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Secret Sword

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Building on a Budget
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PRO TOUR-VALENCIA

Welcome to my final appearance as the Building on a Budget columnist. Yes, it saddens me to leave like this, but fear not... a column named "Building on a Budget" will return next week with a new author at the helm.

I want to take a moment to thank all of my fans and loyal readers. You guys have consistently made this column one of the most popular on the site, and for that I am grateful. I am glad to have been able to help the budget-minded player out. At one point I might have believed in the myth of needing money in order to compete, but looking back at the near 100 deck lists that I have written about in this column over the course of two years, the evidence clearly states otherwise.

I will not be hanging up my pen (keyboard?) permanently, however. Every so often I plan to write a feature for magicthegathering.com, or you might perhaps find me doing some coverage. You just don't write about **Magic** for over half a decade and then go out cold turkey!

Final Wrap-up
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Building on a Budget: Ninja Attack! (About 30 Tickets)

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Main Deck
60 cards

14 Island 10 Swamp 24 lands	2 Higure, the Still Wind 2 Minamo Sightbender 3 Trinket Mage 4 Ravenous Rats 2 Nekrataal 2 Ink-Eyes, Servant of Oni 4 Ninja of the Deep Hours 3 Okiba-Gang Shinobi 4 Throat Slitter 2 Walker of Secret Ways 28 creatures	3 Phantom Wings 1 Blinding Powder 1 AEther Spellbomb 3 Shuriken 8 other spells
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It has been a lot of fun writing these, and I know that you will enjoy...

What the...



My monologue has been sabotaged by Ninjas!
...I should have blocked.

So sneaky are those men of the secret sword! Well, there goes my surprise! Tip #1: Never let your decklist get the jump on you!

Ok, well, since they have our attention let's talk about Ninja. Ninja are true masters. I can't tell you how excited I am to not only see Ninja in **Magic**, but to see how incredibly awesome they are. At first, the mechanic seems like a cool flavorful way of portraying these shadowy assassins, but after having played them for a while I can attest that this mechanic is truly powerful!

Ophidian, meet **Ninja of the Deep Hours**. Owned. **Mindstab Thrull**, meet the **Okiba-Gang Shinobi**. Savaged. **Terror**, meet **Throat Slitter**.

...Hey, isn't that the rat that trained the turtles how to fight?

Then we have the legendary Ninja...Higure and Ink-Eyes, both of which are quite powerful in any matchup. Higure is especially underrated, since he can help you get off your super saboteur triggers from your Ninja. I think everyone already knows how Ink-Eyes operates.

Ninja are not only good at appearing out of nowhere, but they can also disappear into thin air via **Walker of Secret Ways**! This girl lets you do some truly ridiculous tricks during your attack step. Anyone with a bit of imagination can think of some rather powerful 'damage on the stack' tricks, but it gets cooler than that.

For instance, let's say you are attacking with:

Ninja of the Deep Hours
Throat Slitter
Ravenous Rats
Trinket Mage

Your opponent blocks the two Ninja with **Fat Guys**™.

After blocks are declared, you ninjutsu out the Walker, returning the **Ravenous Rats**. You then pay 1 to return the **Throat Slitter**, then ninjutsu it back out, returning the **Trinket Mage**. If you have 4 extra mana on top of that, (unlikely, but possible) you could also bring back the **Ninja of the Deep Hours**, and swap out the **Walker of Secret Ways** for it.

Ninja Attack!

Those Ninja are a slippery bunch. Notice how you now can **Ravenous Rats** your opponent again, and go **Trinket Mage** up a new toy, like, say, **Shuriken**? Oh **Shuriken**, let me do a happy dance when my Ninja throws you! *Happy Dance*

The **Trinket Mage** can also fetch you a **Blinding Powder** (no Ninja arsenal is complete without one) or an **Aether Spellbomb**, to help force through your guys. **Phantom Wings** is actually one of your best tools for getting your Ninja past those pesky blockers. You can either give your Ninja flying or use the **Phantom Wings** as a bounce spell by putting it on your opponent's creature. There is also the happy side effect of letting you do some crazy tricks like you would with **Walker of Secret Ways** even if they have flying blockers.

Tips on Playing the Deck

- Whenever possible, strike with ninjutsu!
- Try to reuse your creatures with comes-into-play effects by bouncing them with ninjutsu.
- It is really good to ninjutsu Higure out, but it's ok to just hard-cast Ink-Eyes. This is because getting the initial hit in with Higure sets you up for some huge tempo advantage the following turn. Ink-Eyes is more of a fighter, and you almost prefer that she engages in combat.
- If you find yourself unable to get around a blocker, look for a **Minamo Sightbender** or a **Phantom Wings** to help you get the process rolling.
- Don't be afraid to attack with your Sightbender...and then turn it into a Ninja!
- It is usually correct to fetch up a **Shuriken** with **Trinket Mage**, but **Aether Spellbomb** and **Blinding Powder** can also help force through some attackers.
- Try to **Okiba-Gang Shinobi** your opponent at the earliest opportunity, to ensure you hit three cards.

