

Mark Gottlieb

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OK, I'm putting away my monkeys and my robot ninjas and my Clone-a-Moon™ device. This week it's just me.

Hi.

An awful lot of you out there in readerland (take that as "a whole bunch of you" or "a nasty mob of you" as you see fit) enjoy reading my column and send me email saying so. I appreciate that. An awful lot of you out there in readerland (see previous parenthetical) think I'm an idiot who screws up all the time. I appreciate that too.

One of the most common email topics I get (possibly the most common topic) is the "You made a mistake" email. There's nothing wrong with that. Hey, keep 'em coming. But I thought I'd take this space here today to address them en masse. These emails generally fall into a few different categories.

1) Wizards of the Coast messed up by printing so-and-so, or by not printing so-and-so, or by not making Mirror Gallery a legendary artifact, or whatever.

A valid opinion. As valid as any opinion (including mine), anyway. But you're grossly overestimating my position or influence. My primary responsibility in R&D is to be the **Duel Masters** Rules Manager. No, it's true. Would I lie to you? The first **Magic** set I'll have had any significant developmental input into won't be released for another six months. I suppose your emails can serve as cautionary tales that prevent me from repeating the mistakes of the past. But you really want to be writing these to Mark Rosewater or Aaron Forsythe.

2) There's a mistake on the web page.

This happened a couple of weeks ago, when the new *Betrayers of Kamigawa* cards weren't being sorted into the correct categories in the decklist field. Oops. But I had nothing to do with it. This cuts the other way, too. Sometimes I'll get lauded for a particularly cool or funny picture that shows up in my column. Cool. But I had nothing to do with it. All I do is generate this dumb text. All the layout work and artwork is created later by our fantastic web team, and they do a brilliant job. They make my work better than it is. I considered taking the picture of me with villainous mustache and "EVIL" t-shirt standing in front of a smoking Mount St. Helens and making it into my Christmas cards. That is why I would like Scott Johns to step in here and name these fine people, so they can get the credit they deserve. Any minor snafus that pop up once in a while pale in comparison to the awesome work they do every single day.

3) The card/combo/deck doesn't work the way you said.

Possible. It's happened before. Sometimes I will misread or misremember a card. Sometimes I'll get a rule wrong. But it's very, very rare. And when someone writes in with the subject line "Mistake!" and proceeds to chastise me for something I got right when they, in fact, have no idea what they're talking about... well, let's just say I enjoy writing responses to those emails. I shouldn't be cruel; it's got to be embarrassing for those people. I'd say, though, that when this kind of discrepancy comes up, I'm right about 95% of the time.


Okay, quick credits mode: Kevin Endo and Doug Beyer are the Developers for the site. As just part of their job they are responsible for the technical side of **magicthegathering.com**, like actually coding up the articles, getting them up on the site, putting together most images, pulling off crazy stuff like in-

4) You forgot [certain card] in your deck; you should have used it instead.

And when this kind of discrepancy comes up, the reader is right 95% of the time. Two weeks ago I used Mycosynth Lattice to wash green mana into blue mana, completely forgetting that Orochi Leafcaller existed. The Leafcaller had exactly what ability I wanted, but I couldn't come up with the right phrasing to successfully search for it in either Gatherer or *Magic Online*. That same deck had a copy of Relearn because I wanted to bring back Artificial Evolution from my graveyard—but I was so focused on my need to regrow an instant that I didn't think about regrowing a *card*. Eternal Witness would have been much better there. A number of alert readers pointed out these oversights. (Although, to be fair, my chimpanzee Pickles was writing that column, not me.)

I don't feel bad about these kinds of "mistakes," though. They irk me a little because I'm naturally a perfectionist. But the decks in this column aren't designed to be perfect. They're designed to try out a goofy idea or showcase a strange interaction. They're first drafts or (if I can play them in *Magic Online*) second drafts. There's always room for improvement, and you the reader are supposed to find that room and furnish it with affordable Swedish furniture yourself. Swap out cards. Change the lands. Transplant the baseline combo into a completely different deck. I encourage you to customize the decks and find improvements that I never saw! Make it your own. Who ever said I was so great, anyway? In fact, I... uh... I often include mistakes in my decks on purpose just so you can find them and feel good. Yeah! Yeah, that's what they're there for. It's good to see that plan is working.


Plinko

Of course, the much more enjoyable type of email that I get is the kind that has a combo or deck idea I've never seen before. Matt (last names, people, last names—you can't get famous with just one name unless you're a musician or a soccer player) suggested the combo of Aggravated Assault and Nature's Will. As long as you can generate  with your lands and you have a creature with at least 1 power that your opponent can't block, you'll win the game. In fact, you can do this if everything goes perfectly:

Turn 1: Land, Orochi Leafcaller

Turn 2: Land, Sakura-Tribe Elder

Turn 3: Land, Nature's Will, sacrifice the Elder for another land

Turn 4: Land, Aggravated Assault, Shock your opponent's untapped creature, attack with Orochi Leafcaller. When the Leafcaller hits, your five lands untap. Pay  to activate Aggravated Assault. Infinite Leafcaller brutality!

