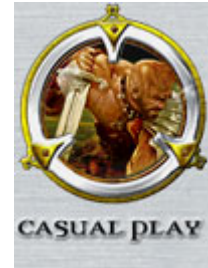


Mark Gottlieb

Thursday, April 29, 2004

I'm going to let you folks in on a little secret. I like to play **Magic**. And I don't just mean at work. I mean that in my off hours, on my own time, sometimes, for fun, I'll play **Magic**. It's true! Oh, that feels good to get off my chest. You don't know how long I've been living with that burden.

When I play **Magic** for fun, it's almost always on **Magic Online** (under the name Doctor Wombat), and it's almost always in one of the casual formats. I get enough Standard play when I'm testing my column decks, and I don't feel the need to combat more Affinity decks, Goblin decks, and Elf decks than I already do. I'm prohibited from playing in any sanctioned events due to my employee status. I'm even prohibited from playing in events that are non-sanctioned but have prize support (this means you, Leagues) for the same reason. This strikes me as odd: In the real world, I can play in any non-sanctioned **Magic** events whether they hand out prizes or not. But this is not the case online.



Luckily, there are a handful of bizarro formats that happily entertain my inner wacko. I particularly like Prismatic and Singleton, and I have staple decks that I keep up-to-date in my Net Decks file. While I'm playing online, I get asked two questions over and over.

1. "What's the Wizards logo next to your name mean?" Oy! This drives me nuts. NUTS! Cashews, pecans, almonds, all-the-nuts-in-the-world-mixed-together nuts! This is partially because I get this question *all the time* and it's pretty obvious (to me) what the logo means. It's partially because the people asking the question could just read my profile to find the answer without popping up an intrusive chat window. But it's mostly because that intrusive chat window always seems to pop up in the middle of a game. (OK, the real reason it annoys me is because I'm a miserable misanthrope, but I figure that's a given at this point.) The logo means... I work for Wizards!
2. "Are you writing an article about [Singleton/Prismatic/Tribal/Multiplayer] decks?" The answer to this is always "No—I'm just goofing around." But this week, I decided to take a look at the decks that I actually play more than any others. It's a nice break between churning up *Darksteel* combos and the start of *Fifth Dawn* previews, and it sure beats creating new decks to write about. (I'm a *lazy* miserable misanthrope, after all.)

The Worst Zoo in the World

Fellow R&D member Worth Wollpert inspired me to get into the Prismatic format many months ago. He had discovered it himself and was loudly touting it around the office as the best format ever. He was having fun crushing random players with a brutal, Bribery-powered deck. You see, Worth likes making 12-year-olds cry. If, while smacking them around with their own creatures, he could think of a way to steal their candy too, he'd jump at the chance. Bribery is just much easier to find and cast than the biggest, baddest, giantest monster buried within a 250-card deck, and the spell always dug up something ridiculous. I wouldn't stand for such shenanigans! Since I



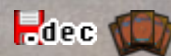
Better watch your candy around this guy...

am the champion of the people, and since Worth was taunting me to make a deck, I entered the fray. That's my motto: Dive headfirst into the empty swimming pool of life! But how could I thwart his super Bribery tech? Easy. I decided I had to build a creatureless deck.

A creatureless deck?!? In this format? Are there even 250 non-creature cards in the game? It turns out there are! To this day, the best part of this deck is when my opponent casts Bribery... and gets *nothing*. I loved it the first time Worth did it, and I still love it. The deck has been revised since its original form, but the philosophy is simple. Lots and lots of Wrath effects, some man-lands, and some token producers. And, while I'm at it, some extra Wrath effects.

The deck is pretty harsh, especially with all the Timmy Prismatic decks floating around. Hey, I enjoy making 12-year-olds cry too. And I *have* figured out a way to steal their candy... BWA HA HA!!! But it avoids the primo triumvirate of Prismatic pain: the Buried Alive gambit (no creatures, remember?), the Seedborn Muse-Planar Portal combo (still no creatures), and the Quiet Speculation tactic (umm... I don't know why I don't use this). It's very satisfying to repeatedly nuke the board until I can establish control and churn out 1/1 tokens for the win. But this is a very Spike-y deck that's chock full of rares, so I don't trot it out as often as my other Prismatic deck.

