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Finally, it's Blue Week! You have no idea how long I've been waiting for this. Believe me, you can't whip out your Brainy Smurf costume any old time you want and wear it to work—people'll think you're a freak! But during Blue Week, no one will give a second thought to a man wearing nothing but white pants, a white hat, glasses, and a gallon of blue body paint. If anything, I'll be lauded as a Blue Week hero! At least, that's what I'm counting on. We'll see how it goes.

In **Magic**, I have a love/hate relationship with blue. I love blue when I'm playing it: I get to trick, frustrate, and annoy my fellow players. Some of my past blue exploits include a Dreamborn Muse deck that bounces my opponents' creatures and mills their deck away, and a Hoodwink deck that goes one step further and bounces my opponents' land so they can't play anything at all. The wellspring of impotent anguish that decks like that cause is priceless. I hate blue when my opponent is playing it: Those decks are really annoying! What kind of twisted, joyless person would ruin a game of **Magic** by playing a denial deck . . . against me? Honestly, the nerve of some people!

The obvious place to start when discussing blue decks is classic Draw-Go. These decks use a fully stocked arsenal of countermagic backed up with lots of card drawing to ZZZZZZZzzzzzzz... Sorry, dozed off there. How about a deck that's interesting instead? (Blue fans: Send all hate mail for that comment to Mark Rosewater. He loves hate mail.)

## A Cog in the Machine

OK, I lied. I'm starting with a Draw-Go deck. It's not packed to the gills with counterspells, but it does have 10—hopefully just enough to keep the most dangerous threats off the table. Tread lightly with counterspells in casual play. Even if you consider them fun, most casual players don't. Countermagic prevents your opponents from doing the fun things that their decks are designed to do, and if you deprive them of having their fun, pretty soon they'll decide that *you're* not fun, and out you go.

This deck is centered around one of the most interesting blue creatures to come along in a while: Cognivore. It's an 8-mana flying Lhurgoyf, so you know it's cool right off the bat. It loves instants, it loves cards in your graveyard . . . it's a lot like Psychatog, except that its sorry overcosting makes it a lot more sympathetic than Psychatog's sorry undercosting. Since you're not going to attempt to cast Cognivore until you have about 10 mana on the table (2 extra to protect it with, say, a Mage's Guile or a Boomerang), you spend a lot of the game doing nothing but burrowing through your deck.

Rather than go the Compulsion route, which essentially gives all your cards cycling for 1U, I've chosen to use cards that actually have built-in cycling. Not to be overlooked is Standstill, which is the best turn 2 play you could make.

Standstill has an odd effect on people. They're terrified of it. Not everyone is, of course. Some will do the correct thing and immediately cast a spell to break it. But others will wait. For a long, long time. I can't imagine why. Any deck that plops down a Standstill without having anything on the table except

Islands clearly isn't eager to break the Standstill itself. So that player isn't going to give away any cards. Meanwhile, the blue deck's pilot is holding a full grip of seven cards, so giving that player three more isn't going to have a game-breaking impact. But handing your opponent three cards just feels like the wrong play, so both people settle down. There are two actions that don't affect Standstill, and those are the only two actions the Cognivorian wants to do: play lands, and cycle instants. By the time you have enough lands to drop the Cognivore, the monster will have a power and toughness well into the teens. You don't care whether you break Standstill at that point because you're going to deal

lethal damage in just two—and perhaps only one—attack. After one nerve-wracking turn praying your opponent has no answer to Very Large Cognivore #1, you dump as many more instants as you can into your graveyard (Mental Note can be crazy at this point) and go for the throat.

Instant Nothing

### **Standard-legal Cognivore deck**

Say Yes to Piracy

Let's swing around the other way, over to the blue beatdown deck. Blue's strength is not its creatures. And its creatures have no strength. But they do have evasion. Many have flying, and a few go one step beyond and can't be blocked at all. Plus, thanks to the *Eighth Edition* reprints of Curiosity and Coastal Piracy, they all draw cards!

The idea behind this deck is very, very simple. Play unblockable creatures. Attack. Draw cards. Play more unblockable creatures. Wormfang Drake gives some surprising beef to your weenie swarm, and it makes you a bit resistant to a board sweeper. If Wrath of God clears out all your creatures, the Drake will just unevolve back into whatever it was before. With luck, it was a Sage Owl, so you can rearrange the top of your library. You don't need much land in this deck (Coastal Piracy is the only thing that costs more than 3 mana), and extra lands can be pitched to save Escape Artist and Cephalid Inkshrouder from spot removal.

I can't figure out whether or not to label this a LITE! deck. The only rare it's got is the *Eighth Edition* Coastal Piracy (arguably the most vital card in the deck)—but Coastal Piracy was merely uncommon in *Mercadian Masques*! Does that make the card any easier to come by today? Beats me. I guess this deck is Litelike.

Curious Pirates

### **Standard-legal Coastal Piracy deck**

It's unclear to me how Coastal Piracy is the global Curiosity. There seems to be a bit of a flavor disconnect there. But maybe that explains why pirates are always raiding and looting and pillaging—they're just curious about other cultures.

Wizards of the Toast

This week's final deck is a Wizard deck. And I mean it has 24 lands and 36 Wizards. It didn't start out that way. It started as an infiltration deck featuring Raven Guild Master and Riptide Entrancer, both supported by Crafty Pathmage. But since those are all Wizards, I started to think about Supreme Inquisitor. And that's just too deliciously evil (and silly) to pass up. Once the deck took that turn, it was a no-brainer to include Echo Tracer, Willbender, and Riptide Director. Other various Wizards joined the cast, but the controversial ones are Voidmage Prodigy and Patron Wizard.

Voidmage Prodigy is controversial because of that art. I mean, seriously, let's talk about Kai's pants . . . or not. No, those two choices make waves because they turn all your Wizards into Counterspells and Force Spikes, respectively. (And you thought those weren't in the Standard environment anymore.)

That can become very frustrating very quickly. I've had casual players online concede to me the moment my Patron Wizard hit the table. They abandoned the game because it was no longer fun to them. The uberwizards aren't the focus of the deck; they're a way to take advantage of the abundant Wizard resources the deck has and to make sure nothing horribly bad happens that would make you lose. (Except cycled Slice and Dice. That'll end your game right quick.) So while the Prodigy and the Patron are intended as support for the goofier Wizards, they have the unfortunate tendency to completely lock down a game and turn it into a slog through the mud. ("I cast Wild Mongrel." "I tap a Wizard." "I pay 1." "I tap a Wizard." "I pay 1." "I tap a Wizard" "I pay 1." \*yawn\* "I tap a Wizard." "I

pay 1." "I sacrifice Hapless Researcher to counter it." Who wants to play that game?) How many Prodigies and Patrons you want to play with is up to your style and what your play group will tolerate.

Oddly, explaining that the Patron is just buying time until Supreme Inquisitor comes down doesn't make anyone any happier.

Inquiring Minds

### Standard-legal Wizard deck

One great thing about the deck is its variety of morph creatures. Everyone expects Echo Tracer and Willbender, but the Prodigy, Entrancer, and Raven Guild Master (even though it's usually better to play it face up) will surprise people. And, of course, *nobody expects the Supreme Inquisition!*

Until next week, annoy your friends with blue decks.

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