

Where the format is, how the Championship went, and what happens next.

2005 Legacy Championship

Zvi Mowshowitz

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I thought I had already played my last sanctioned tournament when I got the call from Scott Johns. Scott wanted me to go to Gen Con to cover the first ever Legacy Championship and write about my experiences with the format and at the event. I was reluctant to go out on a trip so soon before moving across the country to join Wizards R&D, but in the end I couldn't turn down the opportunity. Gen Con is a great place to spend the better part of a week and this was going to be the best chance anyone was going to get to understand the new Legacy format prior to Grand Prix: Philadelphia. I accepted the assignment expecting to find a degenerate format likely ruled by combination decks. What I found instead was a healthy and enjoyable format where the powerful cards keep each other in check and game play is both dramatic and demanding. In this article I'll be giving you a quick overview of my exploration of the format, a recap of my experiences in the tournament itself, and also a high level look at the decks and match-ups based on what I learned at Gen Con as well as some predictions on where I think things could go from here. By the end, I hope you'll have a good jumping-off point for your own exploration of this crazy and exciting new format.

The Format Going In

My preparations for the Legacy championships began by asking the opinion of those who had played the format before. With all but a handful of the **Magic** cards ever printed without silver borders legal in Legacy, trying to figure everything out from scratch would be impossible. The responses I found painted a picture of a format still in its infancy. Professionals attack formats with a certain ruthlessness that quickly eliminates decks that cannot keep up. Some of the decks I saw seemed like they had the potential to be strong contenders, but others did not.

In a format with so many cards the natural fear is that combination decks will run wild. There are a number of cards that have caused problems in the past that are legal in Legacy. You can play Lion's Eye Diamond and Lotus Petal! Another potentially amazing card is High Tide. If these decks proved too good, they might overrun the format and turn it into a war to see who could pull off the fastest combo. Those two seemed like the primary contenders that have been found so far.

In a format with so many cards the natural fear is that combination decks will run wild... The control role belongs to a deck called Landstill. Landstill uses Wasteland, Mishra's Factory and Faerie Conclave to win under a Standstill if both players refuse to break it, which means that if they play the Standstill with no threats on the board for either player than their opponent will be forced to let

them draw three cards. They also get to back this up with Force of Will and Swords to Plowshares along with such classics as Wrath of God and Nevinyrral's Disk. You have to love the classics.

There were also some other candidates for the control role. A red version of Landstill uses Fire/Ice instead of Swords to Plowshares. It has some advantages over the white version, but I think that they can't offer as much as white can. A more interesting option is to play all three colors, which is not all that difficult when you get to use duallands and fetch lands. What it means is that you won't get to play with any basic lands at all, with all the vulnerabilities that implies. There are also multiple Survival of the Fittest decks: The good creature Red/Green decks, the "angry" Tradewind Survival decks called ATS, the bizarre concoction of cards known as Full English Breakfast and other variants too. That's one of the great things about Survival, you can do almost anything that you want to with it.

Beatdown can take many forms, but red is by far the most popular. Goblin Lackey is legal, so the Goblin decks will get a lot of free wins. The combination of that and AEther Vial gives you a lot of fast starts and the deck is not that slow even if it gets no such help. A traditional Goblin draw will work fine too, and Goblin Matron gives you a lot of flexibility and a decent long game when combined with Goblin Ringleader. Red can also do more aggressive but less resilient Goblin builds, outright Sligh builds with Jackal Pup, Lightning Bolt, Fireblast and Ball Lightning, or even pure burn strategies. There is a lot of very good burn available. There are also potentially Fish, Elves, White Weenie and a number of other creature decks that could be of interest but none of them have the same raw power as the red decks do.

With all of this in mind, I figured that I would play High Tide and see if the players were prepared. This was the list I was considering running:

High Tide

The goal of High Tide (which, for some reason I have been unable to figure out, is referred to by many Legacy players as "Solidarity") is to win the game in one massive turn. Once the first High Tide is cast, each Reset or Turnabout you play will provide you with a lot of extra mana. You use that mana to search through your deck and to draw cards, with Meditate being your best card drawer and frequent Twincast target. Once you've cast a lot of spells, you can win the game either with a massive Stroke of Genius or a Brain Freeze for their deck. The version listed above can consistently pull this off on the fourth turn.