Kill 'Em All



Main Deck

250 cards

1 Adarkar Wastes	0 creatures	4 Akroma's Vengeance
1 Barren Moor		4 Allied Strategies
4 Blinkmoth Nexus		2 Artifact Mutation
1 Bloodstained Mire		2 Barter in Blood
1 Brushland		2 Burning Wish
4 Coastal Tower		4 Compulsion
4 Elfhome Palace		4 Cremate
3 Flooded Strand		3 Darksteel Brute
7 Forest		4 Darksteel Ingot
3 Grand Coliseum		4 Darksteel Pendant
10 Island		4 Decree of Justice
4 Krosan Verge		4 Deep Analysis
1 Lonely Sandbar		2 Diabolic Tutor
4 Mirrodin's Core		3 Disenchant
6 Mountain		2 Dismantling Blow
3 Nantuko Monastery		4 Explosive Vegetation
11 Plains		3 Fabricate
1 Polluted Delta		4 Fact or Fiction
4 Salt Marsh		4 Far Wanderings
1 Secluded Steppe		4 Fire/Ice
4 Shivan Oasis		2 Fireball
7 Swamp		2 Force Bubble
1 Temple of the False God		2 Grim Reminder
4 Terminal Moraine		4 Harrow
1 Tranquil Thicket		1 Haunting Echoes
4 Urborg Volcano		2 Holistic Wisdom
3 Windswept Heath		1 Hull Breach
1 Wooded Foothills		3 Jalum Tome
		4 Kirtar's Wrath
		4 Legacy Weapon
		4 Mind's Eye
		4 Mobilization
99 lands		

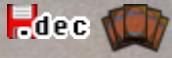
- 2 Morningtide
- 1 Myr Matrix
- 2 Oblivion Stone
- 2 Opt
- 1 Panoptic Mirror
- 4 Pernicious Deed
- 4 Prophetic Bolt
- 4 Rampant Growth
- 1 Rats' Feast
- 2 Recoup
- 4 Repulse
- 2 Reviving Vapors
- 4 Rout
- 4 Sleight of Hand
- 2 Tainted Pact
- 1 Trade Routes
- 4 Vindicate
- 3 Void
- 4 Wrath of God

151 other spells



One by One

Playing Prismatic, you'll encounter two types of people. The ones with tuned, dedicated decks built from massive collections, and the ones with random 468-card decks. I started feeling bad when I mercilessly annihilated the players in the latter category. As an R&D member, I have an unlimited Online collection—four of every card. (That's the tradeoff for not being able to draft, join Leagues, or play in tournaments. And NO—I can't trade cards.) It can be a hefty advantage in Prismatic, and my "Kill 'Em All" deck has more than its share of rares. So I built a secondary deck. A goofy deck. A random deck. A deck that contained every card I could ever want to see in my hand. A deck that would play differently every time the shuffler shuffled it up. A Singleton Prismatic deck. This deck isn't nearly as good as "Kill 'Em All," but I play it at least five times as often.

Random Hall 

Main Deck
250 cards


1 Adarkar Wastes	1 Anurid Brushhopper	1 Akroma's Vengeance
1 Barren Moor	1 Archivist	1 Allied Strategies
1 Battlefield Forge	1 Arc-Slogger	1 Animal Magnetism
1 Blinkmoth Nexus	1 Bane of the Living	1 Arrest
1 Bloodstained Mire	1 Blazing Specter	1 Aura Shards
1 Brushland	1 Bloodshot Cyclops	1 Break Asunder
1 Caves of Koilos	1 Cabal Interrogator	1 Breath of Darigaaz
1 Cephalid Coliseum	1 Caller of the Claw	1 Bribery
1 City of Brass	1 Callous Oppressor	1 Compulsion

