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Tuesday, June 21, 2005

For this week's article I'm going to do another draft walk-through, but this time with the addition of *Saviors of Kamigawa* courtesy of the **Magic Online** beta program. The beta seems to be going well and *Saviors* is due for release on the 27th of June so it won't be too much longer before you'll all be drafting with it.

This article will likely be long enough as it is so I'll cut the preamble short. It's a standard eight player *Champions-Betrayers-Saviors* draft. With the set still fairly new, card ratings and deck archetypes still aren't completely established so let's just see where the draft takes us.

My choices can be found by simply clicking on the "reveal pick" button after the pack listing. If you want to make your own choice then don't read the text after the pack as I'll be discussing why I made the choice I made there. Hopefully this will give you all a chance to look at the pack and make your own choice before reading my own.

The Draft



Pack 1, Pick 1 – Stone Rain, Sift Through Sands, Vine Kami, Cruel Deceiver, Lantern Kami, Lava Spike, Quiet Purity, Ember-Fist Zubera, Lifted By Clouds, Frostwielder, Teller of Tales, Cut The Tethers, Hideous Laughter, Kami of the Palace Fields, Shimatsu the Bloodcloaked.

My Pick:

The three best cards in this pack are Frostwielder, Teller of Tales and Hideous Laughter. Frostwielder is definitely the weakest of them and should probably be discounted right away. In my limited experience of this format there seems to be a lower number of removal spells now and solid creatures are therefore more valuable. The format has also slowed down a little, as there aren't so many good two-drops in the newer sets. Both these facts make Teller of Tales a higher pick than it was previously. Despite that I think you just have to go with the mini-Wrath that is Hideous Laughter here. It's just too good to ignore and there aren't any other considerations such as colour signalling that prevent you doing so. My pick is therefore Hideous Laughter.

Pack 1, Pick 2 – Callous Deceiver, Commune with Nature, Kami of the Waning Moon, Devoted Retainer, Yamabushi's Storm, Eye of Nowhere, Soulless Revival, Silent-Chant Zubera, Ember-Fist

Zubera, Mothrider Samurai, Yamabushi's Flame, Mana Seism, Time of Need, Samurai of the Pale Curtain.

My Pick:

The best cards here are Mothrider Samurai, Samurai of the Pale Curtain and Yamabushi's Flame. There's no real reason not to take the Flame and several reasons in favour of taking it. First of all, it's the best card in the pack. By taking it I'm passing two good white cards, which, along with the Teller, will hopefully set my neighbour into blue-white. The Flame is the best card in the pack and although black-red isn't a great combination it's still the right pick here.

Pack 1, Pick 3 – River Kaijin, Commune with Nature, Devouring Greed, Kitsune Healer, Stone Rain, Floating-Dream Zubera, Peer Through Depths, Jukai Messenger, Deathcurse Ogre, Order of the Sacred Bell, Kashi-Tribe Reaver, Sensei's Divining Top, Akki Coalflinger.

My Pick:

This pick is a little trickier. Devouring Greed is an excellent on-colour pick, but I'm finding it less useful these days. My black decks tend to be full of Ninjas and Rats now that we're drafting the full block and Greed often doesn't even find a place. I also think that the Laughter is best in a deck with numerous high toughness monsters, which suggests that green-black is a fine combination to aim for. Green also allows the splashing of the Flame quite easily and as such I think Kashi-Tribe Reaver is a better pick than Greed here. There's no need to commit heavily to a colour so early in the draft here; keeping your options open can't hurt. There's a chance the Greed will send someone into black near me but I haven't passed any other great black cards and a fourth pick Greed isn't the most amazing signal anyway.

Pack 1, Pick 4 – Orochi Ranger, Devouring Greed, Call to Glory, Devouring Rage, River Kaijin, Venerable Kumo, Soulless Revival, Vigilance, Desperate Ritual, Jade Idol, Eerie Procession, Eiganjo Castle

My Pick:

Another Greed in this pack and this time around there's little else competing with it. There are a few other solid cards but not only is Greed probably the best card still in the pack, it's also on colour and is the right pick here.

