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Rare and Last Minute Finds...

Brian David-Marshall
Learning Curve
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Even as *Seventh Edition's* rotation out of Standard looms on the horizon players still stumble across hidden treasures that have barely been dusted off during the set's stay in the format. **Stronghold Assassin** recently popped his head up in Black-Green Cemetery decks - mostly as a foil to the omni-present Blue-Green Madness decks-and he will be popping it back down in just a few short weeks.

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Black-Green Cemetery

Josh Rider - Top 8 Canadian Nationals

Main Deck 60 cards		Sideboard
3 City of Brass	4 Cabal Therapy	2 Braids, Cabal Minion
10 Forest	4 Living Wish	1 City of Brass
9 Swamp	3 Oversold Cemetery	2 Engineered Plague
22 lands	4 Smother	1 Faceless Butcher
	15 other spells	1 Genesis
4 Birds of Paradise		1 Mindslicer
2 Braids, Cabal Minion		1 Nantuko Vigilante
1 Caller of the Claw		1 Phantom Centaur
2 Faceless Butcher		1 Ravenous Baloth
3 Llanowar Elves		2 Ray of Revelation
3 Phantom Centaur		1 Stronghold Assassin
2 Ravenous Baloth		1 Withered Wretch
3 Stronghold Assassin		15 sideboard cards
3 Wirewood Herald		
23 creatures		



Oversold Cemetery decks have made quite a push in recent days. Versions of the deck won Canadian Nationals and placed highly in the Dutch Nationals. The deck loses very little other than the Stronghold Assassin and the soon to be lamented Llanowar Elves. Caretakers of the Cemetery decks will easily replace the Elves with Vine Trellis but what will fill the role of the Assassin? For the answer to that we need to look to another Green-Black deck - The Rock and his Millions.

Main Deck 60 cards		Sideboard
4 Bayou	1 Choke	1 Choke
2 Dust Bowl	4 Duress	3 Diabolic Edict
8 Forest	1 Living Death	1 Dust Bowl
5 Swamp	4 Pernicious Deed	2 Emerald Charm
4 Treetop Village	2 Phyrexian Furnace	1 Massacre
23 lands	1 Recurring Nightmare	1 Phyrexian Furnace
	2 Vampiric Tutor	1 Rank and File
	15 other spells	1 Stench of Evil
4 Birds of Paradise		1 Tsunami
1 Phyrexian Plaguelord		2 Uktabi Orangutan
4 Spike Feeder		1 Volrath's Stronghold
2 Spike Weaver		
4 Spiritmonger		15 sideboard cards
3 Wall of Roots		
4 Yavimaya Elder		
22 creatures		

The deck's name referred to the **Phyrexian Plaguelord** and **Deranged Hermit** - a pretty powerful combo. The deck's name was shortened to merely 'The Rock' when the **Deranged Hermits** drifted out of the deck. Eventually most Rock players realized that **Pernicious Deed** dealt with everything that you wanted the Plaguelord to take care of more effectively and for less mana and even the Rock was no longer in the Rock.

There is no **Pernicious Deed** in Standard however and the Plaguelord plugs perfectly into the slot currently occupied by the Assassin. With **Wirewood Herald** you have a renewable source of fodder to eat away at your opponent's army-doubly so once you account for the Cemetery.

The **Faceless Butcher** will become one of the deck's most powerful weapons. Imagine a situation where your opponent has a **Bird of Paradise** and a **Hunted Wumpus** while you have a **Phyrexian Plaguelord** in play. If you play the **Faceless Butcher** you can stack its abilities in such a way that you would devastate your opponent. When the **Butcher** comes into play you can put its come into play ability on the stack and respond by sacrificing it to your Plaguelord and giving the Bird -1/-1. Then the leave play ability of the **Butcher** will go on the stack and resolve before the come into play ability. Since there will be no creature removed by the **Butcher** to return that part will fizzle and when the come into play portion removes the **Wumpus** it will be for good.

Not bad and with an **Oversold Cemetery** in play you can do that every turn provided you have four creatures in your yard-something that should not be a problem with the Plaguelord working for your team. The Rock also works quite nicely with the **Mesmeric Fiend**. If you stack the come into play ability as with the **Butcher** you can give a creature -1/-1 and remove a card from your opponent's hand from the game-permanently.

Speaking of stupid stack tricks... With **Caller of the Claw** you can always take down a 2/2 with only the Plaguelord and the Caller. Simply play the caller and put its come into play ability on the stack and respond by sacrificing it to your Plaguelord. When its come into play ability resolves it will count itself and you will get a token, which you can then use to finish off the 2/2. Again you can do this over and over again with a Cemetery.

Of course, if you don't have **Caller of the Claw** in hand you can always find one with **Wirewood Herald**. With just a Plaguelord and a **Wirewood Herald** you can now shoot down anything 4/4 and smaller. Now if you do the same stack trick with **Caller of the Claw** you can activate Plaguelord four times-once for herald, once for the caller, and-if you stack it right-twice more with the tokens.

The **Phyrexian Plaguelord** also gives you an aura of invincibility if your opponent is playing steal creature effects. Whether it is the currently in vogue **Threaten** or the casual play stylings of a **Spinal Embrace**, your creatures are in no danger of being stolen when the Plaguelord is on the watch. **Chromeshell Crab**, **Blatant Thievery** or even **Ray of Command** - your opponent will find nothing but frustration as those cards sit useless in their hands.



Almost any creature with useful leave play abilities becomes much better with the Plaguelord. We have already looked at the **Wirewood Herald**. Players looking for a Standard replacement for the soon to be departed **Engineered Plague** may find it in **Death's-Head Buzzard**. **Screeching Buzzard** is an unlikely candidate for Constructed play but even that he is a consideration is another example of the power of the Plaguelord.

Obviously any creature that shows up with friends is a sure bet with the Rock. He has already seen great success with the **Deranged Hermit** and I expect to see him tried out with a variety of creature generators from the unwieldy **Nut Collector** to the much more likely **Squirrel Nest**.

Heck, you don't have to go Black-Green. **Siege-Gang Commander** and **Petravark** can also be exploited. He has always been one of my favorite cards and I am excited to be able to dust off my foil copies and begin having some fun. Here is a quick look at an *Eighth Edition* version of Josh Rider's deck:

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2 Faceless Butcher		1 Phantom Centaur
2 Phantom Centaur		1 Phyrexian Plaguelord
3 Phyrexian Plaguelord		1 Ravenous Baloth
2 Ravenous Baloth		2 Ray of Revelation
3 Vine Trellis		1 Withered Wretch
3 Wirewood Herald		
23 creatures		15 sideboard cards

Next week: A card that I have a special affinity for...

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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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