

The Return of the Attack of the Bombo Search

Mark Gottlieb
Thursday, October 28, 2004

Aaron Forsythe based his last column on a particularly harsh email that I got. Let me assure you, that message was unusual. Nearly all of the mail I get is positive. Some are *very* positive:

Dear Mark Gottlieb,

I understand you've been getting some unpleasant fan mail lately. I can assure you there is at least one (1) fan who would totally have tried to ask you out by now if she weren't already married. I suspect the people who write in and dis you can't say the same.

So there.

—A Perhaps-Too-Adoring Fan

Wow. I warned Anthony not to spend too much time with Rebecca Romijn. Unfortunately, all of the messages I get like that are from married women or 13-year-olds. But interspersed with all the love, the crazy combos, and the occasional rudeness are the insidious seeds of ruination...

As a supervillain, I am often pestered by Captain Obvious. But even worse than him is his twin brother: Captain Oblivious! He sends me emails under many different names in order to confuse me, but I know it's him. Superheroes are on the side of "good." Supervillains are on the side of "right"—er, I mean "evil." Captain Oblivious is a superneutral. He just gets in the way for no good reason. His weapon of choice? Why, it's so obvious even Captain Obvious would say it's obvious. Bombos!

The Top 10 Bombos That I Felt Like Including in a Top 10 Bombos List

10. Captain Oblivious tries to improve my deck from last week!

After reading the deck "Rat Extraction," I came up with this deck idea. Get a lot of Relentless Rats and combine them with Cranial Extraction and Patriarch's Bidding.

Wrong! Cranial Extraction removes the Rats from the game. It doesn't put them in the graveyard.

9. Captain Oblivious responds to my correction of his baffling bombo with... a baffling bombo!

I have found a famed Infinite Damage Loop. While playing my "Binding Memnarch" deck, I found that Spellbinder + Dream's Grip + any unblockable creature = infinite damage + serious annoyance.

Wrong! After you attack with your Spellbinder-equipped creature, you can play a copy of Dream's Grip and untap your creature. But you can't attack with it again; you don't have another combat phase.

I feel like an idiot. My combo *was* a bombo. So to make up for it I have been thinking of a new one. I hope this works: Triskelion + Dream's Grip + Spellbinder = You see where

that is going. :)

Um... nope. No, I don't.

8.5. Captain Oblivious has a farm!

On the table you have Aluren, Concordant Crossroads, and any creature. You drop an Ovinomancer, and put the "destroy it" ability on the stack. In response, you tap it to turn your creature into a Sheep. Ovinomancer is now in your hand, and you respond by playing it and targeting your creature again. In theory, when these abilities all resolve, the game tries to destroy your Ovinomancer for each comes-into-play ability, and then the game destroys your other creature, puts a Sheep into play, and attempts to destroy it again. Basically the combo was meant to include an Echoing Courage for the win. How cool is it to swing with an infinite number of sheep?

Really cool. I mean **Wrong!** To be fair, this time Captain Oblivious asked whether this combo works, rather than stating it as a fact. It's less fun when he's not overbearingly pompous. I started counting how many Sheep this would create, and *yawn* it's *yawn* only going to *yawn* make one. Since Ovinomancer's Sheepifying ability has a target, it will be countered if the targeted creature is gone when it tries to resolve. Stacking up a million redundant Sheep Rays will just make one Sheep.

We interrupt this Top 10ish list to bring you a real combo

It's been one of those kinds of weeks: I got sent two Ovinomancer decks in two days. Weird. Doc Twisted paired Ovinomancer with Azusa, Lost but Seeking, which happily offsets our Sheepish friend's steep costs. Doc's deck was filled with bounce effects and Tims, but being the supervillain that I am, I found it more interesting to genetically crossbreed it with Marcel's Wizardly Azami, Lady of Scrolls deck. (Marcel's deck sought to overstuff your own hand, then deck your opponent with a couple of monstrous Tomoya the Revealer activations.) Ovinomancer is a Wizard. Prodigal Sorcerer is a Wizard. And Azami and Azusa should get along quite well as you draw scads of cards.

Mutated Sheep

Casual Wizard deck

8. Captain Oblivious delves into his *Homelands* collection!

The way this deck works is to slap down an An-Zerrin Ruins, naming something like Slivers and Imagecrafting your opponent's creatures into Slivers on their turn so all their creatures are tapped for the turn.

Wrong! Imagecrafter + An-Zerrin Ruins is *not* a combo. No player can play spells or abilities before the untap step. Therefore, you can't change your opponent's creatures into Slivers (or anything else) with Imagecrafter before he gets a chance to untap them as normal.

