



-1/-1 COUNTERWEEK

MAGICTHEGATHERING.COM

ARCHIVES

TOURNAMENT CENTER

MAGIC ONLINE

GATHERER

Home > Games > Magic > Magicthegathering.com > Columns



The Secret Life of Slivers

Brian David-Marshall
Swimming With Sharks
Wednesday, March 10, 2004



WHAT IS MAGIC?
CLICK HERE!

For this week I'll be changing things up a bit by taking a look back in competitive **Magic's** history. In preparation for this article I poked about a fair bit on the web. When you do a search for "slivers" in regards to **Magic** you get back a dizzying array of information. Slivers are like bigamists who lead two separate lives. Day in and day out they are married to the casual player, but they've also found their way into high profile tournament decks as well.

To this day they remain so popular to the bulk of the **Magic** playing audience that even common slivers from the Rath cycle sell for one to two dollars. I have seen **Crystalline Slivers** go for upwards of five bucks. **Sliver Queen** is approaching forty-dollars on some sites.

Legions remains one of the best selling sets of all time. That success is largely credited to the addition of slivers. When the next set was released **Sliver Overlord** was more expensive than any other two rares in *Scourge* combined right out of the gate.

Despite the long and seemingly happy marriage to the casual **Magic** community, Slivers have led a double life. They carried on a relationship with the professional (and aspiring professional) **Magic** community for much of that time as well

I was at Pro Tour Los Angeles in 1998--the year that Dave Price introduced the world to 4/3 **Jackal Pups**--when I first caught a whiff of the relationship. One of the decks I remember seeing during the Swiss rounds was something called Sliving Death. The deck was blue-black and featured **Mindwhip Sliver** and **Mnemonic Sliver** among others. The deck set up by stocking its graveyard with slivers--either by drawing cards or making the opponent discard cards. It would then finish them off with an army of flying Slivers coming back from beyond with a **Living Death**.

I have never been able to quite puzzle out the decklist. The online coverage of events was not as thorough as it is today and any decklists below the Top 8 may be lost forever. That may be for the best in this case as the deck does not seem very good in hindsight, but the idea is an entertaining one.

Slivers seemed to fade away for awhile as a competitive force until an Extended PTQ season in early 1999. Future Magic Dojo editor Chris Senhouse and a group of YMG (Your Move Games) players developed a deck that became known as House of Slivers. The dominant decks at the time were Sligh (a mono-red deck with cheap creatures and plenty of burn), High Tide (a combo deck that abused Time Spiral), and Necropotence decks. House of Slivers was an unexpected deck choice and it earned a number of the team members Top 8 berths on the East Coast PTQ circuit.



PRODUCTS

SHADOWMOOR
MORNINGGLIDE

MAGIC ONLINE

MAGIC ONLINE
Download MOL III Now!

MAGIC PRO TOUR

Hollywood
Live webcast:
May 25 at 1:45 p.m. ET

GLEEMAX
FIND OUT MORE!

MESSAGE BOARDS

Magic General Forum
magicthegathering.com Forum

RULES

RULES

House of Slivers

Chris Senhouse - Extended Deck circa Feb 1999

Main Deck 60 cards	Sideboard
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2 City of Brass 3 Flood Plain 4 Island 1 Reflecting Pool 4 Savannah 4 Tropical Island 4 Tundra <hr/> <p>22 lands</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 4 Counterspell 2 Disenchant 4 Force of Will 4 Impulse 2 Mana Leak 2 Swords to Plowshares 1 Worship <hr/> <p>19 other spells</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 4 Crystalline Sliver 4 Muscle Sliver 3 Ophidian 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 4 Arcane Laboratory 2 Disrupt 2 Serrated Arrows 2 Swords to Plowshares 2 Tormod's Crypt 3 Worship <hr/> <p>15 sideboard cards</p>

4 Wall of Blossoms
4 Winged Sliver

19 creatures

Chris Senhouse claimed the deck completely disrupted the metagame at the time. Not only did the deck have an aggressive early game like a goblin deck or a merfolk deck but it had strong control elements as well. It had counterspells for problem cards. Card drawing in **Wall of Blossoms**, **Impulse**, and **Ophidian** with **Swords to Plowshares** to clear the way for the last one. It had additional utility with **Disenchant**. It even had a combo-like quality with **Crystalline Sliver** and **Worship**—a two card combo that presented a serious problem for the red decks at the time.

