

Choosing Your Second Color

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I hope you all had a great time at the *Fifth Dawn* pre-releases that took place this past weekend. If you didn't get a chance to play with the new cards yet you don't have long to wait until the set becomes legal for limited play everywhere.



New sets always tend to impact limited formats fairly significantly but I think *Fifth Dawn* may do so more than usual with its focus on colour in a format that previously had no such emphasis. Sunburst especially will require a lot of cards from *Mirrodin* and *Darksteel* to be re-evaluated.

I'll be discussing *Fifth Dawn* a lot more over the coming months but this week we're still on the current format as it was a *Mirrodin-Mirrodin-Darksteel* draft pick that was the topic of last week's poll. For reference here is the situation I gave you to think about last week:

It's a *Mirrodin-Mirrodin-Darksteel* booster draft and this time out and you were in the slightly fortunate position of opening up Molder Slug which you took over Skyhunter Patrol, Electrostatic Bolt, Bonesplitter, Predator's Strike, Irradiate, Granite Shard and Myr Enforcer.

Your second pick you stayed on colour and went with Fangren Hunter over Skyhunter Cub, Myr Enforcer, Neurok Spy, Altar's Light, Wizard Replica and Pyrite Spellbomb.

Third pick again gave you a nice on-color pick of Deconstruct over Bottle Gnomes, Taj-Nar Swordsmith, Irradiate, Soldier Replica, Tel-Jilad Chosen and Vulshok Berserker.

So you already have Molder Slug, Fangren Hunter and Deconstruct and you have to make your fourth pick from the following selection:





You've had a lot of powerful cards to choose from in your first three packs and whilst I don't think many people would disagree with the picks that were made it would've been quite possible to have excellent beginnings of a White Equip deck (Bonesplitter, Cub, Swordsmith, Den-Guard) or an Affinity deck (2 Myr Enforcers, Irradiate, Somber Hoverguard).

There are still a few solid picks in the above pack with Pewter Golem, Leonin Den-Guard and Somber Hoverguard all being good picks in those colours. As far as green cards go however, Viridian Joiner and Turn to Dust are not what you would be looking for as a fourth pick. Fortunately because the pack isn't devoid of any green cards you would still be hopeful that the pack was just a weak pack for green and that the signals given with the Fangren Hunter and Deconstruct still meant your neighbour wasn't in green.

There are a few playable artifacts you can take still, with options for mana acceleration, equipment and equipment removal available. Before we get onto my opinions let's have a look at what you all voted for this time out:

Which card do you draft?		
Viridian Joiner	2640	20.2%

Banshee's Blade	2125	16.2%
Iron Myr	1887	14.4%
Turn to Dust	1119	8.6%
Leonin Den-Guard	1057	8.1%
Somber Hoverguard	921	7.0%
Ogre Leadfoot	810	6.2%
Pewter Golem	755	5.8%
Molten Rain	657	5.0%
Rustspore Ram	545	4.2%
Tanglebloom	371	2.8%
Vault of Whispers	197	1.5%
Total	13084	100.0%

I'll go through the usual routine of giving you a few brief reasons as to why the worst cards in the pack don't make the cut before we get onto talking about the cards that are worth consideration.

Molten Rain and Tanglebloom are the only two cards in the pack that I don't consider to be playable really. Land Destruction has never really been a viable limited strategy and it certainly isn't in this format either. Life-gain is similar, unless it's really good. Sun Droplet makes it into the playable bracket because if you're taking damage it gains you two life every single turn without requiring any additional mana outside of its initial casting cost. A single Sun Droplet can easily gain you 10-20 life over the course of a game. Tanglebloom can only gain you half as much and it requires a mana cost every single turn as well and those factors render it unplayable.

Ogre Leadfoot is a card that will sometimes make the cut when you have nothing better but in this situation you already have a couple of expensive creatures and even if you wanted more you will almost certainly be able to pick up better creatures than the Ogre. You definitely don't want a deck bad enough where the Leadfoot is playable and he shouldn't be picked up here.

