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Forgotten Ancient



Adrian Sullivan · Single-Card Strategies
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I ended [last week's article](#) asking people to let me know what cards they would like to see covered. One of the nice things about asking for feedback from your readers is that sometimes they surprise you. Since this column began, the biggest surprise I've received so far was about the [Sundering Titan](#) Challenge. After reading the forums and my e-mails, I had expected that most people were unexcited by the Challenge. That's what it seemed from what I was reading. Instead, an overwhelming amount of you voted positively in favor of future Challenges.

The surprise this week is that a lot of you seem to want to talk about cards that have been out for a while already. At the end of this column, I'll find out exactly *how* far back people want to go. As for this week, I got a few suggestions that I really liked, but Adam Fulton was the first to suggest one of my personal favorites, [Forgotten Ancient](#). I'm always more predisposed to write an article about a card I've tried very hard to use, and Mr. Babycakes is just such a card.



Who Is Mr. Babycakes?

[Forgotten Ancient](#), AKA Mr. Babycakes, got his start with the readers. Every week, people voted and eventually we ended up with a card that is quite powerful, but somehow hasn't managed to get into any successful tournament decks that I can think of. One of the things that has always limited him is his casting cost. He costs 4 mana, and in the most hard-hitting tournament decks, a 4 mana spell had better start impacting things in the game quickly.

The thing that I like about Mr. Babycakes is how quickly he can become huge. His primary ability, getting counters, really encourages people to *not* cast spells. He encourages you (and your teammates, if you have any) to cast as many spells as you can. His secondary ability, moving those counters elsewhere, makes running other creatures a good thing.

With those simple facts, we can begin.

Encouraging People To Not Act

This is one of my favorite subtle things about the card. I first tested out Mr. Babycakes back in *Onslaught* Block Constructed in an Elf deck. I was trying to beat Goblin decks, and I simply couldn't hold the table. Little goblins kept storming my castle and doing mean things to my team and my life total.

Dropping **Forgotten Ancient** on the table often really slowed down their attacking. The Goblins had to think twice about attacking after even one turn. Goblin decks, and other aggressive decks *want* to cast spells. In doing so they quickly will make a **Forgotten Ancient** into a killing machine. In turn, the Ancient could make any puny Elf or other creature into one as well. If you can weather that storm, the Ancient should help put things in the bag. That Elf deck never went anywhere, but the Ancients in it really were quite exciting.

To keep things slowed down, then, you need time. Life is one of the great ways to gain time. The Elf deck ran **Wellwisher**. **Wellwisher** and a bunch of elves was great in two ways: the life made the Ancient more likely to impact the game, and the Ancient could drop some counters onto the **Wellwisher** to make sure that he never died.

Moment's Peace is another great potential card choice here. Not only can it be flashed back (2 spells for the Ancient! Yay!), but it could keep you alive in the meantime. By the same token, you can use an **Isochron Scepter** with either life gain (**Nourish**, or even better, **Hero's Reunion**) or a fog effect (**Moment's Peace** or **Respite**, for example). Isochron also has the added benefit of creating copies of a spell again and again to make the Ancient bigger. In decks with older cards, cards like **Zuran Orb** and **Ivory Tower** are options as well.

A Lot of Action on the Table

Forgotten Ancient also thrives when a lot is going on. A simple way to have a lot going on is to have a lot of players in the game. Every additional player makes for more chances for a spell to be cast. In a two-player game, though, you can't control if your opponent plays a lot of cards or not (barring **Mindslaving** them). But you can try to play a lot of cards yourself. The easiest way to do this is card drawing. Every card that you can get in your hand is another chance to get another spell to play.



More cards means more counters...

On the selfish side, drawing cards for just yourself is always good. **Deep Analysis** is one of my favorites here: not only is it hard for someone to stop (they have to counter it twice, and each counterspell gives Mr. Babycakes yet more power), but they have to stop it *twice*.

But giving *everyone* cards is a great way to guarantee even more action. **Howling Mine** is the classic card here. If everyone has a lot of cards, you can bet they are going to use them. Another really good approach to this kind of card drawing is **Trade Secrets**. This card is especially dangerous, since it can easily backfire, but if you can keep control, all of those cards will turn into a whole lotta spells.

Of course, lots of cards are fine, but if you can't cast them all, they aren't doing much. Cheap is good. **Chrome Moxes**, free spells (like **Force of Will** or **Vine Dryad**), mana producers (like **Birds of Paradise**). Anything that lets you cast lots of stuff is going to make the most of your Ancient.

Power Up!

Forgotten Ancient can keep all his power to himself, but he really is best when acting as a power charity. Of course, he can give his power to whoever happens to be around, but there are always better options when you get to plan ahead.

The most obvious options are things that will hurt your opponent. The problem with big creatures is that they can be blocked. Trample and flying are a good way to get this going. **Birds of Paradise** is a great example of a handy flight creature to pop counters on - it both speeds out the Ancient, makes it easier to cast your spells, and flies! Trampers can be made rather than born. Give a **Loxodon Warhammer** to anyone and you suddenly have a huge huge trampler that can keep getting bigger. One of my favorite flying creatures is the cute little **Blinkmoth Nexus**. Activate this guy so that the Ancient can drop a counter onto him, and you have a hard to kill flier that gets to dodge **Wrath of God**.

Possibly the most powerful creatures to use with the **Forgotten Ancients** are creatures that use counters however. There are a whole bunch of them that I could go into. Obviously, the Arcbound Creatures are a great example, with the increasingly pricey **Arcbound Ravager** being perhaps the best one. **Triskellion** is another great card choice. With the **Triskellion** you can suddenly machine-gun everything down. A **Forgotten Ancient** that is loaded with ten counters can turn those counters into damage with the clever robot.

My favorite cards are a bit older, though. The Spikes from **Stronghold** are a great example. With **Spike Feeder**, each counter can become 2 life, and with **Spike Weaver**, each counter becomes a fog. Both of these examples are potent. My favorite card of all for this, however, is **Mindless Automaton**.



The Automaton is special. If someone tries to kill him, you can turn it into a slew of cards. With the **Forgotten Ancient** dropping counters onto him, he can get ridiculous pretty quickly. By being able to turn those counters into more cards, it becomes easy enough to get out **two Forgotten Ancients**, and that's when the big bucks start rolling in.

Wrap-Up

Forgotten Ancients likes it when you can survive long enough for him to get to work. He likes having friendly creatures around, especially if they fly, or can use his counters well. He likes it when people have cards (so they can cast spells). I hope that I've given you a good introduction to what he's capable of as well as some inspiration for your own decks.

That's why I'm opening him up to the "Forgotten Ancient Challenge". Make a **Forgotten Ancient** deck, using Extended deck construction rules (that way we're all on the same page). Send me an e-mail with "Forgotten Ancient Challenge" in the subject line. In two weeks, I'll highlight my 3 favorite decks.

[**Ed. Note:** There was a problem with Adrian's email that temporarily caused any submissions to bounce. The problem is now corrected. Any bounced submissions should be resent to the address below.]

Finally, a poll:

In future Single Card Strategies articles, how far back should I look for cards to review?

- Current Cards Only (*Mirrodin* Block and *8th Edition*)
- Last Block (*Onslaught* Block)
- Two Blocks (*Odyssey* Block and 7th Edition)
- Three Blocks (*Invasion* Block)
- Four Blocks (*Masques* Block)
- Five Blocks (*Urza's* Block)
- Six Blocks (*Tempest* Block)
- More than Six (Everything Older)

I hope you enjoyed this week's article. I know I enjoyed writing it. Until next week!

- Adrian Sullivan
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