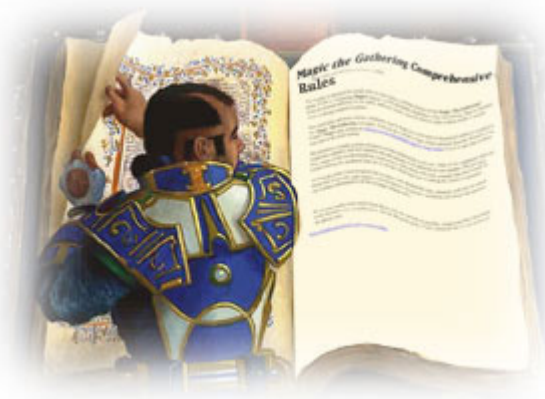


Mark Gottlieb

Thursday, November 04, 2004

Welcome, once again, to House of Cards. This week I thought I'd do something different and mercilessly mock a number of players who a) Aren't rocket scientists, and have therefore not memorized all 86 pages of the Comprehensive Rules, and b) Were foolishly thoughtful enough to send me email with their personal combo creations. What? I did that last week? Oh. I'll have to think of something else then.



Thinking...

Thinking...

Nah, forget it, let's talk about bombos some more. Just like the first time, last week's column was tremendously popular. Something about Schadenfreude, I guess. Everyone delights in the misery of others. You guys are all jerks! And that guy who mercilessly mocked his own fans—he's the biggest jerk of all! However, to those people who wrote in expressing concern over my jerkitude, please note that I'd never use the real name of anyone I'm, uh, playfully chiding. I'm not out to embarrass anyone.

A large swath of emails tried to "correct" the bombos. So let's have a Top 4 list of the ideas multiple people sent in:

13. If you add a Neurok Transmuter to the Wild Mongrel-Mycosynth Lattice combo, it works!

e. If you put Savage Beating into the Spellbinder instead of Dream's Grip, it works!

¾. If your Ovinomancer targets an indestructible creature, it works!

And the most popular:

-1. If you add Vedalken Orrery to the Upheaval-Mindslicer combo, it works!

Sure, sure. If the combos that don't work had different cards in them, they wouldn't be combos that don't work. That's not the point. The point is to make fun of people. No, that's not it. The point is to revel in the wrong. For me to fix these misbegotten combos would be to betray the creative visions of their authors. Whom I'd very much like to make fun of. Furthermore, Bombo 0 (the Upheaval-Mindslicer thing) didn't include Vedalken Orrery for a very specific reason: Its author sent it to me in April. April was a now-mythical time when skies were sunny, flower petals danced in the spring breeze, and Vedalken Orrery didn't exist yet. I wouldn't preview it until 3 weeks later. The other thing about Combo 0 that completely slipped my attention (and the attention of everyone except two people who wrote in to me—and no, I don't feel like making fun of them right now) is that half of it showed up in the first Attack of the Bombos. When I was perusing my old emails for new bombos this was the furthest back I went—part 1 (Upheaval-Mindslicer) was right *before* I wrote the last column and it made it into that one; part 2 (Upheaval-Mindslicer-Pattern of Rebirth) was right *after* I wrote the last column so the whole thread made it into the new article.

Hold, Please

So, you want some new combos? I'm going to start out with an exercise in pure frustration.

Whenever possible, I test the decks I post here on **Magic Online**. I'll tweak and tune until the deck

actually wins a game or two (just to show it can) and then up on the Internet it goes. If a deck can't win a game, I pretty much won't post it. Pretty much.

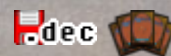
Kevin Thompson sent me a combo that I liked a lot. He was trying to break Hold the Line. Sometime after he mentioned Hold the Line-Soulblast and sometime before he mentioned Ragged Veins-Crushing Pain, he mentioned Hold the Line-Ragged Veins. I liked that a lot. I couldn't figure out what to do with Ragged Veins, and this was a quick way to funnel 21 or so through one of your opponent's unsuspecting creatures and right into his solar plexus. (Solar plexus, by the way, is one of the strangest body parts ever. Have you ever seen a solar plexus? Do you have a lunar plexus? On second thought, don't answer that.)



I put a deck together based around Hold the Line. Besides Ragged Veins, it had other ways to take advantage of a +7/+7 boost. Spikeshot Goblin could go to the dome with that kind of muscle. So could Bloodshot Cyclops, Surestrike Trident, and Grab the Reins. I wanted ways to turn my pump into your pain. I populated the deck with cheap, small blockers—blockers that should keep me alive, but that my opponent shouldn't be afraid to attack into. Wall of Blood goes well with both Ragged Veins and Grab the Reins (any card that ends in “-eins,” really) to create a Hatred-type effect. I included Incite War to make sure my opponent would attack, and (my masterstroke) I included Forbidden Orchard to make sure my opponent would have creatures to attack me with. And then, when the deck was complete, I lost all my games.