7. Captain Oblivious tries to break the new set!

Try this for a nice trick: Kiki-Jiki, Mirror Breaker + one of the legendary Dragon Spirits in *Champions*. Take the black Dragon for example: Tap Kiki-Jiki targeting the black Dragon (preferably after having attacked successfully). Ideally, you should be able to make an opponent lose 15 life. Not bad for only two creatures. Also, consider using Kiki-Jiki with a single Brothers Yamazaki. Try making this combo infinite just to bug the opponent.

Wrong! Kiki-Jiki can't copy Kokusho or the Brothers Yamazaki. It can't copy any legendary creatures, because... it can't copy legendary creatures. Huh. That was kinda cyclical.

6. Captain Oblivious goes on a date with Phage!

Always a bombo favorite!

I was reading your "Kill 'Em All" Online Prismatic deck, and if you put a Phage the Untouchable in there as the only creature, when your opponent used Bribery they would have to take Phage and automatically lose the game.

Wrong! I got this one a lot, but to no avail. Your opponent wouldn't be forced to take Phage. He can choose to "find" no creature at all. The Comp Rules sez: "If you're required to search a zone not revealed to all players for cards matching some criteria, you aren't required to find those cards even if they're present." The combo did halfway work, though, if you could rely on your opponent not knowing this rule. He might think he had to take Phage, and therefore would. This is all moot now, though: Bribery has been banned in the format.

6A. Captain Oblivious tries again with Phage!

Just play Custody Battle on Phage and don't sac your land.

Wrong! Changing controllers is *not* the same as coming into play. When you carry out your plan, Phage is already in play and stays in play. Your opponent doesn't lose the game when he takes control of Phage. Heck, he probably kills you with it.

6B. Captain Oblivious tries again with Custody Battle!

I've been toying with the idea of a Leveler deck. Basically the plan is to cast Custody Battle on the Leveler and then phase it out (we even use banding cards) after I let it change teams. At the beginning of my opponent's turn it would phase in, remove his library and then he would have no card to draw for the draw step. It's not a killer deck, but thinking about removing my opponent's library in this fashion just makes me grin when I think about it.

Wrong! Phasing in doesn't trigger comes-into-play effects.

6Z. Captain Oblivious tries again with Leveler!

Ever since *Mirrodin* came out there have been two cards that I've scratched my head over for a long time. These cards were Fatespinner and Leveler. Fatespinner gave up a crucial component of your (and your opponent's) turn, and, if not in a combo with something, Leveler might as well have read: "You lose next turn". I thought Fate Spinner would be perfect with Leveler because it allows you to skip your draw step after the Leveler hits play. Is this a killer combo or a disastrous bombo? I'll let you decide.

I decide it's a disastrous bombo! This is one of those cases where the fact that your card (in this case, Fatespinner) is better than you think means that your combo is *worse* than you think. Unfortunately(?), Fatespinner only hoses your opponent.

Combo time again

Is Stasis too cheap and too blue? Mickey found a new one that has a substantial up-front cost, but then sustains itself (and even taps any new permanents) for the rest of the game. Endless Whispers + 2 Yosei, the Morning Star. Or, if you prefer, Endless Whispers + Tooth and Nail (fetching guess what). No one ever gets to untap again. Any untapped permanents have a turn, max, before being tapped down forever. (The Yoseis see each other, die in embarrassment at wearing the same dress, then their triggers tap 10 of your opponent's permanents and make him skip his next two untap steps. Endless Whispers brings the Dragons back at the end of the turn under your opponent's control so they can repeat that debacle on you. At the end of the next turn, they'll come back under your control again. In fact, every turn for the rest of the game features a visit from the twin Yoseis.)

For a victory condition, Mickey included a Darksteel Colossus whose intended purpose is to get shuffled back into your deck over and over when you discard it so your opponent will get decked and you won't. But this doesn't work if your opponent also has a Darksteel Colossus. What other victory conditions could there be? Artifacts and enchantments without mana costs can help (Skullcage, Seismic Assault). Or you could creatively untap your creatures (Psychic Overload, Bringer of the Red Dawn).

Whispering Dragons

Standard Endless Whispers deck

With this build, you still have some action after the Yosei-Whispers lock. Playing an artifact land or a Chrome Mox untaps the Battered Golems so they can attack. Playing a land *and* a Mox on the same turn can enable a Mana Seism, which can enable a Golem, Skullcage, Reactor, or Phyrexian Colossus. You have the time to draw these cards. You're not going anywhere fast.

5. Captain Oblivious goes infinite!

I have found a very reliable combo that I think is interesting and that you will find interesting as well. The cards that make my combo up are Culling the Weak, Drudge Skeletons, and Fireball or Disintegrate. The combo goes something like this: First you play Culling the Weak, then play Drudge Skeletons, and then play either Fireball or Disintegrate. This is how you pay for X: You sacrifice Drudge Skeletons for Culling the Weak's effect, but you use one of the black mana you get to regenerate it and you will have BBB left over. And you can keep doing this over and over doing any amount of damage.

