldn't play a deck if it's name wasn't a bad pun, but I realize the **Magic** community is not as pun-loving as I am (wow, I'm bad). Well no matter, my name idea came about when I asked myself, 'what's blue and green and stinks when you eat it?'..."

"**..Moldy Blue Cheese!**"

Kenneth Nagle wrote in to support the **Kamah!** method over **Flamewave Invoker**:

"Brian David-Marshall could not be reached on his cell phone for comment. It's reported that the Griffins are especially loud this mating season."

"I like your Pemmin's deck. Please call it '**Super Chan**.' You use a kill method that isn't stupid like Flamewave Invoker is. A combo kill needs to be invincible yet still synergetic, like yours, not screwed by True Believer, or stopped by Demistify + Gilded Light in response to Invoker (which can result in you infinitely manaburning)."

Like I said earlier I would attempt to include both paths to victory; Kenneth doesn't take into account the possibility of being "fogged out" or your opponent having **Wing Shards**.

In two of the most succinct emails I have ever gotten from MagicTheGathering.com readers Hanrahan Highland suggested "**Channel Hopping**" and Jeff Aaronson suggested "**Intrader**" and "**Charo**." Jeff Kirk offered a deck name for only my Extended deck, which is probably my favorite so far, "**Klaxon, Klaxoff**."

Omar wrote in about **Intruder Alarm** as well. While he did not offer a deck name he wanted to point out another combo with the card that he has always enjoyed:

"Am a regular MTG.com reader and am quite excited by all of the new combos from *Scourge*. I used to get up to some Intruder Alarm mayhem as well but did not take the Elf route as you described. Here was the core of my engine:

"Intruder Alarm + Birds of Paradise + Shrieking Drake + Soul Warden

"Yup, Shrieking Drake. It was very simple and usually went off very quickly. Turn 1 Birds, Turn 2 Alarm, then a Soul Warden and a Drake meant infinite life. (Lifegain had not yet been criticized as much as it is now). The 'kill' was really seeing how fast you could pull it off and then later get more creature mana and pull a Kaervek's Torch. When Saga came I got a couple of Stroke of Geniuses to actually have a quicker win condition, but that Drake effect was (and is still) the fastest creature combo I've ever come across."

Other **Intruder Alarm** combos that were suggested by readers included **Voice of the Woods**—each time you tap five Elves to make a creature they untap and you can make **infinite Elementals**—and two **Priest of Titania** and **Centaur Glade**. Both combos will generate infinite creatures.

A few readers were under the impression that you could use your infinite mana to "pump" the Channeler's toughness to infinite proportions and that its power would not fall below zero. From there, they suggested, you could then pump its power to infinite levels and kill without the need for any back-up. This does not work, as the creature's power will fall below zero. There is no point at which the power and toughness are not being pumped equally in opposite directions.

Several other readers asked about the inclusion of **Read the Runes** and wondered about drawing your whole deck and then having to discard as many cards as you draw or sacrifice that many permanents. At that point in the game you are just looking for your one kill card—whether it is **Kamahl**, **Flamewave Invoker**, or **Ambassador Laquatus**. It is just like using **Compulsion**. As long as you have one card in hand or a tapped land to sacrifice you can keep the only card that matters and win the game.

Back to the subject of naming the deck. There were a number of suggestions that played off of the word Channeler including **"The Cable Guy," "Channel Hopping,"** and **"The Channel Changer,"** but my favorite name for the deck went back to the anagram contained in the deck's key card. Captain Unpredictable offered the following suggestion:

"I have been toying with the deck and I have a Type 2 version I like to call...

"I AM SUPERMANA.

"Basic idea is the same except I am trying for a more fun wacky approach to the infinite mana. My idea is that you could use Echo Tracer to return itself to your hand an infinite number of times then abuse the storm mechanic and go nuts with Mind's Desire and Tendrils of Agony or Brain Freeze."



