

Our Favorite Battlegrounds Decks

The Perfect 10

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With tomorrow's release of **Magic: The Gathering - Battlegrounds**, the Online Media staff has been busy getting in some last minute practice before the masses start dueling on X-Box Live.

For the last several weeks the game has been sitting in our work area taking up most of our game break time (*nearly* usurping our long-standing stint of 4 player Rush 2049 - Battle Mode). Just about everyone on the team has had some time playing the game... some have even stayed after work to finish the entire Quest mode. [Note from Monty: The last duel is challenging! Mishra cheats! Judge! Judge!]



Our team has been very impressed with the way that Secret Level and Atari have converted the card game to a very fun and addictive console (and PC) game. In general, the game feels like you are playing **Magic**. The creatures are there... the spells are there... timing is critical... it just feels strategic from the start to the finish. Where the rules needed to bend to fit the pace of a real-time game, the developers have done so in a way that makes sense.

Battlegrounds has several game modes, A Quest that takes you through each card's strategy, Practice Mode where you can tune your deck against basic computer AI, and the two player duel (either you vs the computer, or another player). In duel mode you have the option of one to three games to win the match where you play another person on your console (or via X-Box Live). While the core of **Magic** game play is there, what follows is a comprehensive overview of how Battlegrounds works:

Battleground Dueling Basics

- You select a Duelist to represent the player who may summons spells and creatures to attempt to bring the opponent from 20 life down to 0. Duelists have two innate abilities - a free **Tim**-like 1 damage staff, or a damage **shield** that burns mana.



- You may have up to 10 spells that will represent your deck. These spells may be cast at any time you can afford them, and as many times as you wish. There are creatures, enchantments, and sorcery/instants to build a deck from. You may build either a one or two color deck.
- The duel takes place in a rectangular arena with a line to denote sides. If the Duelist crosses the line, they begin to take damage for every second they are over the line.
- Your Mana begins to randomly appear on your side of the arena as Mana Spheres. As you pick up a Sphere, your total possible Mana Pool is increased by one. This emulates the fact that you slowly gain ability to cast more expensive spells as the game progresses. (note that when you play a two color deck, you select which sphere will appear first, then your sphere's alternate after that)
- You slowly regain mana over time as well as picking up mana shards left from creatures that have died, as well as when you pick up a sphere.
- You may summon up to five creatures in play at any one time.
- When you summon a creature, a spawn point is marked on the arena. The creature will appear at that point and return to it once it has either survived a combat phase or been unsummoned.
- Creatures only enter combat with other creatures at their level (ie, ground vs ground, flyers vs flyers)... unless the creature has an ability like [Giant Spider](#). All creatures have a power/toughness bar beneath them that represents their stats. When a creature enters combat with another creature, they deal their power to the other's toughness. When combat resolves, if a creature survived, it respawns back at its spawn point with the remainder of its toughness.
- Generally, when you summon a creature, it will automatically attempt to cross the line and damage the opponent. If the creature runs into another creature on the path to the opponent, it will enter combat with that creature. Once that combat resolves, the creature normally respawns if it survived unless it has trample in which case it continues the attack toward the opponent. Once a creature damages the opponent and survives, it will respawn.
- Utility creatures, such as [Llanowar Elves](#), will go to the back of the arena to perform their function, while some creatures are designated as blockers and will remain on your side of the arena.
- Regeneration allows a creature to respawn when it dies back at its spawn point with full power/toughness provided that you have mana available for the regeneration cost.
- There are several ways of winning a duel: Bring your opponent's life total down to 0, have more life than your opponent when the duel clock runs out, or win via an alternative condition such as [Test of Endurance](#).



With up to 5 creatures each, the arena can get nasty real quick.

The Quest mode in Battlegrounds is robust and allows you to go through each color, gaining a new spell for each match you complete. The quest matches can be very challenging as for the most part, they require you to win the match using the new card you are about to gain.... so each card may have special AI tactics to help you learn the strategy of the given card.

Our Favorite Decks

While the Quest mode is rewarding and allows you to unlock all the cards for all the colors while learning the strengths of each card, the Duel is where the game really shines. What follows is a list of our favorite decks we've been playing with along with a little strategy advice.

