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# Mirrodin Weekend Recap

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Learning Curve

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Have I mentioned that I love prerelease weekends? In addition to all the reasons I mentioned in the [Prerelease Primer](#), I get to write about Sealed Deck and Draft strategy after a prerelease—subjects that are often left untouched on this page.

I was at Neutral Ground in New York this past Sunday and had some opportunities to play with *Mirrodin* with a group of friends. One of the advantages to waiting until Sunday to show up is that all of your friends that played on Saturday will likely have packs from placing highly in Sealed Deck flights and booster drafts the day before. There were more than enough packs to go around and we were able to draft well into the night.

## Isochron Scepter

Going into the weekend all the talk was about *Isochron Scepter*. I know that some readers of this column thought I was dismissing this card in a previous article but I was merely saying that it is not as insane as when I mistakenly thought you could imprint *Spelljack* or *Hunting Pack* on it. It is going to be an intriguing card to follow in constructed. In Standard you will be able to imprint a *Boomerang* as early as turn one. I'm not sure if there are any ways of out of that lock if the Scepter player is going first. They can just bounce your land every turn sticking you at one mana.

That said, I am happy to report that the Scepter is not overly broken in the Limited format. Yes, it is very, very good but there is more than enough artifact hate running around to keep it in check. Even just bouncing it with a *Regress* is very good. There were definitely some great stories about people imprinting *Shatter*, *Terror*, *Electrostatic Bolt*, *Predator's Strike*, and *Annul* but my favorite tale came from an unlikely instant. *Dream's Grip* is a spell that allows you to tap a permanent or untap a permanent for 1 with entwine 1. A player imprinted it on his Scepter and was able to play 3 (two for the Scepter and one for entwine) to tap an opponent's permanent and untap his Scepter. He was going to be able to lock down three creatures a turn but his opponent was able to destroy the Scepter before it got out of hand. Most Isochron stories echo that unfulfilled promise thanks to all the ways there are to destroy it.



## White and Equipment

I knew that from looking at the spoiler that I wanted to draft white creatures. The uncommon *Leonin Skyhunter* was my number-one priority but I was also eager to try out the *Skyhunter Cub*. Additionally the *Skyhunter Patrol* and the *Leonin Den-Guard* all seemed like good men to put in a deck. Both the Cub and the Den-Guard get bonuses for being equipped—as do a number of other good white creatures—and I quickly became aware of a significant dilemma for a white drafter. If you do not highly prioritize the good equipment you just won't get any. At the same time if you take a *Bonesplitter* and pass a *Skyhunter Cub* there is a pretty good chance that you will end up sending the player next to you into white.

White was clearly the early favorite of many drafters and any signal that a player received indicating an opening in that color would be taken loud and clear. In drafts where I intended to be the white player I quickly learned to pass equipment that was of *Bonesplitter* quality or worse and take white fliers or potential fliers. In one draft I had three *Skyhunter Cubs* but none of the high-end equipment you would hope to pair them with. I was quite happy to pick up a *Leonin Scimitar* as well as two *Slagwurm Armor*. Originally, I wasn't very high on the Armor but it was quite good at making 3/9 flying creatures for my attack step and huge walls for my opponent's attack step.



On the other hand there were several pieces of equipment that you just never want to pass. *Loxodon Warhammer* is one of those cards. It is absolutely absurd—an *Armadillo Cloak* that in exchange for giving up the bonus on the rear end never goes away. *Vulshok Battlegear* is another card that I never want to pass. While not as flashy as the Warhammer, the extra padding from this piece makes the Battlegear first pick quality in my book.

Sword of Kaldra proved to be utterly ridiculous as did Scythe of the Wretched and Empyrial Plate. What else would you expect from rare equipment?

## Green and Equipment

Another drafting dilemma that continued to arise over the weekend was the relationship between green players and equipment. Players were drawn to green and its abundant hatred for artifacts—**Turn to Dust** and **Deconstruct** turned out to be amazing for everyone who played them. By late Sunday evening players were splashing **Deconstruct** as a third color. **Tel-Jilad Archers** and **Tel-Jilad Chosen** were both excellent cards. The former not only has protection from artifacts but can block fliers. But on more than one occasion a green player lost his draft because he could not put his equipment on any of his multiple protection from artifact creatures in play.

