

Scott Wills

Monday, November 08, 2004

Almost since the first draft I have done with *Champions of Kamigawa* I've held the opinion that green is one of its weakest colours for limited. Unfortunately this often seems to be the case in limited formats in general, as green doesn't usually get any removal spells or any evasion creatures and those are the sorts of cards that you tend to value highly in limited formats. It usually takes some ridiculously powerful creature along the lines of Wild Mongrel or Timberwatch Elf before you get people clamouring for green.

Even in this sealed format green seems to be chosen less frequently than the other colours due to its lack of powerful commons. Fellow brit Craig Stevenson recently ran a series of sealed deck builds over at StarCityGames and in his summary article he listed how often the colours were chosen.

He opened up twelve sealed decks and noted the best deck available from the card pool. Black saw play eleven out of the twelve times, and white and red saw play eight and seven times respectively. Along with blue, green came in last as it only saw play in five of the builds. Now I don't pretend that twelve sealed decks is a huge sample by any means, but the numbers Craig posted were very close to what I'd expect.

Drafting Green

The best green common is almost universally agreed to be Kodama's Reach. There's no questioning that it's a nice card, but compared to Befoul, Cage of Hands, Teller of Tales and Glacial Ray it really doesn't actually impact the game by itself. It allows you to cast your more powerful spells earlier, and it allows you to play spells from different colours but by itself it does nothing to help you win the game. If you haven't drawn your powerful spells then the Reach isn't going to help you out. Some people will cite the deck thinning aspect of the card improving your draws over a long game, but really this isn't likely to provide a tangible advantage until (typically) 10-15 turns later.

Opinions on the second best green card are divided. It probably depends upon what archetype you're trying to draft but in general I think Sakura-Tribe Elder should be taken ahead of Kodama's Might and the other green creatures. Once again though, you have a creature that isn't realistically going to win the game by itself. All it can do is help you cast your other spells faster, and more consistently. Sometimes that will be enough to win the game, but that's not always the case.

So, given that the best green cards are mana fixers it makes sense to draft your green decks to take advantage of this fact. What green does best is allow you to splash other colours and accelerate your mana, so when drafting green you should always be on the lookout for powerful cards in any colour. You also shouldn't be afraid of playing a few more high-costed cards than you might otherwise do. There's no point accelerating your mana and then casting a Kami of the Hunt; it's the powerful creatures like Moss Kami you want to be dropping. If some of your spells merely fix your mana then you'll typically have less spells that impact the game so you need to make sure the ones you do have are powerful enough to make up for this.

I've tried all manner of standard two colour green decks and when these decks do win it's rarely on the back of the green spells. Having said that, green-black is probably one of my favourite green-X combinations because the addition of black gives you removal, excellent early drops and a decent flyer too. The fat green creatures usually make up the top end of the curve. These two colours go quite well together as the green cards fill some of the holes black has.

This is a fairly typical green-black deck that won one of my drafts recently:

Green-black draft deck

When drafting this sort of deck you take removal over all the decent creatures. Rend Spirit, Rend Flesh, Befoul, etc. are the cards you want to be picking early. You aren't going to get passed many of these so it's important that you take them when you see them. Kami of the Waning Moon is a card I quite like in green-black as it frequently grants your best creature some much-needed evasion. It can also trade with several of the common flyers should you need it to. Serpent Skin is another card that tends to shine a little brighter in green-black simply because your three mana creatures are often Villainous Ogres or Nezumi Ronin and your opponent will be much more likely to block these with their 2/2s to avoid the three damage. Dropping Serpent Skin onto an Ogre or Ronin on the fourth turn after they've blocked and you've put damage on the stack leaves you with a very threatening creature in play.

Part of the reason I prefer green-black to green-red is that black is much deeper and you tend to get passed more black removal spells as a result. On top of that cards like Befoul, Swallowing Plague and Hideous Laughter aren't easily splashed, as opposed to Glacial Ray and Yamabushi's Flame. This means you get passed the good red cards far less frequently and combined with the weakness of green this means that your green-red deck often ends up lacking power. I've seen people play green-white and green-blue decks and while they can sometimes work I'm not a fan personally. They just die to an early Cutthroat and their only plan is to race as they usually have only one or two ways of dealing with opposing threats. They do have effects that help them win races – damage prevention in white, bounce in blue – but in general these decks really suffer if they have a weak draw.

As far as the rest of the green cards go I think the pick order is very dependant on what other cards you've already drafted. Kodama's Might is an excellent trick and I'd take it over the creatures most of the time, especially if I had some other Arcane spells in the deck. Kami of the Hunt, Feral Deceiver and Moss Kami are solid creatures and you'll be happy to play them all. You need to maintain a decent mana curve still and at the same time you want creatures that will win you the game. Having a nice balance of creatures is more important than having a rigid pick order that you'll always stick to.

