

Mark Gottlieb

Thursday, June 17, 2004

Before I get to the heroic exploits of today's guest star, I have some unfinished business from last week.

## Broken Myrrer

I got Servitored! Worse, I Servitored myself! It's true what my mama taught me: Even maniacal supergeniuses have their off days. But hey, how could I be King of the Bombos if I didn't make one myself every now and then? I consider it a reality check. (And it reminds me why I hate reality so much...)

Last week, I touted Myr Servitor as not just an efficient weenie, but a combo engine. *That part is correct.* I posted a decklist. *The deck works: It's good, it's quirky, it's fun.* But I described how to use the deck (and, more specifically, how to use the Servitor engine) completely wrong. There is indeed a Servitor engine; it's just not the same as the one I described. You see, I neglected rule 217.1c of the Comp Rules, which says that "an object that moves from one zone to another is treated as a new object. Effects connected with its previous location will no longer affect it." So let's try that section one more time.



This is one of the more unusual combo engines to ever see print. And, like a lot of other *Fifth Dawn* goodies, it requires proficiency with the stack... a bit more than I seem to possess. (Goblin Cannon and Blasting Station reward stack manipulation as well.) The Servitor's ability has an "intervening-if clause," namely "if Myr Servitor is in play." That clause only refers to the creature it's printed on, not any other Myr Servitors—and keep in mind that when a Myr Servitor rises from the dead, the game considers it to be a brand-new creature. Let's say that when your turn starts, you have three Myr Servitors in play and one in your graveyard. We'll call them, for the sake of convenience, Servitor X, Servitor R, Servitor 3, and the dearly departed one is Mr. Wigglesbottom. At the beginning of your upkeep, the ability of each Servitor in play triggers. Sure, you have just one Myr Servitor in your graveyard at the moment... but that will change.

- Put Servitor X's ability on the stack.
- Put Servitor R's ability on the stack.
- Put Servitor 3's ability on the stack
- Servitor 3's ability resolves, and Mr. Wigglesbottom jumps back into the fray. But let's give it a new name: Mr. Bottomwiggles. Good show, old bean!
- Sacrifice Servitor 3 and Mr. Bottomwiggles to some nifty effect. Atog. Phyrexian Plaguelord. Goblin Bombardment. Whatever.
- Servitor R's ability resolves, and you return Servitor 3 and Mr. Bottomwiggles to play. But they come into the game fresh, with no memories, so we'll call them Servitor 729 and Mr. Biggleswottom.
- Now sac Servitor R, Servitor 729, and Mr. Biggleswottom to whatever you want. Having a Disciple of the Vault in play as you're doing all this couldn't hurt. Well, it couldn't hurt you. It could hurt your opponent quite a bit.

- Servitor X's ability resolves, and back out from the graveyard hop Servitor R (now called Servitor \$), Servitor 729 (now called Servitor -8.61), and the doughty Mr. Biggleswottom (now called Sandi). You're in even better position than when you started, and you've gotten 5 sacrifice effects out of this. You have an 11/12 Atog, or have spread around -5/-5 via your Plaguelord, or have simply dealt 5 damage with Goblin Bombardment, or whatever else you could manage—for free!

This gets downright obscene if you have a Genesis Chamber standing by. In fact, anything that triggers on artifacts or creatures coming into play or leaving play will go gaga for these tenacious Myr.

Much better. And my thanks to everyone who wrote in to offer their help in my time of brain-deadness. It's the only way I'll learn.

## Devin Inspiration

I come up with most of the decks I write about in this column. Most of the rest are sent to me by readers who are as bonkers as I am. But sometimes I feel the need to seek out inspiration in the most unusual places... like within Wizards of the Coast R&D. I sit next to a developer named Devin Low. His desk is tiled with decks. **Magic** decks, **Duel Masters** decks, **Neopets** decks—he's got to have at least 50 of them, all lined up in disturbingly neat rows and columns. Well, neat by R&D standards.

Two of Devin's decks from late in *Fifth Dawn* testing stand out in my mind because he decided it was time to start livin' large. It was time to break the 10-mana barrier in a serious way. How could the Disciples of the Vault, Goblin Prospectors, and Ornithopters possibly stand up to spells that cost 10 times (or, in the case of the Ornithopter, infinity times) as much?

In the weeks leading up to *Fifth Dawn's* release, I dropped a little hint that there would be a card in the new set that would combo very nicely with Soulscour. A certain rumormongering website picked up on this and posted the info in its Mill of Rumors—except they credited the tidbit to Mark Rosewater. Nice. Of course, this combo was neither his nor mine; it was Devin's. In a mad quest to break *Fist of Suns*, Devin paired it with the most expensive, most potentially lopsided cards he could find in Standard and went to town. Soulscour was one of these cards. A blue "Earth" (now *Champions of Kamigawa*) creature was the other. That monstrosity cost 8 at the time, and let's just say it made an entwined Tooth and Nail look like a Mudhole. Because playtesting proved that it was unsafe at any speed (or any mana cost), this particular mystery card will not see print in *Champions*.



