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Seizan, Perverter of Truth



Adrian Sullivan · Single-Card Strategies
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My last PTQ could easily be described as a time warp. In that PTQ was a huge number of players I haven't seen for many, many years. People such as Chicago's "Turbo Bob" Wagner, Michigan's Eric Taylor, and Wisconsin's Matt Bublitz. Not only are these players old (at least compared to the typical **Magic** player), but also they simply haven't been seen at a Madison **Magic** tournament in some time.



The infamous Eric "Danger" Taylor (PT Tokyo '01)

One of the many dinosaurs to show up is Madison's Don Schamun. While vaguely notorious in Madison for a long-ago pre-**Magic** boxing match, he's slightly better well known as the owner of a game store several years back. Years ago, his store The Realm was one of the stopping places on a cross-country road trip for my coworkers at The Dojo, and for quite some time it was the home to Madison's **Magic** scene.

He was one of the granddaddies of **Magic** in other ways too. I remember going to my first Regionals, very many years ago. I'd been in town a little while, and I was hungrily attending as many tournaments as I could. When I went down to Chicago with Don, Jim Hustad, and Darrell Wyatt, I felt as though I was finally in the "inner circle" of the Madison players.

Now, years later, *Kamigawa* had brought back Don, and he was sitting on the other side of the table from me. And he had out a card that I thought was quite, quite bad. And I was going to lose to it.



He pummeled me with Seizan, mostly because the card was *so big* - a beefy 6/5 that I couldn't actually deal with even given most of the cards in my deck. In the meantime, he was drawing other cards to add to the menace of Seizan. While we were both losing 2 life a turn, he was the one with a 6/5 on the table, and by the time I dropped another creature big enough to stave it off I was low enough in life that the regular life loss held me down.

Still, though, it almost killed him too.

Living with Seizan

Seizan is one of the most deceptively dangerous cards that you can put into play from *Champions*. It is easy to get lulled into a sense of false security. After all, you can justify to yourself all of the bonuses of Seizan. You get to draw cards, and even if your opponent does too, they are still getting hurt for it. You have a huge, black creature. A creature that your opponent absolutely has to deal with.

Of course, there is a simple price for all of this. After you cast Seizan, your opponent gets to draw cards before you do. As long as Seizan stays around, you don't have the choice about whether or not you are going to lose life to draw cards – you just are. How can you go about making Seizan's cost less damning? Yes, you're getting virtually an **Ancestral Recall** (or two **Phyrexian Arena**, if you prefer) every turn, but so is your opponent...

Fast like a (vorpal) bunny...

Running lots of cheap cards means that when you get out a Seizan, you'll be able to drop all of the extra cards as quickly as you draw them. And you're going to want most of these cards to be threatening. Think scary.

This means that running cards like **Cranial Extraction**, while cool and powerful, is probably not the way to go. You don't want to go about disrupting the opponent like this, since they're going to be drawing so many more cards anyway. Instead, you want to focus on affecting the board (and opponent's life total!). Scare the opponent. There are only a few ways that you really want to play disruption (more on that later).

What is scary? Scary is fast, cheap creatures. **Wicked Akuba** and **Rotting Giant** (a personal favorite) are big creatures. Many of Black's cheapest creatures are going to be a bit older. Look to extended for cards like **Sarcomancy** and **Carnophage**, or truly fast and out of control creatures like **Flesh Reaver**.



Another way to be scary is speed. **Dark Ritual** was a scary card because of its speed. It's hard to find anyplace to play **Dark Ritual** unless you're able to use **The Abyss** too. Essentially, this means you'll be left with things like **Peat Bog**, **Cabal Ritual**, **Mox Diamond**, and **Chrome Mox**. If you dip outside of black, green is the next logical place to go. **Birds of Paradise**, **Elves of Deep Shadow**, and **Sakura-Tribe Elder** all help ramp you up, and they have the added benefit of being cheap. **Birds of Paradise** is a shockingly scary creature for many people. Over the years, if you've read much of the [event coverage](#) at [magicthegathering.com](#), you'll have noticed many times where players have killed a first turn **Birds of Paradise**. This is because tournament players have learned to fear the speed that a Bird can give. That little guy might not have much power and toughness, but he can be a killer.