His teammate Michele Bush played a similar version of the deck. Instead of **Ophidians** and **Impulses** she was sporting additional Slivers. Her list looked like so...

House of (more) Slivers

Michelle Bush - Extended Deck circa Feb 1999

Main Deck 60 cards

2 City of Brass	4 Crystalline Sliver	4 Counterspell
3 Flood Plain	4 Hibernation Sliver	2 Disenchant
4 Island	3 Metallic Sliver	4 Force of Will
1 Reflecting Pool	4 Muscle Sliver	2 Mana Leak
4 Savannah	4 Wall of Blossoms	2 Swords to Plowshares
4 Tropical Island	4 Winged Sliver	1 Worship
4 Tundra		
22 lands	23 creatures	15 other spells

The deck quickly became a force on the East Coast and rose to National prominence when Lan D. Ho made the Top 8 of Grand Prix Kansas City with a similar decklist which became known as CounterSliver:

Counter Sliver

Lan D. Ho - Extended deck circa March 1999

Main Deck 60 cards

2 City of Brass	4 Crystalline Sliver	4 Counterspell
3 Flood Plain	2 Dwarven Miner	2 Disenchant
2 Savannah	2 Hibernation Sliver	4 Force of Will
4 Tropical Island	4 Muscle Sliver	3 Lim-Dul's Vault
4 Tundra	3 Wall of Blossoms	2 Miscalculation
4 Underground Sea	4 Winged Sliver	3 Swords to Plowshares
2 Volcanic Island		1 Worship
1 Volrath's Stronghold	19 creatures	19 other spells
22 lands		

Lan's deck did away with **Ophidian** and added **Hibernation Slivers** and **Dwarven Miners**. He also nudged the deck toward its most successful iteration with the addition of **Lim Dul's Vault**. The Vault allowed the deck to really search for key pieces such as the **Worship**, **Crystalline Sliver**, **Winged Sliver**, **Disenchant**—whatever the situation called for.

Also playing a similar deck in the tournament was one Brian Kowal. Brian is a well respected designer with many notable decks on his resume. Most recently he was responsible for the red-white deck that Bob Maher wielded to victory at Grand Prix Detroit. He is also a good friend of Mike Flores and Adrian Sullivan. I had the opportunity to spend some time with Adrian in Kobe and we talked about this upcoming theme week.

Adrian was adamant that Brian should get credit for the move from **Lim-Dul's Vault** toward **Demonic Consultation**. Brian played a deck that looked like Lan's with that being the significant difference. Rather than hope to find the card with a Vault his version allowed him to just go get the card he needed with the Consultation. Brian finished outside of the Top 8 but his innovation became relevant when Christian Luhrs adopted Brian's build for Pro Tour Chicago and placed in the Top 8 with the deck.

DD-Sliver

PT Chicago Top 8 - Christian Luhrs - Extended Deck circa 1999

Main Deck 60 cards

Sideboard

2 Disenchant

4 City of Brass	4 Counterspell	3 Honor the Fallen
4 Flood Plain	3 Demonic Consultation	2 Honorable Passage
2 Gemstone Mine	2 Disenchant	3 Hydroblast
2 Scrubland	4 Force of Will	3 Perish
1 Tropical Island	2 Misdirection	2 Swords to Plowshares
3 Tundra	2 Swords to Plowshares	
4 Underground Sea		15 sideboard cards
2 Undiscovered Paradise	17 other spells	
1 Volcanic Island		
23 lands		
4 Acidic Sliver		
4 Crystalline Sliver		
4 Hibernation Sliver		
4 Muscle Sliver		
4 Winged Sliver		
20 creatures		

Christian was the top seeded player in Chicago going into the Top 8. He went as far as the Top 4 before falling to Bob Maher, who would go on to win that event. The deck that Christian ran became the model for the PTQ deck the following year even though Brian Kowal was the deck's progenitor.

