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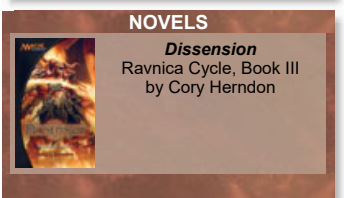
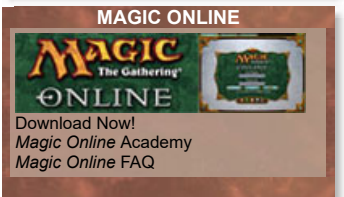
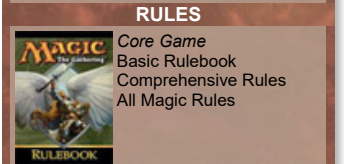
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# Toshiro Umezawa

Adrian Sullivan  
Single-Card Strategies  
Wednesday, January 12, 2005



I have an incredibly cool preview card. His name is Toshiro Umezawa, a Legendary Badass with an incredible power. For those that have already read Rei Nakazawa's [feature article](#) this week, you already know some of the reasons this particular character is special. Once you [see what his card does](#), you'll have even more reason to give this guy respect!



Of all of the preview cards that the [magicthegathering.com](#) columnists received, this one blew me away the most. I don't know why I got this for my preview card, but I have a hunch. Scott Johns knows me pretty well, and he knows that I've made more than a couple of decks with a favorite card that resembles Toshi:



Toshiro Umezawa is probably as close as we can get to Yawgmoth's Will ever again, so much so that I'm surprised they didn't make an anagram out of Yawgmoth's Will to name him. Toshi packs a lot of power, but there

are a couple of things you're going to need to have happening if you want this card to work. You'll need instants in the grave and you'll need to be killing your opponent's creatures. Let's tackle those two questions, last-in-first-out.

## On Monsters and Men

Toshiro Umezawa is a bloodthirsty sort of samurai – he won't give you access to his powers unless something is dying. This is all fine and dandy if your opponent has creatures to kill. We'll get to killing them in a little bit. But what if they decide they don't want to drop a creature you can easily kill? Or, horror of horrors, what if they decided their deck doesn't play any creatures? Thankfully, there are cards that can get around that.

Perhaps one of the most obvious choices here is the card that has been seeing so much play in Type 1 recently: **Forbidden Orchard**. The orchard is an excellent card for this purpose on a number of levels. As a land, its ability can only rarely be countered. In addition, the card makes creatures for free, at virtually any time. Finally, the orchard's ability to make any color mana whatsoever can be of great use to a deck that could very easily be three colors or more.

Somewhat less wonderful (but still good) is **Varchild's War-Riders**. I first saw **Varchild's War-Riders** in play at a November 1996 Standard tournament many, many years ago. The prize was \$1000, and people from all over showed up for a lively event. In the Top 8, one Gary Nawrocki was playing a deck that included fistfuls of burn and the dreaded **Varchild's War-Riders**. The deck itself was very rogue, but looked incredibly good, and my friend Brian Kowal and I had a lot of fun trying to convince Eric "Dinosaur" Taylor that we were in love with the card. Truth be told, I do think that the War Riders were good in Gary's deck, but even today we bring up the War Riders just to annoy ed. War-Riders, War-Riders! Nyah nyah nyah! One fun side note on the **Varchild's War-Riders** is their "Rampage" ability (also known as "Really Bad Bushido"). With a cumulative upkeep of 1/1s being given to your opponent, you should have no trouble giving your opponent creatures.

There are certainly other options, but most of them are simply not as good as these two. **Sleeper Agent** probably isn't worth the trouble. **Infernal Genesis** is incredibly expensive, but it might actually make the cut. Unfortunately, you can't plan on how many creatures your opponent will get, and it is possible that things could go wrong for you. **Phelddagrif** or his Questing brother get the job done, but here you have the worry of a million different colors of mana. Most likely, I bet you'll be playing with an Orchard or two.



## The Killing Fields

So they have creatures. Now you have to kill them. The funny thing about this proposition is that most decks are built with the idea that they just *might* play against a creature deck now and again, and so most of them already have creature kill. Many other decks have responded to this dilemma by using various strategies to thwart this. Toshiro Umezawa isn't satisfied unless there is killing, however, so the blood must flow. You'll want copious amount of dedicated instant creature kill, or something that can stick around and kill things at will.



