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Pentavus



Adrian Sullivan · *Single-Card Strategies*
Wednesday, May 5, 2004

When *Antiquities* came out, the game was washed over by a ton of Artifacts. In a sense, what we have with *Mirrodin* Block is a return to a simple but exciting time. Back when *Antiquities* came out the Urza's Lands had just made their first showing, and for the most part, people were pretty excited about them. They weren't necessarily the greatest at the time, though. *Antiquities* also brought *Strip Mine*, and it isn't the easiest task to assemble a full Urza-Tron set when people can easily pack *Strip Mine* in nearly any deck. Also making their first showing were cards like *Triskellion* (a card that has continuously been a favorite of mine) and *Tetravus*. *Tetravus* was a crazy card. If you look at what the card does (even under the currently official Oracle wording), it actually allows you to eat your opponent's Tetravites (the little men a *Tetravus* makes).

These days, those cards are back. *8th Edition* gives us back the Urza's lands, and *Mirrodin* returns *Triskellion* while giving *Tetravus* the best makeover it has ever had: *Pentavus*. They almost remade the card once before (as *Thopter Squadron*), and while they took the ability of the card out of the upkeep and into the main phase, it was slow: Sorceries are like that... slow and unwieldy. *Pentavus* is not only a little bit bigger than that old clunky chopper from *Exodus*, it's also full of a lot more tricks.



Solo-flying Tricks

It's great when a card is capable of pulling off tricks all by itself. Even without any help, a *Pentavus* can do loop-de-loops of various different sorts. Given enough mana in this big guy's gas tank he can really pull out all sorts of tricks.

Mana is about the only thing holding this guy back. Seven mana isn't exactly cheap, so he does cost a wee bit. In the real world, we'll usually be tapped out when we put him into play. If we pretend, however, that we do have an abundance of mana because we've had the time to build it up, or because we've got a set of Urza's land out (or because your opponent put a *Mana Flare* into play), what can we accomplish?

The most obvious trick to me is how great this guys stands up to being killed. If someone has their **Shatter**, their **Arrest**, or their **Purge**, you can respond by getting rid of your **Pentavus** and replacing it with a small army of Pentavites. Other cards like **Innocent Blood** and **Chainer's Edict** get a similar treatment: out pops a little Pentavite to take a hit for the team. The **Pentavus** and its Pentavites have no real answer to sweeping, so **Wrath of God** and **Starstorm** (if it's big enough) will cause a ruckus, but the resistance to the other forms of removal is truly great.

The Pentavites themselves are nearly indestructible. Again, there is the weakness to sweeping, but that's all you would have to worry about. If you have the mana, there's no reason for a Pentavite to die unless you want it to. For a measly one mana, the little 'vite can come scurrying home to the Mother Ship to avoid danger. For its effort, Mom gets to be +1/+1 to boot.

On defense, then, you have a virtual **Forcefield**. It's actually better than that though. In a sense, you have a much better version of **Splintering Wind**. For a few mana, **Splintering Wind** could make a flier that would be able to put in work on the defense (or the offense), but to do so, it needed to be able to poke something. **Pentavus** can't poke, but it can provide the blocker, and for less mana. One of my favorite things about this trick is that you can assemble a small gang of little blockers to take out an army of attackers (or one big one), and after they've dealt their damage they all run away before perish. **Splintering Wind** had the advantage of getting around **Wrath of God**, but it still had a lot more disadvantages than a **Pentavus** once it was out. This comparison to **Splintering Wind** makes me smile quite a bit; years ago, I qualified for the Pro-Tour with **Splintering Wind** (and **Natural Spring** and **Hailstorm** and a number of other "bad" cards), so I couldn't help but think of the comparison once I noticed how like **Forcefield** the card is.



Pentavus is impressive on defense...

The offensive version of this trick is nice as well, though not as impressive in my opinion. At the end of your opponent's turn, you can churn out as many attackers as you feel is right, and send them into the fray. Any of them that get stopped by annoying blockers can zip home in a heartbeat, and be ready to go on the defense again on your own turn. Think of it like a **Pegasus Stampede**.

In a sense, then, **Pentavus** has the ability to act like a **Forcefield** and **Sacred Mesa** all thrown into one. On the off chance that you might actually want a solitary, big guy, you can have that too. All of this, and we haven't even given the card any help yet.