Vault of Whispers is a card I wouldn't have a problem drafting fairly early if I had the appropriate deck. Artifact lands are essential to improving the speed of an Affinity deck and they're a lot harder to pick up now that there are less Mirrodin packs in each draft. As a result you often have to pick up appropriate artifact lands earlier than you would have previously. Having said that, this clearly isn't the appropriate deck as this deck isn't likely to feature a heavy number of artifacts. The Vault is a necessary addition to many black decks but the cards that require it aren't the cards that would be picked to go along with the green cards you already have.

I'd pass up on the Banshee's Blade next. It's the sort of card that can potentially win games if you can get a high number of counters on it but it takes a long while until it gets there. All of the other decent equipment (Bonesplitter, Morningstar, etc) is a better choice than this one. Playing the Blade isn't the end of the world if your deck needs equipment and you simply don't have better options. Base green decks don't typically require equipment at all and certainly not a slower piece like the Blade. The better creatures in your green deck typically come on-line later in the game and in that sort of situation the Blade is simply too slow. You'll probably also have other creatures that can't even be equipped if they have Protection from Artifacts which makes the Blade worse still. It's not the best card for this deck.

Removing those five cards from the pack leaves the following selection:

Rustspore Ram
Viridian Joiner

Pewter Golem
Iron Myr
Somber Hoverguard
Leonin Den-Guard
Turn to Dust

All of those cards are playable although in the case of Rustspore Ram and Turn to Dust they'd probably start off in your sideboard. There's no obvious "best card" there – the best pick would definitely be dependant upon the deck you were drafting. Before going through those cards I think in this instance it's worth examining what might be happening amongst your neighbours.

The best cards you passed in pack one were Skyhunter Patrol, Electrostatic Bolt, Bonesplitter, Granite Shard and Myr Enforcer.

It's difficult to say what your neighbour would've picked there. Electrostatic Bolt probably just edges it as the most obvious pick but it could easily have been the Patrol or the Enforcer if that player's first pick had caused them to lean towards those cards. The best cards that went by you in pack two were Skyhunter Cub, Myr Enforcer, and Pyrite Spellbomb. The pick made from those would probably be dependant upon the deck that the player was drafting so again it's not really possible to accurately predict what deck they might be drafting.



Strong but situational makes these sideboard picks.

With Irradiate and Swordsmith going through you in pack three I think a white based equip deck or an Affinity deck are the most obvious choices and the good news there is that neither of them are likely to be taking green cards. It does make your second colour choice difficult though as it's likely that you've got a white-red and a blue-black drafter on your left. You also haven't been passed any great red cards by the player on your right so it's very likely that they've been scooping up the red cards before they can get to you.

At this point in time you have no clear choice as to a second colour. Both green-black and green-blue aren't particularly strong colour combinations, and even when they are playable the two cards we have here – Pewter Golem and Somber Hoverguard - don't really go well in those two decks.

Green-black tends to be a heavy green base only splashing black for quality removal like Terror and Echoing Decay. Pewter Golem would be playable if you were lacking big creatures but this deck already has a Slug and a Hunter and will probably pick up better choices than the Golem later on.

Green-blue tends to focus on cheap flyers, bounce and the green fatties as mid-late game finishers. Again, Somber Hoverguard doesn't fit in that deck as you'd typically be playing few artifacts in such a deck, making the Hoverguard simply too expensive.

Two of the other cards in that selection are very similar: Rustspore Ram and Turn to Dust. Having removal specifically to deal with equipment is quite useful as there is obviously a lot of powerful equipment in the format. Usually though an opponent will only have a couple of equipment cards in their deck and it's not usually worth playing something like Turn to Dust main-deck as it's totally useless when you have no target for it. Rustspore Ram isn't quite as bad as it can at least function as a bad creature when your opponent has no equipment for it to destroy. If you are drafting green I

would expect you to have a few artifact removal spells in your deck and as a result playing situational cards like the Ram isn't necessary as you would still have ways to deal with opposing equipment cards without needing the Ram. Both the Rustspore Ram and the Turn to Dust are fine sideboard cards for this deck, but you wouldn't normally play them main deck and therefore you can pass on them at this point in favour of something that would make the cut.

