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Grafted Wargear



Adrian Sullivan · Single-Card Strategies
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A bit of exposition first - If you've looked at the art for **Vulshok Berserker** and **Grafted Wargear** as many times as I have, maybe you've asked yourself the same question. Before he put on that Wargear, was the Berserker a 0/0?

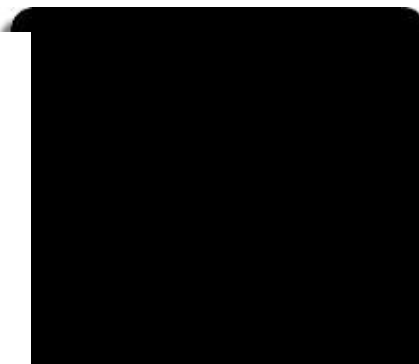


With the release of *Mirrodin*, equipment quickly became one of my least favorite elements of the new set. I was playing a bit of Sealed Deck, and the powerful equipment seemed to put things way on tilt. In a sense, it was a lot like playing against Pro-Tour Jank back in the 1997 tournament scene. The specific cards in the deck aren't too important if you aren't familiar with the deck, as the point is that here was a deck that asked you to do everything. You had to have cards to kill their creatures. But wait, you had to be able to deal with their **Cursed Scroll**. But wait, you had to be able to deal with **Mishra's Factory**. Keep a high enough life total to avoid being burned! Pro-Tour Jank was one of the first aggressive decks that asked you to answer nearly everything, and at the right time too. You couldn't be content to just be good at handling creatures, but you had to be able to **Disenchant** as well.

Equipment made in *Mirrodin*-only Sealed Deck feels the same way. You needed a way to kill the good stuff, or it could overwhelm you. You don't have the **Shatter**? Well, you had better be able to kill nearly every creature that hit the table or else this **Loxodon Warhammer** is gonna get ya.

But (as so often happens) things calmed down later on. *Darksteel* brought a bunch of fine answers, and *Fifth Dawn* continues to do the same for Sealed Deck and Draft. For Constructed, though, that early lesson in equipment was hammered into my skull. Only a couple of equipment really earned the right to be noticed, starting with **Lightning Greaves** and most dramatically in **Skullclamp**. When I first looked at *Fifth Dawn*, I was so busy paying attention to **Cranial Plating**, I didn't even spend a moment checking out the Wargear.

Oops.





This card is not perfect. Far from it. After all, if you take off the Wargear, you die. The same happens if someone rips it off of you with a **Naturalize** or **Boomerang**. So, why play it?

Strengths of Grafted Wargear

One of the things that makes a piece of equipment dangerous is a cheap cost to equip it. **Skullclamp** only cost 1 to equip, but when people would drop out an **Auriok Steelshaper** to join it, it could get ridiculous, fast. Only costing 1 to equip is nice, but costing 0 can be very powerful, even if the ability is weak. If it is a strong ability, then you've got quite a worthwhile card. **Lightning Greaves** made a splash in Extended with **Goblin Welder** decks because of this very reason. Costing 0 means that you can move it around as much as you'd like (though Wargear certainly does punish you for it).

One of the things that comes with having a +3/+2 on a creature is being able to be more aggressive. +3/+2 really is a lot of punch. Scott Wills put it well in [his article this week](#).

The Wargear is simply ridiculous in a good aggressive deck with early drops. Yes, it has a significant drawback, but you may remember this group of cards called "Creature Enchantments" that were the pre-cursors to equipment. They had a similar drawback – you'd lose two cards if your opponent could remove the creature thereby killing the Enchantment too – but the most powerful of these were still very high picks. The power generated by something like **Armadillo Cloak** was worth the risk and the same is true for **Grafted Wargear**. The difference here is that your opponent has to have artifact removal; they can't take care of the Wargear by blocking the creature. Yes, it's a risk but some decks don't even have artifact removal and the risk is well worth it in any case.

Scott was talking about sealed deck and draft, for the most part, but it is still true in an aggressive deck in constructed. To really pack a big wallop with your Wargear, you want to have a creature on the ready to pick it up right away. Having it be aggressive is always good as well.

Let's use the example of **Wild Mongrel**. He's an efficient 2/2 for 2, and on the third turn you drop a Wargear, equip it up, and suddenly you have a 5/4 that you can pump by discarding a card. You can bet that it is going to be incredibly difficult to deal with this guy with simple damage. There are plenty of cheap creatures that are effective attackers. **River Boa** and **Spectral Lynx** are great in Extended as well. Very nearly any Goblin becomes a huge threat. Even support creatures like **Birds of Paradise** can become scary.