Mana Mana Bo Bana

We already know that the card is going to require a bit more than a nickel's worth of mana if it is going to have enough juice to get going. What it can also do, however, is provide the juice to get more than a few engines going.

In decks that are planning on using creatures to make the mana to pump out **Pentavus**, an inclusion of **Intruder Alarm** is an easy way to make infinite mana. If your team of mana-makers can make 3 mana, well, you've just made infinity. By bringing out a Pentavite and triggering the Alarm, all of your mana men get to come back online. Add in some kind of card drawing (say a **Bloodline Shaman**), and you'll eventually have a huge amount of Elves ready to join your team. Now all you need is something to do with that infinite mana!

Another fun combo hearkens back to the late 90's. This one is so good though, that you'll have to make sure that you aren't playing in an area that uses tournament-style rules. The big miscreant here is **Earthcraft**. By itself, this guy isn't completely insane, but in conjunction with mana-boosting, it gets a bit nutty. Again, the critical number is 3 mana. If you can make 3 mana from a single land, **Earthcraft** and **Pentavus** will make infinite for you since each guy you pop off can be used with **Earthcraft** on that mana generating land. Sure, you can



use things like **Wild Growth**, but the real winner here is using **Overgrowth**. Boom!

A much simpler way to infinite mana is **Mana Echoes**. It costs you 4 mana to remove all the Pentavites. When each token comes into play, it is given a name and a type (Pentavite in both cases). The first makes you 0 mana, the next 1, the next 2, and the last 3. You'll have 2 mana left over after all of that. Just enough to put that last Pentavite back onto **Pentavus**, and bring him out again. This time, you'll have 3 mana. Boom! Infinite mana. You can get a much slower build-up from **Black Market**, but it won't take you to infinity. A similar combo for infinite mana can be found with **Dross Scorpion** and **Gilded Lotus**, but that combo has already been written about many, many times.

Great at fueling a number of combo engines.

Pentavus for Life, Pentavus for Death

The first time I stumbled across **Pentavus for Life**, I did it in a draft. I was looking over my cards, and I noticed that **Pentavus** and **Leonin Elder** would make me a lot of life. And boy did they ever. In the match that really drove it home, [Josh Tabak](#) sat with a **Luminous Angel** and strongly on the offensive. I already had out a **Leonin Elder** when I finally drew the **Pentavus**. I used the **Pentavus** blocking trick and started to gain a life at the end of his turn for every two mana I had open. Pretty soon, he was at a point where he had to wait to build up an army to go for an attack, and I had a second **Leonin Elder** in play. Eventually, I got him with a **Tower of Murmurs**, and I learned a healthy respect for the life-gain possible with **Pentavus**.



Healing or hurting (or both!)

Leonin Elder isn't the only way to pull off this trick. **Soul Warden** does the same thing as well, not to mention the new **Fifth Dawn** card **Auriok Champion**, which [Anthony previewed yesterday](#). Another more dangerous way to pull off the life trick is **Dross Harvester**. Here, though, you might gain more life, but you'll be losing it at the same time. It doesn't take very much mana for it to be worthwhile, though. At 8 mana, you can finally break even with a **Soul Warden** for life gain, and at 10, you exceed it. There is the added bonus if anything dies, however... It's no **Khabal Ghoul**, but it's still pretty exciting.

On the reverse end, you can also hurt your opponent. **Disciple of the Vault** is the most obvious here. Similar to his opposite, the **Leonin Elder**, the Disciple is quite capable of pulling off a lot of effect for a simple 2 mana investment. My favorite choice of this type is **Grave Pact**. Each two mana you invest is another **Diabolic Edict**. That's something pretty exciting. Some people might talk about **Confusion in the Ranks** as a clever way to abuse **Pentavus**. Me, well I prefer combining the **Pentavus** with a **Grave Pact**, and maybe throwing in a

Kamahl, Fist of Krosa

to make things *really* interesting.



