



MAGICTHEGATHERING.COM

ARTICLES

Related links

Read other articles

TOURNAMENTS

MAGIC ONLINE

Article Search

Blistering Firecat



Adrian Sullivan · Single-Card Strategies
Wednesday, August 18, 2004

It's not going to be much longer now until [Champions of Kamigawa](#) is released. While this is *Unglued* week, I'm not on theme this week so I'm taking this time to talk about something else. *Unglued* is a very unconventional set, and I think that you'll find that articles this week are of a slightly different mold. I'm taking a cue from that to write an article that is a bit different than what I normally cover. This one will be mostly about the strategic use of a card rather than mostly about the way to join it with other cards. In addition, it is perhaps my favorite card in all of the soon-to-be-departed *Onslaught* Block. That card is **Blistering Firecat**.



I remember when the card was first printed. Initially it just seemed like a boring, more expensive (read, worse) version of **Ball Lightning**. It didn't take too long for that opinion to change, however: **Blistering Firecat** is better than **Ball Lightning** ever was. While I was being subjected to mockery Chicago's own King of Red, Dave Peterson, showed me a deck he was working on, and he too gushed on and on about how much better **Blistering Firecat** was than the wimpy **Ball Lightning**. This was not a man to diss on **Ball Lightning** either; like most hard-core red players, he had used **Ball Lightning** many, many times, including gaining the crown in the [1998 Midwest Regionals](#).

One of the big things to realize about the power of **Blistering Firecat** is that the card itself, properly played, does almost all of the work for you. It really doesn't need all that much to combo with to be incredibly potent.

Seven and Six...


You wouldn't think that 1 point of damage could make such a big difference, but it can be pretty drastic. In the days before **Shrapnel Blast** was running around, your typical burn spell would do 2 or 3 damage. 3 damage isn't much, but when combined with 7 it does make the whole "kill your opponent dead" idea a lot better.

Let's look at some simple numbers. Essentially, three unanswered **Ball Lightning** will do 18 damage (a living opponent). Three unanswered **Blistering Firecats** will do 21 (a dead one). Two **Blistering Firecats** and 2 simple burn spells (doing 3+ damage each) will also result in a dead opponent. To get a similar result from **Ball Lightning**, your burn spells really need to be doing 4+ damage each. This is asking to get a *lot* more work out of every burn spell.

As the games get going longer and your opponent's life totally is (hopefully) dwindling down to the lower numbers, even a single point of damage can make all of the difference. You can draw a **Blistering Firecat** off the top and force your opponent into bad blocks to stay alive, if not outright kill them. When Trample gets into the mix, each and every extra point can mean a world of difference. When it comes right down to it, running a card like **Blistering Firecat** can mean that you just accidentally kill your opponent sometimes. I like that.



...(and Two and Two and Two)

The other really potent thing is that against the right opponent, you don't need to go for the 7 damage to the throat right away. Dropping a Firecat morphed only costs 3 mana, and the  required to get it going is a pretty tiny secondary investment. If you're pretty confident that your opponent won't be able to kill it, you can turn the 7 damage of a Firecat into 9 or 11 or more. The risk, of course, is that your opponent will kill the Firecat before you've gotten the 7 out of it. The key is knowing whether or not an opponent will be able to actually kill it. Even if they do, this isn't necessarily too terrible. While the lost damage is definitely not something to be happy about, at least they probably had to use a card to kill your Cat. There are other good things about having a morph on the table...

The Shell Game

The Shell Game is an old concept of hucksters and grifters. Probably the most well known version of the Shell Game is Three Card Monty. You have three cards, show one to the opponent, shuffle them around on the table, and then have the opponent guess where the card is. A combination of sleight of hand and simple speed serve to redirect the opponent, and if someone is really good at Three Card Monty, they can make you think you know where that card is every time. But you'll be wrong.

Blistering Firecat isn't unique in having Morph, but it *is* pretty unique in how devastating it can be in punishing someone who guesses wrong. At Grand Prix Detroit, I had a number of matches that boiled down to someone guessing whether or not I had a Firecat. This is a great example from The Ferrett's StarCityGames coverage:

On his turn, Adrian laid a morph.

"A morph!" Mauro said.

"Secret tech," said Adrian cheerfully. "It could be anything! A **Chromeshell Crab**, perhaps..."

