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Monday has rolled around again so that means another Limited Information column for your perusal. As I mentioned last week I'm going to discuss the team sealed format a little this week. For those that have played the format before I suggest you skip ahead to the card listing I've included a little later in the article as I'm going to start off with a brief introduction to the format for those who have never played it before.

There are numerous DCI sanctioned team formats but by far the most common is the one I'll be discussing today. This is a limited format (obviously, otherwise I wouldn't be discussing it here!) and it involves teams of three players.

There are two distinct formats that come under the team limited banner: team sealed deck and team rochester draft. The first, team sealed, is the format that is used more frequently as it is easier to run and takes a lot less time. Team rochester draft is usually reserved for the later stages of a tournament, most often for the knockout portion. If you go to a team Pro-Tour qualifier this season for example you will most likely play team sealed for the swiss rounds at the end of which the top two or four teams will play off against each other using team rochester draft.

I'm only going to be discussing team sealed today; I'll cover the draft side of things another time. The two formats are quite different and it would be too much to try and cover both in a single article.

At a team sealed event you'll be playing alongside two other players. It works just like normal sealed deck except this time you get given two tournament packs and four boosters from which you must construct a different forty-card deck for each of the players in your team. The tournament packs will be from the main set of the current block, and the booster packs will be split amongst any available expansions or they'll also be from the main set if no expansions had been released at that time. Right now, for example, you'd received two *Mirrodin* tournament packs and four *Darksteel* boosters. If you were to do an event in a few months time you'd get two *Fifth Dawn* boosters in place of two of the *Darksteel* ones.

Once you've received your product you sit down alongside your team-mates and you build all the decks together. You're free to talk and discuss your builds with each other as much as you like; it's not like individual sealed where you have to make all the decisions alone. Once you've decided on your decks for each player you also need to confirm their sideboards. In an individual event your entire card pool makes up your sideboard but in a team event every card must be assigned to a player. If you have a great sideboard card, like an Unforge for example, then only one of your team-mates will be able to use it and you need to decide which player will have access to it when you build your decks.

You have fewer cards to work with in team sealed than you would normally get in a sealed event. In normal sealed deck you'd get a tournament pack and two boosters just to yourself but here you get twice as much product but it's divided up amongst three times the number of players. This can sometimes make for difficult decisions if you have a weak pool of cards but usually you can split the colours up between the players and everything works out fine.

The Initial Overview

It's common in limited formats to play two-colour decks and team sealed is no different. One of the most obvious things you should notice initially is that if all your team members played two colours you'd have a total of six colours used, but there are only five colours to choose from. When building your decks deciding which colour or colours to split up and how to do so is usually the most important decision you make. Most of the time you'll end up splitting the most powerful colour you have simply because that colour has the highest number of playable cards, but that isn't always the case.

The first thing to do when you get your pool of cards is to get rid of the unplayable stuff. You don't want cards you're never going to use sitting around cluttering things up so just put them to one side and forget about them.

The next thing to do is to get an overall view of your card pool. Look and see which colours are strong and which are weak. Identify any particularly powerful cards you have as these will often be the cards that will win you matches and they'll need to be supported well. If you have a Sword of Fire and Ice for example then you'll need to make sure it goes in the deck that has plenty of creatures with evasion so that your opponent won't be able to block the creature it equips. If you have a Megatog then you'll want it in a deck with a lot of artifacts.

It's also a good idea to know what the more powerful limited archetypes are. These decks are commonly related to the main mechanics within the sets. In *Onslaught* block for example we had the Tribal cards so you often looked to see if you could build the 'Beast' deck or the 'Soldier' deck. In *Mirrodin* there is Affinity and Equipment so it's worth seeing if you have the cards for a good Affinity deck or a good white-equip deck.