Drafting multiple colours

As I said previously, my green decks are much more commonly of the multi-colour variety. With the best green commons giving you easy access to additional colours it makes sense to take advantage of this fact. Typically you'll want to draft a solid second colour alongside the green and then splash for any extra removal spells you pick up. Glacial Ray is an excellent card for this deck as it's efficient removal and you'll often have some Arcane cards like Kodama's Reach or Kodama's Might that you can Splice the Ray onto. Other removal spells like Rend Flesh, Rend Spirit, Yamabushi's Flame and Cage of Hands are all easily splashed too.

Most multi-colour green decks should end up with two main colours and a third colour splashed with a fourth or even fifth being splashed on some occasions too. If you end up with a four-colour deck it's important to try and avoid any double-casting costs in your non-green colours. If you're mostly green-black with a small blue and red splash then you might want to try and avoid cards like Wicked Akuba as you might find yourself having to choose between finding your second Swamp or the Mountain/Island you need to cast your splash card.

There's a balance to be made between picking up the good cards and picking the mana fixers that you'll need to be able to cast those cards. Early in a draft when your colours aren't fixed then obviously you take the good card but once you're into the second booster then you'll need to make a conscious effort to grab a fixer or two. You take Kodama's Reach over all the other green commons at

that point and I'd probably take it above cards like Ronin Houndmaster or Nezumi Cutthroat even if they were in your other main colour.

The five lands that are capable of producing two colours of mana should also be considered solid picks if you'll need both colours of mana that they can produce. Their drawback is a little annoying but far less annoying than not being able to cast the spells in your hand.

Shrine On

The most common way for me to fall into a multi-colour green deck is not through picking up an early Kodama's Reach (although that does sometime happen) but instead due to getting one of the five Hondens.

In the current format of triple *Champions* you can often pick up at least one more Honden and when you get two or more of these in play at the same time you get two excellent effects every turn. If you pick up one Honden early on then you'll probably need to have a diverse colour base if you want to be able to play all of the Hondens you get hold of. Green is by far the best way to do this and I've moved into a multi-colour green deck numerous times after picking up a Honden of Infinite Rage or Honden of Seeing Winds in the first few picks of a draft. Once you've got your first Honden you should pick additional ones over pretty much anything outside of Meloku the Clouded Mirror or one of the Dragons.

If I pick up multiple Hondens early on then I often try to make the deck green-blue as you really benefit by having some card drawing to increase your chances of drawing multiple Hondens over the course of the game. Blue also gives you some flyers that can stand in the way of opposing flyers or give you an alternative route to victory.

If you end up with three Hondens of different colours then I'd definitely consider drafting and playing duplicates of any of them. If you have green, white and blue Hondens then you should still value a second Honden of Seeing Winds highly simply because it will increase your chances of drawing it. The fact that they're legendary obviously means you don't want to put two into play but the chances of drawing both aren't that high, and even when you do you probably won't mind doing so because you'll be drawing two cards a turn anyway.

When you're drafting multi-colour green you also have to get some sort of creature base. It's usually not that difficult, as you'll usually have your two main colours along with an easily splashable third. There is a deck you can draft if you want to try for something a little more fun though, and it's quite simply what I'd call the "Zebra Deck". Once you know you're drafting 3 or more colours then you focus very heavily on drafting as many Zuberass as you can. These little guys should not be underestimated when you have them in multiples; all you need is a way to put multiples of them into your graveyard at the same time and you can generate some amazing effects. The two most common ways to do this are via Devouring Greed or Devouring Rage but there are other cards like Blood Rites that can perform a similar function. You have to pick the Zuberass much higher than you would normally in order to get a decent quantity of them. You'll probably need to take them around 3rd-7th pick if you want to make them the focus of your deck.

This deck works very well in five-colour green as you can play any of the five Zuberass then. Even the white Zuberass becomes playable if it's going to multiply the effects the other ones have. With this deck you'll want to pick up several green Soulshift creatures that will allow you to recur your Zuberass and increase the Spirit count improving the two finishers. If you can pair this up with a deck that has Honden of Life's Web in it then you've got an even better chance of doing something really unfair with your Devouring Greed.

Here is an example of the sort of deck I'm talking about. I drafted this partly for fun and partly in seriousness but it won the draft pretty easily.

Zebra Deck

This looks very janky, and in a lot of respects it is, but it plays a LOT better than it looks fortunately. With three land searchers alongside the two dual-lands the mana was fine despite the fact it only had 16 lands. It always had something to do in the first two turns of the game and it could routinely stall long enough to draw multiple Hondens or one of the two Devouring cards.

For those of you who doubt what I'm saying (and I can't say I'd blame you if you did!) then feel free to download the MTGO .dec file and try it out against any other *Champions* draft decks you might've drafted recently.

I hope that gives you some ideas as to the different ways you can approach drafting green in this format. Just because a colour is weak doesn't mean you should ignore it altogether as you can always take advantage of its strong areas and find ways to compensate for the weak ones.

That's it for this week; see you again next Monday for some *Unhinged* fun!

© 1995-2009 Wizards of the Coast LLC, a subsidiary of Hasbro, Inc. All Rights Reserved.
[Terms of Use](#) | [Privacy Statement](#)

