

Home > Games > Magic > Magicthegathering.com > Columns

# Sway of the Stars

Adrian Sullivan  
Single-Card Strategies  
Wednesday, June 29, 2005



Every week, I get a lot of e-mail from readers. Some of my favorites have been responses to some of the older Reader Challenges that someone felt deserved another look. Other times, a reader will send in a great insight on a card I just covered. Theodore Perperidis had a fantastic suggestion for a Tooth and Nail deck using **Twincast**: include an Uyo! Now, if your opponent casts **Tooth and Nail**, you can **Twincast** it, retrieving Uyo (and whatever else you might like). Use Uyo to copy the **Tooth and Nail** as many times as you can! Great thinking, Theodore!

I also receive a lot of suggestions on cards to cover in upcoming weeks. Several weeks ago, one reader sent me an e-mail with a clever approach to a card that I already had my eye on. Here is his e-mail:

Dear Adrian Sullivan,  
I was thinking about the card **Sway of the Stars**, and came up with a pretty awesome combo with it: **Day of the Dragons**. The combo shouldn't be too difficult to pull off. I think you might have fun exploring combos with this one, so I thought I'd send it your way. Thanks for the great articles every week!  
-Sam

As soon as you mentioned that combo, Sam, I knew I had to write about **Sway of the Stars**. **Sway of the Stars** is a really impressive and cool card; essentially you are each starting the whole game over again with a new hand and a new board, but with seven life. Cards this cool just need to find the right time - I kept Sam's e-mail on ice for about a month or so, waiting for a moment that felt just right. That moment is now.



## Big, Big Mana

**Sway of the Stars** costs a lot of mana. The [last time](#) I looked at a card that made me think of a ten casting cost spell, it was covering **Eater of Days** (and thinking how it gave your opponent a free **Time Stretch**).

Ten mana is a heck of a lot of mana. How are we going to get it?

Flares are the first thing that most of us are going to think of. The original Flare was **Mana Flare**. I still have fond thoughts of the Mana Flare decks that existed way back in the day, but the more modern day variant is **Heartbeat of Spring**. I've written about **Heartbeat** [already](#), but it bears mentioning how generally dangerous these Flares are. When you are doubling everyone's mana, they can do some scary stuff too, and usually before you get the first shot at it.

This scary stuff that gets done by your opponent is one of the reasons that I paired cards like that with a card like **Jokulhaups**. It gets rid of just about everything scary. **Sway of the Stars** does the very same trick, getting rid of everything nasty that's out there on the table and shoving them back into each player's deck. If you don't want to worry about that scary threat of mana from your opponent, you can always upgrade to **Mirari's Wake**. Another one-way-only option is to get "domain" (one mana of every basic land type) and use a card like **Fist of Suns** to get your **Sway of the Stars** off.

WHAT IS MAGIC?  
CLICK HERE!

GUILDPACT  
MINISITE  
Guild lore. Art. Orb.

PRODUCTS  
Guildpact Ravnica: City of Guilds  
All Magic products

RULES  
Core Game Basic Rulebook Comprehensive Rules All Magic Rules

MESSAGE BOARDS  
All Magic message boards magicthegathering.com forum Rules Q&A forum Magic Online announcements

MAGIC ONLINE  
Download Now! Check server status  
Magic Online Academy Magic Online FAQ

NOVELS  
Guildpact Ravnica Cycle, Book II by Cory Herndon  
More fiction at LEGENDODOLOGY

**Fist of Suns** isn't the only way to cheat on mana costs. One of my old favorites was always the old **Temporal Aperture** from Urza's Block (or "the Washing Machine" as it was called by most of the players I knew). Rather than actually use mana (how old-fashioned!), you could simply get lucky and flip it over, getting to play the card for free.

Another way to get the mana is from Sachi and a slew of Shamans. If you haven't had the opportunity to try out **Sachi, Daughter of Seshiro** as a mana producer, try out a deck with her and some Shamans or run out to your local MTGO traderoom and get a few. Sachi is fully capable of loading up just a ton of mana, and there are an amazingly large amount of great Shamans out there (**Eternal Witness**, anyone?).