The audience chuckled. They knew damn well what it was. The facedown **Blistering Firecat** hurtled into a **Goblin Sledder**; damage went onto the stack, and Mauro cycled a **Gempalm Incinerator** at the Firecat. Adrian **Shocked** the Sledder in response, after briefly verifying whether the Gempalm checked for damage on casting or upon resolution. It was resolution, meaning that when the Gempalm resolved, the Sledder was long gone - and with no other goblins in play, there was zero damage dealt...

Bongiovanni, desperate to axe the Firecat, topdecked a **Shock** and killed it triumphantly... And the morph turned out to be a **Goblin Taskmaster**. "Noool!" Mauro laughed.

"It could have been anything!" Adrian pointed out.

Bluffing with a Morph can also be a great thing against countermagic. This is actually one of the most important parts of using a **Blistering Firecat**. One of the big things about fighting against counterspells is understanding how much mana you can spend every turn. If you have out 5 mana, it might be *cheaper* to just cast a Blistering Firecat without the morph, but if you don't have anything relevant to cast for 1 mana, did you really save yourself anything?

By dropping a morph against a counterspell, first of all your opponent has to decide whether they believe you have a **Blistering Firecat**. You might just have a **Goblin Taskmaster** or a **Dwarven Blastminer**. The other bonus is that if you do draw out a counterspell, you will have an additional mana available for some other threatening card.

Remember, you can turn a **Blistering Firecat** over at any time. If you are slow-rolling your **Blistering Firecat**, one of the best times to flip it over is commonly called "the Waylay phase" but more correctly referred to as "after the 'at end of turn' triggers stack". Spreading out the cost of the **Blistering Firecat** over time does make it 1 mana more expensive, but it is not only less red intensive, it also lets you do special tricks like "blocking".

Blocking the big boys

As much as a deck running **Blistering Firecat** wants to be on the offensive, sometimes even the best-laid plans run awry. Back before *Mirrodin* came out, a bunch of really aggressive cards known as Affinity were the big deck. Oops, I mean Madness. **Wild Mongrel** and his pals were the guys you had to watch out for. **Roar of the Wurm** was *especially* problematic. 6/6 is nothing to sneeze at for a Red deck. Besides Roar, there was always the problematic **Psychatog**. All of these decks are still something to pay attention to in Extended.

Blistering Firecat could show off its defensive capabilities here. Simply by stepping in the way and turning into its 7/1 form, it could kill a **Roar of the Wurm**, or get rid of a bunch of a **Psychatog**'s steam. With a card like **Psychatog** or **Wild Mongrel**, deciding to keep it around can be very difficult if you're not sure whether or not that 7 damage will be followed up with even a tiny burn spell.

Not it!

Other than simply allowing you to block, the **Blistering Firecat** turned facedown has one other incredibly huge advantage over **Ball Lightning**. Sure it's simple, but it's good. A **Blistering Firecat** doesn't have to be Red!

Not only does this mean it can dodge Circle of Protection, **Story Circle**, and other such unpleasantness, but it also gets a few other tricks. Two morphed **Blistering Firecats** can block and kill a **Silver Knight**. A single **Blistering Firecat** and a **Goblin Sledder** can cause the same problem for the little **Silver Knight**. Does it block? A Sledder can make your colorless morph 3/3 for the kill. Does it *not* block? Is 7 damage acceptable?

By not always being Red, **Blistering Firecat** opens a lot of possible outs for a mono-Red deck. It's not that clever, but it's really solid. Let's talk about some Clever Tricks now...

Clever Tricks

Disco Balls

I first heard the idea of Disco Balls from **Prismatic Lace/Reap** pioneer Matthew Baranowski. He and I were on an early **Magic** team together, and we were trying to come to something new and exciting for Extended. His initial idea was to exploit the damage potential of **Ball Lightning** by including **Corpse Dance** in his deck. Even way back then, there was a moment that you could cast **Corpse Dance** at the end of your opponent's turn after the point which would check for a dead **Ball Lightning**. Baranowski's deck ran the following pieces:

- 4 **Ball Lightning**
- 4 **Demonic Consultation**
- 3 **Corpse Dance**

Even if you didn't buyback a **Corpse Dance**, you were usually able to milk yet another single shot **Ball Lightning** out of the deal. If you do start getting to the point where you are able to buy it back, you were in great shape. The **Demonic Consultations** could get either portion of the little combo, as well as finding a game ending **Price of Progress** or **Fireblast**. Including **Black** made it easy to make use of **Forsaken Wastes**.