I still consider my list to be solid, although four Opt is likely too many and you want to cut some out to get Peer Through Depths. When I arrived at the tournament site, I knew there would be trouble finding Reset. Reset has never been considered seriously because there was never a serious format in which it was legal. It has been legal for Vintage, but that doesn't count because in Vintage there are far better things to do with your time. Now everyone needed to find them and there weren't many copies around to be found. I also was starting to doubt my choice, as the deck has some serious weaknesses against good resistance. I didn't want to give players I could outplay a chance to hate me out of the match.

That is also kind of ironic considering that I was close to ending up running Goblin Charbelcher. If you think that High Tide has issues with losing to itself, the Charbelcher deck has some news for you. The plan for Goblin Charbelcher is to run only two lands in the entire deck by taking advantage of all the alternate mana sources in Legacy. It then attempts to get at least one and hopefully both lands out of the deck, killing the opponent with a single Goblin Charbelcher operation. It can do this as early as turn one thanks to Lion's Eye Diamond, and it wins a lot of games on turns two and three.

There were issues of card availability here as well. Team Meandeck is one of the premier teams of Vintage players. They have made their name with extremely strong finishes and original decks in Vintage. Team leader Stephen Menendian is probably the world's most knowledgeable person when it comes to Vintage. Kevin Cron builds and plays Stax in ways that I would never have thought of and tutored me in the ways of the deck before a tournament in Rochester, and they have many other notable members as well. They were loaning me my deck and Charbelcher was one of the options since it was one of those that was built. I figured I could handle the deck well and that playing it would be a crucial test of the format. However, I was aware that it was a poor choice if I wanted to win this particular event: When you play a deck like that, your chances are never that great. You can only win so often when you're casting Spoils of the Vault.

While I wouldn't vouch for the exact list, I believe I decided to run it like this:

Goblin Charbelcher

That's a decklist with a lot of good ideas; one of mine was to put the Taiga in the sideboard. That gives you added flexibility without taking much away because your sideboard is pretty much a hopeless cause. There is never anything to take out except for Duress and Xantid Swarm and you have to bring in Oxidize a lot just to guard against Pithing Needle even if you don't know that it is there.

Stephen is the type of player who feels that skill will win out and is willing to take risks, so he was fine with the idea of my playing Charbelcher. Luckily for me, a few Meandeck members recognized that this was crazy talk while I was away getting the last few cards in the dealer room and audibled me out of Charbelcher and into the deck that I should have been playing all along: The control deck, Landstill. They started me out with a list that came more from Vintage than Legacy, and that I knew I would have to quickly tune if I was going to do well. I had thought about how to build Landstill before coming to Gen Con, so I wasn't flying blind. I also knew that it was a hard deck to build, because you have a lot of choices and can't get everything you want into the deck. The deck can be subdivided into four categories:

1. Mana

Your mana comes from lands and sometimes Eternal Dragon. Since Landstill is the primary control deck, I felt it was important to retain Eternal Dragon even though it seems like such a silly card in a format this fast. Two copies are the most you can play without risking them gumming up the



works too much. The first copy clearly belongs, but the second one is optional. There are also issues of land count and color count. The deck has to run four Wasteland and four Mishra's Factory but it also has good use for Dust Bowl. Dust Bowl is obviously a great card in the mirror and can be randomly devastating elsewhere. You do have enough lands that you can afford to play one, but it's not clear that you want to. The same goes for the fourth Faerie Conclave. They're good cards, but you have to pay the price and give up basic lands for them. Basic lands provide protection against Ruination, Price of Progress, Back to Basics, Blood Moon, Wasteland and all the cards you didn't know you were worried about until they came after you with a Dwarven Blastminer.

2. Countermagic

Eight are necessary, nine seems like a realistic minimum and more would be nice. Force of Will and Counterspell are the classics that no one is going to try and cut. At that point it is reasonably clear that the next counter needs to be Mana Leak. If you had two copies of Mana Leak you could start looking at Forbid or other counters. There are a lot of them to choose from but Mana Leak seems to be the strongest right now.