I am Supermana		
July Standard deck		
Main Deck 60 cards		
4 City of Brass	1 Ambassador Laquatus	2 Brain Freeze
9 Forest	4 Birchlore Rangers	4 Counterspell
11 Island	4 Echo Tracer	3 Mind's Desire
24 lands	4 Llanowar Elves	4 Pemmin's Aura
	4 Wall of Mulch	2 Tendrils of Agony
	4 Wirewood Channeler	
		15 other spells
	21 creatures	

Dragon Group Dynamics

[Last week](#) I wrote about my struggles with designing top-down decks and I pondered what the appropriate collective noun for dragons would be. I also incorrectly called a murder of crows a "storm of crows"—no doubt thinking of the *Seventh Edition* flier. This error was caught by a bunch of eagle-eyed—or should I say a convocation of eagle-eyed readers that not only pointed out the error but sent me multiple web addresses to sites dedicated to the collection of collective nouns. My favorite? An ostentation of peacocks.

A pretty exhaustive list can be found [here](#). Thanks to David Gill for pointing me in that direction. Included on the page are three offerings for multiple dragons—*flight*, *wing*, and *weyr*. This was a topic of intense interest and I received a great volume of email on the subject. Many

readers favored Aaron's suggestion of a "scourge of dragons" while others felt that storm would be appropriate—seeing as how the crows were not making use of it. A number of authoritative texts were cited including RPGs and a wide range of fantasy novels.

Corwin Kelly makes his case as follows:

"I've heard a group of dragons referred to as a 'flight' before. That term seems to be the official one in the *Dragonlance* series of books."

Stephen Frimmel suggests:

"A group of dragons is called a 'drive of dragons' (I think...).

"If you want to make sure, read *Dealing With Dragons*."

Eric Gilson referred me to one of my favorite childhood authors:

"In your recent MagicTheGathering.com article you wondered if there is a correct term for a group of dragons. I have heard it called a 'drove of dragons.' I read this in *A Wind in the Door* by Madeleine L'Engle."



Another reader—I can't find the original email—suggested that a "desolation of dragons" was the appropriate term. Apparently it has some biblical significance.

Finally, JD Garrison offers:

"Yes, there is a term for a grouping of dragons.

"'Rage of dragons' is the correct term. Of course as this is only the case in various rpgs, I wouldn't take it at face value."

Save the Day

The **Day of the Dragons** deck I included apparently piqued a lot of interest and readers offered many modifications and suggestions.

Ace Peacecraft advocates the inclusion of another power rare from *Scourge* to protect the deck from **Disenchants**:

"With this heavy enchantment-hate environment, it should be a good idea to run **Stifle** so even if they do destroy Day of the Dragons, you can Stifle its second ability and still have your dragons. Isn't that better than fearing Disenchants?"

It sure is, Ace. I am sorry that I didn't think of that myself. **Stifle** is fast becoming one of my favorite *Scourge* cards. I am constantly amazed by its versatility whether it is foiling a morph trigger or "**Swordsing**" a creature that has been removed from the game with **Astral Slide**. Now if I could only open a few in draft...

A number of readers pointed out that instead of fearing the Disenchant you could embrace it. When you play the **Day of the Dragons** you can respond to its comes-into-play effect by destroying it with enchantment removal. The "remove all Dragons from the game" portion will trigger before the comes-into-play ability resolves, and you will have permanent Dragons. Granted, nine mana is a lot to ask of any deck and it might not be feasible but there were a number of cheaper solutions offered. Unfortunately, I don't seem to have all of my emails saved properly and cannot give appropriate credit where it is due. Apologies all the way around.

Artificial Evolution was a popular choice. Once **Day of the Dragons** is in play you can use **Artificial Evolution** to change the word "Dragons" to "Camels" or "Sand" or any other creature type. If your opponent removes your **Day of the Dragons** all of your Camels will be removed from the game, but your Dragons will be fine. Along the same lines, a number of people suggested **Standardize**, but the cheaper spell seems more versatile.



Stacking **Day of the Dragons** and a **Chain of Vapor** was suggested in the same vein as the earlier **Disenchant** trick. At eight mana, all of which can be blue, this is probably easier to count on than the earlier suggestion, but I prefer **Stifle** and then **Artificial Evolution** for the deck.

Next week's article will answer the question, "When is the best time to cast an instant?" The answer might not be quite what you would expect.

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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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