Super-cheap guys aren't the only things that can make fantastic use of a Wargear. Trampers can do even better. A lowly **Slioth Predator** can turn into a 4/3 ever-growing Trampler. **Spark Elemental** turns into a **Ball Lightning** +0/+2. You never did care if it was going to die, did you? A **Blistering Firecat** turns into a ridiculous 10/3 trampler at the drop of the hat. **Blistering Firecat** is an excellent example for other reasons as well.

As a morph, Firecat is somewhat useful on its lonesome. It can block and kill big creatures, it can avoid **Story Circle**. But really, it isn't that ferocious. It's as a 7/1, that the card is scary. But as a 5/4, even unmorphed, the Firecat can pull off a lot of damage. Effectively, a Wargear and a Firecat can pull off 20 damage in 3 swings, unless someone does something to stop it. Of

course, if it happens to be a blocker, your Firecat plays kamikaze, so it isn't all that bad.

With all of this talk of **Ball Lightnings**, **Blistering Firecats**, and **Spark Elementals**, not mentioning haste would be bad. Haste is a great ability for cards like **Grafted Wargear**. Wargear is going to be good as long as it is on an attacking creature. The best laid plans of mice and men do at times fall apart. A **Wrath of God** can wipe out your board, leaving you with a Wargear. But then a good Haste creature can immediately pick up the reins and go to town. Wargear and **Lightning Greaves** actually complement each other quite well in this department.



In the combo department, check out how the card interacts with **Greater Good!** Essentially, any creature you might sacrifice to **Greater Good** is going to be able to have the Wargear on it. With **Greater Good**, you can sacrifice any creature to draw cards equal to its power, and then discard three cards. Even the wimpiest of creatures (like an **Ornithopter**) can be sacrificed to break even on your cards (draw three, discard three) and improve your hand. Anything a bit bigger begins to net you a lot of cards, fast. Find a second Wargear as you draw more cards, and things go completely insane. Can you say Affinity or **Cadaverous Bloom**?

Making the Weakness into Strength

If you play with fire, you'll get burned. It's inevitable that you'll have a Wargear out, and someone will destroy it, making you lose a creature in the process. Wargear does that sometimes... but maybe we can make the most of it. Generally speaking, this usually means that you're going to need a second creature to equip, but not always.

Obviously, one of the first places to look to is creatures that *like* dying. There are plenty to be had. **Onulet** and **Rukh Egg** were pioneers in dying for a cause. There are a lot of better options than **Onulet**, but **Rukh Egg** is back, and still a pretty impressive little bundle. When you're sick of a 3/5 Egg, put the Wargear on something else. Out hatches a little 4/4 flier, or if you're ready for equipping it as well, a 7/6 one instead.

It's hard to mention making creatures die without mentioning **Yavimaya Elder** and **Academy Rector**. Ever since Sol Malka made his Green/Black deck called The Rock, the Elder has always been an option for decks that want the cards that Elder grants. **Academy Rector** has been the equivalent of the **Moat** for a long time. While you aren't likely to see the two cards floating in the same deck other than in the Five Color format, it is a nice way to turn your **Moat** into more of a tutor.

Other things simply don't care about dying. **Weatherseed Treefolk** can die and die and die again, but it'll keep coming back for more. This is especially good when combined with the **Lightning Greaves** we mentioned before. Creatures like **Ichorid** and **Ashen Ghoul** also work well here, coming back when your board has been cleared. For a bit of a mana investment, **Shard Phoenix** is a great option, since its flying makes it all that much harder to deal with.



What's so bad about death?

Wrapping it Up

Grafted Wargear is a pretty mean little piece of equipment. While it can really help any deck that just wants to pack more punch, it really shines with special abilities like Trample and Haste. Besides that, you can use it to kill your own men, should that suit you.

I applied some of the ideas from this article to a red deck I was working on for Standard. The deck packs aggressive creatures, and includes a fair smattering of Haste and Trample.

Grafted Wargear		
60 cards		
4 Great Furnace 16 Mountain	4 Slith Firewalker 4 Blistering Firecat 4 Oxidda Golem 3 Menacing Ogre	4 Grafted Wargear 4 Electrostatic Bolt 4 Shrapnel Blast 4 Magma Jet 3 Pyrite Spellbomb 2 Hammer of Bogardan 4 Chrome Mox
20 land	15 creatures	25 other spells

The deck can put out a lot of punishment. With a **Wargear** out, 2 **Blistering Firecats** can be game. **Menacing Ogre** is a lot scarier when people are trying to decide how much life they need to bid between a 6/5 **Trample**, **Haster** or an 8/7. The burn is just enough to be able to both keep the board clear and go to the head. If you really like going for the head, drop the **Electrostatic Bolts** in favor of **Shock** or **Volcanic Hammer**.

Hope you enjoyed the article this week. Next week, I'll be talking about something big, bad and mean...



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