

Home > Games > Magic > Magicthegathering.com > Columns



9th Edition Release Events

*Bennie Smith
Into the Aether
Thursday, August 25, 2005*



Next Monday *9th Edition* becomes available on the *Magic Online* Store. Core sets always have great staple cards that any serious **Magic** player needs to round out their collection. This time, though... there just seems to be a little bit more to get excited about.

First and foremost are all ten painlands to set your mana worries at ease. Players new to the Aether have often lamented the high tix cost and relative rarity of the *Apocalypse* [enemy-color pain lands](#). Now they're back for at least a two-year rotation, so you should be able to get your mitts on 'em.

There are also a slew of classic hits you're sure to want to try out for the first time online. *Jade Statue*, *Hypnotic Specter*, *Verdant Force*, *Quicksand*, *Rathi Dragon*, *Polymorph*, and *Paladin en-Vec* are all going to be ready to rumble in the Aether!

No matter why you play *Magic Online*, *9th Edition* Release Events have something for you, beginning a week from today, Thursday September 1st!

Looking for Fun? You Got It!

Anyone who's played in paper **Magic** prerelease tournaments knows that these sorts of events are all about having fun. Most people are laid back and even the more competitive events feel more casual and fun, with players of all stripes jumping in to acquire cards and see how this new mix of cards spanning **Magic's** history interact in a limited environment.

Release Leagues

These special leagues run for just 1 week; pick up five *9th Edition* boosters, two tickets, and jump in. Up to 256 players can play in each league, and 2x prizes are awarded.

Draft Queues

In the expansion sets, draft strategies often revolve around harnessing block mechanic synergies, but the Core set has cards from *all* the **Magic** sets throughout its 12 year history. What sort of synergies from the available cards can you put together on the fly, pack by pack? Think you can snag a *Soul Warden* or two to go with the *Verdant Force* you cracked open? How about a *Spirit Link* for your *Orcish Artillery*? For 3 packs & 2 tix, jump in a 4-3-2-2 queue and find out! (And you may also want to read [this week's feature article](#) while you're at it.)

Looking for Competition? You Got It!

Those looking to whet their competitive appetites have plenty of opportunity in the Premier event flights offering 2x and even 4x prizes!

Premier Event Flights 2x prizes

Starting on September 1st at 3pm, 2x flights of 24-32 players will start up every hour on the hour. The cost is 2 Tix and 5 9E booster packs to make a 40 card minimum deck, with the top 8 players advancing to a booster draft single-elimination. The winner gets 24 boosters of *9th Edition*, with payout down to 4 packs for eighth place. These smaller flights are a good place to get your feet wet for tournament play if you're new to the game, or if you don't have all day to spend on it.

Premier Event Flights 4x prizes

Also starting on September 1st at 3pm, 4x flights of 24-128 players will start up every three hours. The cost is 5 Tix and 5 9E booster packs to make a 40 card minimum deck, with the top 8 players advancing to a booster draft single-elimination. The winner gets 48 boosters of *9th Edition*, with a payout down to 6 packs for eighth place. This is where the big dogs roam for the full tournament throwdown experience!

Release Championship 6x prizes

You've got to play in one of the Premier events and do well (getting 1st place for the 2x events, or getting Top 4 for the 4x events) in order to win an Invite, but playing in the Championship is free once you've earned your slot. The winner of the event gets 72 boosters (that's two boxes of booster packs!), and the payout continues down to 6 packs for 32nd place. That's on top of the five *9th Edition* booster packs you get for free in the sealed deck portion, along with the cards you draft in the Top 8.

In it for the Prizes? You Got It!