The cards that are left now are the cards that I think would actually be playable in the main deck if they were drafted. We're down to only three now:



The correct pick definitely comes from that selection in my opinion. Before I tell you which I'd go for let's get a couple of other opinions:

Nicolai Herzog: I'd take Iron Myr. Without thinking. When you're green you REALLY need Myrs and Talismans. And you're not sure about your second color yet. Somber Hoverguard, arguably the strongest card in the pack, does not fit in with the cards you've already taken, and the rest are just not worth taking over a Myr that will definitely shine in your deck.

Adrian Sullivan: You can basically reduce this pack to:

Pewter Golem
Iron Myr
Somber Hoverguard
Leonin Den-Guard

Basically, each of these cards can direct you into color combinations better than others of their color. The first two I'm going to eliminate are the Pewter Golem and the Leonin Den-Guard. It isn't at all hard to eliminate the Pewter Golem. He's a big guy, but he's slow, and Green can provide you with plenty of big guys that are better for the cost. The problem with the "big guy" deck is that you really need to have some solid elimination to survive long enough for big guys to matter. You've already passed Irradiate onwards twice, and at this point it is unlikely that you'll get passed any kind of decent Black elim. The minor fact that he is an artifact is a contributing factor, but it is very minor. Den Guard is the pass I don't want to pass, but I will. You've already been feeding White to your neighbor, and Den Guard requires equipment to back it up. Both of these together are enough to knock it out of contention: you won't get much white in the 2nd pack, and you'll need artifacts to make them useful (making your Slug weaker). This leads pretty quickly to the "Slug"- "Affinity" problem of the Hoverguard.

Most of the time, it is worth taking powerful cards that may not interact so well. However, if Slug becomes more like Braids and less like, well, Molder Slug, it ceases being such a huge bomb and starts becoming just a good card.

As underwhelming as it may seem, I like the Iron Myr. If you lose an Iron Myr to a Slug, that isn't that big of a deal. It is nice, though, to potentially get the Slug out a turn sooner, as well as begin a dip into another color. Viridian Joiner helps speed up the deck as well, but beginning to lay claim to another color, as well as the extra bit of speed is more important.

Zvi Mowshowitz: Currently you have two five drops and are solidly green. With a Slug already in your pile and two Enforcers passed Hoverguard is downright silly and you could definitely use some solid mana acceleration. The clear pick is Iron Myr.

Daniel Zink: I'd definitely take the Iron Myr out of this pack. If you are green, you really want the acceleration and the other cards in the pack just don't fit as well with the cards you drafted so far. Somber Hoverguard is a fine card, but blue-green isn't really the best color combination you would hope for. Besides you already passed two Myr Enforcers which means that one guy to your left is definitely drafting Affinity and I'd continue to set him up that way. The last card worth noting is Pewter Golem but seeing that you already have two powerful 5-drop creatures I would pass it along. Even if the black keeps coming and you end up black-green I'd still rather have the Myr. Additionally, the Myr will always make the cut in your deck, postponing the decision on your second color.

Victor van den Broek: I would take Iron Myr here as mana acceleration is very important in green-based decks. The other cards are either of a different color or require a more subtle approach than G beatdown.

There's a clear consensus there with everyone going for the Iron Myr. I agree with the dismissal of the Hoverguard and Pewter Golem but I think the Den-Guard is a little under-rated by the above players.

As I've said in previous articles I really don't mind green-white that much and it does appear that both of those colours are open on your right meaning you would most likely get decent picks in Darksteel. The Den-Guard is a fine guy in a green-white deck as it gives you something to do early in the game, and even when he isn't equipped he can hold off early attackers, giving you time to get your bigger green creatures into play. Obviously the fact that he needs equipment doesn't go too well with the Molder Slug but if you draw Den-Guard + Equipment + Slug then you can decide to make your opponent deal with one of the first two before dropping the Slug.