Sadly, Devin didn't do particularly well with his version of the deck in the Future Future League tournament he played it in. I suppose I should say "happily" instead of "sadly"—it's partly due to his 2-3 record that *Fist of Suns* got printed as is. The obstacles he tripped over had nothing to do with the "everything costs the same as Sliver Queen" artifact, though. No, problem #1 was that Soulscour wrecked far fewer mana bases than he had hoped. Sometimes Soulscour is a one-sided Armageddon *and* Wrath of God, but sometimes it's merely a cantrip... without that whole card-drawing bit. Problem #2 is easily summed up by the descriptions of the decks Devin played against:

- Paul Sottosanti's ChimeraClamp ["Chimera" was the playtest name for modular]
- Mark Gottlieb's 5-color Turboland combo

- Aaron Forsythe's Monogreen Clamp combo
- Mike Elliott's White Weenie Mox Clamp
- Henry Stern's Ironworks/Clamp combo

Can you find the theme there? The only decks not running Skullclamp were Devin's and mine. (My deck was the one that pulled off the Door to Nothingness win once or twice... and that got some Earth cards changed as well.) With a slower, Clampless environment, maybe Devin's Fist of Suns deck can do some things now... or maybe not. As always, I'm less concerned with winning than with coolness, and paying \*👁️👁️👁️👁️👁️ for a Soulscour is as cool as the Fonz buried to his neck in an Antarctic glacier. Anyway, to fill the gap left by the axed *Champions* card, I went back to *Odyssey* block for two super-expensive bits of lunacy.

## Shake Your Fist

**Main Deck**  
60 cards

<p>3 Ancient Den</p> <p>4 City of Brass</p> <p>4 Glimmervoid</p> <p>3 Great Furnace</p> <p>3 Seat of the Synod</p> <p>4 Tree of Tales</p> <p>3 Vault of Whispers</p> <hr style="width: 20%; margin: 5px 0;"/> <p>24 lands</p>	<p>4 Bringer of the Black Dawn</p> <p>2 Bringer of the Blue Dawn</p> <p>1 Darksteel Colossus</p> <p>4 Etched Oracle</p> <p>3 Hypnox</p> <hr style="width: 20%; margin: 5px 0;"/> <p>14 creatures</p>	<p>1 Engineered Explosives</p> <p>4 Fist of Suns</p> <p>4 Pentad Prism</p> <p>4 Soulscour</p> <p>2 Talisman of Dominance</p> <p>1 Talisman of Impulse</p> <p>1 Talisman of Indulgence</p> <p>1 Talisman of Progress</p> <p>1 Talisman of Unity</p> <p>3 Time Stretch</p> <hr style="width: 20%; margin: 5px 0;"/> <p>22 other spells</p>
---	--	--

Any expensive card can benefit from a Fist of Suns discount. Perhaps the Darksteel Forge/Obliterate pair is more to your liking than the Soulscour. Maybe this is a faster way to bring forth some Angels like Akroma or Reya. It's at least another interesting alternative to the Uratron.

## My Mycosynth

I had hoped to run an interview with Devin Low in this space, but he's unfortunately been on vacation for the past week. So I'll just have to fake it. I've worked with him for a year. I know how he thinks.

**Mark:** Thanks for joining me today, Devin.

**Not Really Devin:** No problem, Mark. The funny thing about hero worship is that when that hero asks for a favor, you just can't say no.

**Mark:** Hrm, I wouldn't know. So, why did you want to come to work at Wizards of the Coast?

**Seriously, This Isn't Devin:** Back in the late 90s, I would visit my brother Aidan at his MIT dorm—the same dorm where you lived, Mark! Although I didn't meet you at the time, I could sense the nearly mystical presence of a cosmic force of genius. I spent the next six years tracking you down so I could bask in your glow.

**Mark:** Neat. So you didn't attend MIT yourself?

**Fake Devin:** No, just... well... Harvard.

**Mark:** Pity. Hey, why don't you tell my fans what it's like sitting next to me?

**Devinesque Figment of My Imagination:** Well, you know how your desk is in one of the big, open R&D areas adjacent to both Mark Rosewater and Randy Buehler?

**Mark:** Yes. Yes I do.

**Devin's Sneaky Impostor:** But my desk is on the other side of yours, out of the action, neighbor to a corridor and a window?

**Mark:** Rings a bell.

**Lo-Cal Devin Substitute:** Remember right before Matt Place was hired, you were going to move your desk to a quieter corner, which would allow me to take over your prime real estate and have a chair with an eyeline to just about every single person in TCG R&D—until, at the very last minute, through either a change of heart or sheer laziness, you changed your mind and went absolutely nowhere, leaving me crammed in my backwater cube?

