

# Limited Pointing Conclusion

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Welcome to this week's Limited Information. A quick thanks to all those readers who took the time to send me a 'get well soon' message. I was surprised to receive so many but it was very nice so thank-you to everyone who sent one.

I'll be concluding the pointing exercise that was started a few weeks back during Red Week. If you haven't been following then you'll want to check out the first article which listed the cards and the second article which dealt with the first half of the results. A description as to what the pointing numbers on each of those cards can be found on those columns but here's a quick recap for you:

**5.0:** *I will always play this card. Period.*

**4.5:** *I will almost always play this card, regardless of what else I get.*

**4.0:** *I will strongly consider playing this as the only card of its color.*

**3.5:** *I feel a strong pull into this card's color.*

**3.0:** *This card makes me want to play this color. (Given that I'm playing that color, I will play this card 100% of the time.)*

**2.5:** *Several cards of this power level start to pull me into this color. If playing that color, I essentially always play these. (Given that I'm playing that color, I will play this card 90% of the time.)*

**2.0:** *If I'm playing this color, I usually play these. (70%)*

**1.5:** *This card will make the cut into the main deck about half the times I play this color. (50%)*

**1.0:** *I feel bad when this card is in my main deck. (30%)*

**0.5:** *There are situations where I might sideboard this into my deck, but I'll never start it. (10%)*

**0.0:** *I will never put this card into my deck (main deck or after sideboarding). (0%)*

Today I'll be going through the remainder of the cards.

Goblin Archaeologist

Randy's Score: 1.6

Reader Score: 1.3

My Score: 1.4

No real disagreement here. The rating I've given the Archaeologist doesn't really reflect how often I personally would play it, but instead it's the score I think it probably deserves. I hate having the Archaeologist in my deck personally, but that's largely because I dislike its randomness. It's true that

sometimes it can kill multiple artifacts but the fact is that half the time it pretty much does nothing and it's that aspect of the card that makes me want to avoid it.

#### Fireball

Randy's Score: 4.2

Reader Score: 3.7

My Score: 4.4

I think the reader score on this card is a little low. There are few times in sealed deck especially that I won't want to make an effort to splash a Fireball in my deck. In a *Mirrodin-Darksteel-Fifth Dawn* draft you'll open the Fireball in the second pack of the draft and you'll usually be able to modify the rest of your draft such that splashing for it doesn't hurt you too much. Fireball is an excellent card that has several different applications. It functions as a fairly efficient one-for-one removal spell for starters. It kills a Fangren Hunter for five mana and a Skyhunter Patrol for four mana – the same cost as the creatures themselves, meaning it rarely ends up being too expensive to cast. It can also generate card advantage quite easily. Spend six mana on it and you can take out two opposing two-toughness creatures. And it's easily one of the best finishers in the game. Opponents can't really plan to play around it and often they'll sacrifice their life total a little in order to play around a combat trick or to try to win the damage race. Fireball ends games and there's usually very little an opponent can do about it.

#### Pulse of the Forge

Randy's Score: 2.7

Reader Score: 3.4

My Score: 3.2

I think this is one card Randy was a little low on but it's harder for R&D to point the rares as they wouldn't be focused on balancing them as much as they would on the commons in the set.

The reader score is very good – I thought this might be one card that slipped under the radar but I'm glad to see that isn't the case. Pulse of the Forge is an exceptional finisher and is thoroughly deserving of the rating it received. While you can't usually splash for it, it finds a home in every deck that can support its casting cost. It's usually very easy to manipulate your own life total either through not blocking or through mana-burning. Pulse of the Forge can easily deal 12 damage to an opponent between their end phase and your main phase, which greatly limits the number of ways they might have to get around it.

#### Shunt

Randy's Score: 2.5

Reader Score: 2.0

My Score: 1.4

This is one card I think has been over-rated a little. Right now I don't think it's something I'd be happy to play in my main deck. Sometimes it does very unfair things but other times you'll have this in hand to prevent a combat trick and your opponent will instead throw a Roar of the Kha or Baton of Courage out there and the Shunt in your hand does nothing to help you out. When it works it can be pretty brutal – re-directing an Essence Drain or Predator's Strike can net you a nice two-for-one – but that doesn't happen often enough for me to get excited about this card. It does make an excellent sideboard choice however and that's how I personally tend to use it.

#### Rain of Rust

Randy's Score: 1.8

Reader Score: 1.3

My Score: 2.2

A big difference here between your rating and mine. There are two reasons why I rate this card as highly as I do: "Destroy target artifact" and "Instant".

Being able to deal with opposing artifacts is crucial in this block, and if you have to pay more than you'd like to be able to do than I think you just have to suck it up and go ahead and do that. The casting cost of Rain of Rust is high and when you put it next to Shatter this card obviously comes off much, much worse. If you could replace all your Rain of Rusts with Shatters then no doubt you would do so but you don't have that luxury in draft or sealed deck.