Finally, making sure your creatures get through is scary. There are plenty of ways to do that. Killing your opponent's creatures is of course the first one that springs to mind. If your opponent is going to be dropping creatures quickly (they are drawing 2 extra cards a turn, after all), you need to be able to kill them fast as well.

Some of the fastest elimination is painful. **Vendetta** and **Snuff Out** might be just a bit too dangerous, since you are already going to be losing life. Perhaps a bit more reasonable are other 2 mana efforts. **Terror**, **Smother**, **Chainer's Edict**, **Diabolic Edict**, and **Vicious Hunger** are all great at getting blockers out of the way. If you're more worried about weenie creatures, **Nausea** and **Dry Spell** will clear out a bunch of little guys. Just remember not to have any out of your own.


The Strange Powers of Uba Mask

One curious card possibility to run with Seizan is **Uba Mask**. **Uba Mask** punishes people for drawing cards. Essentially, when an **Uba Mask** is out, every card you draw is only good on the turn you draw it. If your deck is built to be able to cast many, many cards a turn, you can expect that your deck will handle this better than your opponents. Use it now, or never. **Uba Mask** also has the benefit of turning off any counter-magic the opponent might draw, while also weakening many other card-drawing cards.



Stopping the bleeding

Your opponent is going to be able to cast a large amount of spells too. The damage that another player can wreak with a steady supply of cards can be quite huge. Expect that you're going to be quite bruised by their barrage of spells, if not outright bleeding. Having your own fast spells is one way to best take advantage of the situation, but it isn't the only one. Another option is to make it harder for opponents to cast their own spells. Land destruction, long a most favorite/least favorite method of playing the game, is a great choice here.


 Playing a land is a heck of a lot cheaper than destroying it. However, barring abilities that allow people to play more, you are limited to only playing a single land a turn. There is no limitation on the number of land destruction spells that you are allowed to play. If you can afford it, you can cast it.

I used to run an annoying Howling Mine Land Destruction deck. It ran **Boomerangs** and **Stone Rains** among its huge amount of mana disruption. Here, your **Howling Mine** is big, black, and can do up to 7 damage a turn all by itself. If nothing else, it can block while you knock out their land with one-for-one spells. Some cards (**Rancid Earth**, for example) can actually have a useful effect on the board besides removing a land. Take **Avalanche Riders**, for example – in a racing position, these can really cause a huge change in tempo.

Besides simple land destruction spells, there are more permanent global effects. **Winter Orb** is especially good here. If your opponent is drawing a million cards, it won't matter. They are likely to only have two mana every turn – the land they untap, and the land they drop. Running cards like **Birds of Paradise** becomes very valuable here. Also, your cheap creature elimination can be very valuable under a **Winter Orb**. **Static Orb** is less good here, but still reasonable.

But none of this compares to my favorite choice, **Cataclysm**. Here, we destroy nearly everything. When I envision a **Cataclysm** going off, I see you with Seizan, two land (you lay one after the **Cataclysm**) and a Mox of some sort, and your opponent with their best creature and a land. That seems like a pretty good place to be.

An element of control

It isn't very controlling to have a Seizan out. Generally speaking, you don't want to have your opponent drawing cards if you're going to try to control them. However, maybe you can attempt to keep just enough of a hold on things long enough that you are able to kill them. 

Here, you aren't attempting to be able to counterspell every little thing. You have a 6/5. Just run enough counterspells, creature-kill, or bounce to make sure that it kills them. If they drop a guy in the way, you don't necessarily have to kill it. If they chump block Seizan with it, they've done that job for you. You're drawing an additional 2 cards a turn, so if you run controlling cards, you'll likely see them.

Remember, a card like **Memory Lapse** is almost the same thing as **Counterspell** here. They are drawing so many cards, all you need to do is be able to stop the spells that matter for a turn. You'll probably draw another spell to stop them again on the next turn. If you only spend 2 mana to stop their 4 mana **Wrath of God**, we can expect that they are in trouble.

