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# Overmaster

Adrian Sullivan · Single-Card Strategies  
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We're already well into Sorcery week at this point. I looked at every Sorcery that has ever been printed, trying to find that certain special someone that would really make me take notice. In a sense, it was a lot like going through the personals. There would be some title or other ("Misguided Rage!", "Cultural Exchange", or "Saproling Symbiosis") that might draw my attention, and then as I read or reread the description of the card, I'd start making my judgments about the card. Some of the cards would be too fat, others too boring, others not titillating enough. And of course, even if I thought the card seemed just right, I knew that in the end, I would have to introduce the card to all of you. In a sense, it was kind of like the pressure of introducing them to your parents or good friends.

After a lot of flirting with different cards, I literally stumbled across an old flame:



Good ol' **Overmaster**. A few years back, I'd made easily around ten or so different decks with **Overmaster**, and so we had quite a bit of history. It never really ended well; former Pro-Tour Finalist Brian Davis played my **Overmaster** deck "When Sorceries Attack!" at US Nationals '02, but he didn't do well with it. It wasn't for lack of trying though, on both of our parts. Even if it never really worked out between us, there's something about **Overmaster** that I find decidedly exciting and compelling.

## What is Overmaster? Well, in a way...

**Overmaster** is a pretty simple card. It's cheap. It draws a card. And it doesn't like being messed with. When we think about what **Overmaster** tries to accomplish we get one of those cards that is really straightforward. An **Overmaster** effectively adds one Red mana to the cost of certain spells in exchange for making them uncounterable. Since it replaces itself with a card draw immediately after you cast it, in a sense it is more like having a special ability from a Vanguard card out rather than having cast an actual card. Playing 4 **Overmaster** is like saying "Sometimes my spells cannot be countered!"

The most obvious way to use **Overmaster** is pretty clear. If your deck has a lot of sorceries or instants that you don't mind casting on your main phase, having a free Red mana up can be a way to help push things through against someone you think might have counterspells. If they want to stop you, they have to have *two* counters; one for the **Overmaster** and one for your actual spell.

This leads us to the next fun part of **Overmaster**. While this "protection from counterspell" effect can be pretty nice one-on-one, it works the exact same way in multi-player. **Overmaster** protects *your* next spell. This is quite unlike a **Duress** or a **Cabal Therapy** which will only go after a specific player to stop them from being able to counter your spell. Certainly they can go after your **Overmaster** still, but it does mean that once you cast an **Overmaster**, they have to decide right then and there to stop it.

This is almost like having a copy of your best spell in hand at all time against **Counterspells**. A pesky blue mage might like to counter spells, but they hate having to spend time countering spells all the time. Secretly they prefer casting their card-drawing spells. Counters are especially good against the more expensive spells. Say you want to cast a **Time Stretch** or a **Tooth and Nail**. That is a lot of mana to spend if it is only going to be countered. Casting two of them in one turn seems unlikely. But casting an **Overmaster** first... you might as well have cast two of them.

What's nice about all of this is it brings up an element of gambling: the bluff. If you don't have anything worth countering, an **Overmaster** might be a fine spell to cast just to make your opponent *think* that you have something that they should stop. This can be useful if you know that you might not actually have time later on to cast an **Overmaster** and a threat. In the most technical sense, poker aficionados would recognize this as a 'semi-bluff'; after all, if the **Overmaster** isn't countered, it is possible that you might get lucky and draw a legitimate threat.

At the very worst, you can cast an **Overmaster** to draw a card if you need something new in your hand (even a land).

## Making the most of Overmaster

I view **Overmaster** as one of those cards that is just a work of genius. It's a pretty small effect, but elegantly executed. It can accomplish so many different tasks depending on how you want to apply it. Bravo to whoever designed this card.


As I mentioned just a second ago, **Overmaster** can always be used to simply draw a card. One of the most annoying things about **Magic** can be not getting your mana. **Living Wish** was always a nice spell since you could use it to go find a land, and while **Burning Wish** can't actually get you the land directly, what it can do is get you an **Overmaster** to hopefully draw closer to a land. If you run **Burning Wish**, keeping an **Overmaster** handy to Wish for is a great idea. This isn't "Plan A" so to speak, but having a "Plan B" like this available can add flexibility to your deck for when things *aren't* going according to plan.

