

Mark Gottlieb

Tuesday, April 19, 2005

The 2005 Auction of the People decks have been chosen! Recapping the format: Each deck is build around a specific word. That word (or an inflected form) must appear in the name, type line, rules text (including reminder text), or flavor text of an Online Extended version of every card in the deck. Basic lands are free, and each deck must contain at least 24 lands.

We received over 3 billion deck submissions covering every word in the English language (including all the fake words in the OED), plus some new ones that Wizards of the Coast made up themselves. "Nonland"? That's not a word! After a long, grueling process that in no way involved blindfolds or marmosets, the 17 selections have been made.



But first, a word about the decks that didn't make it. Far too many good decks were dashed against the rocky shoals of disqualification. The most common pitfalls were:

- Building Extended decks instead of Online Extended decks (for example, a nifty "white" deck was booted for including Havoc)
- Relying blindly on Gatherer text searches (for example, an illegal "pit" deck contained Master Apothecary... whose flavor text contains the word "hospital")
- Really not understanding the parameters of the deck challenge whatsoever (uh, too many examples to name)

Of the legit decks, we looked for the ones that fell into the sweet spot. If you chose a word that was too common, deckbuilding wasn't creative. The "artifact" decks that were perfect replicas of tournament-level Ravager Affinity decks? They met the same fate as the "discard" decks that looked suspiciously like blue-green madness, as well as the "goblin" decks, "elf" decks, "creature" decks, etc. On the other hand, decks with highly offbeat—and thus restrictive—words often wound up being nothing more than collections of some creatures and some spells. They didn't come together as decks; they had no internal synergy.



The 17 decks that were chosen to represent the people combine interesting word choices with creative deckbuilding. Various styles of play are represented, and the decks showcase a wide array of color choices. How much life and how many cards would you bid to get your hands on your favorite one?

Deckbuilding Ability

The word "ability" appears on fewer cards than you might think. It's used on cards that have abilities with restrictive timing ("Play this ability only..."), including one of the three types of threshold reminder text. It's also in the rules text of "when this becomes the target" triggers, and a couple of oddball cards like Quicksilver Elemental. It shows up in Samite Healer's flavor text as well. The resulting deck is set up to pull off Cowardice and Fractured Loyalty tricks. Barring that, it can use protection, damage prevention, bushido, and tapping to control creature combat anyway.

Main Deck

60 cards

1 Barbarian Ring	3 Eternal Dragon	3 Cowardice
1 Cephalid Coliseum	1 Glory	4 Fractured Loyalty
7 Island	4 Nomad Decoy	4 Guerrilla Tactics
5 Mountain	4 Quicksilver Elemental	1 Solitary Confinement
10 Plains	4 Samite Healer	2 Stifle
24 lands	2 Sensei Golden-Tail	14 other spells
	4 Weathered Wayfarer	
	22 creatures	

An Additional Deck

The word "additional" has two main uses: Kicker reminder text, and the phrase "additional combat phase." It comes up on a couple of other cards, and the result is a monored deck with some burn for early creatures, some mean fatties, and the ability to let those mean fatties attack repeatedly. Bonus points for getting both Godo and Tenza, Godo's Maul into the same deck.

Main Deck

60 cards

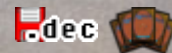
25 Mountain	1 Godo, Bandit Warlord	2 Fireball
25 lands	4 Kavu Aggressor	2 Relentless Assault
	4 Pouncing Kavu	2 Savage Beating
	4 Skizzik	4 Scorching Lava
	2 Two-Headed Dragon	4 Seize the Day
	15 creatures	2 Tenza, Godo's Maul
		4 Urza's Rage
		20 other spells

Another Deck

"Another" may seem like "additional" in regular English usage, but their **Magic** usages are quite different. This artifact-heavy deck gets exactly half of its "anthers" from rules text (usually when another something comes into play), and the other half comes from flavor text ("Find another cousin"

indeed). Fodder Cannon is the key to the deck, as it interacts devilishly with Myr Retriever, Myr Servitor, and Rotlung Reanimator while keeping the opposing side of the board clear. Both kinds of recycling Myr boost Arcbound Crusher and Serum Tank, while the Reanimator is happy to see a couple other Clerics in the deck.

