

# Building a Champion

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Learning Curve  
Wednesday, December 31, 2003



One of my most popular columns, this article presented four possible decks for States and actually resulted in an article on another site thanking me!

**S**tate and Provincial Championships are going to cause me physical harm. I'm fairly certain I am going to walk into an open manhole cover while trying to figure out what I want to play. Even worse, I am going to finally figure out what to play and while lost in the epiphany I will not see an oncoming truck. There seem to be so many decks that are possible with all of the cards in Core Set and *Mirrodin*. Last week I looked at a smattering of decks that I expected to do well.

The big three decks that I expect to be facing are Mono-Black Control, Goblins/Goblin Bidding and Astral Slide. None of those decks really strike my fancy. I want to play with new cards and test out new ideas at States. Yes, I want to win but I want to do it on my own terms with a deck slightly off the beaten path. I think the deck I want to build is an updated version of Aaron Forsythe's *Angry Hermit* deck from US Nationals in 2000. I have always had an unnatural affection for both *Vine Trellis* and *Plow Under* and I don't know if I can pass up the opportunity to dust off my old foils and play them on Saturday.

### Moldy Hermit

Standard States deck

Main Deck 60 cards		Sideboard
3 Contested Cliffs 7 Forest 6 Mountain 4 Shivan Oasis 4 Wooded Foothills <hr/> 24 lands <hr/> 4 Bird of Paradise 2 Krosan Tusker 4 Molder Slug 4 Ravenous Baloth 4 Vine Trellis <hr/> 18 creatures	4 Creeping Mold 2 Hammer of Bogardan 4 Plow Under 4 Starstorm 4 Stone Rain <hr/> 18 other spells	3 Flashfires 4 Pyroclasm 4 Spreading Algae 4 Viridian Shaman <hr/> 15 sideboard cards

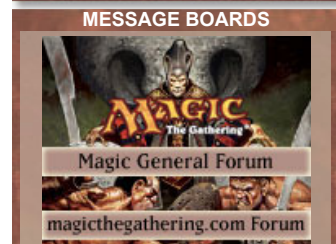
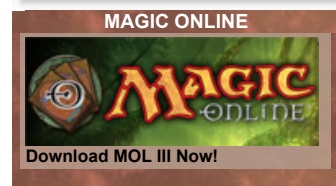
The potential for a turn three *Plow Under* (*Bird* followed by *Trellis*) is way too appealing for me to not play this deck. I am confident in its ability to battle against Mono-Black and I think it can hold its own against Slide. The match-up that concerns me is—of course—Goblins. I think that I can muster a fair game one with the *Trellis* and the *Baloth* buying me time to draw into *Starstorm*. *Pyroclasm* for the remaining two games should even things out somewhat. I will be testing and tuning this deck and I hope to have it ready for action by Saturday.

I was definitely leaning toward Mono-Black Control for a while. I like the all purpose utility of the *Oblivion Stone*. I just don't like *Karma*. Whether it is literal or metaphorical, *Karma* is going to get you. I have tried to work around Swamps as best I can but you have only so many options.

### Mono-Black Control

Standard States deck

Main Deck 60 cards		Sideboard
4 Barren Moor 4 Salt Marsh 12 Swamp 2 Unholy Grotto 4 Vault of Whispers <hr/>	4 Consume Spirit 4 Decree of Pain 2 Infest 4 Oblivion Stone 3 Persecute <hr/>	4 Cabal Interrogator 2 Infest 4 Mind Bend 1 Persecute 4 Promise of Power <hr/>



26 lands	4 <b>Phyrexian Arena</b>	15 sideboard cards
	4 <b>Terror</b>	
4 <b>Twisted Abomination</b>	25 other spells	
3 <b>Undead Gladiator</b>		
2 <b>Visara, the Dreadful</b>		
9 creatures		

**Mind Bend** gives you a pretty good option against **Karma** but you might actually need more blue—possibly some number of **Polluted Deltas** and an Island in place of four Swamps and a **Grotto**. You might be wondering where my **Grid Monitors** are but I want to be able to cast **Visara** and not have to wait for some way to get rid of my Monitor. That is definitely another direction the deck can go but my attentions have been pulled in the direction of the Red-Green deck listed above of late and I haven't toyed with the various MBC builds very much.