3. Removal

All four copies of Swords to Plowshares and Wrath of God need to be in the deck. None of those slots is negotiable if you are to deal with all of the Goblins out there along with all the other creature strategies. It's not even enough to have all eight, you'll need more. Nevinyrral's Disk and Akroma's Vengeance are the mass removal that can back up Wrath of God but there is no true substitute for Swords to Plowshares. Fire/Ice is the only card that comes close. That card is great for you, but it requires you to have red mana and that means giving up your basic lands. The more this format develops the more those basic lands look like they will frequently end up being life savers, but there's no question that this card makes you far stronger against Goblins. Disenchant is the rogue removal card since it can't remove creatures, but you'll need access to it and your sideboard is rather busy. That's how the card ends up in the maindeck, with good targets out of every major deck but High Tide. While Disenchant is good removal for some rather annoying threats like AEther Vial and Survival of the Fittest, you can't do the whole job without help from Nevinyrral's Disk. Akroma's Vengeance looks awful but grants you a flexibility that it is worth considering.



4. Non-Removal Card Advantage

Your tools are Eternal Dragon (which is mana too), Decree of Justice, Crucible of Worlds, Standstill, Brainstorm and Fact or Fiction. With all the shuffling, Brainstorm is great and there should be four copies. I did not run four copies for reasons that should never apply to you and I knew at the time my decision was wrong but I did it to save myself from making an even worse decision

(more on this below). Standstill is the defining card of the deck and you run four copies of that as well. Two Crucible of Worlds is the right number. Any more and you risk drawing two when the card is irrelevant, but it is too important to your plans to only use one. Decree of Justice and Fact or Fiction are the high end of your deck, and the more I think about it the more Decree of Justice is just better for you than Fact or Fiction. In the control matchup one player or the other will often end up with Standstill in play, and Decree is amazing under a long term Standstill and in the mirror in general. Fact or Fiction is just another good spell. While it seems counterintuitive, I don't think I would run Fact or Fiction at all right now. Keep in mind that there are more cards you want than there are slots for them, so something that seems vital is going to get the axe.

To me, that makes this the core of the deck, assuming you don't run red:

4 Flooded Strand	1 Decree of Justice
4 Tundra	1 Mana Leak
4 Wasteland	4 Brainstorm
3 Faerie Conclave	4 Counterspell
4 Mishra's Factory	4 Force of Will
2 Island	4 Wrath of God
2 Plains	2 Nevinyrral's Disk
	4 Standstill
1 Eternal Dragon	2 Disenchant
	2 Crucible of Worlds

That's fifty-two cards, leaving eight slots to play with. From there, you select either two mana sources and six spells or three mana sources and five spells. At least one of the spells must be creature removal of some kind. Then you move on to the sideboard, where you need to deal with the major threats in the format: Landstill (the mirror), Red and Combo. With the current state of red, I think that my sideboard from this tournament was very strong. It keeps you flexible without sacrificing too much anywhere, since you still want most of your maindeck cards in the mirror.

Therefore, if I ran the deck again I probably would run something close to this, with the most likely substitution being getting the Dust Bowl back in:

I believe this is the list we wrote down for me to play:

Everyone who sees a problem with that list, which matched the cards I had on me, raise your hand. There seems to be a rather vital card missing. Someone forgot to give me Force of Wills. Oops. The problem was that it is such an obvious card that it became a blind spot: I didn't realize it was missing because it could not possibly be missing. I was looking at the list, and something wasn't quite right... and I looked for Force of Will. I didn't find it. I had to think fast. Option one was to play the deck as is but I knew I'd have no chance. I had about thirty seconds before the judge came by to collect the lists. I had to cut four cards and I had to cut them now. The problem here is that you need to cut cards that you know you can survive without. I cut out a Decree of Justice and a Nevinyrral's Disk quickly, then cut a Fact or Fiction. Those seemed like relatively easy choices, but I was also

considering Mana Leak. In fact, I considered it enough that I accidentally marked it off instead of Decree of Justice without realizing. For the fourth cut, I decided to cut Brainstorm. That is obviously a horrible choice, as I noted above, but the principle was that it can't be that bad. I was taking the easy way out because of how little time I had to work with, knowing that I wouldn't break my deck.