Another great thing to do with lots of cards is run another powerful control card: **Masticore**. **Masticore** is a powerhouse in his own right, but **Masticore** and Seizan have a pretty special

relationship. Both **Masticore** and Seizan have abilities that trigger during the upkeep. This means that you'll actually be able to have a **Masticore** in play, and on the next turn empty your hand to cast a Seizan. By stacking the abilities properly, Seizan will give you cards to feed to **Masticore** before it gets hungry. Even when you're not in this difficult position, they work very well together. **Masticore** can knock very nearly everything out of the way for your big guys, and you can actually cast all of your spells every turn without having to worry about him dying!

One last sneaky trick

As I've already said, Seizan's biggest drawback is that your opponent gets to use the extra cards they draw before you draw any. Well, they don't have to if you put out Seizan on *their* turn. Here are a few good cards to do that with:

- **Winding Canyons**
- **Elvish Piper**
- **Call of the Wild**
- **Riptide Shapeshifter** (name Demon or Spirit)
- **Corpse Dance** (use it after "At end of turn" triggers occur)

Of course, this is not an all-inclusive list. Use your own sneaky trick and get your opponent with a huge blocker, and then grab a few extra cards in the process.

Wrapping Up

With all of these ideas in mind, here is a simple sample deck that goes with a black beatdown approach:

Seizan, Perverter of Truth		
60 cards		
4 Wasteland	4 Carnophage	4 Sarcomancy
4 Polluted Delta	4 Withered Wretch	2 Cover of Darkness
4 Bloodstained Mire	4 Rotting Giant	4 Crown of Suspicion
10 Swamp	3 Seizan, Perverter of Truth	4 Diabolic Edict
22 land	15 creatures	4 Tangle Wire
		2 Chrome Mox
		3 Mox Diamond
		23 other spells

Essentially, this deck runs a bunch of cheap threats and some good ways to get things out of the way. A Seizan in play can simply finish the opponent off by draining away their life after the initial rush (even if they do manage to draw good cards with him). **Cover of Darkness** can supply a great path of victory for either Zombies, Demons, or Spirits, depending on your board position. **Tangle Wire** is great in any Seizan deck, but in a beatdown deck it becomes especially good. I'm running a split selection of Moxes just to speed up the deck further, but even though I'm mono-black, I'm running more **Mox Diamond** just to help make the **Rotting Giant** better. For a similar reason, I'm running the full complement of eight lands that sacrifice to find Swamps, even though they can't find anything else. If you start making a sideboard, **Masticore** is a great place to start. Not only does he shore up one of black's notorious weaknesses (dealing with small Red creatures), but also he works wonderfully with Seizan. I helped work on a similar deck for Extended a few years back with Andy Wolf and the rest of Cabal Rogue, and I think you'll find that the basic idea has a lot to offer.

On a different note, I'd like to come out and apologize for the problem with the Uyo Challenge from last week. At the *Champions of Kamigawa* pre-release, I had been talking to newly christened Level 3 Judge [Chris Richter](#) about how much I liked Uyo with a card like **Harrow**. We'd been talking a while when Chris mentioned how much he liked the idea of using Uyo with **Journey of Discovery**. As we talked more, he described how you could use it with a **Mana Flare** effect to "go infinite". In my original article, I mentioned cards like **Primal Growth** and **Harrow** to use with the Uyo, and while I didn't mention the idea of **Journey of Discovery**, Chris's words were on my mind when I was judging the Challenge. While normally Chris is a fantastic judge, he had thought that the card worked like a **Tooth and Nail** and actually put the cards into play rather than *allowing* you to put them into play. For my part, I didn't check up on this idea, mostly because I

have nearly as much faith in Chris Richter's judging as I do in Rune Horvik's. I do sincerely apologize for the mistake.

Also, last week, I brought up the difference of opinion between Zvi and I regarding the potential differences between my build of an Uyo-Turbo Land deck and the way that he might build it. Here's what you all believed:

What do you think?		
More card drawing	2113	53.0%
More land	1871	47.0%
Total	3984	100.0%

Enjoy the rest of Spirit Week!



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