As I was testing for Pro-Tour Philadelphia, I ended up morphing one of our Snake decks into a Sway of the Stars deck. It didn't end up being the one to make the cut, but still, it illustrates what can be done with the proper focus. Here is my e-mail to my little **Magic** think tank, Cabal Rogue:

Snake-Sway – Adrian Sullivan with Ben Dempsey		
60 cards		
1 Okina, Temple to the Grandfathers	4 Sakura-Tribe Elder	4 Sosuke's Summons
1 Minamo, School at Water's Edge	4 Orochi Sustainer	4 Kodama's Reach
14 Forest	3 Sachi, Daughter of Seshiro	4 Time of Need
6 Island	1 Patron of the Orochi	2 Sway of the Stars
22 land	4 Sakura-Tribe Springcaller	14 other spells
	3 Seshiro the Anointed	
	1 Kira, Great Glass-Spinner	
	1 Myojin of Seeing Winds	
	1 Kodama of the North Tree	
	1 Meloku the Clouded Mirror	
	1 Azusa, Lost but Seeking	
	24 creatures	

Projected readiness: 60% (maybe this is too harsh)

This isn't the typical Snake list. First of all, it doesn't run Jitte nor does it run a Jitte answer like **Wear Away**. One of the things the deck does do is run the Snake-Engine buttressed by **Time of Need** and other powerful Legends. Generally, when fighting against the Jitte, the Summons, Sachi, and Springcaller are all good at keeping the Jitte in its place. Seshiro can then force the issue and either swoop in for the kill or when that plan doesn't work out, the 2 Sway reset the board, typically with a lot of mana floating.

Ben can attest that it does seem to still do well when a Jitte is in play on the other side of the table. I'm pretty pleased with this deck, but there are cards I wouldn't mind seeing. **Gifts Ungiven** is the first that comes to mind. **Time Stop** also seems nice (but perhaps more of a board card). **Orochi Leafcaller** seems decent with the Summons, but I'm not sure it makes the cut (even if it is a Shaman for Sachi).

Thoughts?

When I say this deck is capable of floating a lot of mana, oh boy, is it. Against the aggressive decks, it was very easy to get the Snakes to slow the game down until you were able to drop a **Patron of the Orochi** with Sachi, Springcallers, and quite a few land. More than a few times, I floated something like 18 mana into my pool after resolving a **Sway of the Stars** (though the time I played against a Time Stop made me really cringe). Seven cards usually managed to find some way to spend that mana...

## All Sevens

**Sway of the Stars** is a complete game reset. Each player gets rid of everything left in the game, shuffles it up, and draws seven cards. After that, they go to seven life.

I know that when I first saw the card, I had visions of a beatdown deck that would use the Sway just in case things didn't work out. In my head, I had these Merfolk or Skies decks having the ultimate answer to anything that wasn't going their way.

It doesn't really work like that when you start thinking about it. I'm sure that many of the columnists will hit on what beatdown is (it is Beatdown Weak, after all). Whether it is Mike Flores or Scott Wills, I expect they'll hit on the fact that most beatdown decks play low on the curve. One of the problems with my initial vision of Sway in a beatdown deck is that an aggressive deck isn't going to enjoy drawing that ten-mana **Sway of the Stars** while it is winning. Getting to the mana required to cast such a spell is generally going to take an edge off of the beatdown and without actually investing the kind of space required for that kind of mana, you aren't ever going to actually manage to cast the **Sway of the Stars**.

My Snake-Sway was one attempt to answer this problem: the little guys that would be used simply to build your mana would make fine beatdown creatures if your opponent only had 1 mana on the table on their next turn. We're talking about 7 life here... This isn't really all that much.

Another idea is to float the mana you acquire and hope to draw into the appropriate kind of burn. 7 damage isn't really all that much mana when you're talking about the kind of damage that burn is capable of. If you float only 8 mana, you can easily draw a **Fireball** (or any such legal X-spell) and finish the game. Even with smaller point-and-click burn, it doesn't take much.

Stopping someone from being able to gain life is another trick that you can pull. Take a **Flames of the Blood Hand**, for example. If you can cast a **Flames of the Blood Hand** to knock someone below 7 life before you cast the **Sway of the Stars**, the **Flames of the Blood Hand** will not let them raise back up to 7. One of the little-known rules of **Magic** is that changes of life total are considered a gain or a loss, so they don't get an out here.

One of the simplest ways to use burn in an abusive manner are things that abuse hand-size. We're not just talking Maros here, we're also talking cards like **Storm Seeker**, or the recently printed **Gaze of Adamaro**. Put in a few **Eerie Processions** or **Peer through Depths** in with your **Gaze of Adamaro** and I'd wager you'd be able to draw into an automatic kill in **Karnigawa** block nearly all the time with only about 7 mana floating.



## Some Little Tricks, Phasing, and Nightmares

Of course, all of this started because Sam sent me an e-mail mentioning **Day of the Dragons**. **Day of the Dragons** combos so well with **Sway of the Stars** because the cards taken out of the game by **Day of the Dragons** are not shuffled back into the deck by **Sway**. Instead, they come back into play, letting you effectively cheat the **Sway of the Stars** out of this completely new game state.



**Otherworldly Journey** and **Reality Ripple** can let you dodge this effect as well. Take any of the phasing creatures and you have a creature that can dodge the bullet. **Rainbow Efreet** makes a pretty powerful attacker when there is nothing else on the board, and a **Frenetic Efreet** was always a creature worthy of a bit of respect. **Taniwha**, on the other hand, could happen to just kill your opponent on the next turn after a **Sway of the Stars**, and you never even needed to float any mana!

