

Mark Gottlieb

Thursday, February 19, 2004

The column I wrote last week really struck a nerve. It seems that I had been grossly misjudging my audience. I figured you were benevolent mad scientists, interested in crazy concoctions that created chaos in the game. It turns out you're *evil* mad scientists, interested in cruel concoctions that leave your opponents with no mana, no options, and writhing in pain. Right on. And once I tapped into that lock-the-hero-in-the-dungeon-while-I-unleash-my-army-of-radioactive-mutant-kitten-squids-to-terrorize-the-city vibe, I received acclaim the likes of which I had never imagined. I received message board posts and emails proclaiming that column as the best one ever! Every single piece of new email (that I didn't delete) praised me! It all started to seep in. Half a tenth of a million people read my column each week. That's right: half a tenth of a *MILLION!* The young 'uns in the science class taught by my sister-in-law know me by name! It started to go to my head.

The typical advice in this situation is the opposite: Don't let it go to your head. And normally I wouldn't. I'm not that kind of guy. I actually have quite an inferiority complex. Truth be told, I have the best damn inferiority complex in the universe. But I'm sick of not letting things go to my head. When my team won the National Engineering Design Challenge in high school, I didn't let it go to my head. When the team I captained won the MIT Mystery Hunt not once, but twice, I didn't let it go to my head. When I rescued Kate Beckinsale off the coast of Aruba by kickboxing those sharks in my Wednesday afternoon daydream, I didn't let it go to my head. That ends here! My head is sick of stuff not having been let gone to it. It's all going to my head now, baby! It's time for me to start believing my own press! It's time to start being a pompous ass, because I deserve it! First things first: For a celebrity of my caliber, it's time to start using the royal "we."

The Eyes Have It

Now that We are too big, too *de luxe* for our measly little column, what on earth can We do about it? Easy: Another perk of our fame & acclaim is the requisite minions. One of them, the (We're assuming) awestruck Cody Watts, wrote to us with the idea of a 20-damage insta-win using Aether Charge, Artificial Evolution, and a token generator such as One Dozen Eyes. His suggestions also included Symbiotic Beast, Broodhatch Nantuko, and Lightning Coils. The genius We are, We can recognize a good idea when We see one, and We saw one here.

The combo is reminiscent of a past Extended tournament fave called "21" or "Blackjack" because it dealt 21 straight to the head on one turn. That deck also paired a red damage-dealing enchantment (Pandemonium) with a green token generator (Saproling Burst). But that deck didn't need a third card in a third color to make it work, and that's why this new deck finds itself in our little crazy casual combo corner of the world.

The One Dozen Eyes plan is clearly the way to go: Any of the others would require an extra step to generate the magic number of 5 tokens. The simplest route to victoryville is to put an Aether Charge on the table, hack it to trigger on Insects, use the 10-eye mode of One Dozen Eyes, and... and nothing. The game is over. We included Broodhatch Nantukos in the deck anyway as a back-up plan. They're early-game defense, since your opponent won't want to attack into one (if you chump-block



with it, it'll just create more chump blockers). Late in the game if you have the Charge and the Evolution but can't find a One Dozen Eyes, playing a Nantuko and Hammering it will deal 16 damage and leave you with three 1/1 tokens.

The rest of the deck might seem like the same old, same old, but it's all necessary for a combo deck that relies on a 5-mana red card, a 1-mana blue card, and a 6-mana green card... in that order. You need mana diversity and acceleration (and let's hear it for Mirrodin's Core, possibly the best land of all time for 3-color decks.) You need to stall for time (the Hammers and Spellbombs should keep you alive against beatdown decks, and you can cycle through the Spellbombs if there's no pressure on you). You need to draw enough cards to find your combo (and Rush of Knowledge is worth five cards if you've been able to find an Aether Charge first). The artifact lands are included only to help with Thirst of Knowledge; be careful against March of the Machines decks. Though We don't know *what* kind of lunatic would be promoting a degenerate card like *that*.