All those who participate in a League Event or a Premier Event will receive the Participation Avatar: Hell's Caretaker. The winner of each League Event, the Top 2 players in each 2x Premier Event, and the Top 8 players

Get Magic Invitational Wallpapers & Sign Up for Messaging!
www.mtgmobile.com

PRODUCTS

DISSENSION **GUILDPACT**

Dissension *Guildpact*

All Magic products

RULES

Magic *Core Game*

Basic Rulebook
Comprehensive Rules
All Magic Rules

MESSAGE BOARDS

Magic *COMMUNITY*

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

MAGIC ONLINE

Magic *The Gathering* **ONLINE**

Download Now!
Magic Online Academy
Magic Online FAQ

NOVELS

Dissension
Ravnica Cycle, Book III
by Cory Herndon

in each 4x Premier event will receive the Prize Avatar: Maro. Don't forget that each new avatar you win gives you more options for Vanguard play!

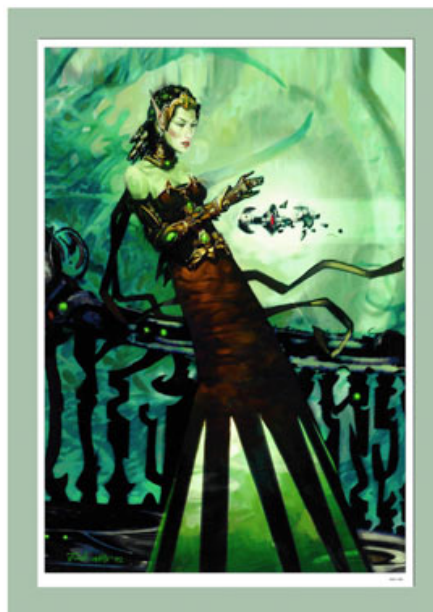
Of course, the really cool prize is winning the *9th Edition* Release Event Championship Grand Prize: framed, original artwork for the *9th Edition* card *Will-O'-The-Wisp* by artist Rob Alexander, whose sketch [was chosen by the readers](#) of [magicthegathering.com](#) as part of the Selecting *Ninth Edition* promotion.



While Rob's artwork is downright amazing, that's not all Wizards is giving away. Places 2 through 6 in the Release Event Championship will receive his or her choice (in place order) from five Limited Edition Canvas Prints depicting *Ninth Edition* artwork. The prints are reproductions of original magic art. Each piece is hand signed and hand numbered by the artist and comes with a certificate of authenticity. As an added bonus, the prints used as prizes for the release events will have very low collector's numbers. Places 7 through 11 will receive his or her choice (in place order) from five Limited Edition matted lithographs depicting *Ninth Edition* artwork. These new limited edition canvas and lithograph prints were just recently announced on the Wizards of the Coast website. The *Shivan Dragon* is shown in [today's Arcana](#), and I'm told there will be more information and more images coming from Wizards of the Coast soon.



Viridian Shaman
by Scott M. Fischer
Canvas with black wood frame



Viridian Shaman
by Scott M. Fischer
Print with grey mat

18" w x 24" h
Retail price: \$299
Total quantity available: 250

18" w x 24" h
Retail price: \$49
Total quantity available: 1000

New Avatars, New Vanguard Abilities!

Okay, so you've procured a new Avatar or two from the Release Events; what are their Vanguard abilities? Glad you asked!

Hell's Caretaker

Hand +0, Life +4

③, Sacrifice a creature: Return target creature card from your graveyard to play.

Your participation avatar embodies the flavor of this classic card originally printed in *Legends*, sacrificing one puny, insignificant creature for some threatening monster that can dominate the board or make short work of your opponent's life total. While the actual **Magic** card forces you to make that decision during your upkeep, the Avatar frees you from the bounds of a particular phase and gives you the option of swapping critters at the most opportune time. The most obvious would be when one of your creatures takes lethal damage in combat or becomes targeted by creature removal. You can also use the ability after you send all your creatures to attack but need to make sure you have some blockers available, swapping your tapped attackers for untapped blockers from the graveyard. Don't forget about trickiness like reanimating *Mystic Snake* while a spell is on the stack you don't want to see, or downright silliness with *Fecundity*.



