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Half and Half (and Half)

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Swimming With Sharks
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So my local base of players is split into three camps. There are the players who are either qualified for US Nationals or are planning on grinding into the tournament. They are focused on the current incarnation of Standard and still have to grapple with the soon to be departed **Skullclamp**. The other two camps are looking forward to June 20th when **Skullclamp** leaves and a whole new batch of cards rotate in.

One group is made up of the Friday Night **Magic** Standard crowd. They are looking forward to building new decks without the constraints of **Skullclamp** in the format. **Wrath of God** becomes a lot more attractive once it does not give your opponent a two card advantage. The other group is scrambling to figure out how they are going to get to the Pro Tour now that **Skullclamp** has been removed from the Block constructed equation. The decks from Kobe were supposed to serve as guideposts but without **Skullclamp** they find themselves standing on an unmarked road that bears little resemblance to where they expected to be at this point.

I am going to take a look at three different decks in the three very different formats. Not surprisingly, all three decks feature green for the powerful artifact removal available in that color. Affinity may be losing **Skullclamp** but it is gaining **Cranial Plating** and is not going to be leaving your local metagame anytime soon. **Krark-Clan Ironworks** will also fertilize another crop of artifact decks in the coming months, keeping the need for green on red alert.

If I were going to play at US Nationals the deck I would choose would almost certainly be some variation on Elf and Nail. The deck not only has terrific match-ups against most of the field but it is a ton of fun to play. Rather than muck around with Urza lands and **Cloudposts** this deck relies on Forests and **Vernal Bloom** to accelerate its mana. It also abuses two of my favorite cards in **Wood Elves** and **Wirewood Symbiote**. Those two cards in play with **Vernal Bloom** and a mana creature allow you to play out up to six mana in a turn!



Elf and Nail	
Sameer Merchant - Winner Northwest Regional Championships	
Main Deck	Sideboard
60 cards	
20 Forest	3 Creeping Mold
20 lands	1 Duplicant
	4 Oxidize
4 Birds of Paradise	3 Reap and Sow
1 Darksteel Colossus	1 Tooth and Nail
1 Duplicant	1 Triskelion
1 Fierce Empath	1 Vine Trellis
1 Kamahl, Fist of Krosa	1 Viridian Shaman
1 Sundering Titan	15 sideboard cards
1 Triskelion	
3 Vine Trellis	
3 Viridian Shaman	
3 Wirewood Herald	
4 Wirewood Symbiote	
4 Wood Elves	
27 creatures	
	3 Chrome Mox
	4 Skullclamp
	3 Tooth and Nail
	4 Vernal Bloom
	13 other spells

One of the advantages this deck had when it took the top spot in Seattle was that the deck was completely unexpected and there was nothing else like it. Now most players consider the deck one of the top choices for US Nationals and some adjustments need to be made in anticipation of the mirror match.

One of the cards that gives this deck problems in the goblin decks is **Goblin Sharpshooter** so I added Garfield's goblin to the deck with one Mountain and four **Wooded Foothills** to support it in addition to the Birds. The goblin allows you to shoot down opposing Birds and Symbiotes in the mirror and works very nicely with the untap target creature ability of your own Symbiotes.

The other card that I added for the mirror was **Fangren Firstborn**—four copies in the sideboard to swap out for your **Vernal Blooms** (you

never want to play one in the mirror). Since you are playing against a deck with no mass removal and not much of an early game you transform into a green/red beatdown deck with your Symbiotes, Birds and Wood Elves all growing to menacing size in just a couple of attack steps. Even if your opponent uses **Duplicant** on them he only gets a 1/1 or 0/1 in return.

My deck would look something like this:



Machine-gun indeed!

Main Deck 60 cards		Sideboard
15 Forest	2 Chrome Mox	3 Creeping Mold
1 Mountain	4 Skullclamp	1 Duplicant
4 Wooded Foothills	3 Tooth and Nail	4 Fangren Firstborn
20 lands	4 Vernal Bloom	4 Oxidize
	13 other spells	1 Triskelion
4 Birds of Paradise		1 Vine Trellis
1 Darksteel Colossus		1 Viridian Shaman
1 Duplicant		15 sideboard cards
4 Goblin Sharpshooter		
1 Kamahl, Fist of Krosa		
1 Sundering Titan		
1 Triskelion		
3 Vine Trellis		
3 Viridian Shaman		
4 Wirewood Symbiote		
4 Wood Elves		
27 creatures		

I'm still not sure about the **Chrome Mox** and I have not tested this deck beyond the playing card stage versus goldfish. I have proxied it up to do test draws but since I will be at Nationals to do coverage and not as a competitor I have not spent a lot of time on the deck. I can tell you that I would almost certainly be playing this or some other variant on the Elf and Nail deck if I was going to Nationals.