I'm going to introduce the card pool for this week's article now as it's much easier to talk about these things with a suitable example. I've removed the completely unplayable stuff although I've still left a number of cards that I personally wouldn't ever want to play because they do border on the edge of vaguely useful under extreme circumstances. Here's the card pool I'll be referring too. The first link is to a screenshot of the card pool in **Magic Online**. The second is to a text list of the cards.



Text List

If you fancy trying to build it yourself I'd recommend doing so before you read the rest of the article. Have a look through the above pool of cards and think about what you might build then come back and see how I'd build the decks from this pool. Take your time, this article isn't going anywhere in the mean time.

If we look through this pool for any particularly powerful cards or combos there are a few things that jump out. Glissa Sunseeker is an obvious bomb. It would be nice

if there were a deck with a good quantity of green so her double green casting cost could be supported easily. Leonin Shikari is a great addition to white equipment decks and makes Viridian Longbows and Leonin Bolas a lot more potent. Red is very deep with Grab the Reins and Flamebreak as the powerhouses in that colour. Flamebreak is worth paying close attention to as it requires a lot of red mana in the deck to be castable consistently. Isochron Scepter looks very nice here as there are a lot of cards that could be Imprinted on it:



Roar of the Kha, Test of Faith and Raise the Alarm in white. Bolt, Shatter and Shrapnel Blast in red. Terror, Echoing Decay and two Echoing Courages are available as well. It shouldn't be hard to maximise the Sceptre with this pool. The last thing of note is the high number of powerful equipment cards here. Empyrial Plate, Skullclamp, Mask of Memory and Spectre's Shroud are all superb and there's plenty more in addition to those. With such a wide array of equipment cards close attention will have to be paid to them to make sure they go in the appropriate decks.

Red looks to be the deepest colour so on initial inspection of the card pool that's the colour that I would imagine getting split between the decks.

Let's look at the pool with regard to the more common *Mirrodin* archetypes next.

The white-equip deck looks feasible here mostly due to the strength of the equipment. There are no Skyhunter Cubs or Leonin Den-Guards here but with so many excellent equipment cards I think the two Glaivemasters are very playable in this pool. I've already mentioned the Leonin Shikari and that's an excellent card to have with the equipment here. Razor Golem and Raise the Alarm both combine well with the Bolas and there are even some nice white spells to go in the deck too. I note immediately that white is short on flyers – no Cub and no Patrol either. I think the equipment cards that rely on dealing damage to an opponent will be better off in another deck. White is also a little creature light so that side of things will need a fair bit of support. With the Glaivemasters providing early damage this deck will need the support of some solid aggressive creatures.

There aren't too many Affinity cards here – no Behemoths, no Myr Enforcers – although we do have the tricky-to-cast Chromescale Drake along with a Hoverguard, Frogmite, Thoughtcast and Irradiate. No Nim Lashers or Shriekers either but that isn't the end of the world. There are a solid number of flyers here though – Spire Golem, Somber Hoverguard, Grimclaw Bats and the Drake – so it's likely that this deck would be a good home for the Mask of Memory and Spectre's Shroud. Any Affinity deck likes cheap artifacts and the high number of flyers maximises the power of those two Equipment cards.

There is definitely a very good black-red control deck in here as there's a lot of removal spread between those two colours along with some excellent creatures like the Spikeshot Goblin and the Pewter Golem. Grab the Reins is excellent anytime but it's very good in this sort of deck where you have lots of ways to deal with early creatures giving you plenty of time to work up to seven mana so you can Entwine it. This particular combination would definitely want the Isochron Scepter as it would

have up to five cards that could be Imprinted on it. This deck might end up hoarding too many of the good cards though and that's something you always have to watch out for.

