



Second Wind

Brian David-Marshall
Learning Curve

Wednesday, November 26, 2003



My article from two weeks ago, which featured a combo Affinity deck revolving around **Words of Wind** and **Vedalken Archmage**, generated a substantial reader response. I posted a preliminary list and asked for suggestions and help in naming the newborn deck. I can't remember a recent column that provoked so much feedback. The only other times I can remember getting a comparable volume of mail for a column was when I posted a Day of the Dragons deck and another when I posted pair of green-blue decks; Tradewind-Intruder Alarm and the Wirewood Channeler-Pemmin's Aura combo.

There were a number of suggestions and modifications, a smattering of deck names, and more than few lessons on the finer points of madness. In the original article I discussed an earlier blue-green attempt at abusing **Words of Wind** and mentioned that **Compulsion**, two **Basking Rootwallas** and a **Words of Wind** would allow you to create an ersatz **Capsize** with buyback...

David writes:

*Hi Brian, good article. But you need to brush up on madness rules a little (play Magic Online) - the original combo was more powerful than you thought! You only need one **Basking Rootwala** in order to pull off the combo, not two. You discard your **Basking Rootwala** as part of the cost of activating **Compulsion**. The madness trigger doesn't go on the stack until you have completed announcing the **Compulsion** ability. This means your madness trigger is on top of the card draw, and you have to put the **Basking Rootwala** into play before **Compulsion** and **Words of Wind** resolves. Bounce the **Rootwala** you just put into play and repeat!*

David is correct in his explanation of how this works—and his assumption that I do not play **Magic Online**. A number of people wrote in to explain how this works and they all cited **Magic Online** as the source of their clarity on the subject. I checked with a couple of Level 3 and Level 4 judges just to be sure and they confirmed David's account of how everything stacked up. Essentially you would have a non-targeting **Capsize** with buyback for 2 —although it does take you three cards to put it together.

Perhaps the most popular suggestion was to load up on actual zero casting cost artifacts—**Ornithopters** and **Welding Jars** were the most frequently mentioned—and worry less about implementing the Affinity mechanic. Some suggested merely adding the **Ornithopter** to the deck to make the combo easier to pull off.

Brian Wells writes:

*After reading your article I immediately put the deck on apprentice, with a slight alteration being **Ornithopter** for **Howling Mine**. The consistency of the deck is amazing and I have nearly decked myself by turn 8. With 16 free spells in the deck it runs very smoothly. It was a great idea and I'm sure I'd love to build this for a fun tournament or multi-player game. Thanks for the idea!*

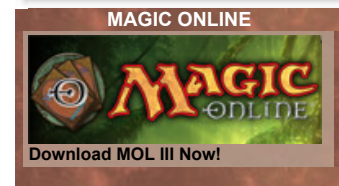


More than a few people criticized the inclusion of the **Howling Mines**. I can understand that perfectly well. I have these four well loved Alpha **Howling Mines** that I try to cram into every combo deck I have ever built. **Howling Mine** is sort of a pet card of mine. I understand that my opponent gets to draw cards before I do and it gets them to their answers before I can ask all of my questions but I still always try to work it in somehow. As I continued to test the deck I found the **Howling Mines** were an unwieldy component of the deck that could potentially be replaced by some other card.

It is possible that I would add some countermagic, card drawing or a tutor effect but I don't think I can bring myself to add **Ornithopters**. I know I am venturing into dangerous territory here and that the **Ornithopter** is something of a sacred cow but I just don't care for it at all. I barely like the **Frogmite** but I can accept him in this deck as a necessary element.

In the case of the **Ornithopter** you get what you pay for. For zero mana you get a creature that does zero. You can make a compelling case for **Welding Jar**—a card already present in many Affinity builds—since it can protect a **Myr Enforcer** but the problems I have encountered with the deck have not been finding the artifacts I need for the combo but in finding the combo itself. I have won the occasional match just attacking with my **Frogmites** and **Myr Enforcers**—unless a creature can serve similar double duty I don't want it in my deck. It is bad enough to have that slacker Archmage sitting on his 0/2 duff all game.

Stefan Nelson-Lindall writes:



I think that the deck needs two things the way that it's set up right now. *Words of Wind* is its own protection against just about anything, as long as you have instant draw card capabilities. *Thirst for knowledge* is a little bit expensive, but it works. I would suggest throwing in some the armor of *Chiss-Goria*,

The deck's other problem is that it has no win condition, other than the *Enforcers*.

When I was originally tinkering with the idea for this deck I considered both *Tooth and Scale of Chiss-Goria*. I like the idea of having an instant speed method of protecting my Archmage as *Stefan* suggested. You could go either of two routes. If burn spells were your concern then the *Scale of Chiss-Goria* would allow you to pump up the toughness of the Archmage to three at instant speed. If you were facing something more life-threatening you could just return the Archmage if you had a *Words of Wind* in play. In fact, you could protect any piece of the combo at instant speed—even the *Words of Wind* itself.

Since you could just use the *Words of Wind* to protect your Archmage I found myself leaning toward the *Tooth of Chiss-Goria*. I think this was mostly because I like the idea of cycling a pair of Teeth and sending my Archmage into the red zone with an arbitrarily large power. In the end they became *Lightning Greaves*. The Greaves is simply more powerful and versatile in the deck. It offers protection for my Archmage and allows me to send my *Enforcers* into combat the turn they see play. In fact, I find myself wanting at least more copy of *Lightning Greaves* with the potential of a fourth in the sidebar.