Having said all that, you have passed a lot of good white cards and you're unlikely to get good white cards in the next Mirrodin pack as a result. Mirrodin is where white is strong and missing out on that pack would definitely hurt your deck as a result. You don't have to commit to a second colour at this point in time and I think it'd be a better plan to do just that and go with either of the mana-accelerators.



Green-White is just fine under the right circumstances.

So it's either Iron Myr or Viridian Joiner. The Myr won the votes of the Pros and the Joiner won the votes of the readers, but which is better?



There are three things to consider here. First of all there's the fact that the Myr comes online earlier. It can come out on turn two and start doing its job on turn three. This means any four mana creatures you might have come out quicker with the Myr than they do with the Joiner. This advantage might sound small but it's actually very significant. You might also be in a situation where you're lacking a third land and then that extra one mana you pay for the Joiner becomes very relevant indeed. Both cards accelerate you into your five mana creatures at the same speed but the Myr definitely has the edge over the Joiner here.

The second thing to consider is that the Myr gives you red mana, whilst the Joiner gives you green. It might seem like getting green mana is preferable but in this case I don't think that's correct. More often than not the coloured mana you get isn't that relevant at all. If you have two forests it doesn't matter whether you get green, red or blue mana from your Myr to cast your Fangren Hunter. The coloured mana only matters when you don't have enough of it. At the moment you don't have a second colour but I think in all likelihood it will be red. You haven't passed that many red cards and red is probably the best splash colour you can get as most of its good cards don't have heavy mana commitments. It's quite likely you'll open a Shatter or Bolt in the second Mirrodin pack or perhaps a Barbed Lightning or Echoing Ruin in Darksteel. Having a source of red mana that will already be in your deck means you'll better be able to splash these cards, even perhaps as a third colour if need be. I think the red mana you get from the Iron Myr has the potential to be more beneficial than the green the Joiner gives.

The last thing to consider is that the Iron Myr is an artifact whereas the Joiner is not. There's the obvious implications with the Molder Slug but the Myr is also more vulnerable to removal when an opponent wants to stunt your development early in the game. I'll often point a Shatter at an opposing Myr if my opponent also played a Forest or two. Green's best creatures most likely won't be artifacts but they will cost more mana than normal and as a result killing the Myr quickly would be the best way of disrupting them. The decision of when to kill an opposing Myr and when to hold off and save the removal spell for a better threat is often very tricky. However, against a green deck it's often correct to kill their acceleration, as they may not give you any better target for your artifact removal. The Joiner wins this round as it also has an extra point of toughness, making it a bit more resilient against opposing Longbows, Spikeshots and Granite Shards.

Overall though I think the Myr has two points going for it against just the one for the Joiner. I also think that the two points in favour of the Iron Myr are general stronger points too and as a result I believe the Iron Myr is the correct pick from this booster. The Joiner comes in second for me but the fact that you get earlier acceleration as well as something that can help you out with potential colour splashes means the Iron Myr is preferable here.

Coming Soon...

With *Fifth Dawn* becoming legal soon I'm curious as to what sort of articles relating to it you'd like to see. There are numerous things I could write but obviously I'd like to give you what you want so please take a second to fill in this poll:

What type of *Fifth Dawn* limited articles would you prefer?

- General overview of the set as a whole.
- A look at each colour and the best limited cards in that colour.

- Ratings for each and every card in the set.
- The standard draft-pick articles with *Fifth Dawn* picks is enough.
- Something else entirely

Submit

If there's something not covered on that list then please either drop me an e-mail or leave a note on the message board. I'll definitely be covering *Fifth Dawn* over the coming weeks so let me know now what you want and I'll try and structure the articles accordingly.

That's it for this week.

Thanks for reading,

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