Examining the First Decks

Once you've gotten a feel for the card pool, and you know where its strengths and weaknesses are it's worth building skeletons of some or all of the decks that you think would work best with the pool. This is especially true if there looks to be one or two obvious decks that work. Within your team it's usually a good idea to assign each player the task of building one of the three decks. You'll usually get an hour total to build your decks and although that sounds like a long time it disappears quickly so you need to do everything you can to speed up the process. Having everyone build the base of one of the decks at the same time means you'll have more time for tweaking and tuning later. I'm going to start with the white-equip deck just to see how that deck looks. The core of the deck I'd form from the following cards:

Creatures (10):

Auriok Transfixer
Auriok Glaivemaster x 2
Pteron Ghost
Leonin Shikari
Alpha Myr
Cathodion
Leonin Battlemage
Goblin War Wagon
Razor Golem

Spells (9):

Skullclamp
Leonin Scimitar
Leonin Bola
Vulshok Morningstar
Empyrial Plate
Raise the Alarm
Test of Faith
Roar of the Kha
Arrest

I've put the Cathodion, War Wagon and Alpha Myr in here as it was a little creature light and all of those creatures have a decent power-to-casting-cost ratio, which keeps with the aggressive theme of this deck. The Skullclamp belongs here mostly due to the Raise the Alarm but it's fine on a Glaivemaster too. I love the cheapness of the spells in this deck; only four of the spells could cost more than three mana. That means it should be able to run 16 lands even without any mana Myrs. With only 11 creatures (counting the Raise as a creature) this deck needs to find some more.

With red being the deepest colour I'd initially look to that to fill some holes. Right off the bat I'd move the Spikeshot Goblin in here. It's superb with the many power-boosting equipment cards and can combine very nicely with the Test of Faith. Vulshok Berserker makes another good addition and I'd put the Shrapnel Blast in here as it's a fine finisher in an aggressive deck. I'd put the Krark-Clan Stoker in here too simply because it's another guy who can attack early on. That leaves one more slot to fill. I'd leave that blank for now and come back to it when the other decks have been looked at.

With the white deck built temporarily, the blue-black Affinity deck is the next to get the rough treatment. Initially I'd be looking at the following cards all definitely making it in:

Creatures (13):

Silver Myr
Vedalken Engineer
Grimclaw Bats
Arcbound Stinger
Chittering Rats
Neurok Transmuter
Frogmite
Cobalt Golem
Dross Golem
Pewter Golem
Somber Hoverguard
Spire Golem
Chromescale Drake

Spells (9):

Chromatic Sphere
Specter's Shroud

Mask of Memory

Terror

Echoing Decay

Darksteel Ingot

Irradiate

Thoughtcast

Essence Drain

Everything there should be fairly self-explanatory. The Ingot belongs because the deck has a hole at three mana and it needs both artifacts and a decent amount of coloured mana to work properly. The Ingot helps out with all of those things. The Shroud and the Mask should excel in this deck with all the flyers. A second turn Grimclaw Bats or Arcbound Stinger followed by either of these equipment cards on turn three gives you a massive advantage if they're not dealt with immediately.

This is another deck that I'd envision running 16 lands. It has some expensive cards but with the Ingot, the Engineer and the Myr I think 16 should be fine. That leaves two slots left to fill in this deck and as with the white deck, I'd put this aside for now and tune it up later.



Even better with access to evasion.

With only one colour unused it's time to look at the green cards. They'd obviously go alongside the remainder of the Red. The green creatures are very solid, with most of the good commons represented. Two on-colour Myrs would definitely make the cut here and I think the Vulshok War Boar could be excellent in this deck as there are two Tree of Tales to help it out. The Shatter, the Electrostatic Bolt and the Echoing Ruin provide some good removal and I think the second Leonin Bola

would fit in here as a backup answer to any problematic creatures as well as giving the deck a good answer to opposing Equipment cards.

My core for this deck would look like this:

Creatures (12):

Iron Myr
Copper Myr
Tel-Jilad Chosen
Tel-Jilad Wolf
Elf Replica
Tel-Jilad Exile
Glissa Sunseeker
Vulshok War Boar
Hematite Golem
Tel-Jilad Archers
Fangren Hunter
Tangle Spider

Spells (7):

Electrostatic Bolt
Leonin Bola
Shatter
Echoing Ruin
Echoing Courage
Creeping Mold
Grab the Reins

This listing is 19 cards and I'd be thinking that there should be 17 lands in this deck even with the two Myr so that leaves four slots left to fill.

