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This week I'll be finishing off my comments on *Fifth Dawn*. In case you haven't checked in recently I encourage you to go through the last two weeks articles which covered the new mechanics and the coloured cards in the set. All that's left now are the artifacts and I'll be going through those and then giving some final thoughts on the implications the set will have on the various deck archetypes that are currently popular.

Creatures

There are nine common artifact creatures in this set and, because they can be played by anyone, the best of these will be in high demand. Some of the colours in this set have a fairly weak set of creatures from which to draft. Red in particular is severely lacking in good quality creatures and it will frequently be forced to rely on the good artifact creatures to make up its numbers.

There's a small emphasis on one casting cost artifacts in this set with numerous cards having an interaction with them; Leonin Squire, Trinket Mage and Auriok Salvagers can all provide card advantage if you have the appropriate targets. As a result it's disappointing not to have a decent one mana artifact creature among the commons in this set. Small creatures are notoriously difficult to design but Arcbound Worker was a good start. In *Fifth Dawn* however there is only Myr Servitor and Razorglass Screen and neither of these are normally good enough to make the cut. The Screen looks like it has potential to trade off with something early but if that's going to happen your opponent can simply avoid doing so. Often it might only trade for a Raise the Alarm token or jump in the way of an early Goblin Brawler and if you draw it late game it's even less effective. The fact that it can't ever attack is the final nail in the coffin and you shouldn't ever be playing with it really. Steel Wall is a much, much better alternative.

There are several options for mid-range creatures with Battered Golem, Myr Quadropod, Suntouched Myr and Thermal Navigator all coming in the three-to-four mana range. Thermal Navigator is clearly the worst of the three with a very expensive ability and I wouldn't want to have that guy in my deck at all.

Battered Golem has reasonable stats with the extra point of power being very relevant. It allows him to attack into the many 2/3 creatures in this format as well as allowing him to trade with any 3/3s that are around. His drawback is annoying, but manageable, and it certainly shouldn't be a problem early on in most games when artifacts are entering play on both sides of the table. He's obviously nothing to get excited over but he can provide another reasonable three drop.

Myr Quadropod is much the same really, although he does get a fair bit better when combined with some equipment. Equip it with a Leonin Scimitar for example and you've got a 2/5 that can turn into a 5/2 if unblocked. Most of you will probably be aware of this trick, but for those who aren't a Quadropod can take down a 3/3 without dying itself if you have six mana available. Simply block the 3/3, and pay three mana to make the Quadropod a 4/1 until end of turn. Put damage on the stack so it assigns four damage, and then activate its ability again to turn it into 1/4 again. It'll receive three damage but will have four toughness and yet it will still deal four damage to the attacker. This trick works when it's equipped too: if you put a Vulshok Morningstar on it then you can flip it to deal six damage, and then flip it back so it has six toughness still. A 1/4 for four mana is useful in some decks, but this little trick makes the Quadropod playable in many decks.

Sunburst Myr really needs to be considered alongside its bigger brother Skyreach Manta. When I discussed Sunburst a couple of weeks back I mentioned that three counters was basically the number you should aiming for and that is true of both of these cards. If you can only generate two colours of mana then both of these are pretty weak. They're both above average if you expect to be able to get three colours consistently and Skyreach Manta is excellent value if you can ever get four or five. Simply put, both of these guys are deck dependant and you can only evaluate them with regards to the consistency of your mana base. If I expected to get three colours most of the time I'd definitely be picking these two fairly highly, with Manta getting the nod over the Myr due to it's evasion and it's potential to be a 4/4 or even 5/5 in the right circumstances.

The final two creatures are both top-end: Anodet Lurker at five mana and Sawtooth Thresher at six. Unfortunately neither of these offers much bang for your buck with pretty poor stats on both of them. Sawtooth Thresher will usually be a 4/4 that can pump itself up once to an 8/8 but for six mana you'd really want something better than that. The Lurker is worse still, with a mediocre ability attached to an over-costed creature.

As far as the common creatures go things look good if you can reliably use the Sunburst ability for three counters, but if not it's fairly slim pickings with only the Battered Golem and the Quadropod really considered playable.

It's not good news in the uncommons either as there's a lot of expensive stuff that really won't be worth playing most of the time. Arachnoid, Arcbound Wanderer, Composite Golem, Lunar Avenger and Spinal Parasite are all pretty poor, and you'll want to avoid all of those in most circumstances.

Synod Centurion has a lot of potential in some decks and will basically work out similar to Myr Enforcer most of the time. Etched Oracle is another decent Sunburst card that is fair with three counters and superb if you can give it a fourth.

Equipment

One thing *Fifth Dawn* does have its fair share of is equipment. With six common pieces of equipment in this small set you'll definitely be seeing them passed around the draft table, the only question is which ones are worth picking?

The main series of equipment in the commons all have the same casting cost and equip costs but they vary wildly in terms of power. On top of that they all have an additional ability that lets you equip them at instant speed. This ability is fairly costly requiring two mana of a single colour (the colour dependant upon the ability of the equipment) but will still often come in handy.