Putting Force of Will on my decklist didn't mean I had Force of Will. I now had about three minutes to find four copies. If I failed, I'd have to take a game or perhaps match loss to run to the dealer room and pay about twenty dollars each for them. Luckily for me Brian Kowal came through for me and loaned me four Force of Wills. Sure, they were so worn that they were white bordered, but they still get the job done.

Zvi Mowshowitz - Landstill

2005 Legacy Championship – Top 8

At the 2005 Legacy Championship

With a complete set of 40 dual lands going to the winner and the addition of two Legacy format Grand Prix events later this year, it's no surprise the 2005 Legacy Championship attracted a solid crowd of 151 players.



Along with the trophy, the Legacy winner receives 40 dual lands.

Round 1: Brian Kornis, Goblins

I opened up with a Tundra, Kornis played a Goblin Lackey and I plowed it. He played another, but he missed his second land drop. His only land was a Taiga he'd fetched with a Wooded Foothills, and I had a Wasteland in my hand but neither Swords nor Force of Will. I have no choice but to play Mishra's Factory and hope that he isn't holding Lightning Bolt in his hand. He wasn't, so he had to pass the turn and take out his only land. Soon Standstill was on the table, he was discarding, and he was well out of the game.

In Game 2 I kept a hand that would beat any draw without Goblin Lackey but would be in trouble against a Lackey that has stuff worth bringing down. That's what happens when you only have eight good ways out, and four of them aren't too pretty. He had the Lackey, and like a true Pro I pull a Swords to Plowshares off the top of my deck. That bought me plenty of time to cruise to victory on the strength of my sideboard.

Match Record: 1-0

Brian Kornis - Goblins

2005 Legacy Championship

Round 2: Christopher Alexander, Survival



Alexander was playing a Survival deck whose primary plan is Tradewind Rider, allowing it to use Force of Will. This strategy was known in Extended as Tradewind Survival or TS, and the players of this format consider it angry so they call it ATS. I'm not sure why it is angry, but that doesn't matter.

Zvi squares off against Chris Alexander in Round 2.

In Game 1, he put out a Masticore along with some one drops, and I got to Wrath of God away three cards while noticing that it left him low on mana so I also started using Wastelands to pressure him. He threatened to get Genesis going, but his mana base was crippled so he couldn't catch up that way and scooped when it became inevitable.

Game 2 he went for Survival of the Fittest, I cast Force of Will, he Forced back and I Forced a second time. Without Survival, he's just playing a creature deck, most of whose creatures are mostly harmless. I notice his wince when I use a Wasteland, so I use Swords to Plowshares on his Wall of Roots and once again he ends up without enough mana to be a threat while I cruise to victory – but the whole game was decided on turn two. If he keeps Survival in play he almost certainly wins, without it he almost certainly loses. Until the Survival decks manage to play a stronger game when they don't get Survival of the Fittest, they will continue to have a very poor matchup against control decks.

Match Record: 2-0

Chris Alexander - Angry Tradewind Survival

2005 Legacy Championship

Round 3: Gadiel Szleifer, High Tide

I was paired against
Pro Tour Champion

Gadiel Szleifer, who **Szleifer, enjoying his Top 8 status at Pro Tour Columbus '05**
started out playing

basic Islands. I assumed it was High Tide, but if it wasn't then it was blue control so either way my only play was to attack with my lands as quickly as possible and hope while trying to make him think I had more than just the one counter in my hand. He had no reason not to believe me, as I was representing at least one copy of Counterspell and he wasn't going to know about Force of Will until he went for the win whether I had it or not.

That forced him to use Cunning Wish to get Orim's Chant rather than a card-drawing spell despite having other backup, and that proved to be the difference on the crucial turn. He claimed he found a way to kill me if I had a 39-card deck left rather than a 40-card deck, and he may have been right, but instead he could only Turnabout my lands to buy himself a turn in which he was far too underpowered to come back.

Game 2 was quick, as I put Meddling Mage down on High Tide and attacked him with that and my lands before he could get anything going. I don't care for the version Gadiel played at all. It used Intuition and Accumulated Knowledge, which is the logical place to start thinking about the deck but has two big weaknesses. The first is that it is too slow: You want to win on turn four, so a third-turn Intuition is not efficient. The second reason is that when you search out Accumulated Knowledge you're thinning the deck of the card-drawing spells that you need to keep the engine running reliably.