I think the first deck I'm going to try with Hell's Caretaker is Elves with *Intruder Alarm*. Popping creatures back into play with the sacrifice ability can let you get a lot of extra mileage with *Intruder Alarm*, and with *Birchlore Rangers* and enough Elves, you can activate the avatar over and over. Sacrifice *Wirewood Herald* to fetch another Herald, and then switch between the one in the graveyard and the one in play to draw all the elves in your deck. Top it off by playing *Caller of the Claw*... all this during your opponent's end step.

I particularly like how Hell's Caretaker removes the drawback of *Bloodline Shaman* if you have non-Elvish creatures in your deck; if you end up milling away an *Eternal Witness*, you can sacrifice something (say, a Hivemaster's insect token) to get it back and maybe retrieve something else that got milled away (such as that *Intruder Alarm* you were looking for). If you've set up the Alarm to generate a large number of mana, make sure four of it is red so that you can cast (or reanimate) a *Flamewave Invoker* for 20 points of damage to your opponent.

In the afterlife

You could be headed for the serious strife

Now you make the scene all day

But tomorrow there'll be Hell's Caretaker to pay!

(taking a little liberty with the lyrics of this fun song by the Squirrel Nut Zippers)

Elvish Hell by Bennie Smith (vanguard - extended) txt

Avatar – Hell's Caretaker
60 cards

4 <i>Yavimaya Coast</i> 4 <i>Tendo Ice Bridge</i> 4 <i>Island</i> 8 <i>Forest</i> <hr/> 20 land	1 <i>Taunting Elf</i> 4 <i>Birchlore Rangers</i> 4 <i>Llanowar Elves</i> 4 <i>Wirewood Herald</i> 4 <i>Wirewood Hivemaster</i> 4 <i>Bloodline Shaman</i> 2 <i>Wellwisher</i> 1 <i>Viridian Zealot</i> 2 <i>Timberwatch Elf</i> 1 <i>Caller of the Claw</i> 1 <i>Flamewave Invoker</i> 1 <i>Eternal Witness</i> <hr/> 29 creatures	4 <i>Sensei's Divining Top</i> 4 <i>Intruder Alarm</i> 3 <i>Thirst for Knowledge</i> <hr/> 11 other spells
---	---	---

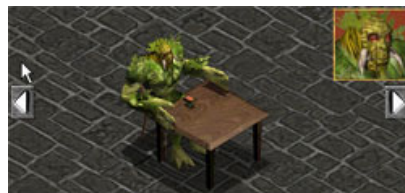
Maro

Hand +1, Life -7

Tap an untapped creature you control, Discard a card: Target creature you control gets +X/+X until end of turn, where X is the number of cards in your hand.

The massive life hit you pay to take advantage of this avatar suggests that it may have proven to be very powerful and fast in testing.

Compare to the other Avatars that give you a boost of +1 to hand size: *Akroma* gives you +7 life, *Etched Oracle* hits your for -4 life, *Oni of Wild Places* costs your -2 life, *Prodigal Sorcerer* gives you +2 life, *Raksha Golden Cub* gives you +9 life and *Two-Headed Giant* takes -4 life. *Eight-and-a-Half-Tails* gives you -3 life but actually adds +2 to hand size. So lets figure out what R&D might have discovered.



Say you're going first and lead with Mountain, **Raging Goblin** and **Ornithopter**. Attack with the Goblin, tap the **Ornithopter**, pitch a card and hit for five. Next turn, draw your card, tap the Goblin and pitch a card, attacking with the **Ornithopter** for four. If the remaining cards in hand include a **Shrapnel Blast** and another burn spell, your opponent could soon be dead. Wow that's fast!