Pack 1, Pick 5 – Waking Nightmare, Devoted Retainer, Callous Deceiver, Orochi Ranger, Battle-Mad Ronin, Psychic Puppetry, Frostwielder, Lure, Hanabi Blast, Night Dealings.

My Pick:

I have no idea what four cards would've been taken over the Hanabi Blast. The standard of drafting on the beta is generally a little lower so it may be a case of inexperienced drafters under-valuing it but it might also have just been an amazing pack was opened. With the Frostwielder here too it could also have just been a conscious decision by the other players to avoid taking the red cards in case

they ended up fighting their neighbour for them. With the Flame already drafted though Hanabi Blast is an easy pick for me here.

Pack 1, Pick 6 – Villainous Ogre, Hundred-Talon Kami, Uncontrollable Anger, Thoughtbind, Burr Grafter, Cursed Ronin, Crushing Pain, Wandering Ones, Wear Away, Thousand-legged Kami

My Pick:

From an amazing late pick to a lot of mediocrity. The Hundred-Talon Kami would be my choice if I felt there was any chance this deck could end up being white, but at this point that colour has already been dismissed from contention barring anything particularly freakish. As a result it's basically a choice between Villainous Ogre or Burr Grafter. I think Burr Grafter is a slightly better choice as it's a Spirit with soulshift which goes well with the Greed and it shifts the deck more towards green which goes better with the Hideous Laughter. This pick is fairly close but I think Burr Grafter is a better choice, even though I might not end up drafting that colour.

Pack 1, Pick 7 – Thoughtbind, Indomitable Will, Hisoka's Guard, Field of Reality, Midnight Covenant, Mystic Restraints, Time of Need, Lantern-Lit Graveyard, Okina, Temple to the Grandfathers.

My Pick:

Mystic Restraints is the best card here but at this point in the draft I'm very happy to pass it as it'll hopefully help the player who took the Teller of Tales solidify their commitment to blue, thus staying out of at least one of my colours. Time of Need is a possible choice in case any Legends get opened later but with the possibility of a green-black deck splashing red the Lantern-Lit Graveyard will be a fine addition to the deck and as such that's the pick I go with.

Pack 1, Pick 8 – Kitsune Healer, Yamabushi's Storm, Sift Through Sands, Kashi-Tribe Warriors, Joyous Respite, Midnight Covenant, Terashi's Cry, Student of Elements.

My Pick:

There's really very little playable here. I could take the Healer as a hate-draft but it's not that ridiculous a card and if it helps move a neighbour into white then so much the better. Yamabushi's Storm is my pick as it's a fine sideboard card and even an acceptable 23rd card for the maindeck if things get desperate.

Pack 1, Pick 9 – Stone Rain, Sift Through Sands, Lava Spike, Quiet Purity, Lifted By Clouds, Cut The Tethers, Shimatsu the Bloodcloaked

My Pick:

While Shimatsu isn't very good he can be a decent size late game. I really hope he won't be included in the deck but I draft Shimatsu here, as there's nothing else in the pack that is playable. Lava Spike definitely won't have a place and won't ever be sideboarded in this deck either so Shimatsu is the better choice for me.

Late Picks – There's not much else that turns up late in the *Champions* packs. A Time of Need gets picked up late along with two Devouring Rages. A Kitsune Healer gets drafted from a pack with nothing else in and the first pack finished up with a Crushing Pain and a Field of Reality.

So far the playable cards amount to:

- 1CC:
- 2CC: Yamabushi's Storm
- 3CC: Yamabushi's Flame, Hanabi Blast
- 4CC: Kashi-Tribe Reaver, Burr Grafter, Hideous Laughter, Devouring Greed
- 5CC:
- 6CC:
- Land: Lantern-Lit Graveyard

The Betrayers Pack



Pack 2, Pick 1 – Blademane Baku, Mistblade Shinobi, Gnarled Mass, Psychic Spear, Waxmane Baku, Goblin Cohort, First Volley, Phantom Wings, Vital Surge, Crawling Filth, Silverstorm Samurai, Cunning Bandit, Budoka Pupil, Akki Raider, Kira, Great Glass-Spinner.