Match Record: 3-0

Gadiel Szleifer - High Tide

2005 Legacy Championship

Round 4: Willie Gregory-Bkorkiund, Elves!

At the end of Round 3, a crowd gathered to watch the emergence of a rogue deck as Elves! (up from "Elves?" to start the tournament and then "Elves?!" after Round 1 and "Elves!?" after Round 2) trample over a Grim Lavamancer with a Sylvan Messenger for the last point of damage and the win to capture table one and go to 3-0.

I loved seeing that for many reasons. Elves! was a rogue deck, Elves! are fun and of course Elves! is a strong matchup for my deck, especially with my build that had nine Wrath effects. You have no right to pack nine in a tournament with stronger opposition, but it can work wonders against weaker fields. The worse your opposition, the more global destruction effects you want.

Elves! kept putting out a lot of Elves for a while and kept me on my toes thanks to threats like Tribal Forcemage and Gempalm Strider, but I knew that as long as I used Swords on Wirewood Symbiote only a bizarre draw would deny me the chance to get into the Wrath effects. Once that happened he had no real game plan, as his deck needs to win before that happens. In Game 2, Pulse

of the Fieldsmade things even worse, downgrading it back to Elves!?. What punctuation ends up being correct in the long run remains to be seen.

Match Record: 4-0

Willie Gregory-Bkorkiund - Elves!

2005 Legacy Championship

Round 5: Tim Kincaid, Landstill

Tim had a draw already, which I watched him get against Brian Kowal's Survival deck several rounds ago. He too was playing Landstill, so it was time for a mirror matchup. The Dust Bowl was clearly a powerful advantage if I drew it, forcing him to trade a minimum of two important lands to get rid of it, but I suspected my build was otherwise weak – I had only Meddling Mage in the board, only one Decree of Justice, only two Disenchants and only eight counters.

In the first game he dropped Standstill on turn two, holding two Eternal Dragons and a good mix of lands. Luckily for me I had exactly the same draw, and he had the same land mix I did so the board position was a draw. He



cycled Decree of Justice for six, Tim Kincaid brought the mirror match against Zvi in Round 5. allowing him to launch an offensive, but he got too aggressive too quickly and attacked without the ability to kill me under the Standstill before I could block with my lands.

He broke the Standstill to try to win right away, but the extra cards allowed me to stay alive, untap and play Crucible of Worlds. Eventually I won by locking him under Wasteland and Crucible, walking a tightrope to avoid dying if he drew a second Decree of Justice.

In Game 2, he once again made essentially the same mistake: He tried to get aggressive with damage and then was forced to break his own Standstill to Stifle my Decree of Justice, which would have given

me a dominating position because I was focusing on mana development through Eternal Dragon. Once again, the cards proved decisive as there are a lot of removal cards for the threats, although he came close to finishing me off before I could turn the tide thanks to Decree of Justice.

Match Record: 5-0

Tim Kincaid - Landstill

2005 Legacy Championship

Round 6: Kyle Boggemes, Landstill

I was once again paired against a Landstill deck, but this match was the polar opposite of the previous one. Instead of playing a long exhaustion war, we were swinging at each other with our lands and squeezing every point of damage and every point of mana that we could out of our draws.

If you hang back in a game like that, you give your opponent a commanding position and cost yourself dearly if he draws well on his own turn. I won Game 1 by drawing an extra land when it counted. I lost Game 2 by having to mulligan and then missing land drops. You can't miss early land drops in the mirror matchup and expect to win; I put up a good fight but couldn't quite catch up.

I'd also seen him play Stifle and Decree of Justice, so I suspected he had more mirror match tools and decided to take him up on his pre-match offer of a draw. It was unlikely that we could make the Top 8 at 6-2, and it was also unlikely we would miss at 6-1-1. That meant we needed a draw sooner or later, and with no other Landstill decks near the top I was not worried about another draw and decided I would rather take my chances in better match-ups that still had three games to play. I also suspected my opponent was one of the most dangerous players in the tournament.