The best of this series is undoubtedly Cranial Plating. You only need one other piece of equipment in addition to Plating itself before you find yourself with a two mana Bonesplitter and anything beyond that makes this truly frightening. It's quite likely you'll see this card giving +4/+0 or even higher in



artifact heavy decks and that sort of bonus will allow the humblest of creatures to trade with almost anything your opponent cares to block with. It requires black mana to move around at instant speed and that ability will often let you deal damage directly to an opponent as you can simply move it to any unblocked creature after blockers have been declared.

Just as Cranial Plating echoed Bonesplitter before it, Horned Helm has very similar stats to Leonin Scimitar. The extra mana required to get the Helm into play isn't that significant and it's easily outweighed by the Trample ability and by the ability to move it at instant speed. I like equipment with cheap equip costs and this is very playable even if you don't have access to the green mana required for its last ability.



The best of the new equipment

Healer's Headdress is a very unique piece of equipment and there's nothing around that it compares directly to. I think Pearl Shard is the best comparison as the two damage that prevents is comparable to the +0/+2 granted by the Headdress. The Headdress prevents an additional point and can be moved around, but the Pearl Shard is much better when you want to attack with your creatures instead of holding them back for defensive purposes. This card is a bit trickier to evaluate but I think it will probably be playable in a defensive white-blue deck that tries to hold the ground while it wins with flyers but outside of that I don't think the Headdress will be that great.

Neurok Stealhsuit and Sparring Collar give very mediocre abilities when compared to the other pieces of equipment. I wouldn't consider either of these playable unless you're going to be able to pay the tricky instant activation cost. Even then you should try and draft better options than these as the abilities they grant are situational at best.

The last piece of common equipment is Sunburst dependant: Opaline Bracers. These are a little better than most of the Sunburst cards as they're still playable if you can only manage two colours when casting it. In that situation it's more expensive than Vulshok Morningstar for the same boost but it has the same equip cost when it's in play. When you can get three or even four counters the Bracers become very good indeed and compare favourably with Vulshok Battlegear and Empyrial Plate. That sort of potential means you'll often seen the Bracers having a big impact on the game.

In the uncommon slot Ensouled Scimitar and Grafted Wargear are both respectable. The Scimitar can provide a useful defender in its own right as well as making anything it equips very tough to kill. The Wargear is risky but at the same time it provides a very significant power boost for its cost. A lowly Myr becomes a powerful 4/3 with the Wargear and the risk of your opponent killing the Wargear will be worth the reward in a lot of decks. It's especially powerful with cards like Raise the Alarm and Nuisance Engine where you don't care too much about the equipped creature.

Paradise Mantle is another card that looks pretty innocuous but will have a place in some decks. Having a zero mana artifact that can accelerate your mana is nice for an Affinity deck and you can equip multiple creatures a turn with it to generate lots of different colours of mana which will obviously be useful if your deck is focused on that. Outside of those situations you'd rather have a Myr or Talisman or some other form of acceleration that isn't dependant on your having a spare creature.

The Rest

All that's left now is the remainder of the artifacts. There's not much left in the commons as the equipment takes up most of those spots but there are a couple of gems here.

The first two cards are "Cogs" - one mana artifacts that interact well with the rest of the set. Wayfarer's Bauble is a great card to pick up as it permanently accelerates your mana by putting an additional land into play as well as providing easy access to a splashed colour and assisting your Sunburst cards. It fits in any deck and should be drafted accordingly. Conjuror's Bauble is a simple cantrip but it can gain you a bit of card advantage if you're able to reuse it. It gives you a handy target for your Trinket Mage if you just want to draw that extra card.

Baton of Courage is a reasonably weak combat trick but sometimes you don't get any tricks early on and you might feel you need it in your deck. It becomes very good if you have anything it interacts with - it combines very well with Vedalken Mastermind for instance.

The weakest card in this section is Heliophial. It's another Sunburst card but unfortunately this one needs four or even five counters before you could consider it even remotely playable. With three counters it's seven mana for just three damage and that's just terrible. Avoid this one unless you're totally desperate for a removal spell.

Many of the uncommon artifacts have been created with constructed overtones, and will only really find a home in those decks. Cards like Clock of Omens, Krark-Clan Ironworks and Lantern of Insight have very focused abilities that will rarely be useful in limited games. Despite that, there are still a few great cards worth looking out for.

Guardian Idol is respectable mana acceleration that can trade off with a creature or serve as a small attacker later on. In this world of Sunburst and potential three colour decks the fact that it only gives colourless mana will sometimes be an annoyance but it's always going to be playable with its dual functions.

Energy Chamber is excellent if you have a high number of artifact creatures. It's just like a Dragon Blood but without an activation cost and the main problem with Dragon Blood is simply that it was too slow. Energy Chamber doesn't have that drawback and by the time the *Fifth Dawn* pack gets opened you'll know if you have enough artifact creatures to support it. It's worth noting that it combines very well with the Modular creatures in *Darksteel* as all +1/+1 counters are all interchangeable.

A nice card to combine with your Energy Chamber is Infused Arrows. It is good removal and if you can get three counters on it you may well be able to take out a couple of creatures with it. If you get both you can use the Chamber to add counters and take out lots of guys with it. The Arrows stick around even after all of its counters are gone so if you can get it back into your hand - via the aforementioned Vedalken Mastermind or even a simple Echoing Truth perhaps - you can reuse it.

