

Mark Gottlieb

Thursday, March 11, 2004

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**W**hen Scott Johns told me that this week would be Sliver Week, I immediately had a bone to pick. Oops, I meant "nose," not "bone." But once I was done with that, I needed to have a little chat with Scott. Since my tape recorder's batteries had run down, I'm going to take some dramatic license in reconstructing the conversation. (That's literary-speak for "completely make the whole thing up.")

**Mark:** Uh, Scott...

**Scott:** *Oh, hey, Mark. Call me Sir.*

**Mark:** Sir, I might have a problem with Sliver Week.

**Sir:** *What's that?*

**Mark:** I've done it before. Let my words verbally link you to the article to refresh your memory.

**Sir:** *Doesn't count.*

**Mark:** But I poured my heart and soul into that column, as I do each and every week. My readership, which happens to be the flat-out best dang Internet column readership of all time (though I'd be so embarrassed if they ever found out I felt that way about them), deserves no less than my absolute best effort. It is my duty—nay, my privilege—to deliver it each and every week! The whole point of my life is to serve them!

**Sir:** *It's a good thing your tape recorder batteries are dead, or they'd think you were the biggest kiss-ass of all time.*

**Mark:** Can telling the truth really be kissing ass?

**Sir:** *What was your point?*

**Mark:** That Sliver column I already wrote. Plus the other couple of Sliver decks I've made.

**Sir:** *Irrelevant! That was in the Before Time.*

**Mark:** The...

**Sir:** *The primitive era prior to my glorious arrival! Everything that appeared on this website earlier than six weeks ago was merely practice. Now that the show has really started, I suggest you get cracking!*

And so I backed out of Scott's office, softly closed the 24-karat-gold door, and slunk back down to my cubicle. The month and a half of power must have finally gone to his head. What could I write about? There certainly hadn't been any new Slivers printed since *Scourge*. After I gave it some thought, though, I realized that there was plenty of land in Sliver country I had never set foot on. Lots of ground yet to be covered. Miles of wilderness before a wide-open horizon. Dozens of ways to overuse this metaphor. There may not have been any new Slivers in *Mirrodin* block, but there were plenty of new toys for them to play with.

## If I Had a Warhammer

Slivers and Equipment! What a perfect match! What a... wait a minute, no it isn't. The point of Equipment is to enhance creatures by granting them abilities they wouldn't normally have. But that's the point of Slivers too! A Neurok Hoversail, which gives one Sliver flying, pales in comparison to a Winged Sliver, which gives *all* Slivers flying. You don't need a Dead-Iron Sledge with a Toxin Sliver around. There are a number of other pairs that either overlap exactly or are very close: Leonin Scimitar & Muscle Sliver. Mask of Memory & Synapse Sliver. Lightning Greaves & Heart Sliver plus Crystalline Sliver (which you probably don't want to include in an Equipment deck). Horned Sliver has the trample of Vorrac Battlehorns; Essence Sliver has the life gain of Loxodon Warhammer (though both together is cumulative); and the list goes on. So what do you gain from handing out weaponry to your Slivery friends?

I'm glad I asked, because I know the answer. There are two benefits. The first is color specialization. Sure, you could add the white Essence Sliver to your black-red Sliver deck to gain some life. Or you could add the Warhammer and stick to only two colors. The second is that some abilities that appear on Equipment have no Sliver counterparts. The provoke ability of Hunter Sliver is no match for the Lure ability of Nemesis Mask—which is a great combo with Toxin Sliver. It's so great that I made it the basis for my first deck.

I've combined the black and red Slivers before. I love that mixing provoke, regeneration, and Toxin Sliver's ability turns all your Slivers into reusable combat-based assassins. Boost its power with other Slivers and/or Equipment and add double strike via Fireshrieker and even a Crypt Sliver can take out an opposing army all at once. Mask of Memory on a toxic attacker forces your opponent to make an unpleasant choice. The Patriarch's Biddings let you come back from a Wrath or Vengeance, or just pick up the Slivers you lost to Mask of Memory discards and kamikaze attacks. After all, why shouldn't one creature have five abilities on it? It worked for Akroma and Morphling.

