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# The Psychic Vortex Challenge



Adrian Sullivan · *Single-Card Strategies*  
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It's been nearly two months since the [results](#) of the Uyo Challenge, and once again I see the readers are fired up about trying to meet my challenge. I profiled Psychic Vortex [two weeks ago](#), and I have to say that people were very enthusiastic about my look at the card. *Psychic Vortex* just stands out as one of those cards that really does inspire the imagination. I remember the first time that I looked at the card and tried to figure out what I could do to abuse the "cost" of the card. Judging from all of the creative deck submissions for the Challenge, it seems like it has done its job in inspiring you as well.



Unlike previous challenges, there was a *great* deal more diversity in the submissions. I did have quite a few people send in Donate decks, intending to give a Vortex to an unsuspecting opponent, often combined with *Underworld Dreams* or some other such trick. Unfortunately, an opponent isn't required to pay upkeep, so except in the case of those decks that instead centered on *Eon Hub*, none of those decks worked. *Seismic Assault* was another popular card, and one of the *Seismic Assault* submissions did get the nod this week. The criteria I've used to judge the decks remains the same since the beginning of Card Challenges way back with the Sundering Titan Challenge [37 weeks ago](#). They are:

- Decks that focus on doing something and doing it well
- Decks that have that little extra creativity or innovation
- Speed as a tiebreaker – get your submission in sooner, you beat out a similar deck

Simple, really. There were a lot of great submissions this week, so it was harder than usual. Combine that with having to stay in bed all weekend from illness, and you had one very sad writer trying to find the best submissions. It could be said that those submissions that helped me feel better got a slightly stronger nod than others, and I also want to thank all of the people who mentioned enjoying my movie references – each e-mail really did make me feel a little better. With that said, let's check out the winning decks.

## The Honorable Mention: Rat-tastic

This first submission isn't nearly as honed as a lot of the other submissions that aren't getting mentioned this week, but it made me laugh out loud when I saw it. That, combined with the creative use of a previous card I've covered in my column, *Relentless Rats*, really made me want to put a little spotlight on krizc's Legacy (formerly known as "Type 1.5") legal deck.

krizc writes:

I have a really crazy idea with *Psychic Vortex*. It's a silly B/g/u deck that revolves around *Relentless Rats*. Basically, the deck is mostly black Rat aggro until you can get out a *Psychic Vortex/Aluren* engine. You gradually end up drawing a fistful of rats each turn, and getting to play them all for free, which negates the penalty of having to sacrifice most of your lands. The deck plays out like any other relentless

rats deck, but has that extra punch if the side-combo gets played. **Naturalize** is there just in case you have only the Vortex out, and if it's hurting you more than it's helping. The best part of this deck is that it can still win as a rat deck even if the Vortex is not in play.

Somehow, I imagine the Vortex helps, though. Here is the list:

The Honorable Mention: Rat-tastic		
60 cards		
8 <b>Swamp</b>	24 <b>Relentless Rats</b>	4 <b>Aluren</b>
4 <b>Llanowar Wastes</b>	24 creatures	4 <b>Psychic Vortex</b>
4 <b>Yavimaya Coast</b>		4 <b>Naturalize</b>
4 <b>Underground River</b>		12 other spells
4 <b>City of Brass</b>		
24 land		

I can see that the decklist could use a little bit of help. The biggest thing that could probably be improved is the mana base. **Fellwar Stone** or Talismans of some kind could really help improve the speed of the deck, and if you really want to add money to the deck, you could always add in actual dual lands. For less money, **Gemstone Mine** is always a great inclusion in a Vortex deck (so long as you don't use too many) – it's going to die anyway, so why not have good mana fixing in the meantime? I'm not sure if **Naturalize** is necessary at all – I think I'd rather just have the additional mana acceleration. If you do include dual lands, **Nature's Lore** might be a really good idea, getting you both more mana and fixing your colors.

While certainly not the most potent of submissions, I really enjoyed the idea of using a powerful card like **Psychic Vortex** to simply power out a bunch of lowly rats.

