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Cloudhoof Kirin



Adrian Sullivan · *Single-Card Strategies*
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This last weekend was [Pro Tour Philadelphia](#) and the *Kamigawa* Block Constructed format has been fleshed out as far as it can be – up until the next day. Yes, this week begins the two weeks of previews of the new set *Saviors of Kamigawa*. I'm sure that by the end of those two weeks you'll have even more questions whetting your appetite for the [Prerelease](#), but there are some things you can have a handle on. By the time this article gets to the printers, for example, I'll have had the chance to find out who was the winner (Gadiel Szleifer), what they played (Gifts Ungiven Toolbox), and what was the most played card ([Sakura-Tribe Elder](#)). On your end, you'll have learned about one more card that you would be lucky to crack open in the Prerelease- Cloudhoof Kirin.

Ecology of the Cloudhoof Kirin

Here's what Cloudhoof Kirin looks like:



First off, take a previously good card (in this case [Air Elemental](#)) and then simply make it better in pretty much every way. Obviously the fact that the card is a Legend makes Cloudhoof Kirin an entirely different beast, but there's a lot more in the equation than that.

There is an almost silly kind of tension between the milling ability of the Cloudhoof Kirin and the fact that it is a cheap, big flier. Usually when you have a cheap evasion creature that can beat down, the fact that it can pretend to be a **Millstone** is largely irrelevant. I know that I generally am hoping that my opponent will just die from damage when I have a 4/4 flier early in the game. In Sealed Deck or draft, it certainly is possible that you could be able to mill someone's entire library away. The Cloudhoof Kirin could sit back and play defense while your opponent's 40 card deck (likely down to at most 28 cards by the time you play the Kirin) gets knocked into the grave, but it's far more likely you'll be doing something trickier with the milling of this Kirin.

But in that unlikely event...

Maybe being a Millstone deck is the way that you want to use the Cloudhoof Kirin. Here's how we can go about that task.

1. Find the expensive Spirits
2. Find the expensive Arcane spells
3. Think outside the box

As far as expensive Spirits go, there are more than a few out there. Obviously any of the Myojin are going to be able to do a fantastic job of milling the library. My personal favorite Myojin for this purpose would be **Myojin of Seeing Winds**, dropping a whopping ten cards off of your opponent's library and giving you a mitful of new cards to mill them with. Again, all of these big Spirits do suffer from the "problem" that you are likely to just be able to kill them if you've dropped **The Unspeakable** or an **Oyobi Who Split the Heavens** into play.

The expensive Arcane spells are pretty few and far between. Some of the best ones are the ones that can help you keep control of the game. The disruption from **Three Tragedies** or the card-drawing from **Ribbons of the Reikai** can keep your opponent down enough that they could be milled out of it. **Petals of Insight** is actually one of the best possibilities for something like this. If you planned on running a ton of expensive cards, you'd be likely to be bogged down by them and never get anywhere while your opponent wins the game. A single **Petals of Insight**, however, can be cast and recast as often as needed to mill your opponent out.



As far as thinking outside the box goes, here are three little bits of food for thought. "Playing a card" is what triggers the Cloudhoof Kirin. Using a Snake Offering to power out say a **Patron of the Orochi** is a much cheaper way to play a large spirit. The next food for thought is **Mirror Gallery** – after all, if one Cloudhoof Kirin's milling is exciting to you, shouldn't you consider doubling your pleasure? There is another reason that you might want to mill your opponent, and it doesn't have to do with specifically decking them. Getting your opponent's graveyard fat can certainly make resolving a **Haunting Echoes** *incredibly* crippling for your opponent.

Grinding yourself – Six ways to get something from fattening your grave

One thing that all of these cards and ideas have in common in filling your graveyard is that you don't have to just focus on any one aspect of a filled graveyard. Each card can help fill things up and in the meantime you can pick up on other aspects of how a fat graveyard can be a good thing and run with those too. Here are a whole slew of things we can do with Cloudhoof Kirin grinding away at our own library.

1 - Library Manipulation

While I wasn't qualified for Pro Tour Philadelphia, I certainly did do a bit of playtesting in the **Kamigawa** Block format. One of the key cards that quickly stood up to be noticed was **Sensei's Divining Top**. I've already talked about that particular card [in depth](#), but it deserves a special mention in Block. With so many Legends and game altering spells around, the Top could help keep you

from drawing a redundant Legend or simply find you a bit more mana for an expensive spell. The problem, of course, is that you want to keep “priming the pump” with the Top. Cards like **Sakura-Tribe Elder** and **Kodama's Reach** weren't just powerful because of how they fixed your mana; they were also great because they reset the top of your library. Cloudhoof Kirin can do the very same thing for you. In this way, you can use Cloudhoof Kirin to beat down and have something like a **Sensei's Divining Top** help you out by keeping you in the right cards to maintain your beats. Other cards that you can use like this include **Scroll Rack**, **Brainstorm**, or even **Future Sight**.