If you are drafting the green deck you probably want to be very wary about how much equipment you decide to play with and whether or not you wouldn't rather take a green card over it during the draft. I have yet to draft a green deck in this format but if I was going into a draft with a predisposition toward the color I would probably take a green card—either the Archers or a **Predator's Strike** for example—over almost any common or uncommon equipment.



## Blue: Not Bad

Blue was definitely a pleasant surprise this weekend. **Aether Spellbomb** and **Crystal Shard** were my two favorite "blue cards" this weekend. I usually adopt a pet card early on in each new block. It is almost always a card that other players disdain, and in this block it is looking like the **Clockwork Condor**. I know it is not very good but it has been fine for me—especially with **Crystal Shard** and other "blue" bounce.

**Lumengrid Hovergard** is another nice companion piece to the **Crystal Shard**—similar to the **Hunting Drake/Cavern Harpy** combo from *Invasion* block draft. But the real limited MVP in blue thus far has been the **Neurok Spy**. This guy is almost always unblockable. My friend Brook drafted a deck with four copies of the spy and a handful of **Fists of the Anvil**. It was the fastest deck I have seen so far in the format and he found the formula to be quite successful on the weekend.



During the prerelease drafts over the weekend, Neutral Ground regular Wayne Rosen drafted almost mono-blue affinity decks on multiple occasions. He played a turn five **Broodstar** one game and countered multiple spells with **Wizard Replica** and **Override**. In addition to multiple **Thoughtcasts** in each deck he highly prioritized **Thirst for Knowledge**—a card people were comparing to **Fact or Fiction** by the end of the weekend. Blue was dismissed by many players coming into the tournament and is generally believed to be the worst of the five colors. I think all the colors are pretty close but if everyone is passing on blue and you can set yourself up as the only person drafting it you will have a mighty fine deck.

## Black and Red

Black was extremely good. While **Terror** is not what it has been in sets past—someone compared **Mirrodin** to Bizarro World where **Terror** is **Shatter** and **Shatter** is **Terror**—the other removal in the color is exceptional and **Terror** was still better than fine. **Irradiate**, **Consume Spirit**, **Betrayal of Flesh**, **Barter in Blood**... you barely need to play any creatures. The absolute standout cards for black this weekend were **Nim Shrieker** and **Skeleton Shard**. The Shrieker gets surprisingly large and if you have any way to pump his toughness like a **Slagwurm Armor** he is almost impossible to deal with.

The **Skeleton Shard** was a lethal weapon in the hands of my friend Scott McCord all weekend long. He was able to sit behind his "Raise Dead on a stick" and recur chump blocking artifact creatures while his **Nim Shriekers** did the dirty work for him. I quickly learned the value of **Inertia Bubble** after being held at bay by an unending parade of **Goblin War Wagons** and **Goblin Replicas**. In the mid-game the combination of **Goblin Replica** and **Skeleton Shard** is devastating when most of your creatures are artifacts.

There was plenty of removal in red; I saw **Detonates** and **Shatters** get picked first all weekend long. Of all the Slith, the red one might be the most dangerous. A turn two **Slith Firewalker** gets out of hand pretty quickly and I have already seen multiple games where a turn two **Firewalker**



was all a player needed to kill his adversary.

## Problem Cards Reborn

I know many players that were looking forward to playing with *Mirrodin* for no other reason than to get away from *Sparksmith* and *Timberwatch Elf*. Imagine their disappointment when their opponents played *Spikeshot Goblin* and *Auriok Bladewarden*. Like their *Onslaught*-block counterparts, neither one is devastating by themselves—although still quite good. In the previous block it was following the tribal theme that made those cards better in this block it is equipment that makes their descendants formidable.

Remember early when I mentioned that most equipment does little for the toughness of the equipped creature? Well that does not apply to *Auriok Bladewarden*. Not only does *Bonesplitter* give the Bladewarden +2/+0 but it allows it to give another creature +3/+3. On the *Spikeshot Goblin* any power-enhancing equipment will make you forget about *Sparksmith*, especially when you start shooting your opponent for four damage a turn via *Vulshok Battlegear* while holding the ground with your 4/5 Goblin.

I gotta run, I think there is a draft starting. Tune in next week when we look at how some colorless creatures are adding color to the game.



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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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