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Thursday, April 15, 2004

So Mark Rosewater did a mailbag column this week? Well, two can play at that game. Was his mailbag column mean? Vicious? Did it bite the hand that feeds him or alienate his fans? No? Then I'll soon be one up on him.

Here's the deal, folks: When you send me an email, it's mine. Mine! I can use it however I see fit. How I see fit usually means displaying cool, funky decks that people send to me. And I'll do that today as well. But I get other kinds of emails too. Emails from people whose ambition outstrips their talent. People whose rules knowledge and reading-the-words-on-the-card skills are decidedly subpar. Yes, while I have a delightful stack of gleaming combos, I also have a frightful stock of steaming bombos—and it's the bombos I'm going to share with you today. Since I don't really want to embarrass anyone (the people who sent me this stuff were just trying to help me), I'll change all the names to silly monikers of my own invention. But make no mistake: All the bombos are 100% real. This is not April Fool's Day. I am *not* (however much I wish I were) making this stuff up.

Bombos Away

The most common bombo I get involves our friend Wirewood Symbiote. When *Scourge* was new, this little number would pop up every week or so. This example is mashed together from emails sent by Feffer Plotzen and Hrankler Ug:

Get the Symbiote and a Tangleroot in play, then drop a 1-mana Elf. Tangleroot makes ☙. Use the Symbiote to untap something and bounce the 1-mana Elf. Replay the bounced Elf with the Tangleroot mana, and Tangleroot makes ☙ again. Use Symbiote to bounce it again, and voila: Infinity! You get a million free untaps, so you can gain well over a million life with Wellwisher, or siphon those untaps through Aphetto Alchemist to untap an artifact (such as Chrome Mox) a million times to generate crazy amounts of mana. And as long as you're playing the same Elf over and over, put a million counters on Elvish Vanguard.



Wrong! No one ever reads the last line on the Symbiote. Once each turn, people. It says that expressly to prevent shenanigans like this.

Some bombos are understandable: They work if you use the wordings on the card. But we all know those don't count. If you're tiptoeing across the timing tightrope, you've got to consult Oracle. Filbert Grettularsh sent in this out-of-date doozy:

Here's a first turn Serra Avatar kill that is not completely impossible to pull off: [*Oh, the irony.* –MG] Play Swamp, Dark Ritual. Entomb a Serra Avatar, then in response to its shuffle-into-library ability, use Shallow Grave to bring it into play with haste. Attack for 20 and win!!

Wrong! Serra Avatar's "shuffle into library" ability has been changed from a triggered ability (as it was printed) to a replacement ability (as it is in Oracle). So the Avatar can never possibly be in your graveyard, and thus it can never possibly be reanimated.

Oh, those elusive first-turn wins. Want another that fails? This is from, let's say, Vronsky Unguent, and I swear I'm quoting on this one:

When I first saw the card Phage the Untouchable I fell in love.... I quickly went underway and started to deceive a way to make her come out on the first turn with haste or trample, and... success. Here's the perfect hand: 1. Swamp 2. A pair of Ornithopters or Phyrexian Walkers or Kobolds from Legends. 3. Culling the Weak, sac the pair of free creatures to Culling the Weak. 4. Morgue Toad, sac for ability. 5. Cauldron Dance with the Toad back out from the graveyard for fun. BAM! You win!

Wrong! You lose. This is a common mistake: Putting a creature into play from your hand is not the same as playing a creature from your hand. If you bring Phage into play via Cauldron Dance, you will lose the game. Playing Phage means paying its mana cost and putting it on the stack.

NOT A BOMBO! A REAL COMBO!

Let's sneak in a first-turn win that works. This comes from Joe Burnett of Kansas City, Missouri and assumes you're drawing first:

Badlands + Dark Ritual + Zombie Infestation + discard 2 Phyrexian Delvers; Karona, False God; and Anger to make 2 2/2 Zombie tokens + cast Reanimate to bring back 1 Delver to bring back the other Delver to get the False God + attack with all choosing to make Zombies +3/+3 making the Delvers 6/5 and the tokens 5/5 to hit your opponent for 27 for the win. You end the game with only 4 life left.

Right! And you don't even need one of those Delvers; that can turn into any card you pitch to make a Zombie. It'll stay in the graveyard, and you'll only deal (egads!) 21 damage.

Back to the Bombos

When you send in a bombo, it's best not to be arrogant about it. Isn't that right, Quentini Dudelars?