Bug Off



Main Deck

60 cards

5 Forest	3 Broodhatch Nantuko	4 Aether Charge
1 Great Furnace	1 Nantuko Vigilante	4 Aether Spellbomb
5 Island	<hr/>	4 Artificial Evolution
4 Mirrodin's Core	4 creatures	2 Darksteel Ingot
4 Mountain		1 Fireball
2 Seat of the Synod		4 One Dozen Eyes
2 Tree of Tales		3 Rush of Knowledge
<hr/>		1 Talisman of Dominance
23 lands		2 Talisman of Impulse
		1 Talisman of Progress
		3 Thirst for Knowledge
		4 Volcanic Hammer
		<hr/>
		33 other spells

We were testing this deck on the **Magic Online Darksteel** Beta server over the weekend, and our opponent, playing a White Weenie deck, asked us if We were playing a casual deck or a serious deck. It's a question We've often been at a loss to answer. We responded, "I don't know," (this was way back on Saturday, when We believed ourselves to be a mere mortal), "it's a goofy 3-card combo—but I intend to kill you with it." How do you classify a silly deck that takes itself very seriously?

Back to the Lattice

We never revisit our old columns in later columns; We're usually happy to let them fester in the bowels of history. But We feel compelled to shrug off the shackles of space-time and transport ourselves to the past. The laws of physics cannot constrain us! Hold onto your hats, and imagine some trippy sci-fi fade-out effects....

Whew! Made it! We don't want to blow your mind, but we're now in the past. The Democrats are in the midst of a frenzied primary season. *Friends* is ramming each of its remaining episodes down our

throats. And the weather here in Seattle is rainy. Do you remember what it was like... February 12, 2004???

Yes, the response to last week's mana denial decks was so vociferous (a word so great We didn't even have to make it up) that We're going to take another look at it. Feast your eyes on...


An oversight! We wrote about the *Mirrodin* block's plethora of 3-mana blue selective card searchers, but while We mentioned Fabricate, Pulse of the Grid, and Thirst for Knowledge, We left out Machinate!

An error! Some of the alternate cost spells in the Null Rod deck were useless: You can't alterna-cast Vine Dryad once Mycosynth Lattice is out because you have no green cards in your hand anymore—they're all colorless!

And many, many suggestions!

- Once Mycosynth Lattice is in play, Hurkyl's Recall is a one-sided Upheaval!
- Many people suggested adding Glorious Anthem to the March-Lattice deck to keep your lands alive. Other suggested inclusions included Lightning Coils (which works), Spawning Pit (which doesn't), and Darksteel Forge. They're all interesting. They're all unnecessary in our opinion—March-Lattice should win the game by itself, and these are all “win more” options.
- The Shield of Kaldra slot is simply better as a Darksteel Reactor.
- Laurie Cheers noted another triggered mana source, when all activated sources have been shut down: Black Market!
- A great suggestion was to use affinity creatures (Myr Enforcer, Dross Golem) in the Null Rod deck instead of the faulty Vine Dryads. They're the new free!

Some minions just used those decks as a jumping-off point. Inspired by our transcendent brilliance (or is it our brilliant transcendence?), they created their own wacky Mycosynth Lattice decks. (Anthony may not be able to pick out the multiplayerest card in *Darksteel*, but We're ready to hand out the award for the Johnniest card in the set.) Merter Sualp's deck uses logic so twisted only Baron von Pretzel (who, oddly enough, was mortal enemies with the Earl of Sandwich) could follow it.

Furnace Dragon will remove all artifacts from the game. But it's not an artifact, so it's safe from itself. But when you combo it with Mycosynth Lattice, its cost shrinks to only  and it will remove everything—including all your opponent's stuff—from the game! But it'll remove itself from the game too, since now it's also an artifact! But if you also have Neurok Transmuter, you can turn the Dragon blue and make it stop being an artifact so it won't remove itself from the game, which it wouldn't normally do anyway!!!



Got it? Without the Transmuter, but with the Lattice, Furnace Dragon is still an uber-Obliterate at a fraction of the cost, and that's not a bad thing. Get the Transmuter going too and the Dragon acts like an uber-Desolation Angel with kicker. Our version of Merter's deck is below. Just about all of it is the same. The biggest difference is that We removed all copies of Retract. We initially thought this was a brilliant use for this niche combo card—until We tried it. The idea is to put the Dragon's ability on the stack, Transmute it, Retract all your artifacts (including your lands) to your hand, then let the Dragon remove all your opponent's permanents from the game. The problem is that when you bounce your lands this way, you also bounce Mycosynth Lattice. Your opponent's permanents cease to be artifacts, and they stay in play. Meanwhile, you've got a 5/5 flyer and not much else. (We learned that the hard way.) But as in the March-Lattice decks that don't really need Glorious Anthems, it's enough to have a 2/2 and a 5/5 on the board when there are no other permanents in the game.

