

# The Colours of *Fifth Dawn*

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Welcome once again to Limited Information. In last week's article I gave you all my initial thoughts on the main mechanics in *Fifth Dawn* and I'm going to continue today with the actual coloured cards in the set itself. I'll be primarily talking about draft formats here today; whilst the comments on individual cards will still apply to Sealed Deck the comments on the various deck archetypes don't apply there quite as much as there's no way of forcing a particular colour combination or deck-type in Sealed.

The first thing I notice when looking through the *Fifth Dawn* card-list is that the set is severely lacking in good creature removal spells. In *Darksteel* you had Barbed Lightning, Echoing Ruin, Essence Drain and Echoing Decay which were all easily splashable and which were all good-to-excellent removal spells. In *Fifth Dawn* these are replaced with Lose Hope, Heliophial, and Rain of Rust, which obviously aren't in the same league. White probably gets the best common removal spell in Stasis Cocoon but that card still isn't as good as something like Echoing Ruin.



Good removal will need to be valued even more highly...

Right off the bat I can tell you that the quality removal spells in *Mirrodin* and *Darksteel* should be valued a little higher now as it'll be difficult to pick up replacements for these if you haven't got anything by the time you're heading into the *Fifth Dawn* pack of the draft.

The other thing that's worth immediately noting is that the five mana Myrs (Iron Myr, Silver Myr, etc) get both rarer and, at the same time, more valuable. Your *Mirrodin* block drafts will now feature only one pack from the main set and as a result there will be half as many mana Myrs as when you were drafting *Mirrodin-Mirrodin-Darksteel*. In addition to that, as I mentioned last week, sources of coloured mana will become much more desirable due to the addition of Sunburst. Myrs and Talismans will become much higher picks in *Mirrodin* now and should probably be taken only just behind the top picks like Shatter, Blinding Beam, Terror, etc.

The next thing I picked up on is that there is a lot of reasonable equipment available in *Fifth Dawn*. *Darksteel* only really had Leonin Bola and Vulshok Morningstar as its good common Equipment, but *Fifth Dawn* contains six common pieces of equipment. Cranial Plating is potentially better than Bonesplitter and Opaline Bracers will be better than Vulshok Battlegear in a lot of decks. Horned Helm is an improved Leonin Scimitar and I think Healer's Headdress will prove to be playable too, especially in white decks. The result of this is that the value of Equipment should go down a little in both *Mirrodin* and *Darksteel*. Obviously the powerful Equipment cards that give unique abilities such as Leonin Bola, Viridian Longbow or Mask of Memory should still be valued very highly. Equipment like Bonesplitter, Leonin Scimitar and Vulshok Morningstar shouldn't be rated as highly simply because there are several decent replacements for these available in *Fifth Dawn*.

In order to examine the rest of the changes you need to look at the individual cards in the set a little more. As a result I'm going to talk a little about the individual colours before going through the artifacts.

## Red



Red has it pretty tough in *Fifth Dawn*. In *Mirrodin* it was clearly the best colour with many of the top commons in the set being red. There's nothing in *Fifth Dawn* that rivals the twin removal spells of Shatter and Electrostatic Bolt in *Mirrodin*. When *Darksteel* replaced one of the powerful *Mirrodin* packs red was weakened significantly although Barbed Lightning and Echoing Ruin still gave it a couple of great first picks. In *Fifth Dawn* there's nothing close to those two cards, whilst there's still the same number of weak cards. Vulshok Sorcerer is the only red common I'd class as first pick worthy; Rain of Rust is too expensive for what it does although it'll still obviously get played as it's probably the second best red common. However, the Sorcerer is very good as it'll frequently take out an opposing creature without giving your opponent any chance to stop it. In a few games it'll be better even than Spikeshot Goblin simply due to the fact it has Haste and no mana cost in its activation.