1 Coastal Tower	1 Cephalid Broker	1 Confiscate
1 Darkwater Catacombs	1 Cephalid Looter	1 Cremate
1 Elfame Palace	1 Chartooth Cougar	1 Dark Banishing
1 Flooded Strand	1 Chromeshell Crab	1 Darksteel Ingot
19 Forest	1 Cromat	1 Darksteel Pendant
1 Forgotten Cave	1 Crosis, the Purger	1 Death Grasp
1 Grand Coliseum	1 Darigaaz, the Igniter	1 Decree of Justice
11 Island	1 Diligent Farmhand	1 Decree of Pain
1 Karplusan Forest	1 Draco	1 Deep Analysis
1 Krosan Verge	1 Duplicant	1 Demolish
1 Llanowar Wastes	1 Elvish Aberration	1 Diabolic Tutor
1 Lonely Sandbar	1 Eternal Dragon	1 Disenchant
1 Mirrodin's Core	1 Exalted Angel	1 Dismantling Blow
1 Mossfire Valley	1 Fierce Empath	1 Dragon Breath
10 Mountain	1 Flametongue Kavu	1 Earthquake
1 Nantuko Monastery	1 Genesis	1 Eladamri's Call
10 Plains	1 Glory	1 Explosive Vegetation
1 Polluted Delta	1 Gravedigger	1 Fabricate
1 Salt Marsh	1 Havoc Demon	1 Fact or Fiction
1 Secluded Steppe	1 Hystrodon	1 Far Wanderings
1 Shadowblood Ridge	1 Intrepid Hero	1 Fertile Ground
1 Shivan Oasis	1 Iridescent Angel	1 Fire/Ice
1 Shivan Reef	1 Jungle Barrier	1 Fireball
1 Skycloud Expanse	1 Krosan Tusker	1 Frenzied Tilling
1 Stalking Stones	1 Lavaborn Muse	1 Gilded Lotus
1 Sulfurous Springs	1 Lhurgoyf	1 Grim Reminder
1 Sungrass Prairie	1 Lightning Angel	1 Grizzly Fate
9 Swamp	1 Memnarch	1 Harrow
1 Temple of the False God	1 Merfolk Looter	1 Holistic Wisdom
1 Terminal Moraine	1 Mischievous Quonar	1 Hull Breach
1 Tranquil Thicket	1 Nantuko Vigilante	1 Icy Manipulator
1 Underground River	1 Nokrataal	1 Jalum Tome
1 Urborg Volcano	1 Noble Templar	1 Jayemdae Tome
1 Windswept Heath	1 Phantom Centaur	1 Jilt
1 Wooded Foothills	1 Phantom Nishoba	1 Journey of Discovery
1 Yavimaya Coast	1 Quicksilver Dragon	1 Kirtar's Wrath
	1 Quirion Trailblazer	1 Lay of the Land
99 lands	1 Rith, the Awakener	1 Legacy Weapon
	1 Royal Assassin	1 Living Wish
	1 Seedborn Muse	1 Mind's Eye
	1 Shadowmage Infiltrator	1 Mobilization
	1 Shoreline Ranger	1 Morningtide
	1 Solemn Simulacrum	1 Myr Matrix
	1 Spiritmonger	1 Naturalize
	1 Sundering Titan	1 Nuisance Engine
	1 Sunscape Battlemage	1 Oblivion Stone
	1 Thornscape Battlemage	1 Opt
	1 Thunderscape Battlemage	1 Oversold Cemetery
	1 Triskelion	1 Pacifism
	1 Twisted Abomination	1 Panoptic Mirror
	1 Viridian Shaman	1 Pernicious Deed
	1 Werebear	1 Planar Portal
	1 Wirewood Guardian	1 Prophetic Bolt
		1 Rampant Growth

62 creatures

1 Rats' Feast
1 Reap and Sow
1 Recoil
1 Recoup
1 Repulse
1 Reviving Vapors
1 Roar of the Wurm
1 Rout
1 Rush of Knowledge
1 Sculpting Steel
1 Skullclamp
1 Sleight of Hand
1 Slice and Dice
1 Sprouting Vines
1 Starstorm
1 Sylvan Scrying
1 Tainted Pact
1 Terminate
1 Terror
1 Thought Dissector
1 Tribal Flames
1 Urza's Rage
1 Vindicate
1 Void
1 Wrath of God
1 Zombify