My Pick:

Not the worst pack to open but not the best either. Would be nice if Waxmane Baku or Kira were playable here but they aren't. The choice here basically comes down to Budoka Pupil or Cunning Bandit. Both are solid cards but with tricky casting costs. This is a tough decision as I'm initially tempted to go with the Budoka Pupil for the black-green deck. On the other hand the red cards from pack one are much better than the green ones so I'd rather be playing those. I also think that red was cut off in pack one much more severely than green so there's a greater chance of getting passed red cards in this pack. The final point that decides it for me is that I prefer red to green in *Saviors* too, it's just deeper and has more powerful cards. For all those reasons I go with Cunning Bandit here.

Pack 2, Pick 2 – Skullsnatcher, Moonlit Strider, Frost Ogre, Ribbons of the Reikai, Gnarled Mass, Skullmane Baku, Kumano's Blessing, Toils of Night and Day, Matsu-Tribe Sniper, Bile Urchin, Heart of Light, Blinding Powder, Splinter, Nezumi Shadow-Watcher.

My Pick:

The choices from this pack are basically Skullsnatcher, Frost Ogre and Blinding Powder. If I'm playing red-black I don't really want the Blinding Powder – I'd prefer to have solid creatures and removal spells first. Also at this point I'm getting more and more sure I'm playing red, but less sure whether it'll be paired with black or green. It'd be a shame to lose the Laughter but there aren't too many other great black cards that have been drafted and the Greed isn't looking like it will be playable as yet. For those reasons I decide to solidify my position in red, as that's the one colour I do want to be playing now. I take the Frost Ogre.

Pack 2, Pick 3 – Harbinger of Spring, Horobi's Whisper, Kami of False Hope, Blademane Baku, Quillmane Baku, Ire of Kaminari, Toils of Night and Day, Traproot Kami, Call for Blood, Terashi's Grasp, Mark of the Oni, Walker of Secret Ways, Ishi-Ishi, Akki Crackshot.

My Pick:

The decision between going black or green is finally made. Ishi-Ishi would be a nice card to have in the deck but Horobi's Whisper is more powerful and is easily the best card for this deck here. I take the Whisper and settle down to draft red-black.

Pack 2, Pick 4 – Frostling, Teardrop Kami, Roar of Jukai, Okiba-Gang Shinobi, Split-Tail Miko, Crack the Earth, Minamo's Meddling, Traproot Kami, Blessing of Leeches, Takeno's Cavalry, Sosuke's Summons, Indebted Samurai.

My Pick:

Now that we have *Saviors* present in the draft the “cards in hand” theme actually makes Okiba-Gang Shinobi a lot more powerful. It's especially good in this sort of deck too where it can hit once, and then you have the removal spells to take out a potential blocker and have it hit again. This deck will need some sort of mechanism to gain card advantage – Hideous Laughter is a good start mind you – and the Okiba-Gang should be taken over the Frostling as a result.

Pack 2, Pick 5 – Shinka Gatekeeper, Skullmane Baku, Hundred-Talon Strike, Goblin Cohort, First Volley, Uproot, Call for Blood, Takeno's Cavalry, Ashen Monstrosity, Kaijin of the Vanishing Touch, Hero's Demise

My Pick:

There are a number of choices here as there's a lot of on-colour cards that could potentially be playable. I pass on Goblin Cohort first of all simply because I don't think this deck will be that aggressive and I don't think it'll have a high creature count either. Ashen Monstrosity is also a no-no as it's just too expensive and isn't needed right now. The pick here is either Skullmane Baku or First Volley. I like First Volley more than most I think and it almost always manages to kill something for me. *Saviors* has added a few more one-toughness creatures to the format and I'm definitely happy to main-deck the First Volley these days. I also like the idea of having the Volley in the deck so it can take out annoying 2/1s early in the game leaving my more powerful removal spells to deal with their bigger threats. The mana curve on this deck is pretty high and the Volley makes a much better addition for that reason alone. Skullmane Baku is actually much better now that the format has slowed down a bit but I'm still not sure I'll be running enough Spirits to want it in the main-deck. It's very close and I'm sure lots of people would go with the Baku here. The final things that makes the

decision for me is the Laughter and Whisper – it'd be nice to have a playable cheap Arcane spell that I can potentially splice those two cards onto. I therefore go with First Volley.