Elvish Beefcake



Main Deck

10 cards

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1 Elvish Warrior | 1 Giant Growth |
| 1 Llanowar Elves | 1 Guided Strike |
| 1 Suntail Hawk | 1 Run Wild |
| 1 Warrior Angel | 1 Tranquility |
| 1 Youthful Knight | 1 Wrath of God |

5 creatures

5 other spells



Strategy:

[Llanowar Elves](#)

[Llanowar Elves](#)

[Elvish Warrior](#) - [Guided Strike](#)

Keep the Warrior alive with [Guided Strikes](#)/[Giant Growths](#) until you can start casting [Warrior Angels](#).

For an early air rush you can also go with Hawk/Growth. [Youthful Knights](#) are good for last second blocking or for a rush. If you're faced with [Overrun](#) - [Wrath of God](#) if you need to.

[Run Wild](#)/[Guided Strike](#) is a great combo for any creature as it will give power for one creature to take out a bunch of blockers. [Run Wild](#)/[Giant Growth](#) on a [Warrior Angel](#) is life gaining supreme joy![Tranquility](#) is really there as a sort of sideboard card... you can generally run [Untamed Wilds](#) instead for faster mana spheres but I've found that having it in the deck can save you from a few nasty enchantment combos out there (like double [Pendrell Mists](#)).

Speed Gorilla



Main Deck

10 cards

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1 Avatar of Might | 1 Giant Growth |
| 1 Elvish Warrior | 1 Overrun |
| 1 Giant Spider | 1 Tranquility |
| 1 Gorilla Chieftain | 1 Untamed Wilds |
| 1 Llanowar Elves | _____ |

1 [Priest of Titania](#)

4 other spells

6 creatures



Strategy:

There are two basic plans of attack with this deck. Against most opponents, you can start with a couple of [Llanowar Elves](#) and a [Priest of Titania](#), followed up by an [Untamed Wilds](#) or two. You'll probably take some damage along the way, but you'll have an enormous mana advantage, which you can exploit by putting out [Gorilla Chieftains](#). And by the time those are dealt with, you can drop an [Avatar of Might](#) and keep [Giant Growth](#)ing it until you win.

If you're facing a more aggressive opponent, skip the mana acceleration and drop [Elvish Warriors](#) as soon as possible. At two mana, a 2/3 is very hard to deal with, and they'll keep your opponent back on the defensive while you progress to Gorilla mana.

If you've lost control of the game, a [Giant Growth](#)ed [Giant Spider](#) is about the only way to deal with large fliers. And if all else fails, you can always pump out cheap elves and [Overrun](#). The [Tranquility](#) is in there more as a panic button than anything else; the only enchantment that's really annoying is [No Mercy](#).

Monoblue Control



Main Deck
10 cards

- 1 [Fighting Drake](#)
- 1 [Horned Turtle](#)
- 1 [Mahamoti Djinn](#)

3 creatures

- 1 [Counterspell](#)
- 1 [Cowardice](#)
- 1 [Deluge](#)
- 1 [Mana Short](#)
- 1 [Pendrell Mists](#)
- 1 [Spelljack](#)
- 1 [Unsummon](#)

7 other spells



Strategy:

The goal of this deck is to get 2 [Pendrell Mists](#) into play. You can take some damage or use a [Horned Turtle](#) to stall until this point. Once you have the 2 [Pendrell Mists](#) in play, continually [Unsummon](#) your opponent's creatures. It will cost them 2 mana each time, and if they don't have it, their creature will be destroyed. Cast [Mana Short](#) at opportune times to keep their mana down and eventually use [Mahamoti Djinn](#) to win.

Prepare to Duel

Battlegrounds releases November 19th for the PC and X-Box. Atari has announced that there will be downloadable content at launch. There is also the possibility for future downloads too, should the game do well. X-Box Live will be hosting a rankings ladder and from what we've heard, the game really shines on Live. I can speak for the rest of the group and say that we are all looking forward to dueling with you online!