Why? It's a fragile combo. It has lots of redundant parts, but it fails without at least two blockers, Hold the Line, a damage-channeling card, and a cooperative opponent. Add to that a very shaky mana base. But the real problem was that *no one attacked me!* I played deck after deck after deck of Zuberass, Shrines, and Devouring Greed. It's the new Affinity: It's the fast, ubiquitous, strong block deck that's very robust and made of nearly all commons... but unlike Affinity, this deck doesn't beat your face in in three turns. It sits behind Zuberass, starts pinging away with Honden of Infinite Rage, and finishes with Devouring Greed. When you're amassing a Zuberass army, you don't much feel like sending one hurtling into a Wall of Blood (which is very suspicious on its own). I was frequently in the weird position where if my opponent attacked me (and had no disruption), I'd win the game—but if he didn't attack, I was helpless. And they somehow all knew it. I never got the mana right to induce an attack, play Hold the Line, *and* funnel the damage. Still, I like the deck, so I'll post it. I'll leave it to you, O Internettians, to fix it.

Waiting in Line



Main Deck

60 cards

3 Forbidden Orchard	2 Bloodshot Cyclops	2 Darksteel Ingot
3 Mirrodin's Core	4 Cinder Wall	2 Grab the Reins
6 Mountain	3 Kami of Ancient Law	4 Hold the Line
8 Plains	2 Samurai of the Pale Curtain	4 Incite War
2 Swamp	4 Spikeshot Goblin	4 Ragged Veins
2 Urborg Volcano	4 Wall of Blood	1 Surestrike Trident
<hr/>		
24 lands	19 creatures	17 other spells

The Samurai of the Pale Curtain were a last-minute Zubera-hating addition. As long as the mana base is already awful...

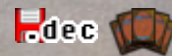
Over the Moon

Now let's draw cards. RML from NC (New Carthage? Nova Cotia? Nufflewad County? Nearly Canada? Perhaps North Carolina?) suggested the bizarre and slowly explosive card-drawing combo of Moonring Mirror and Teferi's Puzzle Box. Let's say you have N cards in your hand at the start of your turn with both of these permanents in play. You draw a card, so you're at $N+1$. One card goes under the Mirror. Then the Puzzle Box takes you for a whirl. You still have $N+1$ cards, but they're all different, and now there are $N+2$ cards under the Mirror. Next turn, you swap hands with the Mirror and do-si-do. Bow to your newly drawn card and you have $N+3$ while the Mirror has $N+2$, then do the Puzzle Box promenade until the Mirror has $2N+5$ cards. Next turn, that number of cards plus one more will be in your hand and the Mirror will have $3N+10$. This is, of course, a fantastic way to deck yourself. It's also just a theoretical number; play or discard some cards and you'll keep your library shredding somewhat in check. Oh, and to put $3N+10$ in perspective, say N is 4. Reasonable number of cards to start out with in hand, right? If so, there are now 22 cards—more than a third of your deck—being hoarded by Moonring Mirror on turn 3 of this action, while you're holding 14 yourself.



RML's quandary was what to do next: "I don't really know what to do with all these cards. I mean, sure, you could just play them, but there's got to be something more. Maro maybe?" So I forwarded the email to Mark Rosewater, and... ooohhh, he meant the *card*! Right-o. When I have a ridiculous amount of cards in my hand, I somehow always think of Turbulent Dreams first. Jushi Apprentice came to mind as both a way to get more cards and a way to take advantage of the bounty. Maro and its friend Empyrial Plate are fine choices. I tried combining this deck with Tor-Erik Hokstad's Zur's Weirding-Honden of Cleansing Fire suggestion, and while I was able to achieve a lock in a couple of games, it was pretty clunky and expensive to put them together. I thought Hisoka, Minamo Sensei might do something with a swelled hand, but it didn't seem that useful. In the end, here's what I wound up with.

Moonachie



Main Deck

60 cards

8 Forest
 11 Island
 2 Minamo, School at Water's Edge
 3 Mirrodin's Core

 24 lands

3 Graceful Adept
 4 Jushi Apprentice
 4 Maro
 4 Phantom Warrior

 15 creatures

3 Empyrial Plate
 4 Moonring Mirror
 2 Talisman of Progress
 2 Talisman of Unity
 4 Teferi's Puzzle Box
 4 Turbulent Dreams
 2 Words of Wind

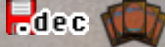
21 other spells

Reverse the Plunge into Blood Sands

And my look at the *Champions of Kamigawa* cards Anthony Alongi previewed continues. Next up is Reverse the Sands, which I had only ever considered to be a multiplayer card until Agsded the Defiler took time out of his busy day marauding through medieval Norse villages to send me the combo of Reverse the Sands + Plunge into Darkness. On your opponent's end step, you Plunge down to 1 life looking for Reverse the Sands, untap, and play it. Voila! Plunge is both the method to find Reverse the Sands and the method to make it into a huge life swing.

Naturally, there are grave risks. This combo isn't going anywhere unless you have a hefty 8 mana to move those sands around. You might Plunge yourself down to 1 and miss. You might Plunge yourself down to 1 while your opponent is holding a Shock. You might not have a way to deliver the final ping. Agsded suggested Blasting Station, but I like Triskelion here. I also considered Underworld Dreams and Maggot Carrier.

The Barter Battle Book



Main Deck

60 cards

3 Mirrodin's Core	4 Triskelion	2 Barter in Blood
9 Plains	_____	4 Darksteel Ingot
11 Swamp	4 creatures	3 Diabolic Tutor
_____		4 Night's Whisper
23 lands		4 Phyrexian Arena
		4 Plunge into Darkness
		4 Reverse the Sands
		4 Talisman of Dominance
		4 Wrath of God

		33 other spells

What's nice about this deck is that two of its goals (blowing away your own life total and finding your combo pieces) dovetail nicely.

Until next week, watch out for Cranial Extraction!

Mark