This is a *Mirrodin*-block combo: Tangleroot + Skullclamp + Isochron Scepter, imprinting Raise the Alarm. (takes a bow)

Wrong! (And stand up straight.) Quentini thinks he has a 2-mana, draw-4-cards engine. But Tangleroot only makes mana when you play a creature spell—it won't do a darn thing when you play a Raise the Alarm.



Trafalgar Frobnosis fell victim to another very common bombo error: He confused damage with loss of life.

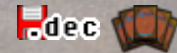
I have a cool deck idea for you. It uses Ebonblade Reaper and Final Punishment. Put a Cover of Darkness into play and WHAM! Almost instant kill.

Wrong! Ebonblade Reaper's ability causes life loss, not damage. Final Punishment only keys off of damage dealt to your opponent. Say your opponent is at 20 life. You hit him with a Reaper. He takes 1 damage and goes to 19. He loses half his life rounded up, so he goes to 9. Playing Final Punishment will only deal an extra 1 damage—not an extra 11 damage.

A REAL DECK! NO-BOMBO ZONE!

Despite my fun-poking, I'm appreciative of everyone that sends me a deck, a combo, or an idea. Edward Haag came up with a good one that he's been using on *Magic Online*. He's broken False Cure. (And Healing Salve!)

Bad Medicine



Main Deck

60 cards

2 Barren Moor	4 Noble Templar	4 Diabolic Tutor
6 Plains	4 Twisted Abomination	4 False Cure
3 Secluded Steppe	8 creatures	4 Healing Salve
9 Swamp		4 Holy Day
4 Tainted Field		4 Isochron Scepter
24 lands		4 Life Burst
		1 Mirari
		3 Reward the Faithful
		28 other spells

I skimmed a Reward the Faithful out to lower the deck to 60 cards; I'm not sure if that was the best card to cut. Edward's description:

The idea is to use cyclers and Tutors to get 7 lands in play on turn 7, along with a hand consisting of some amount of life gain and 2 False Cures (or, optionally, one False Cure and a Mirari in play).

Then you target the opponent for 7 or more life gain, plop 2 False Cures on top of it on the stack, and watch them take 20 to the dome. You only need to do 7 life gain because of the way False Cure is worded: 7 life gain - 14 life loss - 14 life loss = 21 total life loss. The Isochron Scepter and Holy Day are in the deck to slow down aggro decks while you work on getting the required mana and cards in hand.

The thing that I really like about this deck is that you really don't do anything but cycle cards and maybe play a Diabolic Tutor or two for the first 6 turns of the game. When you end up doing 20 damage all in one shot on turn 7, it usually takes the opponent completely by surprise.

Right! I've played it and it's a good one. The shock is delicious. Plus, sometimes you get lucky. The first game I played with the deck, I was ready to pull off the combo as soon as my opponent finished his turn. But wait... he slapped an Armadillo Cloak on his Soldier! And he played Awe Strike on my blocker! And I'm holding two False Cures! Bad times for him.

Back (Again) to the Bombos

Some bombos mix really clever ideas with really awful ones. Grubby Smithbergsonstien suggests:

Play Scornful Egotist. Use Soul Sculptor on it with Opalescence in play: You've given the Egotist +7/+7! If it is destroyed, cast Replenish and get it back!

Wrong! Well, right, then **Wrong!** The Soul Sculptor-Opalescence part is genius. The Replenish part is not. While the Egotist is in the graveyard, it is a creature card, not an enchantment card—it doesn't matter what type it was when it was in play.



Grubby Smithbergsonstien is full of ideas. Also from him:

Have Culling the Weak in hand and Mindslicer in play. Play Upheaval. As the Upheaval resolves, play Culling the Weak and sac Mindslicer. Your opponent discards all the permanents he returned to his hand. You have ♣♣♣♣ , so you can cast some stuff like Braids and a 0-mana card.

Wrong! Oh, the painful timing. You can't sac the Mindslicer to Culling the Weak "as Upheaval resolves." You can't do anything as a spell or ability is resolving. The best you can do is sac Mindslicer while Upheaval is on the stack, which will make each player discard their hands *before* Upheaval resolves and bounces all permanents. Also, Mindslicer is symmetric, which means it knocks out your hand too. Where did that Braids come from?