Pack 2, Pick 6 – Frostling, Ribbons of the Reikai, Moonlit Strider, Akki Blizzard-Herder, Veil of Secrecy, Vital Surge, Bile Urchin, Mending Hands, God's Eye, Gate to the Reikai, Quash

My Pick:

No real decision to be made in this pack – the Frostling is the only playable card for this deck and will make a fine addition to the main deck.

Pack 2, Pick 7 – Shinka Gatekeeper, Child of Thorns, Crack the Earth, Petalmane Baku, Blessing of Leeches, Empty-Shrine Kannushi, Splinter, Lifegift.

My Pick:

There's the option to hate away the Child of Thorns but this deck is short on three-drops and I think with the amount of removal it has there'll be ample opportunity to get some attacks in with the Gatekeeper. Three mana, three power creatures are what this deck really wants and with no Takenuma Bleeders coming around this will do in a pinch. It might not make the main deck, but if there's a hole in the mana curve there it may well do.

Pack 2, Pick 8 – Sakura-Tribe Springcaller, Quillmane Baku, Kumano's Blessing, Stir the Grave, Stir the Grave (FOIL), Mending Hands, Genju of the Spires, Heed the Mists.

My Pick:

Hello! What **on earth** is that Genju doing here! This pack is a clear demonstration that red is under-drafted at this table and that it's the right colour to be in. The fact that zero red cards were passed in pack one has obviously cut the colour off extremely well. It's likely that very few good red cards were opened in pack one as I can't imagine the Genju getting past more than two red drafters. Still, I'm not one to look a gift horse in the mouth so I scoop up the Genju and am very happy about it.

Pack 2, Pick 9 – Blademane Baku, Psychic Spear, Goblin Cohort, Phantom Wings, Vital Surge, Crawling Filth, Akki Raider.

My Pick:

And still there are three playable red cards for the choice as a ninth pick. There may only be one other red drafter at the table. Although Akki Raider has the better stats I think Blademane Baku is the better pick here, as I still want to get some spirits if I can. In this sort of deck I also like it when my two-drops can potentially take out Gnarled Masses and other bigger creatures they might run into.

Pack 2, Pick 10 – Ribbons of the Reikai, Skullmane Baku, Bile Urchin, Kumano's Blessing, Splinter, Nezumi Shadow-Watcher.

My Pick:

The Baku is definitely better than the Bile Urchin here, and I'm very happy to get one this late in the draft. Although it's making my mana curve a little high still it's still a playable card that will probably make the deck. With cards like First Volley, Blademane Baku, Cunning Bandit etc it's good to have more cards that have Spiritcraft triggers and are Spirits themselves.

Late picks – Not much else comes around here. I take an Ire of Kaminari late just in case anyone is drafting that deck. A Splinter, a Crack the Earth, a God's Eye, and a lapped Ashen Monstrosity round out the picks.

The deck is shaping up well now. Adding the cards from this pack to the pool and sticking with just red-black gives the following:

- 1CC: Frostling, Genju of the Spires
- 2CC: Blademane Baku, First Volley, Yamabushi's Storm
- 3CC: Cunning Bandit, Shinka Gatekeeper, Yamabushi's Flame, Hanabi Blast, Horobi's Whisper
- 4CC: Hideous Laughter, Devouring Greed
- 5CC: Skullmane Baku, Frost Ogre, Okiba-Gang-Shinobi
- 6CC:
- Land: Lantern-Lit Graveyard

Things are shaping up pretty well so far. There's still no guarantee the Greed will be playable but there are a few Spiritcraft effects in the deck already so there's some nice synergy there even if it isn't. The mana curve has come down a little. The Genju isn't really a one mana spell though, but then the Shinobi often comes out for four mana instead of five also. It's light on creatures but that's normal for red-black decks; you usually find that the red and black spells in a block are more powerful than the creatures.

Overall there are no huge holes in the deck; so far so it's just a case of picking up the best black and red cards throughout *Saviors* while keeping an eye on the creature count and the mana curve.