All that the **Corpse Dance** is doing is being a kind of 5th through 8th copy of the **Ball Lightning** (or **Firecat**). **Corpse Dance** isn't the only card that can be used for that effect. Any kind of reanimation can do a similar job. One of my current deckbuilding collaborators, Ben Dempsey, used **Oversold Cemetery** along with cycling creatures (**Gempalm Incinerator**, **Twisted Abomination**, and others) to reuse **Blistering Firecats** in **Onslaught** Block Constructed. **Recurring Nightmare** does the same job as well. A bit more Black intensive, **Doomed Necromancer** can also pull the trick off. **Volrath's Stronghold** can make sure that all you ever draw is the **Blistering Firecat**. As we already know, only 3 Cats are required to kill someone. Many, many games can be decided simply by drawing a **Firecat**, and creating a kind of redundancy in cats is a great way to finish an opponent.



Doubling your pleasure

There are a ton of ways to double your damage. When you're doubling a **Blistering Firecat**, 14 damage is certainly nothing to sneeze at. In [an article a few weeks ago](#), of course, I covered the obvious choice: **Furnace of Rath**. There are many, many others, but I'll only list a few...

- **Relentless Assault**
- **Seize the Day**
- **Aggravated Assault**
- **Gratuitous Violence**
- **Fireshrieker**
- **Fling**
- **Bloodshot Cyclops**
- **Pandemonium**

Lots of cards

Getting more cards is good. It means that you can draw more **Blistering Firecats** and burn. These next two cards are just a good way to get cards, but I really like both of them. Obviously, **Skullclamp** on a **Blistering Firecat** after it's gotten a smack down on is a great deal. But, if you really want to get a bunch of great cards, try **Greater Good**.

Sacrificing a **Blistering Firecat** to **Greater Good** will draw you 7 cards. After that, you'll have to discard 3 cards, but that's still a pretty ridiculous deal. If any of the cards you're discarding are Madness cards, it's an even more ridiculous deal.

Grafted Skullcap and Ensnaing Bridge

This is one of the bases for a whole clan of decks. One of my favorites here is **Burning Bridge**, which used this two card combo to hold off opposing creatures while it saved up all of the burn for its opponents nose (and the rest of their face, generally). **Blistering Firecat** can sneakily get around the **Ensnaing Bridge** by being morphed. After you draw your two cards (one from the draw phase, one from the Cap), you attack with your **Blistering Firecat** and then turn it into a 7/1. **Boom!** as we say in the industry. After the attack phase, lay out your cards, and go down to zero in hand thanks to the **Skullcap**. The **Ensnaing Bridge** then protects you from your opponent's creatures.



Wrapping Up with Two Decks!

It's close to **Blistering Firecat's** last huzzah, for Standard at least. Here are two decks that I like lots, lots, parking lots. Essentially, I like them for the same reason: they do a lot of damage to the dome. One of my favorite things about red is doming people...

Extended Burning Bridge

60 cards

2 Blinkmoth Nexus	4 Mogg Fanatic	4 Ensnaring Bridge
4 Barbarian Ring	4 Blistering Firecat	3 Grafted Skullcap
4 Petrified Field		4 Firebolt
3 Forgotten Cave	8 creatures	4 Shrapnel Blast
8 Mountain		4 Violent Eruption
		4 Chain of Plasma
21 land		4 Volcanic Hammer
		4 Chrome Mox
		31 other spells

Type 2 - Oops! Red

60 cards

4 Darksteel Citadel	4 Blistering Firecat	4 Shrapnel Blast
4 Blinkmoth Nexus	4 Slith Firewalker	3 Pulse of the Forge
13 Mountain	2 Dwarven Blastminer	2 Beacon of Destruction
	4 Arc-Slogger	4 Molten Rain
21 land	14 creatures	4 Pyrite Spellbomb
		4 Seething Song
		4 Chrome Mox
		25 other spells

My advice for *Unglued Week*: Don't kid around. Just send a Cat at their face and burn them some more too!



[Discuss](#) on the message boards



[Respond](#) via email



[Adrian Sullivan](#) archive

[WHAT'S NEW](#) [CORPORATE INFO](#) [WHERE TO BUY](#) [INTERNATIONAL](#) [SUPPORT](#) [SITEMAP](#) [PRODUCTS](#)

© 1995-2004 Wizards of the Coast, Inc., a subsidiary of Hasbro, Inc. All Rights Reserved.
[Wizards is headquartered in Renton, Washington, PO Box 707, Renton, WA 98057.](#)
[PRIVACY STATEMENT](#)