Wrong! First of all, Culling the Weak is an instant, not an enchantment. You only get to sacrifice one creature when you play it, not infinite creatures. Secondly, that's not how regeneration works. When you sacrifice a creature, you can't regenerate it.

4. Captain Oblivious decides to rewrite the rulebook!

The combo is Mind Over Matter + Future Sight. The top card of your library, for all intents and purposes, is in your hand. Tap your lands for mana, then discard cards to untap them. Repeat until you have found either Ambassador Laquatus or Stroke of

Genius and have enough mana to deck your opponent. If need be, discard everything except a Reminisce, play it, and repeat. You can completely control the game and slowly kill your opponent, or you could kill him in one turn.

Wrong! "For all intents and purposes"? Yikes! That has no meaning here! Future Sight lets you *play* the card on top of your library as though it were in your hand—but it doesn't actually put it into your hand or let you use it for any other purpose. The cost of Mind Over Matter's ability is "discard a card from your hand." Since the card on top of your library isn't in your hand, you can't discard it to pay Mind Over Matter's cost.

n. Captain Oblivious thinks artifact is a color!

I've got a cool combo I just came up with. This can be hard to pull off, but the look on your opponent's face is worth using it. You need to have out a Mycosynth Lattice, a Wild Mongrel with some sort of evasion, and a mix of 18 permanents (other than the Mongrel) and cards in hand. Attack with the Mongrel, then play Retract before damage is on the stack. In response to Retract, turn the Mongrel a color. It doesn't matter what color. Once Retract resolves, you bounce all of your permanents... *except* for the Mongrel. Now discard everything to the Mongrel to deal 20+ damage.

Wrong! Turning the Mongrel a different color doesn't change it from being an artifact. It'll just be a blue artifact, or a red artifact, or whatever. It'll still return to your hand due to Retract.

3. Captain Oblivious tries to teach me a thing or two!

I love Fist of Suns too. But, unless I made some mistake, you and Devin missed its most obvious use.

Look, here's how you get a spell onto the stack:

- 1) You announce your spell.
- 2) You make any choices about its mode and targets.
- 3) You pay its mana cost.

What Fist of Suns does is let you replace step 3 with "You pay WUBRG."

So picture this. I announce Rolling Thunder, using 1030 for X, and I divide the damage such that every player other than me and every creature that isn't mine is going to be taking about one hundred octillion damage (100,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000). Now I have to pay the mana cost, which is 1030 generic mana plus two red mana. Instead, at this point, I opt to spend WUBRG. Also, I really, really hope nobody is holding something like Honorable Passage or Reverse Damage.

See? I'm pretty sure Fist of Suns can replace the (arbitrarily high) costs of X-spells as they're being cast. You just pick literally any value you want for X. So, instead of wasting your time with 10cc+ spells like Hypnox, you should pair the Fist with X spells that will just win the game right then and there.

Wrong-a-long-a-ding-dong! I've just got to go right to the Comp Rules for this one. The glossary entry for "X" includes this line: "If you're playing a spell that has X in its mana cost and an effect lets you play it without paying any cost that includes X, the only legal choice for X is 0."

An actual deck. Sort of. Not really.

Carlos Hoyos, Alex Rodgers, and Andrea Greco all wrote in to suggest a Glimpse of Nature + Kobolds deck. Carlos's deck was type 1.5 and included Recycle; its victory conditions were Hurricane and Biorhythm. Alex's deck suggestion was simply Glimpse + Kobolds + Goblin Bombardment. Andrea's deck used Junkyo Bell, Shimatsu the Bloodcloaked, and Tears of Rage to take advantage of the large numbers of free creatures. Me, I want it all. I want to play my entire deck and win on turn 1. Just to be clear, this deck is untuned, untested, and will fizzle most of the time. But sometimes—I think—it won't.

The Dumbest Deck Ever?

Type 1 Glimpse of Nature deck

You need a Glimpse and a green mana source (or a Land Grant) in your opening hand. After that, pray.

2. Captain Oblivious gets his mitts on Spellweaver Helix!

In your recent article about Spellweaver Helix, you overlooked two combos with Spellweaver Helix, one of which is completely insane while the other is merely very good.

Combo #1—Spellweaver Helix, Panoptic Mirror, and two other sorceries (might I suggest Terminate and Firebolt)—imprint both the Terminate and the Firebolt on the Spellweaver Helix and just one of these on the Panoptic Mirror, so at the beginning of each upkeep you get to play a copy of each imprinted spell.

Combo #2—(this is the insane one) It involves two Spellweaver Helixes and two copies of one sorcery and three copies of another (might I again suggest Terminate and Firebolt)—imprint both Spellweaver Helixes with the Firebolt and the Terminate. Then you just manage to play either the Firebolt or the Terminate and you have infinite copies of each sorcery.