**Spellweaver Helix** is another card that I really like to think about with **Overmaster**. A card like **Spellweaver Helix** is interesting with a number of cards, but with **Overmaster** it seems especially so. Let's assume that you have a **Spellweaver Helix** with an **Overmaster** and a Good Sorcery™ imprinted on it. If you cast the other spell under the Helix, for example, the Helix will put a copy of **Overmaster** on the stack first. This means that you'll always be able to protect that spell when you cast it from your hand. Plus if you cast an **Overmaster**, the copy might not be protected, but your next spell still will be.

Another new card that works especially well with **Overmaster** is **Panoptic Mirror**. The Mirror has the minor drawback of being a wee-bit expensive, costing the initial investment of 5 mana, and then another X for whatever you put on it. **Overmaster** is a pretty sweet spell to put on the mirror for a bunch of reasons. First of all, the card is so cheap that it won't take away whatever you might be doing with the rest of your turn. Since it replaces itself with a card, if you use your Mirror right, you'll never really have 'lost a card' to anything if the Mirror gets destroyed. Even on the turn that you initially imprint the Mirror with **Overmaster**, you should have plenty of mana to cast a large number of instants and/or sorceries. On subsequent turns, the Mirror acts



like a bargain [Jayemdae Tome](#) as well as wreaking havoc on any hapless opponent who wants to counter your spells.

 [Recoup](#) and [Overmaster](#) also work hand in hand. [Recoup](#) has been a favorite of mine for a long time, but one of the things that I like with it in combination with [Overmaster](#) is how they effect the longer games. The longer a game goes on, the more mana you are likely to have access to. At that point, drawing a [Recoup](#) means that you can begin using old [Overmasters](#) if you just need to draw some cards, and if you are playing against Control, you can keep re-threatening them with the [Overmaster](#). When you feel like you no longer need to worry about whether or not the opponent has any counterspells, the [Recoup](#) can be flashed back to cast an actual threatening Sorcery.

When it comes to specific Sorceries that are good to use with [Overmaster](#), the ones that come to mind most quickly are the expensive, powerful ones. As I mentioned earlier, when you are playing against counterspells, [Overmaster](#) is a card that in many ways copies your threat spells. Most spells that can just turn the game completely around often cost a lot of mana. Adding one red seems like a small price to pay. Here are some of my favorites:

- [Wake of Destruction](#)
- [Decree of Pain](#)
- [Mind's Desire](#)
- [Apocalypse](#)
- [Time Stretch](#)
- [Spinal Embrace](#)
- [Ancestral Tribute](#)
- [Tooth and Nail](#)

Speaking of a lot of mana, if you do find yourself with a lot, [Mirari](#) is another great way to make use of the effects of [Overmaster](#). For a mere 4 mana, you can not only draw 2 cards, but you can make it so that anyone who wants to stop what you are planning on doing had better have 3 counterspells.

## Wrapping Up

I spent some time as I was working on this article trying to find copies of "When Sorceries Attack!" just so that I could show you my favorite versions of my deck sporting the [Overmaster](#). About the best I could do was find articles that linked to [Brian Davis's deck from US Nationals](#) (complete with only 57 cards!) or people who had built different versions that I didn't particularly like. At one point, I thought I found a link to the report from Brian Davis on a different site, but the links to the article don't even work anymore.

While all of that is disappointing, in the end, the ways to make [Overmaster](#) more potent don't just revolve around playing against [Counterspells](#), though that does help a lot of course. The big keys are simple. Anything that lets you play the card again and again is going to make the card especially potent. Because it is so cheap, the [Overmaster](#) will not only help smooth your draws in the early game but also help out your key spells later on. You can use it to bluff, or to just draw a card (or both!). I leave you, until next week, with a poll.



*Brian Davis, US Nationals '02*

**How much do you bluff when you play Magic?**

- All the time
- Sometimes
- Rarely
- Never
- I never even thought about bluffing in the game!

See you all next week!

- Adrian Sullivan  
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