Sometimes people submit ideas based on decks I've just posted. I'm not really sure why. Let's say it's Cycling Week (which it was). I wrote a column about some cycling decks. *Then* people sent me their ideas for cycling decks. Too late! Cycling Week is over for me, and I'm not going to do two weeks' worth of cycling action. Only one person has ever been clever enough to see what the Theme of the Week was on Monday, create an appropriate deck, and send it to me *before* I wrote my column so I could include it and give him credit. (Thanks again, Ryan from Tampa.) Here's a Cycling Week bombo I got from Roycroft Yuurplesmann:

Underworld Dreams + Fluctuator + a bunch of cards with "cycling 2." It could win on turn 3 if you're really lucky, maybe even turn 2 with a Chrome Mox!

Wrong! I'm not sure which concept Roycroft doesn't grasp, but he's not grasping something.

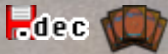
Here's a bombo Kurby Byruk sent me in response to my Mycosynth Lattice-Neurok Transmuter-Furnace Dragon deck:

In the Mycosynth Lattice-Neurok Transmuter-Furnace Dragon deck, why not use Retract as well? Use the Transmuter ability on the Lattice to turn it blue, tap your lands for mana, play Retract to bounce your stuff except the blue Lattice, then play the Dragon to remove your opponent's permanents from the game. You have Dragon and Lattice in play and a full hand.

Wrong! The Transmuter will only turn artifact *creatures* blue. It won't work on the Lattice, so the Retract plan still fails.

LEAVING BOMBO AREA! REAL DECK (SORT OF) ALERT!

Don't get me wrong; I'm not telling you to stop writing to me. Please, send me mail! Send me ideas! Send me decks! Amused by Chris Young's Colossus Schmolossus deck I posted, Adam Chavin sent in his primary Online Extended deck. Take a look:

Soft Lock 

Main Deck
60 cards

13 Island		4 Boomerang
4 Lonely Sandbar	0 creatures	4 Chrome Mox
4 Seat of the Synod		4 Counterspell
		4 Fabricate
21 lands		3 Force Spike
		4 Isochron Scepter
		4 Mana Leak
		4 Memory Lapse
		4 Metamorphose
		4 Thirst for Knowledge
		39 other spells

Have you noticed what the deck is missing? Look again. See what's not there? The deck has *no way to win the game!* Seriously—it can't ever possibly win a game. But it does, because your opponent will just about always concede rather than sit there under an Isochron Scepter-Metamorphose lock. It abuses a fundamental assumption of the game: Every deck has a win condition in it somewhere. Every deck has to! So when you render the other deck helpless by putting a Counterspell or a Memory Lapse into a Scepter, or especially when you achieve a lock with Metamorphose in the Scepter, your opponent will believe it's inevitable that you'll find your victory condition and win. And because your opponent thinks that, you don't need to waste the space to have one! No one would ever assume that if they just waited you out, completely locked, for the next half hour that they'd win the game when you inexorably decked yourself. Then again, even if they knew that, would they want to? That's boring! I tried this deck myself, and it works. I had someone concede as soon as I put Counterspell in the Scepter. I had someone concede after 10 turns of Metamorphose lock. It's a little thrill as you pull off the con—and it's a brilliant, subversive deck concept. But while winning this way is fun for a couple of times, I think the wave of concessions would ultimately get unsatisfying. Still, kudos to you, Mr. Chavin: I've never seen a deck like this before.

The Return of the Attack of the Bombos!

More fun with Mycosynth Lattice and card type confusion, this time from Hodges Dripple:

Mycosynth Lattice turns every card everyone plays into an artifact. Play Infested Roothold: It's a pro-artifact Wall that makes a 1/1 Insect every time your opponent plays an artifact, so in no time at all you'll have a gigantic Insect army.

Wrong! Infested Roothold triggers on artifact spells. Mycosynth Lattice turns *permanents* into artifacts. It also makes all spells colorless, but just because a spell is colorless doesn't make it an artifact.

Shifting from type confusion to subtype confusion, there's Molondo Axlplax's "UltraPost" deck, where he takes TwelvePost to the next level:

Well, we were hangin' out, when we realized that Cloudpost's text says: 'Add 1 mana for each Locus in play'.... Just other Cloudposts? NO! Creatures with the type of Locus! Whammo! (The attached decklist used Proteus Machine, Unnatural Selection, Standardize, and Riptide Replicator to create Locus creatures, and it finished with Fireball & Blaze.)