Another — Scott Wilson



Main Deck

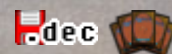
60 cards

14 Plains	3 Arcbound Crusher	2 Chromatic Sphere
10 Swamp	4 Auriok Champion	4 Death Grasp
24 lands	4 Myr Retriever	4 Fodder Cannon
	4 Myr Servitor	3 Serum Tank
	4 Rotlung Reanimator	13 other spells
	4 Zealous Inquisitor	
	23 creatures	

Bloody Good

One of the strongest elements of *Kamigawa* block flavor is the relationship between Ogres and Demons—a relationship predicated on blood magic. For that reason, “blood” is prominently featured in the flavor text of cards that fortuitously work well together. Villainous Ogre and Gutwrencher Oni, for example, clearly enjoy each other’s company. Add in some of the numerous cards that feature “blood” in their names and you’ve got a reasonably suicidal deck—one that can clear out early creatures before playing mean ol’ beaters that (hopefully) hurt your opponent a bit more than they hurt you.

Blood — Matthew Lubich



Main Deck

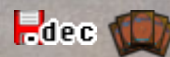
60 cards

7 Mountain	4 Blood Pet	3 Barter in Blood
17 Swamp	2 Blood Speaker	3 Flames of the Blood Hand
24 lands	4 Grimclaw Bats	4 Innocent Blood
	4 Gutwrencher Oni	10 other spells
	1 Heartless Hidetsugu	
	1 Nefashu	
	1 Seizan, Perverter of Truth	
	2 Stalking Bloodsucker	
	4 Takenuma Bleeder	
	3 Villainous Ogre	
	26 creatures	

Feeling Blue

The word “blue” appears 100% in rules text in this deck—no names, no flavor text. The deck is pretty straightforward in its trickiness: It changes things blue, then cares about having blue creatures around. Llawan, Possessed Aven, and Sphere of Reason make bad things happen to your opponent's azure-tinted creatures, and Disciple of Kangee, Metathran Transport, and Neurok Transmuter take care of the color shift. It's a bizarre form of creature control, and it clears the way for a flock of flyers to finish the game.

Blue — Erwin Leijenhorst



Main Deck

60 cards

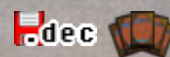
13 Island	4 Disciple of Kangee	3 Flash of Insight
9 Plains	1 Llawan, Cephalid Empress	3 Merchant Scroll
2 Swamp	1 Meloku the Clouded Mirror	3 Shield of Duty and Reason
-----	4 Metathran Transport	2 Sphere of Reason
24 lands	2 Neurok Transmuter	1 Sword of Fire and Ice
	2 Possessed Aven	1 Wand of the Elements
	2 Sawtooth Loon	-----
	2 Silver Drake	13 other spells
	2 Spirit Weaver	
	3 Sunscape Familiar	

	23 creatures	

Burning Up

This is not your standard burn deck. The word “burn” is mainly used one of two ways on **Magic** cards: In flavor text (but surprisingly infrequently on direct damage spells), and in the phrase “mana burn” in rules text. Mana burn is only mentioned when there's an exception to the typical rule, so many “burn” cards let you add or save mana—specifically, *Upwelling* and the *Betrayers of Kamigawa* Snakes. Throw in *Goblin Clearcutter* and *Explosive Vegetation*, and you can generate a *lot* of mana. The deck then finds ways to use that mana, either by playing *Mindslavers* or by funneling it into—that's right—burn effects.

Burn — Chris Turner



Main Deck

60 cards

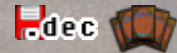
14 Forest	4 Darigaaz's Attendant	4 Explosive Vegetation
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7 Mountain	4 Flamewave Invoker	3 Mindslaver
3 Swamp	2 Goblin Clearcutter	3 Soul Burn
24 lands	4 Pain Kami	3 Upwelling
	2 Sakiko, Mother of Summer	13 other spells
	3 Sakura-Tribe Springcaller	
	4 Shizuko, Caller of Autumn	
	23 creatures	

A Light Touch

Except for two card names, this deck is based entirely on flavor text. However, because “light” is so iconically white, the deck avoids a common pitfall of other flavor-text-based Auction submissions. Rather than being awkwardly constructed from a hodgepodge of random cards, the deck is a convincing white weenie build full of cheap flyers. The deck will be fast to begin with; find an early Sword and it may be lights out for your opponent. The Altar’s Lights are notable in this environment—artifact and enchantment removal is scarily scarce, and there are a ton of powerful such cards among these decklists.