The Saviors Pack



Pack 3, Pick 1 – Shinen of Flight's Wings, Fiddlehead Kami, Death Denied, Shinen of Star's Light, Barrel Down Sokenzan, Minamo Scrollkeeper, Ronin Cavekeeper, Cut the Earthly Bond, Sakura-Tribe Scout, Kuro's Taken, Kitsune Bonesetter, Trusted Advisor, Hail of Arrows, Kashi-Tribe Elite, Hidetsugu's Second Rite

My Pick:

A nice pack to open here as there are a lot of good cards in the pack, which will hopefully mean something decent will make it around the table back to me. The choice here is between Barrel Down Sokenzan and Hidetsugu's Second Rite. The Rite is a powerful card, make no mistake. It can sometimes be difficult to get your opponent to exactly ten life but if it's in your hand you can make the right plays accordingly. Sometimes it's a bit of a "win more" card in that if you can deal them ten damage, you might not need the Rite to be able to deal them the second ten. But whenever you successfully cast it, it just ends the game right there. No messing about, no top-decks for your opponent. Game over. In this pack though, and in this deck I think the Sokenzan is the better pick. An Instant, Arcane removal spell is exactly what this deck wants more of, and it's definitely the more stable choice for the deck.

Pack 3, Pick 2 – Spiraling Embers, Minamo Scrollkeeper, Nightsoil Kami, Sink into Takenuma, Kitsune Loreweaver, Sokenzan Spellblade, Ideas Unbound, Rending Vines, Gnat Miser, Kitsune Bonesetter, Glitterfang, Locust Miser, Rushing-Tide Zubera, Undying Flames.

My Pick:

There's a choice here to be made between the Spiraling Embers and Undying Flames. I haven't ever played with Undying Flames yet but my instincts tells me it's a bomb. On average it'll probably be a Yamabushi's Flame every turn and if you could draw a Yamabushi's Flame every turn in a match you'd probably win! In this deck especially it feels like the deck will establish control with it's removal spells and by trading some creatures off and then just cast this and hit the opponent for 2-5 damage every turn before they have a chance to recover. When in doubt, take the rare card, especially if you don't have experience playing with it as playing with it is the only way you'll get that experience after all.

Pack 3, Pick 3 – Akki Drillmaster, Freed from the Real, Nightsoil Kami, Deathmask Nezumi, Cowed by Wisdom, Akki Underling, Path of Anger's Flame, Dreamcatcher, Matsu-Tribe Birdstalker, Kuro's Taken, Plow Through Reito, Descendant of Masumaro, Kuon, Ogre Ascendant.

My Pick:

The quality drops off severely here obviously, but there are still some playable cards to be grabbed. Kuro's Taken would be a nice two-drop for this deck but when decks like these are light on creatures and heavy on removal I don't think you really want your second turn plays to be defensive 1/1s. I think the Underling makes the better choice as this will be a controllish deck that will be happy to play second in any match and the Underling is excellent in that sort of deck. There's already one Barrel Down Sokenzan been drafted and we might see a Sink into Takenuma making the deck later as well, so there's even a chance to utilise the Sweep effects to make the Underling a 4/2 first-striker in the late game as well.

Pack 3, Pick 4 – Torii Watchward, Descendant of Soramaro, Shinen of Life's Roar, Death Denied, Ronin Cavekeeper, Oboro Breezecaller, Rending Vines, Shinen of Fear's Chill, Spiritual Visit, Exile into Darkness, Inner-Chamber Guard, Feral Lightning.

My Pick:

There's not a lot of choice here. This deck isn't an aggro deck requiring a finisher so Feral Lightning is out. It could take Death Denied perhaps but it isn't going to running that many creatures anyway. Exile into Darkness is the best pick here and it goes very well in this deck as by playing second it'll hopefully be easier to maintain the "cards in hand" advantage. With the other removal spells acting as spot removal early on in the game it's not too difficult to imagine this card locking some decks out of the game completely as soon as turn five.

Pack 3, Pick 5 – Torii Watchward, Shinen of Fury's Fire, Shinen of Life's Roar, Shinen of Fury's Fire (FOIL), Inner Fire, Murmurs from Beyond, Sakura-Tribe Scout, Death of a Thousand Stings, Presence of the Wise, Haru-Onna, Captive Flame.