Another take on this avatar is focusing on the ability to pitch cards into the graveyard. Many of *Odyssey's* cards spring to mind, as do reanimation strategies, especially gigantic trampers that can take advantage of the size boost. I decided to put together a sort of Madness deck, since the Maro avatar essentially makes all of your creatures Madness-enablers. **Genesis**, **Concentrate** and **Groundskeeper** all help keep your hand stocked since with Vanguard Maro, hand size does indeed matter!

Mad Maro by Bennie Smith (vanguard - extended)		
Avatar – Maro		
60 cards		
4 Yavimaya Coast	4 Llanowar Elves	4 Roar of the Wurm
4 Tendo Ice Bridge	4 Birds of Paradise	4 Repulse
5 Island	3 Groundskeeper	4 Concentrate
8 Forest	4 Basking Rootwalla	
	4 Arrogant Wurm	12 other spells
21 land	4 Wonder	
	1 Brawn	
	3 Genesis	
	27 creatures	

Hm, weird that both of my Vanguard decks have essentially the same mana base!

One last thought on the Maro avatar: It's the perfect avatar for most of the **Greater Good** decks I've been sent for the deck challenge! You'll be keeping your hand size full anyway, and pitching a card to boost your creature directly translates into a larger hand size with the signature enchantment. **Greater Good** and Vanguard enthusiasts may want to try and acquire this really cool and powerful avatar!

Equipment Week: Kaldra Returns!

I don't often get the opportunity to participate in the theme weeks we have here on the site, so I was pleasantly surprised when I got the invite from Scott.

Okay, so my challenge was to focus on Equipment in a way that was uniquely *Magic Online*-esque, and that obviously brings us to Vanguard! Now, when I did the Avatar reviews a few months back, one deck had an equipment focus, namely the really cool legendary Kaldra gear that can summon the Legend token whuppin' stick when all three pieces are in play. Here was the deck:

Untouchable Kaldra by Bennie Smith (vanguard - standard)		
Avatar - Phage the Untouchable		
60 cards		
11 Forest	4 Birds of Paradise	3 Sword of Kaldra
7 Plains	4 Bottle Gnomes	4 Pulse of the Fields
3 Tendo Ice Bridge	4 Sakura-Tribe Elder	4 Shield of Kaldra
2 Tranquil Garden		3 Helm of Kaldra
	12 creatures	4 Steelshaper's Gift
23 land		3 Sensei's Divining Top
		4 Terashi's Grasp
		25 other spells

The idea was to discourage attackers with Phage's ability and gain life to buy time to assemble the Kaldra pieces and win. In practice, this really didn't work too well. So for Equipment week, I decided to revisit the puzzle of Kaldra equipment and do something different. First, I decided to pick a different avatar, and there's no better avatar for this experiment than the equipment avatar himself, Raksha Golden Cub.

Kaldra & the Golden Cub by Bennie Smith (vanguard - extended)		
Avatar - Raksha Golden Cub		
61 cards		
14 Plains	4 True Believer	2 Lightning Greaves
4 Secluded Steppe	4 Auriok Steelshaper	1 Loxodon Warhammer
	4 Leonin Shikari	2 Sword of Kaldra

4 Blinkmoth Nexus	3 Steelshaper Apprentice	1 Leonin Bola
1 Miren, the Moaning Well	4 Bushi Tenderfoot	4 Shield of Kaldra
23 land	1 Opal-Eye, Konda's Yojimbo	2 Helm of Kaldra
	20 creatures	4 Steelshaper's Gift
		1 Kusari-Gama
		1 Manriki-Gusari
		18 other spells

Raksha can turn quick weenies and cheap equipment into a really aggressive and fast beatdown deck, and initially my decklist went this route. However, after gold fishing it a few times it became obvious that games would go too fast to ever get the Kaldra pieces searched out and activated. So I decided on a different route, picking creatures that were more utility-based or defensive in nature to buy time. **Bushi Tenderfoot** was a perfect candidate, benefiting from the toughness boost, and being a soldier benefits from equipping **Auriok Steelshaper**. Opponents don't want to swing their creatures into a **Bushi Tenderfoot** and risk having him flip and get downright ridiculous. **Opal-Eye** was also an outstanding defender.