(Boggemes's deck can be found in the [Top 8 decklists](#) section)

Match Record: 5-0-1

Round 7: Michael Riley, Goblins

I got paired up against Riley (the last undefeated player), who was running Goblins with Lightning Bolt and Aether Vial. He offered the draw and I explained that I already had one but that he was probably in little danger. Once again the dynamic of the matchup played out, as he failed to establish a Goblin Lackey and after that I grinded him out of gas over many turns, eventually killing him with Eternal Dragon.

Game 2 I also began by stabilizing but it was far easier when you have Pulse of the Fields and Circle of Protection: Red. It seems that while Goblins decks have answers for Circle in their sideboards, there is no good answer to Pulse and they do not pack good sideboard cards whose job is not to answer yours. In his case he did not even have Red Elemental Blast, instead playing answers to the Circle of Protection: Red that I protected with my counters.

The problem with the Goblin decks in the long term is that they're just a bunch of guys. Their card advantage engine is nice for a while, but it won't last long. The only danger seems to be in the first few turns.

Match Record: 6-0-1

(Riley's deck can be found in the [Top 8 decklists](#) section)

Round 8: Matt Holmen, Zoo Pants

We were both in with a draw, so we took it.

Match Record: 6-0-2

top8

Top 8 Decklists

Peter Franke – Tiger Sligh

2005 Legacy Championship – Top 8

Raymond Robillard – Blue-red Landstill

2005 Legacy Championship – Top 8

Kyle Boggemes - Landstill

2005 Legacy Championship – Top 8

Mike Riley – Goblins

2005 Legacy Championship – Top 8

Matt Holmen – Zoo Pants

2005 Legacy Championship – Top 8

Noah Swartz – Goblins

2005 Legacy Championship – Top 8

Josh Smith - Goblins

2005 Legacy Championship – Top 8

Zvi Mowshowitz - Landstill

2005 Legacy Championship – Top 8

Top 8

Raymond Robillard - Blue-red Landstill Zvi Mowshowitz - Landstill Kyle Boggemes - Landstill Matt Holmen - Zoo Pants Noah Swartz - Goblins Michael Riley - Goblins Josh Smith - Goblins Peter Franke - Tiger Sligh

Quarterfinals: Josh Smith, Goblins

Once again I was up against Goblins, but this time there was a problem: I was down a game. That little deck registration error from early in the tournament had finally come back to haunt me. They collected the decks and it turned that my deck was one card off, so I was given a game loss. In addition, I received what can only be described as a very unpleasant phone call. I can't go into details, but the combination of the two managed to put me on tilt.

Results Standings

	Final
<u>8</u>	<u>8</u>
<u>7</u>	<u>7</u>
<u>6</u>	<u>6</u>
<u>5</u>	<u>5</u>
<u>4</u>	<u>4</u>
<u>3</u>	<u>3</u>
<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>
<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>

I played the first game of the match horribly, doing my best to throw it away but still managing to fail. Game 2 I recovered and managed to play better, but it never mattered. Smith never had a draw that threatened me, and I could have won without Circle of Protection or Pulse of the Fields if I had needed to.

Semifinals: Michael Riley, Goblins

Alas this is where it ended. In Game 1, Riley opened with Goblin Lackey and followed it up with two Wastelands, and without Swords to Plowshares or Force of Will I could not get to my answers in time. In Game 2 I managed to get Circle of Protection: Red onto the table, but he had a steady stream of Goblins thanks to an Aether Vial that kept me from using Standstill and a series of Goblin Ringleader that kept his hand full. If I were to try for my Disk I would likely die to Piledrivers, so I needed to either draw land to allow that or to find Wrath of God. I could do neither, and eventually my Circle was overwhelmed.

Other Semifinal: Peter Franke vs. Noah Swartz

After I lost, I went over to watch the other semifinal where Peter Franke's burn deck took on Noah Swartz's Goblin deck. There seemed to be two ways for the burn deck to win: Either it would have to get a large Slith Firewalker or take advantage of Cursed Scroll. Swartz did not play defensively to guard against Slith Firewalker, allowing them to grow large and take him out of both games. If he didn't do so, I don't know a good way for the burn player to stop Goblin Ringleader from eventually running away with the game. I had talked to Swartz earlier in the day and did again after his loss; he was very happy with his deck and his results, as were the other Goblin players. They all clearly saw the power of what they had and what it allowed them to do.