Light — Matthew Hoffmann



Main Deck

60 cards

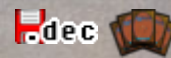
24 Plains	4 Auriok Champion	2 Altar's Light
24 lands	2 Auriok Windwalker	4 Sword of Light and Shadow
	2 Blinding Angel	4 Vanquish
	2 Eight-and-a-Half-Tails	10 other spells
	4 Lantern Kami	
	4 Skyhunter Skirmisher	
	4 Skyshroud Falcon	
	4 Slith Ascendant	
	26 creatures	

Losing It

You can “lose” a flip, “lose” life, and *not* “lose” the game. This may be the weirdest deck among the bunch. It actively strives to lose life, often gaining card advantage in the process. Platinum Angel and Lich’s Tomb specifically prevent you from losing the game, letting you fight on at 0 life or even at a negative life total. Then, if you haven’t been able to win thanks to your unnaturally extended life, fat creatures, and extra cards, you drop the hammer: Reverse the Sands for an instant win. That’s what you were digging for all this time! Reverse the Sands has the distinction of being the only card in the deck in which “lose” isn’t in the rules text—and it’s not in the flavor text either; “lost,” the past tense

of "lose" and thus an allowed form of the word, is. That didn't come up on a Gatherer search for "lose"... Erik Murphy had to find it. *That's* creativity.

Lose — Erik Murphy



Main Deck

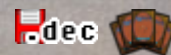
60 cards

7 Mountain	4 Goblin Psychopath	3 Lich's Tomb
7 Plains	2 Graveborn Muse	2 Mindslaver
10 Swamp	4 Maggot Carrier	2 Phyrexian Arena
24 lands	4 Phyrexian Rager	2 Reverse the Sands
	4 Platinum Angel	2 Spoils of the Vault
	4 Putrid Warrior	11 other spells
	3 Soulgorger Orgg	
	25 creatures	

A Masterful Deck

This mix of "master" card names and "master" flavor text looks to pair Furnace of Rath with Kumano, Master Yamabushi or Thornscape Master. Joiner Adept lets you play Thornscape Master's protection ability or Thunderscape Master's drain ability. Journeyer's Kite fishes out lands to power up Kumano and to improve your draws. It's got quick beats, it's got high-end finishers, and it's even got a Shivan Dragon!

Master — Paul Taylor



Main Deck

60 cards

12 Forest	2 Dosan the Falling Leaf	2 Furnace of Rath
12 Mountain	4 Joiner Adept	2 Journeyer's Kite
24 lands	3 Kumano, Master Yamabushi	4 Mossfire Egg
	1 Shivan Dragon	4 Tribal Flames
	4 Thornscape Familiar	12 other spells
	4 Thornscape Master	
	4 Thunderscape Familiar	
	2 Thunderscape Master	
	24 creatures	

Do You Mind?

No deck whose word is a creature type got selected, but there are still some tribal decks in the final sepdecalogue. This monoblue Wizard deck intends to win via decking. Traumatize removes half your opponent's library, while Supreme Inquisitor (assuming he's got enough friends around) removes five cards of your choice each turn. (That *will* crimp your opponent's style.) Syncopate and Chamber of Manipulation provide some control, while Nameless One can grow to quite sizable proportions.