The **Kusari-Gama** was added as something to be searched up for a circumstance I found myself in the last time I tried to win with Kaldra—while smashing with a 10/10 trampling first striker can be fierce, sometimes in Vanguard your opponent can generate a slew of token creatures that easily soak up the hits. K-G wipes your opponent's board if he blocks Kaldra, and having that option in the deck seemed like a good idea this time around. Having **Loxodon Warhammer** and **Leonin Bola** to help race, and a **Manriki-Gusari** to destroy pesky Jittes rounded out the toolbox.

My first opponent was wdamienearthlink with a Two-Headed Giant avatar Rat Ninja deck. He Distressed me turn 2 by knocking out my **Shield of Kaldra**.



Luckily a pair of **True Believers** would keep me from being targeted by pesky discard for the remainder of the game, as well as being fairly sizable 2/3s that held off my opponent's weenies for a few turns. I managed to rip another **Shield** off the top of my deck, and with **Steelshaper Apprentice** soon to be ready to search out the remaining Kaldra piece, things are looking up.



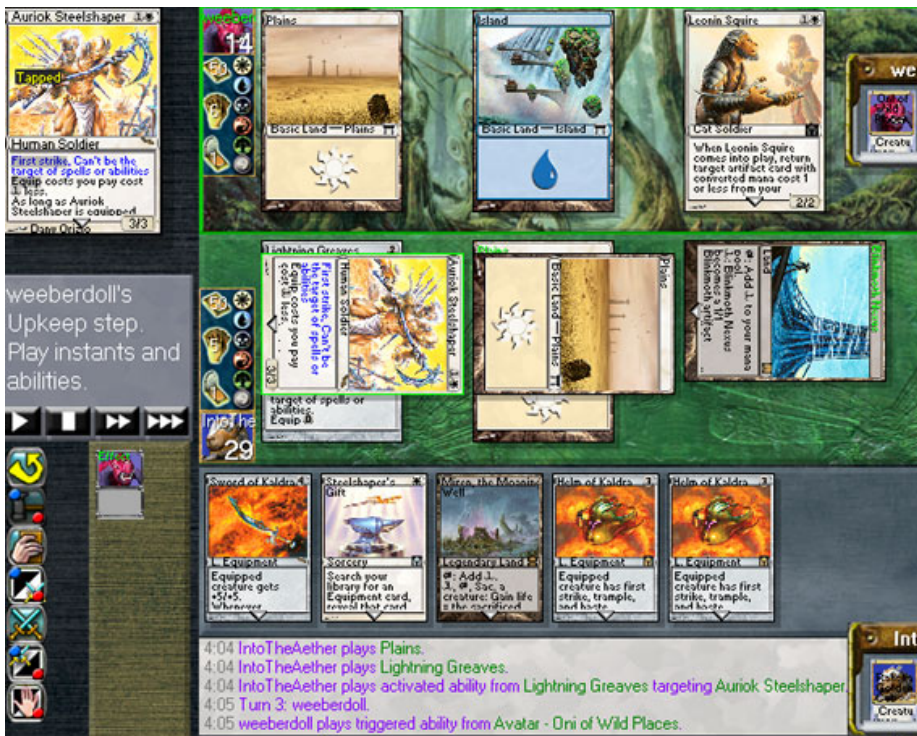
My opponent has assembled a pretty large force and I'm terrified of him slipping someone through and nailing me with an Okiba-Gang, so instead of going with the Kaldra combo I decide to shore up my defenses first. When my opponent gets ready to attack with his Nefashu, it's my intention to tap it first with Leonin Bola, but apparently my stop wasn't set right. Luckily, Raksha's ability gives me a natural defense to Nefashu's special attack.