My Pick:

Not too much to chose from in this pack. The right pick is probably the three-drop that's also a Spirit and that will help fill out the mana curve of the deck.

Pack 3, Pick 6 – Cowed by Wisdom, Akki Drillmaster, Spiraling Embers, Glitterfang, Ideas Unbound, Matsu-Tribe Birdstalker, Death of a Thousand Stings, Curtain of Light, Shifting Borders, Scroll of Origins.

My Pick:

Hopefully no-one needs to ask what I picked from this pack! Getting an Embers this late is very strange, but as I'd already mentioned it's almost certain that there's only one other red drafter at the table now and there are a few cards they could've been taken over it. This is an amazing late-pick gift though, and not something you'd expect to happen every draft, or even one draft in five really. Another great pick for the deck.

Pack 3, Pick 7 – Kitsune Dawnblade, Sokenzan Spellblade, Into the Fray, Dreamcatcher, Dosan's Oldest Chant, Deathknell Kami, Plow Through Reito, Eiganjo Free-Riders, Pure Intentions.

My Pick:

Those Free-Riders will make a nice gift for a white player down the line but for this deck the Sokenzan Spellblade is correct. This deck will hope to re-establish the tempo lost through going second with it's numerous removal spells. The Spellblade is then very difficult for an opponent to deal with as it will often need to be double-blocked and this is the sort of deck that can really punish someone who risks that. The Spellblade is an automatic inclusion in the main deck here and is the right pick because of that.

Pack 3, Pick 8 – Kitsune Dawnblade, Into the Fray, Murmurs from Beyond, Glitterfang, Dosan's Oldest Chant, Gnat Miser, Measure of Wickedness, Seed the Land.

My Pick:

With Cunning Bandit, Blademane Baku and Skullmane Baku all likely to make the main deck I think Glitterfang will be a fine inclusion. It'll also potentially get a few points of damage in and then jump back into your hand to avoid the Hideous Laughter.

Pack 3, Pick 9 – Fiddlehead Kami, Minamo Scrollkeeper, Ronin Cavekeeper, Cut the Earthly Bond, Sakura-Tribe Scout, Trusted Advisor, Kashi-Tribe Elite

My Pick:

There's nothing here I want to play so I go ahead and take the Scrollkeeper. Cheap 2/3 Defenders could prove a little annoying for this deck as it's like to get some damage in with it's early creatures if it can without having to kill annoying blockers.

Pack 3, Pick 10 – Sokenzan Spellblade, Ideas Unbound, Rending Vines, Gnat Miser, Kitsune Bonesetter, Locust Miser.

My Pick:

There's no way a Spellblade should be going round the table like this but I'll take it if it does. It'll probably make the deck in place of the Frost Ogre. With two Spellblades in the deck dropping one on turn five is quite likely and that's the ideal play late-game creature for this kind of deck.

Late Picks: A Deathmask Nezumi picked up late might make the deck due to mana curve considerations but nothing else playable comes around. An Inner Chamber Guard gets hated, but that's about it.

The Deck

So after the draft is complete the final pool of cards looks something like this:



From that I'd build the following core deck of cards that would be definite inclusions:

- 1CC: Frostling, Glitterfang, Genju of the Spires
- 2CC: Blademane Baku, Akki Underling, First Volley
- 3CC: Cunning Bandit, Yamabushi's Flame, Hanabi Blast, Horobi's Whisper, Barrel Down Sokenzan
- 4CC: Hideous Laughter, Spiraling Embers
- 5CC: Skullmane Baku, Okiba-Gang-Shinobi, Exile Into Darkness, Sokenzan Spellblade x 2
- 6CC: Undying Flames
- Land: Lantern-Lit Graveyard

That's a very solid 19 cards to start with, and there are some alternatives for what the last few cards should be. From the remainder of the card pool the following cards are the ones to be considered:

Devouring Greed, Deathmask Nezumi, Yamabushi's Storm, Ashen Monstrosity, Frost Ogre, Shimatsu, Shinen of Fury's Fire, Shinka Gatekeeper.

I think this deck will certainly need eighteen lands, as there are several five-drops that need that extra land. There's also both Hideous Laughter and Hanabi Blast that require double-colour so adding that extra land will help out there too.