For repeat killers, there are a ton of options. Cards like **Drop of Honey** or **Culling Scales** can knock off creatures at a slow, regular pace. **Culling Scales** is especially useful since it is a decent card without a Toshiro Umezawa in play (so useful, I wrote [a column](#) about it). Other killers like **Torture Chamber**, **Granite Shard**, or **Cursed Scroll** are nice, but they do require a mana investment to kill something. This can be problematic the more it costs to kill things since it will limit your ability to cast useful instants.

Turning to creatures, there are tons of efficient cards. Pingers like **Sparksmith** and **Fireslinger** are very cheap, but a lowering life total can quickly become problematic if lots of killing needs to be done. One nice bonus, however, is that they do hit the table so cheaply and quickly. Further up on the pinger scale is **Vulshok Sorcerer**, pinging from the get-go as soon as it hits the table. One of my favorite cards, **Jeska, Warrior Adept** is another nice option (and as a Legend, is well paired with Toshiro Umezawa and **Time of Need**), and Kumano only barely misses as a bad option, not only because of the mana cost to activate him, but also because he sends killed creatures not to the afterlife but to the removed from game zone. Finally, perhaps the best option isn't the hasty Tims, but rather the very powerful **Goblin Sharpshooter**. Once he's active, he's ready to kill anything and everything in a deck like this. Since you are

probably planning on giving your opponent some creatures, the more Sharpshooters the merrier. Don't be surprised if a double Sharpshooter/War-Rider combo can give you a "fireball" to kill nearly everything.

Aside from simple pinging, we also have sweeping. **Fire Ants** can tap at any time to deal 1 damage to everyone other than it. If you kill a bunch of opposing creatures at once, Toshiro Umezawa will trigger numerous times and give you an opportunity to crunch out a bunch of instant from the grave. For a wee bit more mana, the older, bigger **Subterranean Spirit** offers a 3/3 body that can pull the same trick, and he's got Protection from Red to boot. Moving into spells, Instants like **Starstorm** and **Holy Light** can kill a bunch of weenies too, and they provide targets for Toshiro Umezawa's killing floor tricks later on as well.

Besides those instants, pretty much any card that kills something works, but if it is an instant, so much the better. If it successfully takes out an opposing critter, Toshiro Umezawa will trigger. **Shock**, **Diabolic Edict**, **Beacon of Destruction**, **Lightning Bolt**, all of these cards serve as both the fuel to start things going, and the fire to burn. If you've already used several instants, casting one kill spell can set off a kind of crazy **Chain Lightning**, pulling out a ton of reusable cards from the yard.

Certainly, creatures can die as a result of normal wear and tear (like combat), and this is a fine way to die. At some point, your opponent might find themselves in the frustrating position of not wanting to actually get their creatures into combat. The graveyard could just be too scary if something died!

## Finding the right moment

There are a *ton* of instants. In fact, 897 instants have been printed so far. Thankfully, you don't have to go looking at every instant in existence to figure out which ones you'll want to play. There are a couple of simple ways to figure this out.

**Be cheap** – Creatures can die at any odd time. It's a fact of life, and that sucks, but you have to be ready when the moment comes. If you have a lot of cheap instants, you can be ready. One thing to realize is that if an opposing creature dies, your instant has to *already be in the yard* to be a legal target for Toshiro Umezawa's ability. Choosing targets happens immediately when abilities trigger.



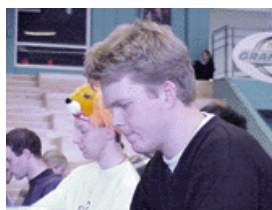
**Be a killer** – As I've already touched on, instants that kill are good. Toshiro Umezawa gets all worked up at the sight of blood, so a card that kills is a great card for him, being both a trigger for his ability and a potential target for his ability.

**Go deep** – Cards that get you farther into your library, either by searching through it or by drawing cards are even better than normal here. Essentially, all of these cards build on each other and find more of everything that your deck has to offer, including more instants that go deep. This might remind you a bit of the previous "killer" idea.

## In the yard

Getting these instants in the yard comes in three basic categories: Natural Accumulation, Greased Accumulation, and actual Dedicated Accumulation.