I block Nefashu with two first strikers, including Bushi Tenderfoot, who flips into Kenzo the Hardhearted. It seems foolish to try and call up Kaldra when you can give Kenzo a few pieces of his gear, a Loxodon Warhammer, and just go to town, quickly ending the game.



Winning with Kenzo and splashy equipment was fun... but I wanted to win with Kaldra! So I searched up another match, this time against weeberdoll, who's playing an interesting Trinket deck with *Oni of Wild Places*. Having two of Kaldra's gear and a *Steelshaper's Gift* in my opening grip seems like a pretty good start, and I start some early beatdown with *Auriok Steelshaper* equipped with *Lightning Greaves*.



Sadly he cuts short my fun with an *Engineered Explosives* with X=2. I suddenly realize I'm in a bit of a bind, since he can replay *Leonin Squire* each turn to retrieve the *Explosives*.



So I pretty much have to go the Kaldra route, and luckily I manage to get all three pieces in play unmolested and summon up the man, the myth, the Legend himself.



I play a few more matches, notch up more wins than losses and am pleased to conclude that this was definitely a better way to go with a Kaldra deck!

Tips & Tricks

DeepSilentComplete wrote in with this tip:

“There is a way to speed up the card naming process for cards like **Pithing Needle** and **Cranial Extraction**. You can start typing the card you want to name, and it will take you closer to that card in the list. For example, if you want to name **Tooth and Nail**, pressing “t” will take you to the beginning of cards that start with the letter “t”. If you press “o” after that, the list is scrolled to the first card beginning with “to” and so on. If you make a mistake, you can even use Backspace to erase the last

letter you typed. Usually, the fastest way to choose a card is to use the combination of this method, up/down arrows and your mouse."

Survivor Magic IV Recap: Week 3 (Round 4)

The Reward Challenge this week was Survivor Magic Unscramble. Each tribe received five sets of scrambled up cards, with four cards in each set. In addition, each of the four cards in each set had something in common which was a clue for a final card. The tribe that first told Gathion what each unscrambled card was in each set, what they had in common, and what the final card was would win the reward of two common cards from any set.

After several minutes, the Kashi Tribe began giving answers and eventually won the challenge.

Next came the Immunity Games. This week's deck format was 60 card two color standard decks, with 60 card minimums and 10 of each color minimum. The game format was a mini round robin format, with players divided into five groups and each player had to play the other in that group one time. Whichever tribe had the fewest wins would go to tribal council.

The groups were (Sakura, Matsu, Kashi):

Red - Istanbul, regfairfield, fallenangeleyes
Green - Ka Tet, Saint Cyril, Howitzer
White - SaradinDR, Ununnilium, Secret Santana
Black - Superpriest, Gyrogearloose, Shinzui
Blue - The Phantom of the Opera, Hoolooovoo, LordoftheCherubs

After 15 games being played, the final total was:

Sakura - 7 wins
Kashi - 6 wins
Matsu - 2 wins

Matsu Tribe had go to Tribal Council and voted this way:

2 votes for regfairfield
2 votes for Saint Cyril

In order to break the tie, the Matsu tribe would re-vote, but this time, regfairfield and Saint Cyril would not vote and the rest of the tribe members could only vote for either regfairfield or Saint Cyril. This was the revote result:

1 vote for regfairfield
2 votes for Saint Cyril

Saint Cyril was the third player voted out of Survivor Magic IV.

You can read full coverage [at this site](#).

*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.*



[Discuss](#) on the message boards



[Respond](#) via email



[Bennie Smith](#) archive

[About Us](#) | [Jobs](#) | [New to the Game?](#) | [Inside Wizards](#) | [Find a Store](#) | [Press](#) | [Help](#) | [Sitemap](#)

© 1995-2006 Wizards of the Coast, Inc., a subsidiary of Hasbro, Inc. All Rights Reserved.
[Terms of Use](#) - [Privacy Statement](#)