89 other spells



Let me go through my deck choices card-by-card... or not. It's just a "good stuff" deck (and yeah, it's full of rares too). I didn't even try to fix the colors. ("Kill 'Em All" specializes in white and blue and has the absolute minimum numbers of red, black, and green cards.) It's got combos, it's got board sweepers, it's got card advantage cards, and it's got big fat monsters. It's completely different every time I play it, and I love the surprise. Sometimes it hates me and sometimes it loves me. It's still reasonably competitive because just about every card (though there are *some* goofy choices) is very, very good. Occasionally I'll use this deck in Singleton games rather than Prismatic games, and I've won my share. I've also played Singleton Prismatic matchups with people as crazy as me. A popular little format is Prismatic Two-Headed Giant, and I'll use both of my Prismatic decks there as well.

Rainbows of Death

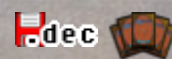
The more I played my "Random Hall" deck, the more I wanted to just get Legacy Weapon on the table. For some reason, it was unusually hard to find in that deck—I wonder why?—so I shortened it. I've tried a few different decks for the Singleton format, but my pet deck is all about Legacy Weapon.

The deck features as much land grabbing as possible, the most efficient card drawers and artifact finders, and one doom-dealing Legacy Weapon. But as long as I'm working the five-color mana base, why not make things interesting? I love casting Last Stand, and my opponents are usually so tickled to see it, they don't mind its game-swinging effect. The absolute opposite is true about Global Ruin, which no one likes at all. I've locked down my share of games against weenie decks with the one-two punch of Collective Restraint and Global Ruin. I also include as many 🌟🐉🐉🐉 creatures as I can



because I can... except Karona (who has appeared in the deck in the past) and Sliver Queen (because I haven't bugged the person I would need to bug to get a copy of one). But as fun as this deck is now, I'm giddy with anticipation for certain delicious *Fifth Dawn* cards.

The Legacy



Main Deck

60 cards

8 Forest	1 Atogatog	1 Allied Strategies
5 Island	1 Cromat	1 Collective Restraint
1 Krosan Verge	1 Diligent Farmhand	1 Darksteel Ingot
1 Mirrodin's Core	1 Draco	1 Darksteel Pendant
2 Mountain	1 Krosan Tusker	1 Dismantling Blow
2 Plains	1 Lightning Angel	1 Evasive Action
1 Polluted Delta	1 Sliver Overlord	1 Explosive Vegetation
2 Swamp	1 Solemn Simulacrum	1 Fabricate
1 Wooded Foothills	1 Spiritmonger	1 Fact or Fiction
<hr/>		1 Far Wanderings
23 lands	9 creatures	1 Fire/Ice
		1 Global Ruin
		1 Harrow
		1 Last Stand
		1 Lay of the Land
		1 Legacy Weapon
		1 Living Wish
		1 Long-Term Plans
		1 Planar Despair
		1 Prophetic Bolt
		1 Rampant Growth
		1 Serum Powder
		1 Sleight of Hand
		1 Tainted Pact
		1 Terminate
		1 Tribal Flames
		1 Vindicate
		1 Worldly Counsel
		<hr/>
		28 other spells

Follow the Bouncing Wall

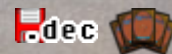
So far, you've seen my Spike tendencies, my Timmy tendencies, and my Legacy Weapon tendencies. (I actually think "The Legacy" is about as even a hybrid of Timmy, Johnny, and Spike impulses as a deck can achieve.) But where's the rabid Johnny? Do I suppress those tendencies on my own time? Do I exhaust the Johnny part of my brain making up decks for my column? Is there a glitch in my Cyborgtronics™ processor? Right here, no, a bit, and DOES NOT COMPUTE. So let's Johnny it up in here.