I was in Kansas City this past weekend doing [Sideboard coverage](#) of the Grand Prix. I had the opportunity to watch a number of players testing for their local Championships. One thing that kept standing out for me was the number of players trying to make Affinity decks work. The best draws would often see a turn three or four **Broodstar** hit play or a hasty **Nim Shrieker** (**Lightning Greaves**) would attack for six or seven on turn four. Unfortunately I also saw countless one-sided **Jokulhaups** when an opponent cast **Akroma's Vengeance**. I started playing with a deck that would put out large, fast threats and still have lands in play after a **Vengeance**.

Main Deck		Sideboard
60 cards		
20 Plains	4 <b>Bonesplitter</b>	3 <b>Akroma's Vengeance</b>
4 <b>Secluded Steppe</b>	4 <b>Glorious Anthem</b>	2 <b>Eternal Dragon</b>
24 lands	4 <b>Mask of Memory</b>	4 <b>Karma</b>
	12 other spells	3 <b>Second Sunrise</b>
4 <b>Exalted Angel</b>		3 <b>Wing Shards</b>
4 <b>Leonin Den-Guard</b>		15 sideboard cards
4 <b>Leonin Skyhunter</b>		
4 <b>Savannah Lions</b>		
4 <b>Silver Knight</b>		
4 <b>Whipcorder</b>		
24 creatures		

This deck leads to some very aggressive opening draws. You can attack for four damage on the second turn with a **Savannah Lions** and a **Bonesplitter**. If your **Den-Guard** picks up the **Bonesplitter** you have an impressive 4/4 creature that does not tap to attack. I saw some people testing out similar versions of this deck with **Auriok Steelshaper** where I have **Savannah Lions**. I prefer the Lions although that is probably just because I have been looking for an excuse to play my four Alpha Lions since they were reprinted.

In reality I prefer the Lions because the deck wanted to have a one-drop that could pick up the **Bonesplitter** and charge into combat with it on turn two. The **Steelshaper** is an excellent man and will undoubtedly see abundant use during the **Mirrodin** Block Constructed season. With eight pieces of equipment I had a hard time making room for another two drop in the deck.

I know that **Empyrial Plate** is a controversial card to leave out of this build but I prefer **Mask of Memory**. It costs less to equip—allowing you to cast it and equip it on turn three—and it gives you both card advantage and card selection. The Mask may shove **Curiosity** into a dark corner form whence it is never heard from again. Not only do you not have to warp your mana base to play the Mask in this deck but you don't lose any card advantage if the intended wearer of the Mask is killed in response to you equipping it.

One of the other decks I saw being played was a Blue-White control deck. Toward the end of the last PTQ season there were a number of regions that were dominated by Blue-White control. The deck should only get better in Standard where you have access to **Mana Leak**, **Rewind** and **Wrath of God**. Whenever I played Blue-White in the past I relied on **Nevinyrral's Disk** to get me out of tight fixes so I began to play around with adding **Oblivion Stone** into the deck. With the mana consistency generated by **Eternal Dragon** and **Temple of the False God** it should not be unreasonable to reach eight mana in enough time to push your reset button.



Blue-White Control	

Standard States deck		
Main Deck 60 cards		Sideboard
4 Flooded Strand	2 Akroma's Vengeance	3 Decree of Silence
8 Island	2 Decree of Justice	4 Karma
12 Plains	2 Discombobulate	4 Silver Knight
4 Temple of the False God	4 Mana Leak	4 Wing Shards
28 lands	4 Oblivion Stone	15 sideboard cards
	4 Rewind	
	4 Wrath of God	
2 Akroma, Angel of Wrath	22 other spells	
4 Eternal Dragon		
4 Exalted Angel		
10 creatures		

This does not even begin to scratch the surface of possible decks. There is still a variety of mono-red decks to puzzle out. In addition to your basic land destruction there is the possibility of an all-haste-all-the-time deck with creatures ranging from **Slith Firewalker** straight up to **Rorix Bladewing**. There are still a number of Black-White decks and aggressive Zombie decks.

I haven't even given **Story Circle** and **Blinding Angel** enough thought--it can all be mind-boggling. Fortunately, I think I know what I am going to be playing. Hopefully I have given you some ideas to think about. I can't wait to see what everyone else has been working on—I guess I'll find out on Saturday.

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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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