That's right—if your opponent doesn't pay the Leafcaller enough respect, it'll plink away for 20 damage in one turn. If you can't find a Nature's Will, then Sakiko, Mother of Summer, will do a similar thing. You'd have to have creatures totaling 5 power and you'd definitely need a Leafcaller to turn your green mana into red mana, but as long as your opponent had no available blockers or spot removal, you'd win that turn.

article crosswords and acrostics (thanks Kevin!) and developing utilities like Gatherer (thanks Doug!). Doug is also the one that puts together the great Arcana feature each day. Greg Collins is the Producer in charge of the Organized Play side of the site, so he's the one running the Tournament Center, event coverage, and BDM's column. As the Producer for the site I'm the one doing the editing, scheduling, making the theme and content decisions, planning, deciding who writes for us, coming up with ideas for the site in general, etc. (So next time a writer who's never seen the art on a preview card starts referring to it by the wrong sex, that's definitely my fault.) Lastly, more complex or involved Photoshopped images on the site (like Giant Wizard Penguins, Ninjas coming out of boar suits, or the family portrait later in this article for that matter) usually come from our Senior New Media Designer Jen Page, who also does most of the layout graphics for the site such as the banners for theme weeks, the amazing skins for the Orbs of Insight, Wallpaper of the Week, and a lot more. It's a heck of a team and while I'm happy to take the credit for the few things that go wrong every now and then, they deserve a lot of credit for all the things that go right every day.

- Scott

Aggravated Snakes



Main Deck

60 cards

9 Forest	3 Orochi Leafcaller	4 Aggravated Assault
4 Karplusan Forest	3 Orochi Ranger	2 Blaze
5 Mountain	1 Patron of the Orochi	4 Nature's Will
2 Shivan Oasis	1 Sakiko, Mother of Summer	4 Shock
4 Wooded Foothills	4 Sakura-Tribe Elder	3 Time of Need
24 lands	1 Seshiro the Anointed	17 other spells
	4 Tangle Asp	
	2 Voracious Cobra	
	19 creatures	

You Clan Do It

Inspired by my preview of Mirror Gallery, Rich Krall made up a neat family-oriented theme deck. It's got Brothers, Sisters, Mothers, Uncles, Grandmothers, and Grandfathers—and it's *not* a *Kamigawa* block Snake deck. In fact, it's red and black (with one green land and an oddball splash of white). The deck was sparked by the Brothers Yamazaki-Mirror Gallery interaction, and it took off from there. Soul Foundry (which, as Rich notes, makes the triplets, quadruplets, etc.) spices up that combo, and the rest is flavor. Some of Rich's notes:



Mother of Runes: She takes care of the kids.

Grandmother Sengir: She takes care of other people's kids.

Uncle Istvan: He hides in the shed and waits for other people's kids.

Smother: Blame Uncle Istvan or Grandma.

Imps' Taunt: Works with Uncle Istvan.

Mass Hysteria: Like any family reunion.

Aether Vial: Consider it a family heirloom.

There was no particular theme justification for the Diabolic Tutors, but if his play group is cool with it, who am I to judge?

Family Reunion		
Main Deck 60 cards		
4 City of Brass	3 Brothers of Fire	3 AEther Vial
8 Mountain	4 Brothers Yamazaki	4 Diabolic Tutor
1 Okina, Temple to the Grandfathers	2 Grandmother Sengir	2 Imps' Taunt
8 Swamp	4 Mother of Runes	2 Mass Hysteria
21 lands	3 Sisters of the Flame	2 Mirror Gallery
	3 Uncle Istvan	4 Smother
	19 creatures	3 Soul Foundry
		20 other spells

The deck is light on lands, but I didn't want to change any of Rich's deck.

Excuse Me

And now we get to a new/old way to abuse Goblin Charbelcher. Don't worry: It's not a *good* way to abuse it. There are plenty of ways to guarantee death with the Charbelcher, from Mana Severance (which removes all lands from your deck) to Goblin Recruiter (which stacks a bazillion Goblins on top of your deck) to decks that fish the lands out with Kodama's Reach and Sakura-Tribe Elder to decks that only start with one or two lands in the first place.

Now the effects of Mana Severance can be recreated in Standard! How? Well, instead of paying two mana to play one card, you pay ten mana for two cards (Mycosynth Lattice-Splinter). Or seven mana for two cards (Myr Landshaper-Splinter). Or six mana for two cards (Lifespark Spellbomb-Eradicate). Sure, you can use these tricks on your opponent to remove the lands from his deck, but that never works out. Who plays monocolored decks with no nonbasic lands these days? And if you do pull it off, odds are your opponent has enough mana already on the table to play his spells anyway. If you're not prepared to back up the combo with more land destruction, you've just improved the quality of your opponent's draws for the rest of the game.

That's why I say aim the combo at yourself. It's not easy playing Splinter in a monoblack deck, but when did I ever make anything easy?



Severance Pay



Main Deck

60 cards

24 Swamp

24 lands

3 Myr Landshaper

3 creatures

4 Darksteel Ingot

4 Diabolic Tutor

4 Eradicate

4 Goblin Charbelcher

4 Lifespark Spellbomb

3 Mycosynth Lattice

4 Night's Whisper

4 Splinter

2 Talisman of Unity

33 other spells

Until next week, have fun making mistakes—and and keep that email coming!

Mark

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