Wrong! This was one of the most popular *Mirrodin* bombos. Helix triggers when you play a *card*. The Mirror and the Helix each let you play a copy of a spell—and a copy isn't a card. Neither the Mirror nor the Helix will trigger the Helix.

2'. He's still got a Helix—can someone take that thing away from him?

Suppose Shock and Dragonstorm are imprinted in the Helix. If I play Shock at the end of my opponent's turn and he or she played 2 spells that turn, do I put into play 2 or 3 Dragons?

Tricky Captain Oblivious! The instinct is to answer "2" or "3," but the actual answer is "**Wrong!**" You can't imprint Shock (or, for that matter, Terminate). You can only imprint sorceries.

1. Captain Oblivious gets the confusing terminology confused!

I found a nice little combo that... is quite evil!! Use Tooth and Nail of course, but go for Myojin of Infinite Rage and Myojin of Cleansing Fire. Why? Well, they both come in with

a divinity counter on them. Use the white one to destroy all other creatures. The red Myojin lives because it's indestructible. Then use it to destroy all lands. So now, all creatures and lands are dead, and you have a 7/4 and a 4/6 to beat down with. That's a 2-turn clock and your opponent has no mana and no creatures (I'm guessing they have no indestructible creatures). How fun, a Wrath of God and Armageddon all at once!!
Enjoy.

Wrong! This is #1 because it's the most common bombo I get. There is a difference between "playing a creature" and "putting a creature into play." "Playing a creature" means paying its mana cost and putting it on the stack. **Magic** Rules Manager John Carter has a great shorthand to remember the difference: Just look at the verb. Did you *play* the Myojin, or did you *put* the Myojin? The Myojin don't get divinity counters unless you play them legitimately—no freebies.

0. Captain Oblivious goes bonkers!

Okay, I am calm. I am sane. That reminds me... I've been takin' a look at Upheaval, that broken bounce card that dominated in *Odyssey*. Well, I found another broken card in *Odyssey* called Mindslicer. Here's how the insane combo works. First, have a Culling the Weak and a Mindslicer in play. Play Upheaval. As the Upheaval resolves, sac the Mindslicer to Culling the Weak. Doing that should force your opponent to discard all those permanents he just returned to his hand. Best of all, you have 4 black mana floating. Why not cast some nice cards? Toss down a zero-mana card and summon a Braids with the other mana. Keep slapping down permanents every turn and, well, your opponent is gonna lose everything he or she plays! Isn't that fun! It is... well, I hope the rules lawyers allow it...

Wrong! Oh, silly Captain Oblivious, blaming the rules lawyers when his bombos don't work. This is a doozy of confused timing. Culling the Weak can't be in play because it's still an instant, not an enchantment. More importantly, you can't sac the Mindslicer to Culling the Weak "as Upheaval resolves." You can't do anything as a spell or ability is resolving. The best you can do is sac Mindslicer while Upheaval is on the stack, which will make each player discard their hands *before* Upheaval resolves and bounces all permanents. Captain Obvious also seems to have neglected the fact that Mindslicer is symmetric, which means it zotzes his hand too. Where does that Braids come from? Oh, but the Captain wasn't done yet.

Sorry for the second e-mail, but I found how to make the "bombo" turn into a true bomb. Keep Culling the Weak and Mindslicer in play, but this time have Pattern of Rebirth attached to Mindslicer. Play Upheaval and sac the Mindslicer before Upheaval resolves, like you said. Then the Pattern of Rebirth ability kicks in after the Upheaval resolves. Really wanna make your opponent scream? Grab Hypnox. Or (another fun thing) grab Darksteel Colossus. Or (even better) grab a Kamahl and smash your opponent to little bits as soon as it hits play. This bomb works. Trust me.

Wrong! This doesn't come any closer to working. Culling the Weak is still an instant. And the timing is still way off. You have Mindslicer with Pattern of Rebirth in play. You play Upheaval. Upheaval goes on the stack. In response, you play Culling the Weak and sacrifice Mindslicer. Mindslicer goes to the graveyard. Mindslicer's ability and Pattern of Rebirth's ability both trigger. You put them on the stack in whichever order you choose. *But the important thing is that they both go on the stack on top of Upheaval!* It's a last-in-first-out stack. Both Mindslicer's ability and Pattern of Rebirth's ability will resolve *before* Upheaval resolves. Whatever you put into play with Pattern of Rebirth will just wind up in your hand.

Trust me.

Until next week, watch out for Captain Oblivious!

Mark

PS: For more mad rulez skillz, check out John Carter's Saturday School column. For some reason, he often gets emails based on stuff I talk about. Strange. Just remember: You can't twist the rules into knots unless you understand them first.

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