I hate to step on Anthony Alongi's toes, but I play multiplayer **Magic** too. I already mentioned my Two-Headed Giant dabbings. But I like a good old-fashioned free-for-all scrum from time to time as well. For a while I would grab whatever recent column deck seemed most translatable to the format, but that wasn't ideal. So I built this monstrosity.

I'm not as fluent in Anthony's animal shorthand as he is, but I'll give it a shot. The deck exploits comes-into-play effects, but your opponents don't need to know that right away. The Crystal Shards have a decent rattlesnake element to them in the early game as they warn off players lest you bounce their creatures. But they're really there to bounce your own creatures so you can put them into play again. The deck is full of spiders that jump out to surprise your opponents and blow up lands or artifacts or remove creatures from the game—no, wait, they're not instants, so I guess they're gorillas. They're gorilla-spiders. Spiderillas. Gorachnids. And judging by the art, the Mystic Snakes are rattlesnakes too. Aperachnismakes. The Sunken Hopes help you (giving you more comes-into-play effect goodness) while majorly disrupting your opponents, unless it helps them too because someone has a Genesis Chamber in play or one of your opponents has Mystic Snakes as well, so they're, uh, plankto-pigeo-snakes. Clone comes into play as a copy of whichever animal element you want (probably wallaby). I'm pretty sure the Jungle Barriers are armadillos, while the Fleetfoot Panthers are, ironically, chrysanthemums.



Abandon All Hope



Main Deck

63 cards

2 Coastal Tower
2 Elfame Palace
8 Forest

1 Benalish Emissary
1 Clone
2 Duplicant

4 Crystal Shard
3 Eladamri's Call
4 Sunken Hope

8 Island	1 Fierce Empath	11 other spells
2 Krosan Verge	1 Fleetfoot Panther	
3 Plains	4 Jungle Barrier	
-----	1 Mirror Golem	
25 lands	2 Mystic Snake	
	2 Solemn Simulacrum	
	1 Sunscape Battlemage	
	1 Teroh's Faithful	
	1 Tolarian Emissary	
	2 Triskelion	
	1 Viridian Shaman	
	3 Wood Elves	
	3 Wormfang Drake	

	27 creatures	

The deck plays it defensively for a while, ducking behind Walls and searching out lands, only dealing with threats when absolutely necessary. When the game turns the corner into the midgame I drop a Sunken Hope (or two!) and start recursing stuff. It's fun to see all sets of eyes suddenly snap toward land-searching-guy, and I have to hold off everybody. I've misjudged the timing and made my move too early, and I've judged the timing right and kept the board clear except for my bouncing Triskelion and Teroh's Faithful. Sunken Hope, in conjunction with Crystal Shard to bounce my own blockers, makes it difficult for anyone to mount a strong attack on me, but I've had the stranglehold broken. What this deck wouldn't give for Man O' War...

And that's my stable of staple decks. Now that I look at them like this, I'm a bit surprised at their relative Spikiness and non-Johnniocity. But I suppose it makes sense considering that every other deck I make is ultraJohnnified—and the formats themselves provide the goofiness so the decks don't necessarily have to.

Until next week, have fun with casual formats.

Mark

Rock the Vote

And now to stroke my ego. Last Friday, Aaron Forsythe ended his column with a poll to see who you think is funnier: Mark Rosewater, me, or another magicthegathering.com columnist. I don't know what possessed him to do that. It certainly wasn't me, bellowing in the middle of R&D with Mark Rosewater present, that despite Mark's training and experience, I write a much funnier column. Oh, wait—now that I think about it, it probably was that. Though the message boards are with me (Conall wrote, "MaGo is without doubt one of the funniest writers I have ever seen," which is flattering yet sad—get that guy some Douglas Adams, stat!) the poll is not. I want to see what kind of last-second spike I can orchestrate (after all, only Aaron's readers—and not my clever, discriminating, sophisticated, *handsome* readers—have voted), so I shamelessly urge each and every one of you to go here and vote the way your conscience tells you to. For me. If you're only going to vote once in 2004, let this be it!

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

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