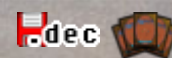


Wrong! (Have you noticed how many bombos include "Wham!" "Whammo!" or "Bam!" I think it's an identifying characteristic of the bombo species.) "Locus" is a land type, *not* a creature type. You can't choose "Locus" for Proteus Machine, Unnatural Selection, or any other effect that changes creature type. You can only choose a type that has been printed on a creature somewhere in **Magic**. Hey, you can't turn Proteus Machine into a "Molondo" or an "Axlplax" either.

TIME FOR A COMBO! BOMBOS KEEP OUT!

I've received a few combos that abuse Voltaic Construct, a creature that seems to exist only to be part of an engine. Nemephosis sent in a Voltaic Construct-Metalworker-Lightning Greaves-Coretapper-Darksteel Reactor monstrosity. Chris Gregory, from the awesomely-named town of Natchitoches, Louisiana (which blows away any of the fake names I made up) was the first to go infinite with a Voltaic Construct-March of the Machines-Gilded Lotus combo. Once the Lotus is a creature, you can tap it for 3 mana, send 2 through the Construct to untap the Lotus, tap the Lotus for 3 again... I think you see where this is going. Michal Mlejnek suggested the same thing a bit later, as well as Voltaic Construct-Neurok Transmuter-Viridian Joiner-Bonesplitter, which also goes infinite but has no rares. Noah Abrams suggested the simpler Construct-Transmuter-Elvish Aberration combo, and Raze230 piped up later with the same idea. Here's a quick & dirty decklist; it's fragile, but it can go off.

Aberrant Construction **Lite!**



Main Deck

60 cards

2 Forest	4 Elvish Aberration	4 Echoing Ruin
1 Forgotten Cave	4 Neurok Transmuter	4 Fabricate
4 Great Furnace	4 Voltaic Construct	4 Fireball
7 Island	4 Wirewood Herald	4 Talisman of Impulse
2 Lonely Sandbar		4 Thirst for Knowledge
4 Seat of the Synod	16 creatures	
4 Tree of Tales		20 other spells

The Final Assault of the Bombos

Mirrodin is just as bomboriffic as it is comboriffic. Swarthy Freshpetals wanted to build a Leveler deck and came up with:

The basic premise of the deck is the get Leveler out and not lose on your next turn. I found some interesting synergy between Arc-Slogger, Reminisce, and Temporal Cascade. Why not discard as much of my library to the Slogger's ability before having to remove it from the game? Why not, indeed!! If I could discard 40 cards, that's 8 points of damage. In the next round or two, I should be able to play a Leveler, remove my deck, and Reminisce my graveyard back into my now empty library to avoid losing by not being able to draw a card. The beauty of the likes of a Myr Retriever and Skeleton Shard is that a Leveler can be discarded to the Slogger then brought to my hand via one of their abilities. The sideboard has more ways to get my graveyard back into my library or avoid the draw phase in the case of Fatespinner.

Wrong! Classic didn't-read-the-card-itis. I've been guilty of that myself (who remembers my Time and Tide snafu?), but we all know that cards with phasing don't count. Problems here: You don't "discard" the cards in your library to Arc-Slogger. You remove them from the game (just like with Leveler), so Reminisce and Temporal Cascade won't let you get those cards back. Arc-Slogger therefore doesn't combo with Skeleton Shard either. Finally, Fatespinner won't help you skip your draw step because it only affects your opponents.

Another? I'm running out of silly names. How about Oglesburt Limpwart?

You have Cowardice and Aluren in play, and assuming you have an artifact heavy deck you tap an artifact to pump Lodestone Myr, then it gets bounced back to your hand via Cowardice and comes right back into play via Aluren, repeat as necessary. I hope this works...

Wrong! Yikes. No part of Lodestone Myr's ability is targeted, which you can tell because it doesn't say "target" in it. The interaction with Cowardice doesn't exist.

The last bombo comes courtesy of Pyftig Jork. I'm completely baffled by what it's supposed to do, so for all I know, it's not a bombo—it's a brilliant combo of sublime genius. But my money's on bombo. Here's the entire message that came under the subject line "Combo (Hilarious)":

Mindslaver + Donate + Auriok Transfixer + Ashnod's Coupon. Like I said, hilarious.



Wrong? Right? Help?

Until next week, have fun (until some jerk bursts your bubble) with bombos.

Mark

Mark may be reached at houseofcardsmail@yahoo.com. Send rules-related **Magic** questions to ask@wizards.com.

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