As for Standard after the June 20th rotation of *Fifth Dawn*. Mike Flores played a green-white deck at Northeast Regionals that becomes more powerful with the banning of **Skullclamp**. It does not gain much of anything in *Fifth Dawn* but should be able to hold its own against most decks it will face. Mike did not do well at Regionals due to the fact that he made a last minute sideboard tweak in anticipation of there being more **Tooth and Nail** than there actually was. He added **Duplicants** and took out **Sacred Grounds** from his sideboard.

His first match of the day was against a green-black Death Cloud deck and even though he pulled out the match it illustrated how Mike's day was going to play out. He would set himself up for a dominant long game and he would be devastated in one turn by a **Flashfires** or **Death Cloud**.

Main Deck 60 cards		Sideboard
4 Elfhome Palace	4 Akroma's Vengeance	2 Darksteel Colossus
3 Forest	2 Gilded Light	4 Duplicant
12 Plains	4 Oxidize	2 Gilded Light
4 Temple of the False God	4 Pulse of the Fields	3 Naturalize
4 Windswept Heath	4 Scrabbling Claws	4 Tooth and Nail
27 lands	4 Wing Shards	15 sideboard cards
	4 Wrath of God	
	26 other spells	
3 Akroma, Angel of Wrath		
4 Eternal Dragon		
7 creatures		

If Mike could go back in time the sideboard he would have played with would look like this:

3 Sacred Ground
3 Tooth and Nail
2 Darksteel Colossus
2 Gilded Light
4 Naturalize
1 Duplicant

I have already written about another green-white deck last week with [Astral Slide](#) and [Eternal Witness](#). I still like that deck very much but this deck is another path you can take in the wilds of the new Standard. It absolutely demolishes Affinity in a three game set and without the power of [Skullclamp](#) the match-up tilts even more heavily in your favor. I don't know how well it fares against the new Ironworks decks but any deck with [Gilded Light](#) has a chance to ruin the Ironworker's day.

“Any deck with Gilded Light has a chance to ruin the Ironworker's day.”

The final deck I want to look at today was one that cruised under the radar at Kobe despite earning its pilot over three grand and finishing in sixteenth place. A similar build also placed Romaine Clere in 21st and earned him better than \$2,000.

Stupid Mono Green		
Sylvain Lauriol - Pro Tour Kobe 16th Place		
Main Deck	Sideboard	
60 cards		
4 Blinkmoth Nexus	4 Oxidize	3 Bloodscent
22 Forest	4 Predator's Strike	2 Culling Scales
26 lands	3 Pulse of the Tangle	1 Fangren Firstborn
	11 other spells	1 Glissa Sunseeker
3 Fangren Firstborn		1 Hum of the Radix
4 Molder Slug		4 Karstoderm
4 Tel-Jilad Chosen		2 Sword of Fire and Ice
4 Troll Ascetic		1 Sword of Light and Shadow
4 Viridian Shaman		
4 Viridian Zealot		15 sideboard cards
23 creatures		

This deck can only benefit from the banning of [Skullclamp](#) in block constructed and could benefit from the addition of [Eternal Witness](#). As you may have figured out by now I really like the [Fangren Firstborn](#) and just use powerful artifact removal as my excuse to play green. In a constructed format without a Wrath effect that sees much play this not-so little beast should be very powerful. [Skullclamp](#) kept him in check so far but if you are going to play in the block constructed qualifiers that begin in July Stupid Mono-Green might not be such a stupid choice.

Next week: I'll talk some more about Block Constructed as I prepare to Rollerblade to Columbus in July!

*Brian David-Marshall has been involved in **Magic** since 1994 when he was violently shaken by someone searching for the game. He has organized tournaments, run a store, and is currently the Pro Tour Historian. His latest venture is [Top8Magic.com](#), the publishing house that is releasing Michael J. Flores: Deckade.*



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