2 – Bursts and friends

Aggressively milling your own library can help you power out larger effects from cards like **Flame Burst**. Even when you are running **Pardic Firecats** and **Flame Bursts** or **Diligent Farmhands** and **Muscle Burst**, it can be incredibly hard to get off a big Burst. Milling yourself even a few times is likely to greatly increase the numbers you get off of Bursts, particularly in the mid-to-late game. **Aether Burst** and **Accumulated Knowledge** also deserve some mention here, but these effects are likely to be a wee bit less dramatic.

3 – Playing your spirits more than once

Quite a large number of the Spirits out there have Soulshift. Once you get even a single Spirit in your yard back out with Soulshift, you're likely to have a never-ending stream of Spirits. Imagine this, for example. You cast a **Kami of the Honored Dead**, milling seven cards into your library, including two Spirits. Somehow your **Kami of the Honored Dead** dies, reclaiming one of your Spirits, say a **Moonlit Strider**, with Soulshift. You cast it, milling a few more cards, and finding a **Floating-Dream Zuber**. As you draw more cards and mill more cards, you'll find it seems like you have a near endless supply.

A step away from Soulshift, you also could run with a card like **Yomiji**, **Who Bars the Way**. Plenty of the larger Spirits are Legends you don't want to see dead, and Yomiji can let you replay them. Outside of **Kamigawa** block, there are a few more cards that you can get to that would let you replay your spirits. Take **Tradewind Rider**, for example. Not only is it a Spirit, but it can let you pop back your own Spirits to your hand if you want to. Maybe more efficient is something like **Blinking Spirit**. A **Blinking Spirit** can sit on defense all day long, and be used to remill at will. A card like Blinky might make it actually reasonable to even mill out an opponent. One of the more powerful possibilities is **Eternal Dragon**. Already a hard to deal with card, an **Eternal Dragon** can easily find its way into your graveyard with all of this milling, and when you get to the point where you play it, mill you some more.

4 – Threshold and other “Ach, Hans, run!” fun

Having even a moderately full graveyard can easily give you Threshold. Tons of cards can make this useful of course, but Threshold isn't the only thing that you can accomplish with a full grave. There are also a ton of Lhurgoyfs out there to consider. From the original **Lhurgoyf** to the newfangled 'vores', a full graveyard means more power. Obviously the best 'vores' here are likely to be **Terravore** (cheap, plus you'll already be running land), **Mortivore** (you can build your deck to include Spirits), or **Magnivore** (Arcane comes in two forms – Instant and Sorcery – but the Sorcery empowered **Magnivore** is far easier to get out). **Psychatog** is always worth thinking about when you might have a full grave. Also, don't forget **Revenant**. Not only does this Black 'Lhurgoyf' fly, it's a Spirit as well!

The Incarnations deserve mention as well. Whether it's a **Wonder** or a **Genesis**, it isn't all that hard to get them into your grave when you're able to fill it simply by casting a card you want to cast anyway, like **Disrupting Shoal** or **Eternal Dragon**. **Genesis** is definitely the most powerful of these, but getting a **Glory** in the yard isn't something to sneeze at either.



5 – Reduce, Reuse, Recycle

When you build a really great deck, usually that deck includes a lot of powerful cards that you would love to see again. If we could, our counterspell decks would probably run eight **Counterspell**, our burn decks would run twelve **Lightning Bolts**, and a whole slew of other cards we would run as more than four-ofs. By running a card like **Soldevi Digger** or **Gaea's Blessing**, you can refill your deck as the game goes on. The Blessing is definitely the more powerful card of the two, but **Soldevi Digger** can be much more exacting when it comes to spicing up your library - you'll just need to add something in to shuffle it.

6 – It came from the grave!

Simple reanimation tricks of various sorts are always good. A full graveyard gives you a ton of options for a card dedicated to reanimation like **Beacon of Unrest**. The **Beacon of Unrest** also has the added bonus of being usable on your opponent's graveyard if you decide that milling them is useful.

Other reanimation effects can be along the lines of **Nether Shadow**. **Nether Shadow** is actually a Spirit, but even its non-Spirit cousins like **Ashen Ghoul** benefit from filling the grave. One really nice thing about taking cards from the top of the library into the grave is that you actually get to put each batch of them into your graveyard in whatever order you choose. This can be quite useful when it comes to cards like **Krovikan Horror** and **Ashen Ghoul**.

One reanimation card that deserves special mention is **Karmic Guide**. When **Karmic Guide** comes into play, it can take any creature in your graveyard and put it directly into play. Because of the miracle of the stack, you can even approach reanimation from a “hope and see” effect: place the **Karmic Guide**'s reanimation ability on the stack and then place on the stack the **Cloudhoof Kirin** trigger (**Karmic Guide** is a spirit). With a little bit of luck, you'll have hit a really excellent creature that you didn't have in the grave a moment before.