## Masked Slivers

**Main Deck**  
60 cards

3 Bloodstained Mire 7 Mountain 1 Shadowblood Ridge 2 Sulfurous Springs 7 Swamp 4 Urborg Volcano <hr style="width: 100%;"/> 24 lands	4 Acidic Sliver 4 Blade Sliver 2 Clot Sliver 2 Crypt Sliver 2 Heart Sliver 3 Hunter Sliver 1 Magma Sliver 2 Spectral Sliver 4 Toxin Sliver <hr style="width: 100%;"/> 24 creatures	1 Banshee's Blade 2 Fireshrieker 1 Loxodon Warhammer 2 Mask of Memory 2 Nemesis Mask 3 Patriarch's Bidding 1 Specter's Shroud <hr style="width: 100%;"/> 12 other spells
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A different option is to use the evasion abilities of Shifting Sliver and Winged Sliver to support the myriad saboteur abilities (those that trigger when a creature deals combat damage to an opponent) available to you. With a Synaspe Sliver in play, an unblocked Essence Sliver equipped with Specter's Shroud leads to 4 damage plus a discard for your opponent and 4 life plus an extra card for you.

## Lost and Foundry

What else have Slivers gained in the past few months? Soul Foundry! This isn't as dynamic as you might first expect, since very few Sliver abilities are cumulative. In fact, Sliver copies aren't that useful. Three Winged Slivers are less interesting than one Winged Sliver plus any two other Slivers. The big exception to this is Muscle Sliver.

Pop a Muscle Sliver into the Soul Foundry and you can crank out critters with built in Muscle-Sliver-only Coats of Arms. Got three of them? They're each 4/4. Got eight of them? They're each 9/9. Even better, they pump up your other Slivers too. Eladamri's Call and Fabricate should help you find the parts you need to get this motor humming. If you have the Foundry but not the Muscle Sliver, Plated Sliver makes a decent replacement in the early going. You pay half the cost for half the ability, and

the cumulative high toughness should keep you around until a Coat of Arms shows up. Popping a Clone into the Foundry is lots of fun as well.

What else? We want to share all that Muscle Sliver goodness with other Slivers, and it doesn't matter if those pump recipients do nothing on their own: Size and numbers are the keys to this deck, not crazy conglomerations of abilities. Brood Sliver makes Sliver tokens, but it's hard to pull off. Sliver Queen makes Sliver tokens, but it's hard to get into play. Time for some genetic engineering! Artificial Evolution, meet Nuisance Engine. Or Mobilization. Or (my favorite) Pentavus. When Pentavus lets you put flying Sliver tokens into play *and* sacrifice Slivers to add counters to it, you've entered Gottlieb country (despite the fact that the UN *still* refuses to recognize my sovereignty).



## Sliver Hatchery

**Main Deck**  
60 cards

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 Adarkar Wastes</li> <li>1 Brushland</li> <li>1 Flooded Strand</li> <li>5 Forest</li> <li>5 Island</li> <li>4 Mirrodin's Core</li> <li>5 Plains</li> <li>1 Windswept Heath</li> <li>1 Yavimaya Coast</li> </ul> <hr style="width: 100%;"/> <p>24 lands</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2 Brood Sliver</li> <li>1 Broodhatch Nantuko</li> <li>1 Clone</li> <li>2 Crystalline Sliver</li> <li>1 Essence Sliver</li> <li>1 Mnemonic Sliver</li> <li>4 Muscle Sliver</li> <li>1 Pentavus</li> <li>3 Plated Sliver</li> <li>1 Shifting Sliver</li> <li>1 Victual Sliver</li> </ul> <hr style="width: 100%;"/> <p>18 creatures</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4 Artificial Evolution</li> <li>1 Coat of Arms</li> <li>2 Eladamri's Call</li> <li>2 Fabricate</li> <li>1 Mobilization</li> <li>3 Nuisance Engine</li> <li>1 Parallel Evolution</li> <li>4 Soul Foundry</li> </ul> <hr style="width: 100%;"/> <p>18 other spells</p>
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### Play 'Em if You Got 'Em

I've been in big trouble for the past week. As many of you know, last Thursday **Magic Online** (and I apologize for the technospeak) went kerflooey. That happened to be the same day I suggested everybody play Confusion in the Ranks-Grip of Chaos decks online. What? It's a coincidence, people! It's gotten so bad, I can't leave work to attend Communist Redneck Anarchist Society of Hackers meetings without getting weird glances.