Relic Barrier is the last of the high picks. Almost every has some number of artifacts in their deck and the Barrier will usually prove its worth. Sometimes it won't be great as your opponent's worst threats won't be artifact based or won't care about being tapped; Relic Barrier does nothing against Equipment for example. Other times though the Barrier will function as a two mana Icy Manipulator and that's something you certainly can't complain about.

Archetype Changes

The replacement of a *Mirrodin* pack with a *Fifth Dawn* pack is obviously going to seriously impact most, if not all, of the common draft decks. Even at this early stage I think there are a few changes



that can be predicted and it's definitely worth thinking about what the new draft format will look like.

✱ - **White Equip:** This deck gains a fair bit from *Fifth Dawn* as the white commons are fairly deep and there are several good common equipment cards, which this archetype really needs to have. There are good creatures, a solid removal spell and some decent tricks so it shouldn't be hard to round out your White deck when *Fifth Dawn* comes around. White-based decks should thrive in the new format.

☠️ - **Black-Red Control:** With a distinct lack of removal spells in *Fifth Dawn* this deck takes a pretty big hit. Long gone are the powerful commons like Barbed Lightning, Terror and Spikeshot Goblin. Vulshok Sorcerer is a great addition but by itself it just isn't enough. Outside of that guy you're left with a fairly weak set of creatures to choose from and overall this is the deck that perhaps takes the biggest hit from *Fifth Dawn*. Black based decks will have to get a bit more aggressive as many of the best creatures in *Fifth Dawn* are of a fairly low casting cost. This builds a little on the Black in *Darksteel* where Grimclaw Bats and Dross Golem were good aggressive creatures so I don't think Black can be discounted yet.

💧 - **Blue-X Affinity:** Affinity decks are hurt in some areas but helped in others. They lose another *Mirrodin* pack full of artifact lands and that also means less Myr Enforcers and Sombre Hoverguards to go around. This archetype does gain some nice cheap artifacts in this set and Cranial Plating especially will be excellent in this deck. Throw it on an Arcbound Stinger or Neurok Spy and you'll be able to take massive chunks out of your opponent's life total. Affinity will be weakened a little but it'll just mean you have to focus that much more on getting the Enforcers and Quicksilver Behemoths throughout *Mirrodin* and *Darksteel*.

🌿 - **Green-X:** Green decks are a mixed bunch, sometimes they're aggressive, sometimes they're slow relying instead on a parade of large creatures and sometimes they rely on their ability to splash powerful cards from other colours. It's this latter type that gains an obvious boost from this set with several mana fixing cards and the whole Sunburst Mechanic which is obviously at home in this type of deck. I think most Green decks will be at least three colours and in many cases four as they become able to support multiple splashes via cards like Journey of Discovery, Dawn's Reflection, Sylvok Explorer and Wayfarer's Bauble.

That's it for *Fifth Dawn* for now. I hope you found some part of these last three articles useful at least. Trying to give accurate predictions for a new set is very difficult when you don't have hundreds of hours of playtesting to back you up. We'll see over the coming months just how close to the mark I was!

Next Week

Now we've gone through the set it's time to put some of those theories into practice! Let's get straight into a *Mirrodin-Darksteel-Fifth Dawn* draft which is the format you'll be playing over the coming months. You've started off with a base green deck and moved into red after three nice *Darksteel* picks. You have the following playables going into *Fifth Dawn*:

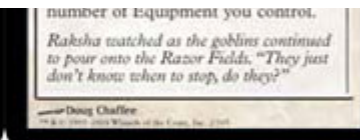
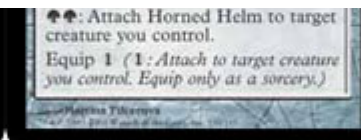
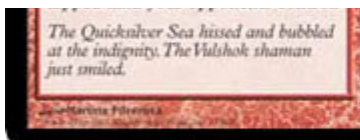
Slith Predator
Tel-Jilad Chosen
Viridian Shaman
Viridian Joiner
Tel-Jilad Wolf
Krark-Clan Stoker
Neurok Spy
Skyhunter Patrol
Fangren Hunter

Tangle Spider
Tangle Golem

Turn to Dust
Leonin Bola
Pyrostatic Spellbomb
Echoing Ruin
Talisman of Dominance
Journey of Discovery
Barbed Lightning
Flamebreak

Remember, the rarity or potential worth of a card shouldn't affect your pick, base it solely on how well the card fits in with your deck. You open the following *Fifth Dawn* Pack:





Q: Which card do you draft?

- Plunge Into Darkness
- Grafted Wargear
- Ouphe Vandals
- Disruption Aura
- Condescend
- Skyreach Manta
- Mana Geyser
- Horned Helm
- Armed Response
- Fleshgrafter
- Sylvok Explorer
- Wayfarer's Bauble
- Tyrranax
- Baton of Courage
- Loxodon Anchorite

Submit

That's it for this time, have a great week everyone.

- Scott

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