Wrapping up and some more thoughts

Overall, **Cloudhoof Kirin** is a really exciting card. I'm sure that some Johnnies are going to definitely work their hearts and brains out trying to make a dedicated decking deck. Other people are probably going to look at the reanimation aspect. A few Spikes out there are likely to simply try to beat down with it. Here's what I did:

Cloudhoof Kirin-a-go-go		
A Casual Extended deck 60 cards		
4 Flooded Strand	4 Cloudhoof Kirin	3 Scroll Rack
4 Island	4 Tradewind Rider	3 Stifle
7 Plains	4 Windborn Muse	4 Disrupting Shoal
4 Adarkar Wastes	3 Eternal Dragon	3 Chrome Mox
19 land	4 Karmic Guide	2 Mox Diamond
	3 Dreamborn Muse	15 other spells
	3 Kami of the Honored Dead	
	1 Reya Dawnbringer	
	26 creatures	

I made this deck to continuously reuse **Karmic Guide** to bring out your other creatures. A **Dreamborn Muse** or a **Cloudhoof Kirin** is able to fill up your graveyard, while **Scroll Rack** can be used to stuff cards you can't cast (or don't want to) on top of your library to be milled away. **Karmic Guide** can then get back to play powerful creatures like **Kami of the Honored Dead** or

Eternal Dragon, both of which also play into the recursive theme, with the Kami having Soulshift for nearly any creature in your deck and the Dragon simply being able to be bought back. The single **Reya Dawnbringer** can suddenly start packing the table full of problematic creatures.

Tradewind Rider and **Windborn Muse** not only slow down the game from your opponent's side, but they also trigger the Cloudhoof's Spirit clause. **Disrupting Shoal** is the only Arcane spell to trigger the Cloudhoof, but it also is somewhat useful just to stop a random bad spell from ruining your day. Tradewind Rider can also be used to pick up your **Karmic Guide** to recast it.

This deck can simply beat down in the air, or play defense and try to mill your opponent out. The **Stifles** can work wonders, not only in stopping problematic things your opponent might try to do – activate a **Pernicious Deed**, for example – but also can be used on your own **Dreamborn Muse** trigger if you run the risk of decking yourself.

If you wanted to, you could probably include some green in the deck for cards like **Genesis** and **Phantom Nishoba** (also a Spirit), but I prefer it this way with two colors. The deck does start out a little slow, but hopefully the Moxes will help get you into the game more quickly. If you do want to speed up the early game, one possibility is to drop the **Disrupting Shoals** completely and add in something that might help keep you alive like a few **Kami of Ancient Law** or **Wrath of God**.

I really hope you enjoyed this week's card and deck. It was a lot of fun to write and I really enjoyed working on the deck. Before I close, though, there are a few other things I'd like to talk about.



I received a couple of unusually clever ideas after last week's Chisei article that I thought I really ought to share. A number of readers brought up using **Decree of Silence** with Chisei, making it incredibly difficult for an opponent to be able to break out of the Decree lock. Justin Norris brought up **Wall of Roots**, one of my all-time favorite cards. With **Wall of Roots**, you can not only drop a third turn Chisei, but also keep making mana with the Wall and expect Chisei to keep it alive. Albert Seratin brought up using one of my favorite cards ever, **Mystic Remora**, as a really decent use for Chisei (cumulative upkeep has errata that now makes it use "age" counters). R. Rasmussen's suggestion though was easily the coolest. He writes, "Did you ever consider the **Quicksilver Fountain** in a Blue/Green deck with **Choke** and Chisei? Only thing that's really necessary is non-island blue lands."

Well, I had definitely noticed the **Quicksilver Fountain** as a possible feeding trough for Chisei, but since the Fountain didn't seem to do much on its own, I moved on to look at other cards. This idea, though, is pretty fun and actually makes the **Quicksilver Fountain** do something useful as well. Keep the great ideas coming! One of the hard things about this column is that with so many different possible combos out there (and more every set), really good combinations are out there that can easily slip by while I'm hunting for ways to make cards work in interesting, powerful, and unusual ways.

This last week, I wrote about Chisei because one of my readers thought it would make a fun article. I'm always happy to focus on a card idea suggested by my readers, so if you have a suggestion for a card (especially if you have a cool use for it), feel free to send me a line. If I like your card choice, I might just right an article about it, and if I like your idea how to use the card, I'll definitely tell everyone about how impressive I find the combo. In closing, I'd like to ask for another kind of feedback about how this column is presented.

In the end of the article wrap-up, do you want to see more reader feedback about the last article, less reader feedback, or about the same?

- More feedback. I always like to see a few more ideas!
- Less feedback. No use beating a dead horse.
- About the same. A little bit here and there is okay by me.

Have a great rest of your week, and enjoy all of the upcoming *Saviors of Kamigawa* previews!



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