Spark Elemental, Mana Geyser and Screaming Fury are all basically unplayable. Screaming Fury will occasionally make the cut as a finisher in some aggressive red-x decks, especially if you're likely to have multiple targets (Neurok Spies, Grimclaw Bats or Skyhunter Patrols etc). However, most of the time, it won't be a card you want in your deck. The two remaining creatures are just filler and you really want to avoid either of them if you have that option.

Red's uncommons are a little better, but there's nothing like Grab the Reins here. Magma Jet is obviously solid and Furnace Whelp is also great but beyond those two there's nothing really worth shouting about.

Red is very weak here. If you're drafting this colour you'll really need to have the goods already before the *Fifth Dawn* pack comes around.

## Green

Green gets a fair collection of decent stuff in this set, especially when compared to the other colours. Ferocious Charge is an excellent spell to have, up there with Predator's Strike. Without the Scry it'd still be great, but with Scry tacked on it definitely lifts it way above average. Sylvok Explorer is great too; it's always nice to have a mana accelerator that can't be used by everyone like the mana Myr's can be. Green more than any other colour needs that acceleration and having a chance to pick it up in the third pack if you aren't able to grab any Myrs improves green a little. On average Sylvok Explorer will tap for two different colours so there's a good chance one of these won't be a colour you already have access to - that will help out any Sunburst cards you might pick up.

Dawn's Reflection is another Sunburst enabler that will often be playable. Explosive Vegetation was often played in *Onslaught* block and Dawn's Reflection does that job a lot better. Although the *Fifth Dawn* card doesn't give you the deck-thinning aspect you do get to use it straight away if you have five or more lands. It basically solves any mana issues you might have for the rest of the game as well as letting you get at least four counters on any Sunburst cards.



*A great ability to have in this set.*

Tyrannax is playable beef if you need some. It'll be very difficult to block it safely as you'll typically be able to pump it's toughness up to seven or more after it's dealt its damage. Tangle Asp is pretty weak but isn't the worst card to have in your deck and even Tel-Jilad Lifebreather makes a decent sideboard card for green mirror matches where you can use it to protect your big guys in combat.

Green's uncommons are also very good. Ouphe Vandals and Tel-Jilad Justice are both decent as they give you artifact removal and something more, although the Justice is obviously the stronger of the two. Eternal Witness is great too, although you'll often want to save it until later in the game when it can bring back something decent. Fangren Pathcutter and Viridian Lorebearers both have respectable stats along with potentially useful abilities and they'll usually make the cut in your deck.

There's a lot in green that's worth playing, although with the Sylvok Explorer and Dawn's Reflection there's an obvious emphasis here on Sunburst enablers. That's fine though as I'd expect most green decks to run three colours, and sometimes four in order to splash powerful cards and make the most of the new *Fifth Dawn* mechanic.

## Black



Black was one of the few colours that was actually improved when *Darksteel* was added to the mix. There are a lot of powerful black commons in that set and its addition made black a lot more draftable than it was in straight *Mirrodin*. This time around black gets a fair amount of playable cards, but there's only one card that I think has a lot of potential.

Cackling Imp and Dross Crocodile are both weak but they both have enough going for them that they'll often make the cut into your main deck. You probably won't be happy about playing them but they'll be there. Sometimes Cackling Imp will just fly over for some damage, and other times it'll finish an opponent off when you're stalled behind a Spider or Archer. Most of the time it'll just be a random 2/2 flyer. Same with the Crocodile really, sometimes he'll do unfair things with a Whispersilk Cloak but mostly he'll just trade off with another creature.

Lose Hope is a decent little removal spell. Being able to take out a second turn Myr and then smooth out your own draw is excellent, but in the midgame this spell might not always do enough to get the job done.

Blind Creeper is the card I think has the potential to be great although I'll need to play with it a bit more first to be sure. A second turn 3/3 is usually pretty ridiculous, especially with as small a drawback as this one has. It dies to some of the common removal spells like Echoing Decay and Electrostatic Bolt but if they don't have one of those the Creeper is sure to get plenty of damage in before they find another way of dealing with him. Sometimes he'll die ineffectually when your opponent has an Instant or two to play during combat but for the most part I think this guy will be excellent.