Trading it in, swapping parts around, or souping it up

The card **Trash for Treasure** describes to a tee the kind of value you're exchanging when you turn a Pentavite into another artifact. The effect of **Trash for Treasure** is accomplished much better with our friend the **Goblin Welder**. Sure, the **Goblin Welder** can turn your Pentavite into any other artifact you might already have **Thirst for Knowledge** or **Gambled** into your graveyard. Better yet, though, is turning your **Pentavus** into a new **Pentavus** with 4 Pentavite friends. What's great is that you can do this every turn. But wait! There's more! Bring that **Intruder Alarm** into the mix and suddenly you can turn a **Pentavus** and a **Welder** into a potent combination that brings *every artifact in your graveyard into play!* That's pretty darn cool.

Souping up your **Pentavus** requires a lot of the same work that I talked about in [the Forgotten Ancient article](#). Spikes can be used to pump him up, as can **Dragon Blood**, but since he's an artifact we get a few more cards. **Power Conduit** is one of the first and easiest cards. Of course, we still have the Arcbound Creatures (especially **Arcbound Ravager**, but let's not forget our little friends the **Worker** and **Stinger**). **Dismantle** is yet another card that we can use to move tokens onto him.

For lots of fun, getting multiple copies of **Pentavus** into play can make it really tough on the opponent. With so many places for the tokens to go, a simple **Shatter** or **Swords to Plowshares** won't end the fun. Try **Dance of the Many**, **Clone**, **Sculpting Steel**, or **Copy Artifact** to pull off this simple and fun trick.

Wrapping Up

Of all the ways to approach the card, for this deck I'm going to focus on an approach that tutors for the **Pentavus** and uses it to run an engine. Here goes!

Pentavus		
60 cards		
4 Yavimaya Coast	4 Birds of Paradise	4 Intruder Alarm
3 City of Brass	4 Vine Trellis	4 other spells
1 Island	4 Birchlore Rangers	
10 Forest	4 Bloodline Shaman	
18 land	4 Wirewood Hivemaster	
	3 Wirewood Symbiote	
	1 Elvish Soultiller	
	3 Wellwisher	
	1 Elvish Aberration	
	1 Krosan Tusker	
	3 Fierce Empath	
	4 Wirewood Herald	
	1 Pentavus	
	1 Kamahl, Fist of Krosa	
	38 creatures	

This deck's early plan is to stay alive with cards like **Wellwisher** and **Vine Trellis** while it sets up the combo. Essentially, with an **Intruder Alarm** out, cards like **Wirewood Herald** can help you find the pieces you need to get going (primarily **Birchlore Rangers**, **Bloodline Shaman**, and **Fierce Empath** to find the **Pentavus**). Once you get a **Pentavus**, you can get infinite mana. At that point, find a **Kamahl**. **Kamahl** can make all of your creatures that aren't summoning sick +Infinity/+Infinity, and of course that will include your lands as well.

The Empaths can also help you find cards to fix your mana base (**Krosan Tusker** or **Elvish Aberration**), besides fixing the combo. If you lose some part of the combo, the **Soultiller** call help bring it back. **Wirewood Symbiote** helps protect the key pieces of the combo, and fortunately the **Birchlore Rangers** don't worry if they are still freshly cast and summoning sick.

One note from last week's article. I want to thank everyone who pointed out that **Rancor** couldn't target **Multani**. For some reason or other I let this one slip by me (maybe I was contemplating a **Rancorous Maro**, I'm not sure). As many people pointed out, there are many other options that would work besides a **Rancor** (**Brawn** being the one I liked best), and I always appreciate comments. That said, I'm still hoping to hear from readers about some of their favorite cards. If I

go with any reader suggestions, I'll be more than happy to mention the people who gave me good ideas on cards.

Thanks, as always, for giving your feedback. No poll this week, but you can certainly expect to see them in upcoming weeks. In the meantime, I'll leave you with the results from last week's poll:

Since I started this column, which one of my articles is your favorite?		
Overmaster	495	12.7%
Culling Scales	476	12.2%
Breaking Flamebreak	462	11.8%
Forgotten Ancient	426	10.9%
The Forgotten Ancient Challenge	416	10.7%
Echoing Truth	347	8.9%
Talon of Pain	312	8.0%
The Sundering Titan Challenge	307	7.9%
Sundering Titan	280	7.2%
No Fear!	212	5.4%
Serum Powder	170	4.4%
Total	3903	100.0%

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