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Prismatic with Comedy AI

Bennie Smith
Into the Aether
Thursday, August 11, 2005



Don't Forget – Magic Immortality is Within Your Grasp!

In case you actually missed the big news [last week](#), since *Mirage* didn't have pre-con decks, Wizards of the Coast has decided to create them in a variety of interesting ways, the first of which will be opening the privilege up to *you* through an Online tournament series! I wanted to remind everyone that qualifiers to get into the final grand prize tournament start **today** (August 11) and run through next Wednesday, August 17, with about half of all Premier Events being designated as a Qualifier. There's Standard, Sealed, Block, Extended, Singleton, Prismatic, and Vanguard events, so no matter what your forte, you have a shot at immortalizing yourself with a pre-con deck (though you might have to borrow a deck for the final tournament, which will be Standard)! For all the info, make sure to read the [official announcement](#).



Greater Challenge Than I Thought

Greater Good is a "pet card" of mine, and I truly love it, so I was indulging myself a bit with the Deck Challenge last week. I was curious what angles other players might take in building decks around this fun and powerful enchantment. I figured a platform like [magicthegathering.com](#) would be large enough shake a few other Greater Good loyalists out of the woodwork.

Let me just say I was overwhelmed by the response! Evidently there are a lot of **Greater Good** fans out there... either that, or there's a horde of deck building enthusiasts out there who love to do these exercises no matter what the card. Regardless, I'm pleasantly surprised and greatly relieved that I actually have a pretty good lead-time before the contest wraps up. Currently, I've received *101 decks* to wade through, which has led me to rethinking how I'm going to work this contest. I'm still going to go through and pick the ones that strike me as the most interesting, but since I have so many, I think I will open things up to you all to help me cull the list down to 4 "finalists" that I'll actually play test and decide on the winner. In the next couple weeks, I'll cook up 10 decklists that I think are the best for you to vote on and based on the top 4 vote getters I'll know what decks to start trying out once [Ninth Edition is released to Magic Online](#) on August 29th. Whichever one of final four decks floats my boat the best gets the foliage!

Speaking of *Ninth Edition*... One thing I've received questions about is **beta** testing, and since I've never actually done any beta testing, I'd need to get the information from someone who has. If you've done several beta tests (including *Ninth Edition*) and would be willing to share your experiences for Into The Aether, drop me an email with your name, MTGO handle, what betas you've tested, and what you do have done differently in beta (as opposed to the normal game). I'll pick one of you to give those of us who're curious a peek behind that particular curtain.

Dabbling in Prismatic!

I've avoided trying out Prismatic for a couple of reasons, first and foremost because there's been a pretty good amount of coverage of the format already.

Wizards of the Coast's own Doug Beyer has written a boatload of Prismatic articles: [A Prismatic Primer](#), [Prismatic Treasures 1](#), [Prismatic Treasures 2](#), [Prismatic in the Darksteel Era](#) (with a nice "deck recipe" guide for building such a huge deck), [Prismatic in the Fifth Dawn Era](#), [Prismatic in the Champions Era](#) (talks about the recent bannings), and [Prismatic Control](#) (includes a **budget** decklist with no rares in it).


JMS's articles on the format include [IntoTheAether And The Really Big Door](#), and [IntotheAether is Prismatastic](#) (where he breaks down why Prismatic is (normally) definitely *not* a budget format). Before Jay, Chad Ellis touched on it with [Narrowing the Focus](#).

Mark Gottlieb even got into it, with [Doctor Wombat's Wild Ride](#) (featuring his creatureless "Kill 'Em All" and a crazy singleton Prismatic deck).


I didn't want to subject you all to another "introduction" to such a well-covered format, but I figured putting links to all the Prismatic articles in one spot would be handy for those of us who are new to the format.

I was also a little intimidated by the sheer process of trying to construct such a huge deck and making sure that all the necessary bases are covered. Ultimately though, "big deck" **Magic** is how I started this game way back in

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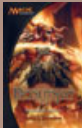


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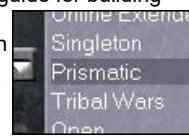


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NOVELS



Dissension
Ravnica Cycle, Book III
by Cory Herndon



the day, so I knew I wanted to give it a try eventually, and I'm sure I wasn't the only one feeling this way about Prismatic. I cooked up the following rough initial list without reading too much background on Prismatic in order to test how good my deckbuilding instincts would be.