Home Furnacings



Main Deck

60 cards

4 Darksteel Citadel	4 Furnace Dragon	4 AEther Spellbomb
4 Great Furnace	4 Neurok Transmuter	2 Fabricate
6 Island	4 Silver Myr	4 Mana Leak
3 Mirrodin's Core	3 Vedalken Engineer	4 Mycosynth Lattice
2 Mountain		4 Thirst for Knowledge
4 Seat of the Synod	15 creatures	4 Thoughtcast
23 lands		22 other spells

Super Subs

Somewhere in the middle of that last section, in an effort to be even haughtier, We adopted an English accent. We figured you didn't notice since this is written, not spoken, but trust us. We are also now wearing quite the ostentatious ostrich-plumed cap, as befits one of our grandeur.

We have been finding it difficult to craft decks that are even *more* annoying than last week's. Thank goodness (evilness?) for my demented disciples. Brian Trautman and Scott Jones both figured out how to do it: Shahrazad. But Eli Shiffrin and Carl Endres built the deck that made our jaw drop open. They freely admit the deck has no good way to win games—*except by insanity*. When your opponent socks you in the nose, the game is over. Besides the Shahrazads, which by themselves don't count, the only damage sources are Mischievous Quanars and Ghitu Fires. But winning is not the point. The point is to create as many subgames as possible! This deck plays Shahrazad straight up, plays copies of it with Panoptic Mirror and Spellweaver Helix, and copies either the spell or other copies of the spell with Fork, Mirari, and Quonar. If you imprint Shahrazad and Ghitu Fire on a Spellweaver Helix, you can use the Fire to create subgames at instant speed! Some of the deck creators' imagined conversations during a game:



"In response to your declaring attackers, I start a subgame."

"Combat damage on the stack, start a subgame."

"I Counterspell!" "I start a subgame in response!"

"What the hell was happening before that last subgame?"

"Is this subgame 6 or 7?"

"Now now, punch me and you lose."

"At the beginning of my upkeep, Shahrazad, and in response, I flip Quonar."

"Is my brain hemorrhaging?"

"Uh oh, I think we're gonna need a longer table!"

Everyone's a comedian. The meat of the deck is unchanged from the original, except for adopting the deck creators' later suggestion to replace a couple of Scepters with Wishes (so you could fetch Shahrazads stranded in an upstream subgame), removing the Moxes and a Lotus from the original decklist (if you have them, you don't need us to tell you when to use them), and rejiggering the crazy mana base (which is by no means set in stone). Gaze in horror:

The Night of 1000 Games

Main Deck
60 cards

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Ancient Den 2 City of Brass 3 Coastal Tower 3 Gemstone Mine 2 Grand Coliseum 1 Great Furnace 3 Island 3 Mirrodin's Core 1 Mountain 2 Plains 1 Seat of the Synod 2 Shivan Reef <hr style="width: 20%; margin-left: 0;"/> <p>24 lands</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 4 Mischievous Quonar <hr style="width: 20%; margin-left: 0;"/> <p>4 creatures</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Burning Wish 1 Death Wish 1 Enlightened Tutor 3 Fabricate 1 Fork 4 Ghitu Fire 2 Isochron Scepter 4 Mirari 1 Mystical Tutor 4 Panoptic Mirror 4 Shahrazad 4 Spellweaver Helix 1 Tinker 1 Vampiric Tutor <hr style="width: 20%; margin-left: 0;"/> <p>32 other spells</p>
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You may have quibbles, questions, or qualms with the deck. But remember that winning the game is *not* its goal. Over 99% of all decks ever made have "winning the game" listed as their career objectives, so it can be a bit much to wrap one's brain around a deck that doesn't care about that. But consider: If this deck creates six subgames, but eventually gets annihilated, it has "won" by achieving what it wanted to do. When playing **Magic**, "winning" and "achieving your objective" are often—but not always—the same. (All the Spikes think We've flipped our lid. *How dare you question our divine sanity?*) Take the Aether Charge-One Dozen Eyes deck. We've found it to be surprisingly good for a 3-card, 3-color combo deck. But you can't expect it to be tremendously consistent. The player who's attracted to this deck doesn't mind getting smashed three games in a row if, in the fourth game, she pulls off the combo and gets the 20-damage-to-the-dome win. A winning record? No. A winning experience? Absolutely.

Until next week, have fun—because We have decreed it so!

Mark Gottlieb

King of Everything

Future Winner of the Pulitzer Prize for Internet Gaming Columns

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