Mind — Carlos Perez 

Main Deck
60 cards

24 Island	3 Archivist	2 Chamber of Manipulation
24 lands	3 Graceful Adept	3 Concentrate
	3 Mistform Ultimus	4 Peek
	3 Nameless One	4 Syncopate
	3 Supreme Inquisitor	3 Traumatize
	3 Telepathic Spies	2 Words of Wind
	18 creatures	18 other spells

Just Say No

Possibly the most bizarre word choice among the final group is "no." It has neither a specific mechanical meaning nor flavor meaning; it's just a functional English word! And it's enabled a Rat deck with a splash of blue for countermagic. "No" appears in both flavor text (unsurprising) and rules text (in a different way each time). It features in the flip conditions of both flippy Rats in *Champions*, as well as the self-destruct trigger for Glimmervoid, the unique Shell of the Last Kappa reminder text, and the phrase "deals no damage." There's a subtheme of graveyard removal, as Nezumi Graverobber and Carrion Rats help each other out and are both helped by Fade from Memory. The Shell, while an atypical choice, may be the perfect answer to the burn cards sprinkled throughout the format, and finding a Coat of Arms at the right time can turn the game into a rout.

No — Andy Jakcsy 

Main Deck
60 cards

2 Glimmervoid	4 Carrion Rats	3 Coat of Arms
4 Island	4 Nezumi Cutthroat	3 Disrupt
18 Swamp	2 Nezumi Graverobber	3 Distress
24 lands	4 Nezumi Ronin	3 Fade from Memory
	2 Nezumi Shortfang	3 Hinder
	16 creatures	

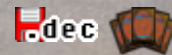
2 Juntu Stakes
3 Shell of the Last Kappa

20 other spells

The Pits

The pit fights were a major story setting in the *Odyssey* block, so there's a good bit of "pit" flavor text available. Add to that a select few cards with "pit" in the title and we get a happily cannibalistic deck. Sadistic Hypnotist, Malevolent Awakening, and Spawning Pit need creature sacrifices to work, and Death Pit Offering will clear your board for you. On the flip side, the Awakening will return your sacrificed creatures from the grave, but the true keystone of the deck is Mobilization. An eternal source of cheap, expendable 1/1 tokens, it makes the rest of the deck hum. And when, post-Offering, it makes 3/3 tokens with vigilance for 3 mana apiece, you'll be ready for a fight with anyone.

Pit — Markus Beyreder



Main Deck

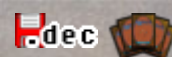
60 cards

4 Cabal Pit	4 Daru Lancer	4 Chainer's Edict
8 Plains	4 Sadistic Hypnotist	4 Death Pit Offering
14 Swamp	4 Stalking Bloodsucker	2 Inspirit
26 lands	12 creatures	2 Malevolent Awakening
		4 Mobilization
		4 Pit Trap
		2 Spawning Pit
		22 other spells

Into the Pool

There are two phrases in **Magic** that use the word "pool": "mana pool," a rules text phrase that appears on just about anything with a mana ability, and "Knowledge Pool," a flavor text phrase that appears on a number of blue *Mirrodin* cards. This deck revolves around Vedalken Archmage, which can provide tremendous card advantage, and Grid Monitor, which can start stomping your opponent when the game is barely underway. Stalking Stones, Blinkmoth Nexus, and Guardian Idol give you more creatures even if you're under Grid Monitor's restriction. Thanks to the savvy word choice, the deck has no basic lands in it at all—and while the artifact lands won't help the Archmage, they will certainly power up the Overrides.

Pool — Mark Matson



Main Deck

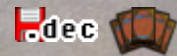
60 cards

2 Barbarian Ring	4 Grid Monitor	4 Chromatic Sphere
4 Blinkmoth Nexus	2 Hydromorph Guardian	4 Guardian Idol
4 Great Furnace	2 Lotus Guardian	4 Mana Short
1 Keldon Necropolis	4 Silver Myr	4 Override
4 Lonely Sandbar	4 Vedalken Archmage	4 Sky Diamond
4 Seat of the Synod		
2 Shivan Reef	16 creatures	20 other spells
3 Stalking Stones		
<hr/>		
24 lands		

The Top Deck

"Top" is used almost exclusively in a mechanical sense here, and this deck fiddles with the top of its library like nobody's business. The scry cards, Tomorrow, and Sensei's Divining Top will maximize your card quality while making sure that the Deceivers are pumpable and Erratic Explosion is as big as possible. Millikin provides mana acceleration while clearing away chaff (you'll rarely be using it blind), and we all know what Arc-Slogger does. The one flavor text inclusion, Wildfire, is the icing on the cake—it leaves both Arc-Slogger and Tomorrow on the table, and you should be able to find the lands you need to recover faster than your opponent.