Inaugural Prismatic		
Bennie Smith		
250 cards		
4 Tendo Ice Bridge	1 Treva, the Renewer	4 Pernicious Deed
2 Battlefield Forge	1 Dromar, the Banisher	4 Artifact Mutation
2 Caves of Koilos	4 Birds of Paradise	4 Aura Mutation
10 Forest	1 Rith, the Awakener	4 Starstorm
7 Island	4 Dwarven Blastminer	1 Decree of Justice
2 Llanowar Wastes	4 Exalted Angel	1 Necrogen Spellbomb
6 Mountain	4 Silent Specter	1 Pyrite Spellbomb
7 Plains	4 Bane of the Living	1 Sunbeam Spellbomb
2 Shivan Reef	4 Chartooth Cougar	1 Aether Spellbomb
6 Swamp	4 Chromeshell Crab	4 Sword of Fire and Ice
1 Treva's Ruins	4 Elvish Aberration	2 Sword of Light and Shadow
2 Yavimaya Coast	4 Eternal Dragon	3 Conjuror's Bauble
4 Coastal Tower	4 Fierce Empath	1 Paradise Mantle
1 Crosis's Catacombs	4 Shoreline Ranger	4 Wayfarer's Bauble
1 Darigaaz's Caldera	4 Twisted Abomination	4 Kodama's Reach
1 Dromar's Cavern	4 Willbender	1 Pithing Needle
4 Elfame Palace	4 Zombie Cutthroat	4 Sensei's Divining Top
1 Rith's Grove	4 Copper Myr	
4 Salt Marsh	2 Gold Myr	44 other spells
4 Shivan Oasis	2 Iron Myr	
4 Terminal Moraine	2 Leaden Myr	
4 Urborg Volcano	2 Silver Myr	
1 Crystal Quarry	4 Bringer of the Blue Dawn	
1 Darkwater Catacombs	4 Bringer of the Red Dawn	
2 Deserted Temple	4 Bringer of the White Dawn	
1 Mossfire Valley	4 Trinket Mage	
1 Shadowblood Ridge	4 Sakura-Tribe Elder	
1 Skycloud Expanse		
1 Sungrass Prairie	91 creatures	
3 Krosan Verge		
4 Bloodstained Mire		
4 Flooded Strand		
3 Grand Coliseum		
3 Polluted Delta		
4 Windswept Heath		
4 Wooded Foothills		
3 Mirrodin's Core		
115 land		

Yes, I know having full access to IPA cards makes things much easier. Later on I'll go about trying Prismatic by constricting some of the older, hard-to-get cards, but for my first few games I wanted power to make up for my lack of experience. I cooked up a few deckbuilding guidelines when putting these together, and as a word of warning these guidelines were certainly far from perfect! I recommend checking out the links above (especially Doug Beyer's articles) to get some input from people who've spent much more time on the format. For better or worse, this was thought-process:

1. Make sure the mana is good. This involved lots of non-basic lands, and green's excellent mana fixers (Birds, Tribe Elder, Reach). I also threw in **Wayfarer's Baubles**, some mana Myr, land cyclers, and a **Paradise Mantle**. After playing the deck a few times, I think I went a little overboard, but it's better to have your mana be too good than not good enough. As with everything else, first you need a starting point. Approach your mana conservatively to start, then test the deck to see where you can cut corners.
2. Consider the use of morphs. Morphs were designed to help players cope with color-screw by giving them a creature they could play no matter what color mana they had available. They seemed to be a perfect way to shore up a Prismatic's early game while you're still trying to fix your mana. In practice, they seemed to be decent additions but not spectacular. Again, I think I might have gone a little overboard.
3. Bring on the Bringers! In a five-color deck I just had to play these fun trawlers, even though their black brethren has been banned from the format. I ended up cutting the green one simply because green was already filled by its incredible mana fixers.
4. A trinket component just for kicks. I was looking for four more cards to round out the blue side of things, and **Trinket Mage** jumped to mind. I liked the addition, but I certainly missed the boat by not including **Engineered Explosives**.

After playing about ten matches, I learned that following my instincts gave me a functional deck, and that the mana was good (so I actually got to play my cards), but that it couldn't hold a candle against some of the better tuned Prismatic decks veterans of the format bring to the table. For one thing, I really need more creature removal; each of my threat creatures were usually dealt with pretty easily whereas I often struggled against the

beasties my opponents dropped on me. I also desperately need some card drawing. I did however have a great time with the format and look forward to exploring it deeper.