I don't know much about the rest of the world but on the East Coast it was a very popular choice for the next two Extended PTQ seasons. At Neutral Ground the following year a group of Long Island players modified the Luhrs deck to a slightly different, blacker build. They took out the *Misdirections* and some other counter magic and added *Duress*. They also bumped up their creature count by going up to four *Hibernation Sliver* and adding in *Acidic Slivers*.

In the first PTQ of the year 2000, the newly dubbed *DyckaSliver* took two spots in the Top 8 of a PTQ at Neutral Ground. Aaron Amendolia won the whole shebang and Slivers became a staple for that season.

Main Deck 60 cards		Sideboard
2 Bad River	2 Aura of Silence	1 Annul
4 City of Brass	4 Counterspell	1 Aura of Silence
2 Flood Plain	3 Demonic Consultation	2 Honorable Passage
2 Gemstone Mine	4 Duress	3 Hydroblast
2 Scrubland	3 Force of Will	2 Karma
1 Tropical Island	2 Swords to Plowshares	2 Perish
3 Tundra		2 Price of Progress
4 Underground Sea	18 other spells	2 Swords to Plowshares
2 Undiscovered Paradise		15 sideboard cards
1 Volcanic Island		
23 lands		
3 Acidic Sliver		
4 Crystalline Sliver		
4 Hibernation Sliver		
4 Muscle Sliver		
4 Winged Sliver		
19 creatures		

There were other sliver decks floating out there at the time as well. There were Tradewind Armageddon decks that did not have access to black. They would have a slightly more reliable mana base and try to stick to blue-white-green. The idea was to get into a good position with Slivers and a Tradewind. From there you could *Armageddon* and lock your opponent out of land with the Tradewind. The deck was slightly more interesting than the Luhrs-inspired versions but it did not put up the same kind of numbers and the blacker version emerged as the dominant deck for the PTQs.

Eventually the dual lands that made the Sliver decks possible rotated out of Extended and the deck's relationship with the professional **Magic** community came to an abrupt halt. But, they still get together once in a while. The *Sliver Queen* has surfaced in a number of decks. As recently as Pro Tour New Orleans I spied at least one player—Bill Stead I believe—utilizing them in his *Sutured Ghoul* deck in order to imprint them on *Chrome Mox*. I saw him hard cast the legend more than once.

Pro Tour New Orleans: Angry Hermit	
Bill Stead	

Main Deck 60 cards		Sideboard
1 Caves of Koilos	4 Cabal Therapy	4 Chill
4 City of Brass	4 Careful Study	1 Coffin Purge
4 Llanowar Wastes	3 Chrome Mox	3 Defense Grid
1 Tarnished Citadel	1 Dragon Breath	2 Engineered Plague
4 Underground River	4 Duress	1 Krosan Reclamation
2 Vault of Whispers	2 Exhume	1 Mana Maze
2 Yavimaya Coast	1 Krosan Reclamation	2 Naturalize
18 lands	4 Mox Diamond	1 Serenity
1 Akroma, Angel of Wrath	4 Reanimate	15 sideboard cards
4 Hermit Druid	1 Steely Resolve	
3 Sliver Queen	4 Vampiric Tutor	
1 Sutured Ghoul	32 other spells	
1 Verdant Force		
10 creatures		

Slivers for the most part have settled back into a monogamous relationship with the more casual segment of the **Magic** community. It is amazing what a difference a little mana can make. Slivers were attractive for tournament play because of their efficient casting costs when compared to their power and toughness—usually two power for two mana, in addition to their trademark ability to improve with numbers. (Consider the incredible deal that is **Muscle Sliver**.) The second wave of slivers was just out of that range. It offered two power for three mana (and even four). Three power would cost you four or five. The cards had exciting effects like unblockability and card drawing but the price was too high for serious tournament play. Mark indicated in [his Monday column](#) that slivers might make a third appearance some time in the future. Whether or not they will stray from the casual tables in the future remains to be seen, but there's no denying that the slivers, at least for a time, were able to bring smiles to tournament and casual players alike.



A great deal for the price

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