**Mark:** Sure do.

**3/3 Green Devin Token:** I just wanted to say thanks. If you had moved, we wouldn't be cubicle buddies anymore.




**Mark:** Aw, shucks.

So what was the other bazillion-mana card Devin tried to break in *Fifth Dawn* testing? Mycosynth Golem. And he succeeded, too—that thing used to be cheaper. It was too potentially abusive at 10 mana. I'm not kidding. Imagine this sequence:

Turn 1: artifact land

Turn 2: artifact land, Talisman, Serum Visions

Turn 3: artifact land, Fabricate for whatever is missing

Turn 4: artifact land, a 10-mana Mycosynth Golem (you have 5 artifacts, so it costs 5), Composite Golem (free!), sac Composite Golem for \*, Rush of Knowledge for 10 cards, Composite Golem (free!), Triskelion (free!), Platinum Angel (free!), Sundering Titan (free!), sac Composite Golem for \*, Rush of Knowledge for 10 cards, Composite Golem (free!), Platinum Angel (free!), Sundering Titan (free!), sac Composite Golem for \*, Fabricate for Darksteel Colossus, Darksteel Colossus (free!), mana burn for 2, go.

Think that's crazy? Think that would never happen? *I saw him do it!* Multiple times. Now that the Golem costs 11 mana, these shenanigans are still possible, but usually take a turn longer. The funniest thing about the Golem's expensivization is that now Rush of Knowledge draws 11 cards instead of a measly 10. The only change I'm going to make to Devin's deck is to swap out some Talismans for Pentad Prisms, which can still allow you to go off on turn 4 if you get lucky.

## Affinity for Fatties



### Main Deck

60 cards

4 Ancient Den	4 Composite Golem	4 Fabricate
4 Darksteel Citadel	1 Darksteel Colossus	4 Pentad Prism
3 Great Furnace	4 Mycosynth Golem	4 Rush of Knowledge
4 Seat of the Synod	4 Platinum Angel	4 Serum Visions
4 Tree of Tales	2 Sundering Titan	2 Talisman of Dominance
4 Vault of Whispers	2 Triskelion	2 Talisman of Progress
<hr/>		
23 lands	17 creatures	20 other spells

This deck is extremely vulnerable to every kind of disruption, especially since there are far too many Shatters floating around. That said, when you manage to pull off the explosive turn, playing free gigantic monster after free gigantic monster and drawing 20-30 cards is just about as fun as it gets.

## Inner Dialogue

Now it's time for a peek inside my creative process.

### LAZINESS

Aw, c'mon! Two decks is enough! No one else does three decks every week. Let's take a nap.

### MASOCHISM

I know! Let's make a deck featuring Gemstone Array.

### SARCASM

Good idea, slick. That card's the *pinnacle* of efficient mana production.

### SELF-DOUBT

I can't make a deck around that thing! Let's give up. Let's quit the column. Let's quit R&D. Let's live in a shack in Montana.

### DEVIN'S DISEMBODIED VOICE

Try pairing it with Mana Cache.... Ooooooooooooo.....

### GUILT

Oh, and let's throw in some Myr Servitors while we're at it.

## Arrays in the Sun



### Main Deck

60 cards

4 Deserted Temple  
6 Island  
3 Mirrodin's Core  
6 Mountain  
4 Shivan Reef

---

23 lands

2 Benthic Explorers  
3 Krosan Restorer  
-----  
5 creatures

1 Candelabra of Tawnos  
4 Citadel of Pain  
4 Frantic Search  
3 Gemstone Array  
4 Mana Cache  
2 Power Surge  
3 Rewind  
4 Snap  
3 Staff of Domination  
2 Turnabout  
2 Well of Discovery

---

32 other spells

The idea here is to keep your opponent's lands untapped. That will load up Mana Cache with counters... which you can siphon off onto your Gemstone Array, where only you get access to them. You lose half the counters in the process, but you gain color production to compensate. Your opponent's untapped lands are also your means to victory, thanks to Citadel of Pain and Power Surge.

How will you untap your opponent's lands? Benthic Explorers and Turnabout are pretty straightforward. You can also use Deserted Temple, Krosan Restorer, and Candelabra of Tawnos. Who says you can only untap *your* lands with those cards? "Help" your opponent at the end of his turn, after the Cache and Citadel trigger. You can also put the instant Urza block "free spells" to subversive use by untapping your opponent's lands instead of your own. But wait—you need to tap out by the end of your own turn! That's the only way for you to avoid the dire consequences of your own red enchantments. Where does the mana come from for your land-untapping instants? Gemstone Array, of course! You can also generate mana with the help of the Explorers and Restorer (a creature that happens to *love* Frantic Search.) Is this a good deck? Probably not. Is it a bizarre deck that tosses conventional **Magic** wisdom on its ear? Yeah. I love those.

Until next week, have fun with your coworkers. (And special thanks to Devin for helping me with this article and being an all-around good sport.)

Mark

---

© 1995-2009 Wizards of the Coast LLC, a subsidiary of Hasbro, Inc. All Rights Reserved.

[Terms of Use](#) | [Privacy Statement](#)