That basically means there are eight cards fighting for three slots.

There are only really five spirits in the deck, which makes the Devouring Greed a definite cut for me. This deck doesn't need it anyway; it isn't going to be trying to pull off a big Greed for the win.

With the mana curve so high I'd also cut Ashen Monstrosity and Frost Ogre. This deck needs three-drops, not these guys. Shimatsu also gets cut simply because I think this deck wants to keep its land in play, not sacrifice them to make a 3/3 monster.

answer quickly. I had the Embers again for his one decent-sized blocker and after a couple of chumps the Spellblade soon finished the job the Underling had started.

Round 2

This round I was against a white-black deck. An Araba Mothrider and Moonwing Moth threatened to start racing my Shinka Gatekeeper but when my opponent tapped out for a Soratami Cloud Chariot a First Volley took care of the Moth. The other Moth was on defence with the help of the Cloud Chariot that meant I could not easily attack so the game stalled for a few turns while we both drew land for a time. A couple of turns later I drew Skullmane Baku which combined nicely with the Glitterfang I'd had in my hand for ages to take out my opponent's low toughness blockers.

Once again the Yamabushi's Storm was boarded in here over the Deathmask Nezumi.

Game two was a little anti-climatic as my opponent didn't see his first Swamp until turn six or so and by that time the Underling had again served up a lot of damage and I had guys in play and removal spells in hand so my opponent was never able to deploy his black cards fast enough to stem the bleeding.

Round 3

My opponent won the flip and again chose to play first, something I was very happy with. This game was basically over on my fourth turn when I cast Hideous Laughter to take out an opposing Kami of Ancient Law, Budoka Pupil and Shinen of Star's Light. All this with Hanabi Blast and Yamabushi's Flame still in hand. A Skullmane Baku and Shinen of Fury's Fire soon finished things off once his last two remaining creatures had been dealt with.

In this match-up I boarded in the Frost Ogre for the Deathmask Nezumi as I wanted another big creature that could attack into my opponent's Springcallers and trade with his Okina Nightwatch and Feral Deceivers.

In the second game a first turn Child of Thorns and second turn Split-Tail Miko caused me a lot of problems as I couldn't use my First Volley to kill the Miko, and the Miko sat around causing grief. A Gnarled Mass and Sakura-Tribe Springcaller were just too much toughness for me to deal with, especially with the Miko around protecting them.

I just about stabilised after killing off the Miko and making a couple of blockers. An all-out attack from my opponent left me suspicious but I was low on life and had to block to trade off two of my guys for two of his. Unfortunately he had the Charge Across the Araba with three Plains in play and that was the end of that game

Game three was a lot tighter, with my opponent leading out with a Gnarled Mass on turn three and two Springcallers again on turn four and five. The Mass was taken out by a Yamabushi's Flame and this was the game where Underling and Barrel Down Sokenzan truly demonstrated their synergy. With the two Springcallers attacking I was able to Barrel one down for four damage, while returning exactly enough Mountains to restore my hand to seven cards so the Underling could take down the second. Although I was down to just a single land at this point my opponent had nothing and the Underling attacked a few times while I replayed the lands and got enough in play for the Hanabi Blast I had in hand to finish off my opponent's top-decked blockers.

Finally a draft win from one of these drafts, but then with a deck as powerful as this one it was hardly surprising.

Both Akki Underling and Sokenzan Spellblade have gone up in my estimations as a result of this draft. The Spellblade especially won a few games outright where another creature like a Frost Ogre would not have. The Bushido 1 tacked onto him makes him harder to deal with than Frost Ogre as cards like Gnarled Mass and Takenuma Bleeder can no longer trade for it. It also means if your opponent ever double blocks with say an Indebted Samurai and River Kaijin the Spellblade is still going to take out both of those blockers whereas a Frost Ogre would not.

I think the Underling still has to really be played in a deck that wants to draw first. With the Underling and Laughter and the more controllish nature of this deck it was happy to do that but I don't think that will be true for every deck and when it isn't the Underling suddenly becomes very mediocre.

Overall, a decent draft with an excellent deck at the end of it. Hopefully you all enjoyed this first look at drafting with *Saviors*.

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