### Third Place: Pallinchron Bridge

Say congratulations to Christian Moeller-Holst from Denmark, for his impressive 3rd appearance in a challenge. Christian's deck is similar to the finalist's deck, but includes a card I've always enjoyed: **Palinchron**. With **Palinchron** being essentially free, there is something exciting about the possibility of drawing several cards and then dropping numerous **Palinchrons** on the next turn. Here is his list:

Third Place: Pallinchron Bridge		
60 cards		
4 <b>City of Brass</b>	3 <b>Palinchron</b>	4 <b>Psychic Vortex</b>
12 <b>Island</b>	4 <b>Birds of Paradise</b>	4 <b>Ensnaring Bridge</b>
8 <b>Forest</b>	7 creatures	4 <b>Manabond</b>
24 land		3 <b>Gaea's Blessing</b>
		3 <b>Null Brooch</b>
		4 <b>Turbulent Dreams</b>
		3 <b>Fireball</b>
		3 <b>Intuition</b>
		1 <b>Crucible of Worlds</b>
		29 other spells

One of the fun things about the deck is that with **Ensnaring Bridge** your opponent may not be able to attack, but once you draw from the Vortex, your **Palinchrons** will be able to. The interaction between **Null Brooch**, **Psychic Vortex**, **Manabond**, and **Ensnaring Bridge** is just wonderful. Christian has a couple of useful things to say about his list:

You mentioned the **Null Brooch** in your article and I must admit that I really like it in this deck since it also works very well with **Ensnaring Bridge**. It is also very nice to

have some way to counter spells, should your opponent have some way of dealing damage without attacking. **Turbulent Dreams** is another card that you mentioned in your article, and since it also works wonders with the Bridge, as well as hold off the enemy until you'll get the missing cards, I've chosen to include it as well. I don't think that **Birds of Paradise** needs much explanation, it's just a great card - it's that simple, and it helps me power out a lethal **Fireball**. The win conditions are **Fireball** and **Palinchron**, as I should have plenty of mana to kill the opponent. The odd one-of is the **Crucible of Worlds**, but I figured that it would be sort of okay in this deck, though I'm not really sure just how good.



The deck includes **Intuition** as a useful tutor spell that can help finish any part off, and **Intuition/Gaea's Blessing** can also be used to keep an almost expired deck from being completely used up by a long game. One of the weaknesses of this deck is that it is pretty hard to get the deck going against someone with countermagic – should they keep the Vortex out of play, it could be very rough. Generally a deck like this is going to want to get out **Null Brooch** first, as potential protection for the Vortex. With that in mind, I would strongly consider dropping the Crucible in this deck for yet another **Null Brooch**.

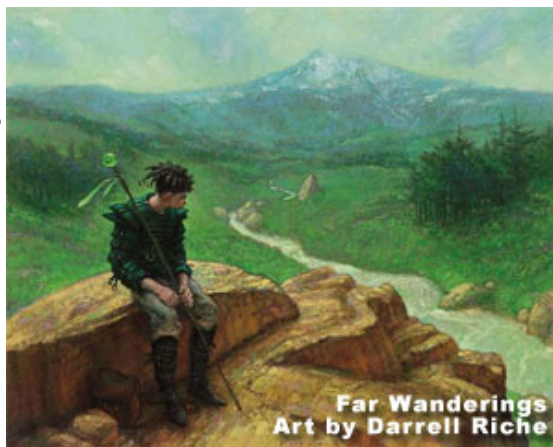
Congratulations again to Christian for his third entry into the deck challenges. I hope if we're ever at a big event together that we get a chance to meet! I've really enjoyed your approach to a lot of cards.

## Finalist: *Another Bridge deck*

Brendan Flaherty had another submission that was quite similar to Christian's deck, but fundamentally different in its final approach. Running a combination of **Stormbind** and **Seismic Assault** as his primary path, his fully three-color version may not have the “cool” factor of **Palinchron** and **Fireball** for the kill, but it is definitely far more deadly than Christian's deck. Like Christian, he includes the powerful Vortex/Brooch/Bridge suite. Here is his list:

Finalist: <i>Another Bridge deck</i>		
60 cards		
6 <b>Island</b>	2 <b>Wall of Blossoms</b>	4 <b>Psychic Vortex</b>
5 <b>Forest</b>	2 <b>Wall of Roots</b>	4 <b>Brainstorm</b>
4 <b>Mountain</b>	2 <b>Vine Trellis</b>	4 <b>Fiery Temper</b>
3 <b>Gemstone Mine</b>		3 <b>Seismic Assault</b>
3 <b>Lotus Vale</b>	6 creatures	3 <b>Far Wanderings</b>
3 <b>City of Brass</b>		3 <b>Ensnaring Bridge</b>
24 land		3 <b>Null Brooch</b>
		2 <b>Long-Term Plans</b>
		2 <b>Reminisce</b>
		2 <b>Stormbind</b>
		30 other spells

One of the features I especially like in this deck is the use of **Far Wanderings**. You can expect that a deck like this will be able to achieve Threshold quite quickly and easily, so **Far Wanderings** is very likely to grab *three* lands and more than make up for the **Psychic Vortex** land drawback. **Far Wanderings** also makes splashing for **Seismic Assault** much, much easier. Brendan talks about this in his own discussion of this deck:



**Psychic Vortex** gets you cards, lots of cards. For the average deck, about a third of these cards will be Lands, and most of these will be discarded, but I figure why not throw them into the graveyard yourself and pick up a little bonus on the side? This brings us to one of my favorite cards, **Seismic Assault**. Certainly an elegant card. We're going to be in a bit of a tight spot here, what with our Land being eaten off of the board as well as straight from the hand, but since they're all going to the same place, and this place is the graveyard, this is the ideal place to add **Far Wanderings**. That'll keep the Vortex happy for a few turns so we can keep chucking Islands at our opponent. Speaking of the opponent, they're going to be doing stuff between our turns, which can potentially be very bad. We can shut them down pretty tightly, though, with a couple of well placed artifacts that capitalize on our handlessness, namely, **Ensnaring Bridge** and another convenient gem, **Null Brooch**. **Stormbind** can keep excess copies of our main enchantments and Bridges from being dead cards, and we'll pack a couple of **Reminisces** to keep the combo rolling, and/or act as a little back-up. A handful of Green Walls for early defense and/or mana acceleration, and that's the core of the deck.

Well said! About the only major change I would make to this deck is to get a few **Lightning Bolts** in there instead of **Fiery Temper**. If you're going to be playing a deck that is otherwise Legacy legal, you might as well play the *real* Bolt here rather than a card that acts as good as a Bolt when you are lucky enough to discard it. Great analysis, Brendan, and good work.

## The Winner: Enchantress-Vortex

We go down to beautiful Brazil for our winner this week. Francisco Barciella's very fun Enchantress deck abuses Vortex in a bunch of very satisfying ways. Check out this list:

The Winner: Enchantress-Vortex		
Main Deck 60 cards		Sideboard
6 Island	2 Pursuit of Knowledge	4 Circle of Protection: Red
10 Forest	2 Abundance	4 Seal of Cleansing
2 Serra's Sanctum	3 Intuition	2 Worship
4 Tropical Island	3 Words of Wind	3 City of Solitude
4 Tundra	1 Worship	2 Energy Flux
26 land	4 Enchantress's Presence	15 sideboard cards
	4 Exploration	
	1 Manabond	
2 Auratog	3 Moment's Peace	
1 Verduran Enchantress	4 Psychic Vortex	
4 Argothian Enchantress		
7 creatures	27 other spells	

One of the truly powerful things about this deck is its great ability to draw cards. Between all of the Enchantresses and the Vortexes, it can definitely keep playing and playing cards. **Auratog** is a truly *great* inclusion in the deck, and I'm very impressed with how it interacts with the Vortex as well, stopping the Vortex from

getting to be too finicky if it has outworn its welcome and also serving as a very fine finisher. **Words of Wind** can accomplish the same trick of killing an overwhelming Vortex. With so much card drawing, drawing all of your cards could be a real threat, but fortunately **Abundance** can be used to avoid this – its ability replaces the draw, so **Abundance** is effective insurance against this final decking. Francisco especially likes these two cards together:

**Abundance** and Vortex is serious fun, with so many cards you can find anything you want. If you want to, you can **Abundance** for all lands and play it all with **Manabond**, or return all your lands with the **Words of Wind** and play it. The deck is pretty funny to play. I hope you like it.

Well, I definitely do. **Exploration** is already a card that works wonders with a **Psychic Vortex**, and combining that with an Enchantress engine is a good idea. The one **Manabond** acts as a more narrow “fifth” **Exploration**, and your **Manabond/Words of Wind** combo is pretty funny and mean at the same time. It shouldn't take long at all for this to overwhelm nearly anyone.

What I would do to pump up the deck a little is to get some more mana and some more enchantments in there at the same time. The deck has enough card drawing and doesn't really need **Pursuit of Knowledge**. Also, **Intuition** just seems like it would take a lot of time given the way the rest of the deck is set up. I would replace these cards with 4 **Fertile Ground** and 1 **Rancor**. The **Fertile Ground** can really speed up the deck while giving you some cheaper enchantments. **Rancor** is really great with **Auratog**, and it can make that little enchantment muncher into a true-killer even if they have a decent blocker. Even before that point, **Rancor** and **Auratog** go really well together, especially if you have out some kind of Enchantress!

## Wrapping Up

I hope you enjoyed this week's article and I want to thank everyone for all of the Challenge submissions I've received over the last two weeks. I'll be celebrating a birthday right around the time of my next column, so I hope I'll be in your thoughts as you read Scott Wills and MaRo's columns at the beginning of next week.

Have a great rest of the week!



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