Fine Tuning

Once you've got your three core decks built it's worth laying them all out and then discussing them as a team. Other team members may find something obvious you've missed and vice versa. Let's have a look at these decks side-by-side:

White-red Equip

Creatures (13):
Auriok Transfixer
Auriok Glaivemaster x 2
Pteron Ghost
Leonin Shikari
Alpha Myr
Spikeshot Goblin
Krark-Clan Stoker
Cathodion
Leonin Battlemage
Vulshok Berserker
Goblin War Wagon
Razor Golem

Spells (10):
Skullclamp

Blue-black Affinity

Creatures (13):
Silver Myr
Vedalken Engineer
Grimclaw Bats
Arcbound Stinger
Chittering Rats
Neurok Transmuter
Frogmite
Cobalt Golem
Dross Golem
Pewter Golem
Somber Hoverguard
Spire Golem
Chromescale Drake

Red-green

Creatures (12):
Iron Myr
Copper Myr
Tel-Jilad Chosen
Tel-Jilad Wolf
Elf Replica
Tel-Jilad Exile
Glissa Sunseeker
Vulshok War Boar
Hematite Golem
Tel-Jilad Archers
Fangren Hunter
Tangle Spider

Spells (7):
Electrostatic Bolt

Leonin Scimitar
Leonin Bola
Vulshok Morningstar
Empyrial Plate
Raise the Alarm
Test of Faith
Roar of the Kha
Shrapnel Blast
Arrest

Spells (9):
Chromatic Sphere
Specter's Shroud
Mask of Memory
Terror
Echoing Decay
Darksteel Ingot
Irradiate
Thoughtcast
Essence Drain

Leonin Bola
Shatter
Echoing Ruin
Echoing Courage
Creeping Mold
Grab the Reins

Once you've got the main parts of the decks laid out it's also worth checking through the remainder of your cards to see if there are any powerful cards that you've missed. Going through the above pool I'd identify the following cards that might deserve a home:

Karstoderm
Altar's Light
Atog
Flamebreak
Oxidda Golem
Isochron Scepter
Pyrite Spellbomb
Gold Myr
Fireshrieker

All the above cards were left out for a variety of reasons but they're all very playable and it's worth looking through to see if they fit in any of the above decks.

The Isochron Scepter probably belongs in the white-red deck. It has four excellent targets and that's more than enough. Whilst it doesn't necessarily fit the theme of the deck it's too powerful to ignore. The Pyrite Spellbomb would also be a good fit in the white-red deck but I think it should go in the green-red deck in place of the Electrostatic Bolt. The green-red deck already has plenty of answers to artifacts and the Bolt would give the white-red deck another target for the Scepter. One card would need to be removed from the white-red to fit these both in and the War Wagon could be given to the green-red deck to give it another creature.



The Flamebreak and the Oxidda Golem could both go into the green-red deck to give that another creature and a nice powerful bomb. With several creatures that survive Flamebreak's effect its best place is in this deck and although it makes the mana tricky the deck already has two on-colour Myrs and it could use the Mirrodin's Core to help out there. Karstoderm is another possibility but I think that guy is best as a sideboard card against other artifact-light decks.

I don't think the White deck really has room for the Altar's Light. The rest of the spells are better and it needs to keep its creature count up.

The Affinity deck is still short a few cards and I think the Gold Myr has a good home there. That deck is happy to have an additional early drop that will cheapen the Affinity spells in the deck. There aren't a lot of good options for the last card in the Affinity deck. Arcbound Hybrid, Arcane Spyglass, Arcbound

Worker are all possibilities but none of those really shine.