Being able to take out artifacts at instant speed is very welcome, especially when there are Equipment cards around that affect combat math. Taking out a Vulshok Morningstar or Opaline Bracers during combat can often net you two-for-one as you're then easily able to ambush the previously equipped creature with some bigger guys of your own. On top of that there are some artifacts that can pretty much win the game by themselves. Whether it's an Icy Manipulator taking care of your best creatures, a Loxodon Warhammer making it impossible for you to race or a Mirror Golem happily getting by your defences turn after turn, having an answer for these is important and that's just what Rain of Rust gives you.

I don't advocate playing it all the time – indeed my score of 2.2 means you should play it around 80% of the time you get it. If your red cards are great and you have enough removal and still need to cut something then by all means leave this out. The reader score of 1.3 is too low though. You should be playing this card more than 40% of the time simply because it answers many of the best cards in your opponent's deck.

Iron-Barb Hellion

Randy's Score: 2.5

Reader Score: 2.1

My Score: 2.2

Everyone was pretty much in agreement here. The Helion is expensive but with the Haste ability attached it has an immediate effect on the game and it's size means your opponent will often need to double-block it to take it out in combat. You don't want a lot of these but having one or two at the top of your mana curve is fine, and you'll usually want to play this in your decks to fill that role.

Krark-Clan Engineers

Randy's Score: 0.9

Reader Score: 1.2

My Score: 0.8

Over-rated a little by the readers, if you compare it directly to Rain of Rust you can see that it definitely deserves a score more than 0.1 lower than that card. The ability it has to kill an artifact is very costly but that could be forgiven if you had a decent creature along with it. Unfortunately you only get a 2/2 for four mana, which is terrible really. This is one time when you don't get something greater than the sum of its parts. It's a bad creature with a weak ability and it shouldn't be something that typically ends up in your main deck.

### Cosmic Larva

Randy's Score: 1.8

Reader Score: 2.2

My Score: 2.0

Cosmic Larva is the last card in the list that was rated evenly all round. It's a very large creature for its casting cost but the drawback for keeping it around is huge. Its casting cost is a little tricky – it will never come down on turn three so it could really cost five mana and have the same impact on the game. It works best in aggressive decks where you can get in some early damage and then use this to trample over any remaining blockers for the last few points. If you cast it with six lands in play you'll most likely be able to get in three or four attacks and that would hopefully be enough to swing the game for you.

### Ion Storm

Randy's Score: 3

Reader Score: 1.9

My Score: 2.8

This is one card that the readers have under-rated a fair bit I think. It's a tricky one to rate, as it does need the support of other cards before it's useful but when it's good in your deck it's usually insanely good.

So the question is *how often* it will be good. There are so many cards that do work with this that this will make the cut in your decks more often than not. *Mirrodin* has several cards that produce charge counters but the support for Ion Storm comes primarily in the two smaller sets as both Modular and Sunburst provide the counters you need for Ion Storm's effect. In draft you'll likely pick Ion Storm up early in *Fifth Dawn* and when you do you can put more of an emphasis on drafting Sunburst cards to support it. I've picked Ion Storm early in a couple of drafts and it wasn't that hard to get Energy Chamber, Baton of Courage, Sawtooth Thresher and so on to go along with it.

A score of 3.0 is a little high as you obviously won't be playing this if you have nothing that combos with it. When you do have the cards to power it up however it gives an effect worthy of a score around 4.0 or higher and you have to score it highly to reflect that.

### Spark Elemental

Randy's Score: 0

Reader Score: 1.7

My Score: 0

Finally we get to the card that had the biggest gap between the scores. It's inevitable when pointing the worst cards that the average score will be above zero as people can't give it a negative score to even out those others who rate it too highly. Despite that, there's no way this should've pulled in the score that it did.

At its absolute best Spark Elemental does one thing only – it deals three damage to an opponent for one red mana. The amount of damage you get for one mana is great but you also lose a card in the process and unfortunately a maximum of three damage just isn't worth the cost of a card, and that's basically the best-case scenario!

Spark Elemental is never around to block so if your opponent doesn't want to trade it for one of their creatures they won't have to. It's also complete shutdown by all manner of blockers from a Goblin Brawler to a Steel Wall. There are lots of situations where Spark Elemental won't even manage to deal damage to your opponent, rendering it completely useless. If your opponent is in a position where they can't afford to take three damage then the option of blocking Spark Elemental is often still available to them.

Another way of looking at this is to think to yourself how much life you'd pay to force your opponent to mulligan at the start of the game. I know that if I could pay three life at the start of the game to force an opponent to mulligan I'd probably do so three or four times every match. I think that if I started with a 7 card hand vs. an opponent's 3 card hand I would almost always be able to defend my 8 life points successfully. If you conclude that you would pay three life to force an opponent to mulligan then you should realise that having cards in your deck that only ever deal three damage is probably something that your opponent will thank you for!

Spark Elemental is unplayable I'm afraid and it's not a card that you should ever consider for your main deck.

That concludes the limited pointing exercise at last. I hope you found it useful and that you were able to gain a better idea of what differentiates the good cards from the bad through these examples.

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