Top — Daniel Pantoja



Main Deck

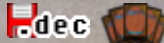
60 cards

11 Island	4 Arc-Slogger	4 Condescend
13 Mountain	4 Brutal Deceiver	2 Erratic Explosion
	4 Callous Deceiver	4 Magma Jet
24 lands	4 Millikin	3 Prophetic Bolt
	2 Tomorrow, Azami's Familiar	2 Sensei's Divining Top
	18 creatures	3 Wildfire
		18 other spells

Take Two

"Two" is strictly a rules text word in this deck—and note that the digit "2" doesn't count; only the word "two" adheres to the submission guidelines. "Two target sorcery cards," "two extra turns," "two creatures," "two piles," etc. In this deck, either the mana acceleration or the Spellweaver Helix (enabled by Careful Study and Acorn Harvest) can power out a devastating Time Stretch or Tooth and

Nail. Using Tooth to put a pair of Hoverguard Sweepers into play bounces four creatures and leaves you with 10 power worth of flyers on the table; popping out a Sweepers and a Horror instead essentially Recoils two creatures and leaves you with 7 power in the air. No wonder Kent Raquet called his deck "TWOth and Nail."

Two — Kent Raquet 

Main Deck
60 cards

14 Forest	3 Abyssal Horror	4 Acorn Harvest
8 Island	3 Hoverguard Sweepers	4 Careful Study
2 Swamp	<hr style="width: 100%;"/>	4 Fact or Fiction
24 lands	6 creatures	4 Journey of Discovery
		4 Kodama's Reach
		3 Spellweaver Helix
		3 Time Stretch
		4 Tooth and Nail
		<hr style="width: 100%;"/>
		30 other spells

What a Voice

Except for two name-based choices, this deck is built entirely off of flavor text, yet it has a surprising amount of tribal synergy. Timberwatch Elf, Wellwisher, and Voice of the Woods are all Elves, and each one is happier to see more Elves in play. Innocence Kami, Soilshaper, Seedborn Muse, and Windborn Muse, on the other hand, are all Spirits, and the first two are happier to see more Spirits come into play. With enough Elves in play, Seedborn Muse doubles the 7/7 Elemental production from Voice of the Woods, and it lets Timberwatch Elf be available for both offense and defense. Not bad at all, especially considering the total available "voice" pool only contains 17 cards!

Voice — Kevin Beireis 

Main Deck
60 cards

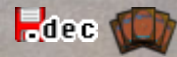
12 Forest	2 Innocence Kami	4 Glorious Anthem
12 Plains	4 Seedborn Muse	<hr style="width: 100%;"/>
24 lands	4 Soilshaper	4 other spells
	2 Stag Beetle	
	4 Timberwatch Elf	
	4 Voice of All	
	4 Voice of the Woods	
	4 Wellwisher	
	4 Windborn Muse	
	<hr style="width: 100%;"/>	

32 creatures

Word Up

The last deck is the most meta, since its word is "word"! "Word" is split pretty evenly between card names and flavor text (amusingly, this deck uses a different Archivist than the one in the "mind" deck), and the result is a deck that uses ramped-up card drawing to send Words of Wilding into a Bear-making frenzy and/or Words of Wind into a bouncetastic typhoon. Relic Barrier is there to tap a dangerous artifact on your opponent's side, or to tap your own Howling Mine so only you get its benefits. And if you wind up producing more Bears than you know what to do with, Epic Struggle can let you win the game while sitting on defense.

Word — Caliph Lebrun



Main Deck

60 cards

12 Forest	4 Archivist	4 Epic Struggle
12 Island	4 Eternal Witness	4 Howling Mine
24 lands	8 creatures	4 Last Word
		4 Relic Barrier
		4 Words of Wilding
		4 Words of Wind
		4 Words of Wisdom
		28 other spells

Those are the 17 decks, folks. Congratulations to all the lauded constructors, and an appreciative thanks to everyone who sent in a deck this year. Feel free to play these decks against each other to see how they perform, and be sure to tune in during the Invitational when they're auctioned off and really put to the test.

Until next week, have fun with the sepdecatalogue!
Mark

