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Elf-Clamp

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Building on a Budget
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PRO TOUR-VALENCIA

Finally.

I have waited for this day for a long time – just like the rest of you. We can finally play *Darksteel* Online. Because of this, I can finally bring you the newest budget decks including *Darksteel* cards. Initially, I was going to do some sort of *Darksteel* theme for the deck, but I have a strange hankering to write about something dear to my heart – Elves.

Wait, wait, wait... isn't this Sliver week? (as you look at the links all around this article, you will notice it indeed is near the end of sliver week). That being said, you might think I would write about some sort of budget Sliver concoction? Well, I would, but the fact is I already have. If you want more Sliver-goodness, I've already [beaten you to it!](#)

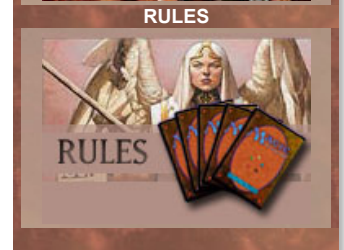
Elves were always more fun anyway- in my book. You see, I had a bonding with the elves last year when I played a Regionals deck based loosely off of one of my budget decks for this column. I proceeded to go on the longest winning streak and best record I've had with any single deck. The deck was called Big Bird, and I played it to win one of the *Magic Online* World Championships qualifiers and I also went 8-0-2 at Regionals with it. The details of that tournament can be found on Starcity Games in an article called "[And the Elves Said... Suffer!](#)"

That being said I feel like I owe the Elves another shot at glory. I think they have only improved with time even though they lost their most precious member, the Llanowar Elf.

Instead they received the best uncommon ever printed – *Skullclamp*. (Maybe *Mana Drain* was better, but I'm not entirely sure it was uncommon...same goes for *Force of Will*)

Skullclamp can be used in many different decks, but I think the deck that best utilizes its awesome power is Elves, especially with *Wirewood Hivemaster*. Elf decks have a tendency to get lots of little dudes on the table, and *Skullclamp* is the best way imaginable to take advantage of the situation...talk about a card drawing engine!

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Building on a Budget: Elfclamp (about 30 Tickets) dec

Main Deck 60 cards		
4 <i>Wirewood Lodge</i> 16 Forest <hr/> 20 lands	4 <i>Wirewood Hivemaster</i> 4 <i>Birchlore Rangers</i> 4 <i>Wirewood Herald</i> 1 <i>Taunting Elf</i> 4 <i>Wirewood Symbiote</i> 4 <i>Wirewood Channeler</i> 4 <i>Wellwisher</i> 3 <i>Viridian Shaman</i> 4 <i>Timberwatch Elf</i> 1 <i>Caller of the Claw</i> <hr/> 33 creatures	4 <i>Skullclamp</i> 3 <i>Lightning Greaves</i> <hr/> 7 other spells

If any of you are actually familiar with my deck from last year – it made Spectacular use of *Timberwatch Elf* with help from *Wirewood Lodge* and *Seeker of Skybreak* (to a lesser extent it made the same use of *Wellwisher*). This deck can do the same exact thing, except replace the *Seeker* with *Wirewood Symbiote* – they are better in some ways and worse in others, but I think the *Symbiote* is overall a much cooler card that lets you do uber-tricky things. It is a little known fact that my favorite card is *Quirion Ranger*. The *Symbiote* is probably straight up better than it (at least in elves). Makes a guy get a warm and fuzzy feeling inside...



The other two interesting cards in the deck are the *Wirewood Channelers* and the *Lightning Greaves*. Between the two of these and *Skullclamp*, the deck can somewhat 'go off' in a combo-ish manner, sacrificing *Hivemaster* insects to the *Skullclamp* with insane amount of *Channeler* mana, then untapping the *Channeler* multiple times while playing out more and more elves. The *Lightning Greaves* allow you to utilize the elves that you just played (especially more *Channelers* and *Timberwatches*) allowing you to basically overrun your opponent that turn. The deck doesn't always win this way,

but it's rather cool to watch when it does.

There are plenty of other cool tricks you can do with **Wirewood Herald** a.k.a. 'Moat'. If they ever attack into your Herald, go get the thing you need most. This could be a **Viridian Shaman**, **Timberwatch**, **Taunting Elf**, or maybe even a **Wellwisher**. **Caller of the Claw** is great to fetch up after they cast a **Wrath of God**. Also, the Caller and the Shaman work great with the Symbiote.

Tips on Playing the Deck:

- Remember that you can tap elves you just played to use the **Birchlore Rangers** – summoning sickness doesn't matter here.
- **Birchlore Rangers** has morph – use it to lure out creature kill spells and countermagic, they might think it's something better.
- Never let your Timberwatch die. The Symbiote will help save it (and any other elves) by bouncing it back to your hand. Sometimes the "cost" of an ability is really the effect you hope to achieve!
- It is not always correct to play your Greaves on turn 2, look at your hand carefully before deciding to. Often it is best on the turn just before you cast a Timberwatch, **Wellwisher**, or **Wirewood Channeler**.
- Ok, this sounds dumb, but don't **Viridian Shaman** your **Skullclamp** by mistake...trust me, it happens!
- There is a cool trick with **Wirewood Symbiote**, **Birchlore Rangers**, and Hivemaster. Tap the Ranger and the Hivemaster for a mana, then return the Birchlore untapping the Hivemaster, then replay the Birchlore netting a new Insect token. This means that when you have those three cards out the Symbiote might as well say 'Make an insect token once during your turn'.



Adding More Money to the Deck:

I would suggest adding the best elf ever...**Birds of Paradise**. Yah, I know. It isn't an Elf...tell it to the jury. The next card I would add is **Chrome Mox**. Both of these cards allow you to play a **Timberwatch Elf** on turn 2, a very important part of the deck. The card disadvantage generated by the Mox is made up for with **Skullclamp** – I would take lands out for the Moxes almost straight up. **Viridian Zealots** would also be helpful especially with all the other artifacts running around, but the real reason why they are good is because they have the ability to kill enchantments like **Lightning Rift** and **Astral Slide**.

If you are just looking for some more fun innovations to the deck, I would try **Coat of Arms**, watching your Insect horde grow larger than your Elves is quite a show. You can also experiment with off color cards like **Fireball**, since the Channeler and **Birchlore Rangers** can provide you with any color you desire. If you are looking for some extra morph diversity, I would try **Tribal Forcemage** or maybe even a **Krosan Colossus** (fun to flip up with the Channeler).

This deck is a load of fun and I hope to play something similar in Regionals...there is no better feeling in the world than when the ten year old kid across from you tells you he is playing his Goblin deck and then asks you what you are playing and you respond by saying, "Elves," and smile the whole match.

Until next time, **create your millions**.

-Nate Heiss
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NateHeiss on **Magic Online**



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