Adding Money to the Deck

To be perfectly honest, I don't think that there are many cards that this deck would want to have in it that would cause the price to rise significantly. If anything, more copies of Higure and Ink Eyes. Overall, Ninja are just a solid



theme. You can experiment with some of the other ones as well, but I find this to be a good mix. I could see playing some one-of Ninjas in order to get some more utility out of Higure...he is really underrated.

While many people might dismiss Ninja as less than tier 1 cards, they have been very powerful for me, and I expect to see them around in Standard for a long time to come. This is a great deck to play if you want to be competitive and have a lot of fun at the same time.

My Picks for the Invitational

And the winner is...well, my vote is not the last of the Writers Invitational votes, so we don't know yet. When Scott Johns approached me with the opportunity to aid in choosing one of the Invitational players, I jumped at the chance. The Invitational is an awesome way for the most loved players to really strut their stuff. It is a way for more people to get to know the most awesome players in the game...and more importantly, it's a way for a player to get immortalized on a card.

Good stuff.

By now you probably know the drill of who the candidates were, and the criteria I was supposed to judge them by, so I will skip right to the good stuff:

1) Antonino DeRosa

Antonino is an all around great guy. As an awesome writer, player, and contributor to Magic overall, he really shines. This man writes a good deal of solid Magic deck strategy and can really hold his own in a tournament. He has done really well on the Pro level, and it is about time he gets some more recognition for his efforts. That being said, Antonino is always good for a laugh, as he loves to make all sorts of quirky remarks and is quick to just make up words whenever he feels that real words won't do the trick. The combination of all of these things makes Antonino my overall #1 pick.

2) Jeroen Remie

Jeroen is the perhaps the most recognizable Dutchman in Magic. He is always striving to get better, and he never has an ounce of ego. It is all humility with this guy. Yet, somehow, with all of his swearing up and down that he is terrible at Magic, he seems to succeed at an alarming rate. He is one of the most consistent and friendly players in the game, and you can really tell that he struggles with all of the problems of the common Magic player. Jeroen is truly a champion of the people. He also has given a lot back to the community with his articles (which he is always striving to make better). Not only does he get a vote, but let me say that you should stop what you are doing and send this guy some fan mail. He is awesome.

3) Olivier Ruel

Olivier is perhaps the most lighthearted man on the PT. He is so easygoing and happy, even when he isn't crushing in the event. Olivier always seems cheerful, and he has been that way for the many years that he has been on the PT. Olivier simply puts on a great spectacle, and thus is just fun to watch.

4) Tim Aten

Tim is an up and comer who has been up and coming since Opalka T2K roamed the mean streets of Ohio. Tim is a truly funny man. If you have never read one of his articles, I recommend doing so right now. It is the closest thing to Rizzo you are going to find these days, except this man can actually win a GP. He connects with the youth of the game, and while he may not seem too excitable in person, put a keyboard in front of this guy and you will see a whole different side...

5) Mark Zajdner

Mark is loud. Mark has flair. Mark is witty. Did I mention Mark is loud? Mark is like the little kid brother of the PT. He is always pulling pranks and pushing people's buttons, but he does it just for the sake of giving everyone a good laugh. The odds of something outrageous happening goes up exponentially when Mark steps into the room. Isn't that reason enough to want him around? Besides, what sort of crazy inside-joke card would this guy come up with?

Well, there are my votes. To all those that I didn't vote for, don't feel bad, it was a tough list of choose people from. The PT is full of such unique characters, and I wish every one of them could see some more time in the limelight. Maybe next year guys!

Signing Off

Well folks...that is the end of my Building on a Budget days. I will now part with a small word of advice for the economically minded player out there: Just remember that even though you are building on a budget, it doesn't mean you should be afraid to compete with more expensive decks. If anything, look at it as a challenge. See how often you can win with limited resources. It is all upside when they are playing with Moxes, Birds and Wraths while you are fighting the good fight with **Raging Goblin**. As long as you are able to enjoy your experiences, it is time well spent. Thirty tickets plus a little time equals many smiles. Smiles are the real key to winning.

Until next time...Thanks for reading!

-Nate Heiss
BuildingOnABudget and NateHeiss on *Magic Online*



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