While playing numerous opponents, I ran across a gentleman who started the game with the traditional "hello and good luck" and then tacked on the much rarer "and have fun!" With that opener, I knew I was in for a pleasant game of **Magic**, and when he played a turn 3 **Mikokoro, Center of the Sea** (everybody draws a card!), I knew Comedy AI was a guy I'd have to add to my buddy list. After our game, I figured he'd be the perfect player to feature this week.

MTGO handle? Comedy AI (I got it from a video game; this isn't based on Weird AI)

Real name? Jesse

Age? 18

Where do you live? New Mexico

How long have you been playing Magic? Roughly, I've played for four years.

How long have you been playing MTGO? One and a half years.

Percentage-wise, how would you consider yourself more of a casual or competitive Magic player? I have a 90/10 casual/competitive ratio. The competitive part of me only plays in Limited events, particularly those that have incentives to join other than keeping the card pool and winning boosters (i.e. Nix-Tix, Release avatars, IPA qualifiers).

What's your favorite online format(s)? Definitely drafting.

What is your favorite color? Red.

What is your quest? Pass?

Do you play Prismatic a lot? There are times when I would play very frequently and others when I would play scarcely.

Do you think there is a defined metagame for Prismatic? Yes and no. From what I've seen in the casual room, there are many decks that have quite a few cards in common, but they don't seem like they'd win games in the same way. For instance, four **Counterspells** seem to be a common occurrence whether they're in a control or beatdown deck.

Have you ever played in the Premier Events for Prismatic? I haven't played in a Prismatic Premier Event because I've already seen what a serious deck does to mine in the casual room. It's not a pretty sight.

Do you have different Prismatic decks or do you just have one that you tinker with every once in a while? I only have my one Prismatic deck. Maybe I'll make another one when *Mirage* and *Ravnica* come out online.

Share with the readers some thoughts you have on your deck:

I wanted to try Prismatic for myself, but my weak budget wouldn't allow me to have top-tier rares, uncommons, and some commons. Basically, I used my leftover draft and sealed stuff to make a new deck. I still do that today, but the deck building is a LOT easier with the inclusion of Betrayers and Saviors.

The deck is basically one big synergy. Spirit/Arcane triggers and Soulshift are the primary foci (focuses?) of the deck. Splicing isn't as much of a theme as the other two since there are only a few splice cards and, in my experience, it's easily disrupted by discard, particularly **Duress**. Aside from the aforementioned stuff, this deck does have other interesting combos and synergies. I love the **Lifespinner** and **Oyobi** combo because it only needs **Lifespinner** with a few other spirits to get it started. I also like the **Hana Kami** and **Death Denied** infinite recursion combo. The **Onnas** can be used to activate useful Spirit/Arcane triggers on spirits like **Thief of Hope** and **Sire of the Storm** multiple times. Due to the overall nature of the deck, **Eerie Procession** can search for any instant or sorcery. Mana fixing is the only problem I have with the deck, so any painlands (yay, *Ninth!*), fetchlands, and dual lands I can run across are very welcome.



Comedy AI's Prismatic		
250 cards		
18 Forest	3 Phantom Centaur	4 Darksteel Ingot
11 Island	4 Krosan Tusker	4 Wayfarer's Bauble
5 Mountain	4 Fierce Empath	4 Death Denied
3 Plains	4 Callow Jushi	4 Eerie Procession
12 Swamp	4 Elder Pine of Jukai	4 Glacial Ray
1 Coastal Tower	4 Forked-Branch Garami	2 Hideous Laughter
2 Elfhome Palace	4 Ghost-Lit Raider	4 Kodama's Reach
4 Salt Marsh	4 Ghost-Lit Stalker	4 Murmurs from Beyond

That's where the author (Sean O'Brien) played Randy. It's the same PTQ from Randy's *Soul Echo* anecdote, and there's a better *Soul Echo* story in this one.

Sean has long since quit the game, but it's worth mentioning that he's the person who more than any other is responsible for my transition from casual to serious tournament player.

~Sol



Malka, at PT Atlanta '05

Final 8

Crazy Randy's Sands-o-Pose deck ... uh-oh.

let me repeat ... uh-oh.

I am playing no enchantment or artifact kill whatsoever ...