One thing that perplexed me was how many people wrote in and bemoaned the deck's lack of a win condition. They suggested adding *Brain Freeze* or *Astral Steel* or *Tooth of Chiss-Goria* or any number of cards to finish off an opponent. I should have been more clear in the original column. First of all, if you return all of your opponent's permanents to their hand they will likely concede in the face of any creature with a power greater than zero.

Secondly, let's pretend for a moment that you had no way to attack your opponent to death but you could still pull off the combo with *Ornithopters* and *Spellbooks*. You could still just deck them without needing to add any additional cards into the equation. As long as you opponent has no plays that can disrupt your combo for the one mana they will have available each turn then you can just run them out of cards. Since *Words of Wind* creates a replacement effect for card drawing you don't have to be worried about getting decked yourself. You can simply pay 1 and not draw with no cards left in your library and you won't lose.

The most popular suggestion I received for the deck was the inclusion of another 'bad rare' from *Mirrodin* that screams to be abused in a combo deck.

Dogget_336 writes:

Tangleroot + *Words of Wind* + *Frogmite* + *Vedalken Archmage* + another artifact = return all your opponent's permanents to owner's hand.



As long as that last artifact is another creature as well Dogget is correct. *Tangleroot* is another card that I considered with Pat Donavon (my co-conspirator on this deck). *Tangleroot* has been tormenting Pat much the way *Words of Wind* had been eating at me. What is alluring about including *Tangleroot* in this deck is the ability to put your opponent on zero permanents regardless of how much mana you have in play. In the original version you were limited as to how many permanents get returned by how much mana you have available. Since you need to pay 1 for each activation of *Words*. This is fine if you pull the combo off on turn five or six but later in the game it can take you two turns to clear the board. Since your opponent can get to choose which permanents they return they could potentially keep their threats on the board long enough to kill you.

The big problem is that *Tangleroot* does nothing on its own and it is adding additional pieces to an already complex puzzle. As I mentioned several times earlier the problem I was having was not in pulling the combo off once the pieces were in place but in finding those pieces in the first place. To this end a number of readers suggested additional card drawing—*Rush of Knowledge* and *Concentrate* being the usual suspects. I have found the deck has little problem drawing cards. What I really wanted was to find some kind of tutor effect.

A handful of people suggested the inclusion of *Long-Term Plans*. With *Howling Mines*, *Thoughtcasts*, and *Thirst for Knowledge* you should be able to get to that three deep card fast enough. *Long-Term Plans* is another one of those cards that tugs at the corners of my brain when I am building decks but I am able to ignore it. If there was nothing else available I might actually pay more attention to it but Core Set provides a much more attractive alternative.

Matt writes:

Finally, if you are concerned about getting the Archmage into play, why not put a few copies of *Diabolic Tutor* into the deck? If you're running 4 *Talisman of Dominance*, 4 *Vault of Whispers*, and the 4 *Chrome Mox*, you should be set for the two black in the casting cost.

It seems unlikely that the *Chrome Mox* will be making any black mana with only *Diabolic Tutor* allowing for that possibility but Matt forgot to mention *Glimmervoid*, which does give us twelve black mana sources not counting the outside shot of the Moxes.

The current build of the deck as it sits on my computer desk took Matt's suggestion to heart as well as those who urged the inclusion of some countermagic—which seemed to be nearly everyone.

Second Wind

Standard Deck



Main Deck

60 cards

4 Ancient Den	4 Frogmite	4 Chrome Mox
4 Glimmervoid	4 Myr Enforcer	3 Diabolic Tutor
2 Island	4 Vedalken Archmage	3 Lightning Greaves
4 Seat of the Synod		3 Mana Leak
4 Vault of Whispers	12 creatures	4 Talisman of Dominance
18 lands		2 Talisman of Progress
		3 Thirst for Knowledge
		4 Thoughtcast
		4 Words of Wind
		30 other spells

I have had my mind wrapped around Extended lately so I have not done any practical testing of this build other than some goldfish draws. I don't know what I would do about the sideboard but the original's Second Sunrises are more problematic now with the white and black producing Talismans flopping to support the Tutors. I would probably want to include some number of **Coercions** to snag Vengeances and other nasty surprises.

The most popular name that was sent in for the original deck was, of course, Breaking Wind. Almost fifty different readers suggested either that name or something close to it. There were a number of other suggestions but nothing that seemed like it would be able to dislodge the scatological humor from the top of my decklist. I have included some of the other suggestions below in no particular order.

Artificial Wind
Free Wind
Updraft
The Almighty Trampoline
Madness Reborn
Madness Reincarnated
Madness Reloaded
TurboFrog Prison
Wind mite blow the frogs away
Frog 4 Free
Mitey Wind
Vedalken Winds
Winfinity
Vedalken on the Wind
Words of Affinity

Thank you to everyone who wrote in with their suggestions and comments. I am sorry that I was not able to write back to everyone who wrote in but I do read each and every letter and look forward to them each Wednesday. Join me next week when we either look at one of my favorite *Ice Age* creatures or my favorite Limited format as I walk the tightrope of another theme week.

Brian may be reached at brian@fightlikeapes.com.

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.



[Discuss](#) on the message boards



[Respond](#) via email



[Brian David-Marshall](#) archive

[About Us](#) | [Jobs](#) | [New to the Game?](#) | [Find a Store](#) | [Press](#) | [Help](#)

© 1995-2008 Wizards of the Coast, Inc., a subsidiary of Hasbro, Inc. All Rights Reserved.

[Terms of Use](#) - [Privacy Statement](#)