Just to follow up on last week's column, Shattered Destiny wrote in to correct two minor errors. If you give away control of Gemini Engine's Twin token during combat, it won't get sacrificed. And if you control Confusion in the Ranks when you bring a Siege-Gang Commander into play, you can use stack tricks to never give the Commander away, even temporarily. This matters if your opponent has mana open to use its ability against you. What does this have to do with the next Sliver deck? Absolutely nothing!

Speaking of absolutely nothing (yes, I'm the king of segues), that's how much you need to pay to pop Slivers into play at instant speed thanks to a handy-dandy Aether Vial. Slivers only range in cost between 1 and 5 mana, with nearly half holding steady at a nifty 2, but their colors are all over the map. How perfect is that for Aether Vial? You don't have to worry about the color requirements of Sliver Queen or (even better in this deck) Sliver Overlord. Your opponent can't safely attack you because you could always tap your Vial to port in a new Sliver—and suddenly all your creatures have flying or first strike or +1/+1. Even better, with an Overlord in play, you can tutor up whichever Sliver perfectly suits your needs at the time and get it on the table. You can even tutor up another Overlord in case of Wrath.



The other delightfully colorless combo in this deck is Well of Lost Dreams with either Victual Sliver or Essence Sliver. (No, those Slivers aren't colorless, but both their abilities and Aether Vial are.) The extra life makes Hibernation Sliver's ability easily affordable, and the extra cards make you win the game. The other other colorless combo is Aether Vial plus Power Conduit, which slurps off the Vial's free counters to beef up your Slivers. If you skip adding charge counters to the Vial over a few upkeep, the Conduit can even let it shrink from five counters back down to two. This version of the deck has fourteen 2-mana Slivers to go along with six 5-mana Slivers, four 4-mana Slivers, and no 3-mana Slivers at all, so having a Vial with two charge counters on it leaves you happily flush with options.

## Vial Slivers



### Main Deck

60 cards

1 Bloodstained Mire	2 Acidic Sliver	4 Aether Vial
3 City of Brass	1 Brood Sliver	2 Darksteel Ingot
1 Crystal Quarry	1 Crypt Sliver	2 Fabricate
1 Flooded Strand	1 Crystalline Sliver	2 Power Conduit
2 Forest	2 Essence Sliver	2 Well of Lost Dreams
2 Island	2 Hibernation Sliver	
4 Mirrodin's Core	1 Hunter Sliver	12 other spells
2 Mountain	2 Muscle Sliver	
2 Plains	1 Shifting Sliver	
1 Polluted Delta	3 Sliver Overlord	
2 Swamp	1 Sliver Queen	
1 Terminal Moraine	2 Talon Sliver	

1 Windswept Heath

1 Wooded Foothills

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24 lands

1 Toxin Sliver

2 Victual Sliver

1 Ward Sliver

1 Winged Sliver

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24 creatures

That deck took a toolbox approach to include at least one copy of nearly half the Slivers in existence. But Slivers are by nature quite adaptable. Feel free to adjust any of the decks to match your personal Sliver tastes (and collection). The first deck needs the Toxin Slivers, the second needs the Muscle Slivers, and the last needs the Sliver Overlords, but anything else is open to debate. Mix and match—that's what the Slivers do!

Until next week, have fun with Slivers.

Mark

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Mark may be reached at [houseofcardsmail@yahoo.com](mailto:houseofcardsmail@yahoo.com). Send rules-related **Magic** questions to [ask@wizards.com](mailto:ask@wizards.com).

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