1st Game: I beat him down with rats, *Fallen Askari* and a crazed *Gallowbraid* and his combo comes one turn to late ... he chose to draw first ... I suppose he has to but it costs him. For reference my opening hand was 4 swamp, 2 *dark ritual*, 1 *mind stone* ... that wasn't too great.

2nd Game: In go 4 *choking sands* (he has tons of non-basic including *lotus vale*) ... between those and my *Stupors* I hope to disrupt... wait what's this ... I draw one swamp??? He goes first and of course knocks it out of my hand with *Ritual-Coercion*... hmmm ... I don't play a land until my *5th* turn ... Does everyone understand this??? I do nothing except discard until my 5th turn. Eventually 234 turns later he beats me with a *Steel Golem*, as I have no land out.

3rd Game: preface ... I am ticked off beyond belief, I am losing my mind mad about being so embarrassed by my deck. This is my downfall. My head is not clear and rational ... I will lose a spot at the Chicago PT because of this.

I get a *fast* start ... I beat him and *Choke* him down to 5 life, *Sewer Rats* and *Askari* are all phased out when a soft-lock starts to settle in. I drain him to 2 life, hoping to kill him with a choke next turn ... on his turn he *Soul Echo*'s for 3 ... argh ... Now here's where I hit the proverbial skids ... on my turn I choke his *Gemstone* and he's at 0 real life ... I have a *Mind Stone* out which isn't going anywhere ... he is at zero land (and hence I am too from the sands-pose) ... I have one *dark ritual* left in my deck ... he has no life so he can't *wand of denial* my ritual ... I need 3 'Damage' rather than loss of life to smoke the *Soul Echo*. If I had been thinking as clearly as I am now I would have won because - At the time I failed to remember that I need to do 'DAMAGE' not loss of life.

If I had sat and thought for a moment I would have followed this logic - He has two routes to victory, a *Steel Golem*, and Decking me ... Decking me is probably out since he drew first and I doubt his 4 card combo deck has more than 60 cards (my deck is 60 cards) ... So he needs to kill me with a *Steel Golem*. What should I do?

I have a *Mind Stone* in play and can lay a Swamp use it and my remaining Ritual to achieve at most 4 mana.

Drain Life
- nope
two
points

Ritual out a Choke? That puts him at 1

Kaervek's Spite him? No because that's loss of li... OH my god I just Spited someone with a Soul Echo



somebody shoot me I am forever doomed to choke in the finals.

The correct path to victory is as follows ... wait until the **Steel Golem** is cast then Ritual out an **Urborg Stalker** and laugh at him as he dies. It'll do at least 1 damage bringing him to 2 (if by some miracle he **Tariffs**) ... and in order to cast another golem he'll have to let me have one swamp in play which means I can lay a swamp and Choke him for the kill.

Why this hit me 45 seconds after my stupidity overwhelmed me I don't know.

I thought it was interesting to see the perspective of the person on the other side of the table from Randy and his wacky deck, and how he details what the correct plan of attack should have been.

Survivor Magic: Week 1 (Round 2)

I didn't receive a recap in time to make it in this column, but [here's a link](#) to the site that's recording the Survivor goings-ons.

Tips and Tricks



In the chat screens, you've probably seen people use mana symbols and smilies. For less experienced players that don't know how to do them, here's the scoop:

To insert mana symbols: hold <CTRL> and press <Q>, then release both and type in the letter corresponding to the mana symbol (using "u" for blue). The same thing works for "colorless" mana, just use the number instead (though you need to use "c" for 12, "a" for 10, and "L" for 16). For you **Fireball** fans, the intuitive "x" will get you that X colorless mana symbol!

To insert smilies: hold <CTRL> and press <Q>, then release both and type in "s" for the smile face, "f" for the frowny face, and "y" for the disgusted face. A quick run through other keys after <CTRL>+<Q> will yield several other symbols as well!

Next Week

Join me as I present to you the first batch of **Greater Good** decks for you to vote on!

*Bennie Smith has been playing **Magic** since **Arabian Nights**, and writing about it nearly as long. Several of his early musings appeared on the **Magic Dojo**, and from there he became a featured writer for **Star City Games** and a Contributing Editor for **Scrye Magazine** before he started writing for **magicthegathering.com**. While a casual gamer at heart, Bennie also thoroughly enjoys the competitive side of **Magic** and won the **Virginia State Championship** in 1999.*



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