Outstanding in combination with Rustspore Ram is also possible but I don't like that main when *higher toughness creatures*. there are other options. Deathmask Duplicant might be okay too, especially with a Vedalken Engineer to accelerate into it. It would probably be a 5/5 Flyer in this deck a lot of the time. Any of these options is fine but I'm going to go with the Duplicant as this deck could do with a nice big creature in it.

The last slot is in the red-green deck. The deck could do with another cheap creature and Atog is pretty much the only option. I don't like it very much in this deck as there aren't enough artifacts you want to sacrifice. I think I'd probably go with the second Echoing Courage as it's a fine combat trick and will most likely always be useful in some way.

That gives the following listings:

White-red Equip

Creatures (12):

Auriok Transfixer
Auriok Glaivemaster x 2
Pteron Ghost
Leonin Shikari
Alpha Myr
Spikeshot Goblin
Krark-Clan Stoker
Cathodion
Leonin Battlemage
Vulshok Berserker
Razor Golem

Spells (12):

Skullclamp
Electrostatic Bolt
Isochron Scepter
Leonin Scimitar
Leonin Bola
Vulshok Morningstar
Empyrial Plate
Raise the Alarm
Test of Faith
Roar of the Kha
Shrapnel Blast
Arrest

Plains x 8

Ancient Den

Mountains x 7

Blue-black Affinity

Creatures (15):

Silver Myr
Gold Myr
Vedalken Engineer
Grimclaw Bats
Arcbound Stinger
Chittering Rats
Neurok Transmuter
Frogmite
Cobalt Golem
Dross Golem
Pewter Golem
Somber Hoverguard
Spire Golem
Chromescale Drake
Death-Mask Duplicant

Spells (9):

Chromatic Sphere
Specter's Shroud
Mask of Memory
Terror
Echoing Decay
Darksteel Ingot
Irradiate
Thoughtcast
Essence Drain

Swamp x 7

Island x 9

Red-green

Creatures (14):

Iron Myr
Copper Myr
Tel-Jilad Chosen
Tel-Jilad Wolf
Elf Replica
Tel-Jilad Exile
Goblin War Wagon
Glissa Sunseeker
Vulshok War Boar
Oxidda Golem
Hematite Golem
Tel-Jilad Archers
Fangren Hunter
Tangle Spider

Spells (9):

Pyrite Spellbomb
Leonin Bola
Shatter
Echoing Ruin
Echoing Courage x 2
Flamebreak
Creeping Mold
Grab the Reins

Mirrodon's Core

Tree of Tales x 2

Mountain x 8

Forest x 6

Now that's only one possible build. If you get your team working quickly you can make a mental note of these decks and then try completely different combinations to see if you think you get anything better.

It's possible that the red cards would be better split amongst the black and the blue. As I mentioned there's a good red-black control deck in here that would have an awful lot of power behind it. Flamebreak, Grab the Reins and some excellent creatures would definitely make for a powerful deck.

A red-blue Affinity style deck would work fine as well. Isochron Scepter would go well here as blue adds Echoing Truth as a target for that. Shrapnel Blast is obviously amazing in this style of deck where the Arcbound creatures combine with it to deal damage and provide potential combat tricks.

That would leave white-green as the third deck but I don't have a problem with that in this pool of cards. As you might remember from my last article white-green loves to be aggressive and that's exactly what we have here. Lots of great turn one and two plays backed up by excellent equipment and combat tricks and a couple of good fatties to finish things off.

It's certainly worth looking at the various options you have if you have the time during the deck building process. When playing in an event though do remember to leave yourself a few minutes at the end of deck building to log the decks and sideboards you'll be playing.

Finishing Up

The above method of going through a team sealed pool is just one way of doing things. Different methods work for different people and lots of teams have their own approach. I've played an awful lot of team events over the years (3 Team Pro-Tours, a Team GP top 8, countless PTQs, etc) and I've found this method works very well. If you're new to the whole team experience it's certainly an approach you might want to consider until you develop your own.

That's it for this week. Join me next week when I'll show you something new.

Thanks for reading,

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