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Red in the East

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Building on a Budget
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PRO TOUR-VALENCIA

Red deck wins? That is what I have been told. From even the earliest days of **Magic**, Red has been one of those archetypes that always manages to pop up in the current formats, regardless of other factors. Why? Well, didn't you hear? Red deck wins! Although it sounds a bit silly, the facts are the facts, and red always puts up impressive numbers. Also, red is a very fun color due to its aggressive nature, thus it has many supporters. Are you a member of Red Mages Anonymous? Don't be ashamed...burning people out is good times.

The deck for this week takes a look at what red can do in *Champions of Kamigawa*. *Champions* is not a very aggressive set when it comes to red's favorite children, the Goblins. They all seem to be 4 mana 1/1s or something of that nature. I guess the little guys are getting slower in their old age. However, there are a few key aggressive cards combined with some of the most wonderful burn spells devised in a long time.

Most of the powerful red creatures seem to be at the three-mana mark, such as **Ronin Houndmaster** (grandson of **Suq'Ata Lancer**?) and **Akki Coalfinger**. Both of these pale in comparison to **Zo-zu the Punisher**, who as his name might indicate, really punishes your opponent for playing more land. Sure, he hurts you too, but burn can easily take a few hits from its cards and be happy with the exchange...**Ankh of Mishra** on a stick sounds great to me! These creatures combined with the usual suspects like **Hearth Kami** and **Akki Avalanchers** make up the core of the deck.

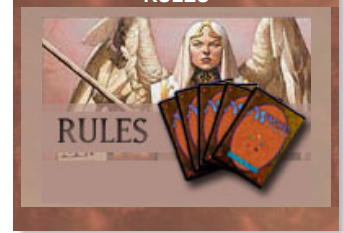
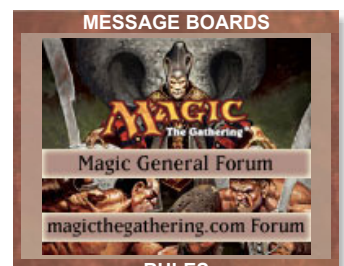
The most questionable include is **Battle-Mad Ronin**. Sure, he isn't the best man ever, but he is a two mana guy that is almost guaranteed to hit for 3 points over the course of his table time, plus it makes it really hard for your opponent to attack on the turn it comes into play. Overall, it seemed like a better deal than **Honden of Infinite Rage** for the purposes of this deck.

The burn is where red really wins. **Lava Spike** is the most efficient burn spell printed since **Lightning Bolt**. Sure, it only hits the face, but you know what? The face is where you want it to go with this deck. The real kicker is the arcane status of the spell, allowing for **Glacial Ray** shenanigans. **Hanabi Blast** and **Yamabushi's Flame** provide a nice support role to those two main burn spells. If you can deal 8-10 damage with your creatures, the burn should take it home.



The name says it all

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Building on a Budget: Red in the East (less than 30 tickets) dec

Main Deck		
60 cards		
20 Mountain <hr/> 20 lands	3 Zo-Zu the Punisher 4 Ronin Houndmaster 4 Hearth Kami 3 Ember-Fist Zuberu 4 Battle-Mad Ronin 4 Akki Coalfinger 4 Akki Avalanchers <hr/> 26 creatures	4 Yamabushi's Flame 4 Lava Spike 2 Hanabi Blast 4 Glacial Ray <hr/> 14 other spells

This deck plays out by casting some early critters and swinging in for a few points of damage. Hopefully by the time your opponent sets up their defenses you will have dealt them a reasonable amount of damage (8-10 or so). From that point, you can make one last suicide attack to force another point or two through while starting to unload the burn in your hand on them. It is really critical to utilize all the burn in such a way as to maximize the damage. Sometimes it will make more sense to burn their guy so your little men can swing through for more damage, and sometimes it will make more sense to send it straight to the dome. Your weakest creature is probably **Ember-Fist Zuberu**. Its main function is blocking a big guy and still dealing a point of damage in burn. Try to lead with **Akki Avalanchers** and **Battle-Mad Ronin** or **Hearth Kami**.

Tips on Playing the Deck

- Use your splice efficiently! While it may be tempting to **Lava Spike** your opponent on the first turn, you probably want to save it for when you can splice a **Glacial Ray** on it and get some extra mileage out of the card.
- Maximize the effectiveness of your **Hanabi Blast**. It is a great renewable source of damage. You really don't have a reason to play out more than 3 lands unless you draw double **Glacial Ray** and want to splice two onto a Spike. You also might need to play more land so that you can feed your Avalanchers, but barring those two scenarios it is best to keep the lands in your hand so that they might get discarded instead of **Hanabi Blast**.
- Flinging coal is a tricky business. Sometimes you might want to keep the Coalflinger back to dissuade your opponents from blocking. Sometimes it is better to just attack with the Coalflinger itself, leaving the vulnerable men behind....and then there is the third scenario where it is best to bring everyone to the Red Zone. The correct answer is the one that maximizes your damage over the course of the next turn and a half, because beyond that point you will likely need to go into burn mode.
- Always try to play the Houndmaster last, since you will be able to force through more damage overall with your last creature being the hasty one.



Adding More Money to the Deck

Money isn't really the object for burn decks - options are the real key. Betrayers will provide some really awesome cards for this deck: **Frostling**, **Goblin Cohort**, **Akki Raider**, and **Flames of the Blood Hand**. That is a big list for a small set! **Frostling** and the Cohort would help the most, since they are really powerful 1-drops, and **Akki Raider** beats the snot out of **Battle-Mad Ronin**. **Flames of the Blood Hand** is a reasonably costed burn spell that also has nasty side effects vs. life gain (which this deck hates to play against).

Overall, this deck is fast, fun, and effective....and free of 4 mana 1/1s.

Until next time, remember that **the puppy** always wins.

-Nate Heiss

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