A card like **Portcullis** could let you build up a whole slew of potential creatures for the **Sway of the Stars**, however, it does have the problem of letting your opponent build up creatures as well. Cards that you have a bit more control of (like **Anurid Brushhopper**) are probably better bets, though **Portcullis** is pretty interesting. **Icy Prison** can save one of your own creatures in much the same way as **Reality Ripple** or **Otherworldly Journey**, but be useful in holding down an opponent's creature earlier in the game when you aren't anywhere near ready to **Sway**.

Nightmares are another really great way to prepare the way for a **Sway of the Stars** that might not have any mana floating. Use a **Faceless Butcher** to remove your own creature from the game or save up a card under a **Mesmeric Fiend**. My favorite of the Nightmares, though, has got to be **Wormfang Crab**. If your opponent knows that you are planning on

**Swaying**, they are placed in an awfully difficult position. Do they remove one of your best cards to give you back after the **Sway**, or do they get rid of a weaker card and leave you with a cheap, huge creature?

Much like the Nightmares, we have the various Parallax removal cards. Whether it is **Parallax Wave** or **Parallax Tide**, these are affected just the same way that the Nightmares or the **Day of the Dragons** are. Get out one of these puppies and on the following turn, remove any of the cards that you're hungry to protect before you drop that **Sway** onto the stack. I expect you'll be way ahead in the "new" game.

Another fun trick is to use delays. Take a powerful spell, cast **Ertai's Meddling** on it for some number of turns after you plan on casting a **Sway of the Stars**. On the appropriate turn, "BOOM!" out comes that original spell. A card like **Three Wishes** can give a different type of delay, giving you a card you can use after the **Sway of the Stars** has resolved, but leaving them removed from the game to be used. This requires another three mana, but sometimes that won't matter.

## Wrapping Up

The way to use the **Sway of the Stars** that I have the most experience is certainly with Snakes. That said, I want to take the deck out of being a Block deck and just make a fun Snake deck for Legacy. I make no claims that this deck would beat anything serious, but it does have a lot of fun stuff in it.



## Sway of the Stars

60 cards

4 Tropical Island	4 Sakura-Tribe Scout	3 Three Wishes
4 Yavimaya Coast	4 Sakura-Tribe Elder	3 Sway of the Stars
8 Forest	4 Sachi, Daughter of Seshiro	3 Concordant Crossroads
5 Island	4 Eternal Witness	
3 Mirrodin's Core	4 Wormfang Crab	9 other spells
24 land	2 Patron of the Orochi	
	4 Troll Ascetic	
	1 Taniwha	
	27 creatures	

This deck is pretty simple. It includes the sneaky, sneaky **Three Wishes** and **Wormfang Crab** as potential ways to simply dodge the Sway. Other than that, it has a lot of Shamans to go with Sachi. Between Sachi and the other Shamans, you should be able to easily power out a Sway unless your opponent kills off all of your guys. **Concordant Crossroads** helps to cause a potential automatic kill after the Sway: if you get enough mana, a Crossroad should all but guarantee the opponent dies from creatures, if not immediately, than by turn 2 after the Sway.

Another build, this one with the "auto-Sway" kill in mind:

## Sway of the Stars

60 cards

4 Volcanic Island	4 Blistering Firecat	4 Mana Flare
4 Shivan Reef	4 creatures	4 Sway of the Stars
3 Mirrodin's Core		4 Impulse
7 Island		4 Peer Through Depths
6 Mountain		4 Sudden Impact
24 land		4 Ertai's Meddling
		4 Force of Will
		4 Gaze of Adamaro
		32 other spells

With a **Fireball** in there instead of one of those **Storm Seeker** reprints, you could always do something like **Fireball** for 8, **Ertai's Meddling** it for 2 turns, and follow up the next turn with a **Sway of the Stars**. This deck is pretty much a one trick pony, but it makes me laugh and can be a lot of fun to play.

I hope you enjoyed this week's card. Thanks, Sam, for the idea!



[Discuss](#) on the message boards



[Respond](#) via email



[Adrian Sullivan](#) archive

[WHAT'S NEW](#) [CORPORATE INFO](#) [WHERE TO BUY](#) [INTERNATIONAL](#) [SUPPORT](#) [SITE MAP](#) [PRODUCT LIBRARY](#)



© 1995-2006 Wizards of the Coast, Inc., a subsidiary of Hasbro, Inc. All Rights Reserved.  
Wizards is headquartered in Renton, Washington, PO Box 707, Renton, WA 98057.  
[PRIVACY STATEMENT](#)