A good example of Natural Accumulation is Mike Flores's deck "Squeaky Wheel" (see his Dojo-era article [here](#)) played to a good finish by our friend, Norway's Sturla Bingen. Essentially, Squeaky Wheel was a Yawgmoth's Will deck in Red/Black which just drew into cards to put into the graveyard and cast them. Other than a little bit of cycling, it didn't do anything in a dedicated way to put them into the grave. It just let them get their naturally.



Sturla Bingen, GP Copenhagen '00

Greasing the Wheel, so to speak, we have Greased Accumulation. My favorite example of this is a Cabal Rogue deck designed by Mike Donais and Shane Neville way back in the day. Brian Kowal honed the deck up a bit for play later on in the early Urza's Extended Season, and the deck was truly fantastic (up until the release of *Urza's Legacy*). For reference, here is the list:

"Jerry" (So called because it's a deck, really, about nothing.)		
Main Deck 60 cards		Sideboard
4 <b>Badlands</b>	4 <b>Urza's Bauble</b>	2 <b>Disenchant</b>
4 <b>Scrubland</b>	1 <b>Phyrexian Furnace</b>	4 <b>Pyroblast</b>
4 <b>Underground River</b>	3 <b>Duress</b>	2 <b>Phyrexian Furnace</b>
2 <b>Bad River</b>	3 <b>Hymn to Tourach</b>	2 <b>Mangara's Blessing</b>
2 <b>Gemstone Mine</b>	3 <b>Funeral Charm</b>	2 <b>Hydroblast</b>
4 <b>Mishra's Factory</b>	3 <b>Lightning Bolt</b>	1 <b>Swords to Plowshares</b>
20 land	2 <b>Rune of Protection: Artifacts</b>	1 <b>Duress</b>
3 <b>Steel Golem</b>	2 <b>Swords to Plowshares</b>	1 <b>Hymn to Tourach</b>
3 creatures	3 <b>Impulse</b>	15 sideboard cards
	3 <b>Cursed Scroll</b>	
	4 <b>Yawgmoth's Will</b>	
	3 <b>Mox Diamond</b>	
	3 <b>Dark Ritual</b>	
	37 other spells	

This deck uses **Impulse** and **Urza's Bauble** to try to get a bit deeper, and thus find more cards to feed a Will and get deeper. Other cards that are good for this purpose are **Brainstorm**, **Fact or Fiction**, or **Accumulated Knowledge**.

Finally, we have Dedicated Accumulation. Now, you can go hog wild with cards like **Tolarian Serpent** or **Traumatize**, but a better way is to use cards like **Mental Note**, **Intuition**, and **Gifts Ungiven**. Here, you can fill up

your graveyard with several cards as well as give you cards for your hand. In addition, unlike other methods, these are actual Instants to reuse.

## Wrapping Up

There are so many ways to handle this card, but I think I'm going to base mine loosely on Jerry. Hopefully a few Canadians won't be the only people that enjoy this list. With the new Legacy format, let's try it out.

### Jerry's Legacy

60 cards

3 Forbidden Orchard	4 Toshiro Umezawa	4 Tainted Pact
1 Reflecting Pool	1 Jeska, Warrior Adept	4 Lightning Bolt
4 Plateau	3 Goblin Sharpshooter	4 Funeral Charm
4 Scrubland		4 Dark Ritual
4 Badlands	8 creatures	4 Tithe
4 Bloodstained Mire		4 Magma Jet
		3 Cursed Scroll
20 land		2 Swords to Plowshares
		3 Mox Diamond
		32 other spells

Essentially this deck is a kind of slightly Greased Accumulation, using **Tithe**, **Jet**, and **Tainted Pact** to get farther into the deck. Thankfully, **Dark Ritual** is legal, so you can abuse Toshiro Umezawa very quickly. For the very brave, you could remove a Toshiro Umezawa and a few of the other cards to fit in a single **Varchild's War-Riders** and some **Vampiric Tutors**. **Lightning Bolt**, **Magma Jet**, and **Funeral Charm** provide point-and-click removal, with **Charm** also supplying a wee bit of discard. **Swords** is in there just because sometimes you *really* need to get rid of something, even if you aren't killing it. .

Now, I close with a question:

**Should Toshiro Umezawa be used as a challenge two weeks from now?**

Yes

No

The answer next week! Have a great time until then!



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