Devour in Shadow, Night's Whisper and Ebon Drake are all cards that give you a fair bit of power for a comparatively small mana cost but running too many of these together could get problematic. The Drake especially is a difficult card to evaluate but I think it'll definitely have a place in a good aggressive deck.

Black definitely seems to be leaning towards aggression in this set. Cards like Blind Creeper and Ebon Drake will be costly if the game goes long but they have the potential to finish off an opponent very, very quickly.

## Blue

One of the better colours in the set, Blue has a few commons that you'll want to pick up early. Thought Courier and Trinket Mage look fairly harmless but both will help you out a lot. The Mage is very flexible as it can fetch a Bonesplitter or AETHER Spellbomb on demand, and the Courier can win the game for you by improving the quality of your draws over several turns. One of the few bad things about this block is that there's often nothing to do with any excess lands you might draw. The Courier allows you to discard those lands along with any useless spells and cycle quickly through your deck to find your most powerful cards.

Serum Visions is definitely playable as it's a cheap cantrip and it smooths out your draws nicely. This is another card that'll require a fair bit of playing. It's the sort of support card that never wins games by itself and so its effect often gets overlooked, but it will often help you out of an early mana stall, or dig up a much needed spell just when you need it. I suspect that it should be rated the third best common in blue, behind only the Mage and the Courier I just talked about.



*Works on artifact lands too!*

Advanced Hoverguard and Condescend both do exactly what they say and both are perfectly playable cards. It's only really Early Frost in the commons that'll never make your deck as even Into Thin Air will make the cut in an Affinity deck sometimes.

The big stand-out in the uncommons is Qumulox which is a huge flyer for its cost. You'll routinely only be paying five mana for this beast and sometimes it'll be cheaper than that. In limited it really is comparable to Broodstar, only it is two mana cheaper. For an uncommon, that's a lot of power.

Blue is solid here, but it's Affinity leanings takes a bit of a hit here as there's no good common that really adds to Affinity decks which is what Blue is most commonly drafted as. There's nothing that replaces Somber Hoverguard or Quicksilver Behemoth. Instead there's a good selection of filler cards and some good sources of card advantage that will round out any non-Affinity blue deck.

## White

Finally we come to White. It has always been popular in *Mirrodin* limited and there isn't anything here that'll change that. Loxodon Anchorite is one of the best commons in the set and it's clearly the best white common and that's a pretty good place to start. Sanctum Custodian was very powerful in limited and one extra mana to give it +1/+1 isn't going to change anything really. It's actually a very nice bonus as it protects the Anchorite from removal like Echoing Decay and Pyrite Spellbomb.

There's some depth in white too though, with Skyhunter Prowler, Leonin Squire and Stand Firm all being playable as well. The Prowler really requires some equipment to be decent but then so does Leonin Den-Guard and Skyhunter Cub and you're obviously happy to play those.

I mentioned Stasis Cocoon previously, and whilst it is good it's not up there with the likes of Shatter. It only does its thing at Sorcery speed and it can't deal with non-activated artifact abilities like Sun



Droplet or the first ability of Thunderstaff. It also doesn't unequip any equipment that's already been attached to a creature; you'll have to kill the creature in order to achieve that.

There's lots of goodness in the uncommons too. I previewed Auriok Salvagers in an article a few weeks back and my opinion on that card still hasn't changed. Steelshaper's Gift is an excellent card for any equipment based deck and Skyhunter Skirmisher can be very powerful indeed with the right equipment attached to it.

White is still definitely leaning towards equipment based decks – Skyhunter Prowler and Skyhunter Skirmisher are only really good when they have something to boost their power. There are other options here too with Squire and Salvagers both giving your card advantage, and the Anchorite will be welcome in any white deck.

## Next Week

Next week I'll be going over the rest of the set and summing up the changes I think *Fifth Dawn* will be bringing to the format. Once that's done we'll move onto some draft situations to give you a chance to offer your own opinions on what *Fifth Dawn* cards should be valued highly.

Thanks for reading,

Scott.

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