Finals: Michael Riley vs. Peter Franke

The finals was a matchup between two very different red decks. They might share the same lands, but they each have their own game plan. Franke's burn deck's only real long-term hope is Cursed Scroll, but if he can keep it in play and stabilize then he should win. Riley's Goblins seemed to dominate as long as nothing terrible happened, since they could gain large amounts of card advantage and burn had no way to get it back. Pithing Needle came in to deal with Cursed Scroll. Both games seemed to come down to Riley overwhelming Franke to secure the victory and Michael Riley was the 2005 Legacy Champion. Clearly, Goblins was the most successful deck in the field.



Franke, left, faced off against Riley in the finals.

With a better sideboard it is very possible that a burn deck can put up a much tougher fight. Pyroclasm is likely to be a key card in this matchup in the future, creating a serious danger of overcommitment for the Goblin player. Both decks can also think about adding colors for cards like Engineered Plague and Goblins could get a lot of mileage out of Absolute Law if they viewed the matchup as important. This matchup has been played before in other formats and will be played again.

The Winner

Riley expected to win, telling his friends he was coming home with 40 dual lands in tow – and that's exactly what he did. I was his only loss in the Swiss rounds and he got his revenge in the



Riley and his spoils after winning the 2005 Legacy Championship. His deck's main departure from other Goblin decks was the use of Lightning Bolt, and that makes a lot of sense to me. The card is too good not to use in a deck that wants to get through with Goblin Lackey.

Riley said he likes the format a lot, and continued to play the Goblin deck with success in side events. While he is happy with his maindeck, he agrees that his sideboard needs work and has changed it to focus on Pithing Needle, Price of Progress and Red Elemental Blast rather than Anarchy and Sirocco. (I suggested Price of Progress, noting that it was a card that I worried about a lot during our matches.) Perhaps most importantly, like the rest of the top players at this event I spoke to, he was pleased with the format.

Red vs. Blue

The format still has some of its original halo, but that won't last past Grand Prix: Philadelphia. At this point, the format comes down to a matchup between Goblins and Landstill, with other decks factoring in as threats if the main two decks drop their guards. Both decks should be willing to devote about half their sideboards to cards that are strong against the other deck, but need to keep some of them from being so narrow that this cripples the sideboard for all the other match-ups. Pulse of the Fields does this for Landstill, and Pithing Needle does that for Goblins so those cards should become sideboard staples. Landstill then will probably go for Circle of Protection: Red and perhaps Blue Elemental Blast. There's something to be said for using at least some blasts instead of Circles. Relying too much on Circle can be bad, as they will be boarding to beat it and you don't need it to win. Blue Elemental Blast can protect against Goblin Lackey, which is the main way that you lose game one. In addition, blasts are more likely to help you against other decks. Red decks have many options, but they should all include some number of red blasts and Pithing Needle. After that, the two main options in my mind are Price of Progress and Flaring Pain, which also should work well together.



Advice on Playing What's Out There

Goblins

You probably want to run Lightning Bolt and a large number of Gempalm Incinerators, but don't be afraid to sideboard all of that out if the matchup calls for it. Aether Vial will help you out a lot, and should be put on four counters for the long term since that's the only way you need more mana in the late game as well as the creature that control decks most want to counter. Be prepared to overcommit if you have to, but be careful that you don't do it when it does not get you anything. When you get into a long term battle, think long term and concentrate on Ringleader card advantage. Sideboarding means bringing in Pithing Needle and Red Elemental Blast along with the other cards you've selected, but what comes in will be reasonably obvious during the match. What you need to be careful about is what comes out, because you need to preserve the core of the deck. Removal can leave and you can trim a land when you know that your opponent won't go after them. Try to find a good mirror matchup sideboard plan, which no one at Gen Con had found yet.

Landstill

I've given a good guide to how to build it, now the question is how to play it. If you're up against anything but a true combination deck you want to play for the long term and try to build up card advantage while guarding against the cards that are most threatening to you. Sometimes you want to hold on to as many Wrath effects as possible, in other effects counters determine your fate. Sit behind Standstill whenever you can do so safely and don't go for the kill until it is safe. However, combination decks require you to go for the kill as soon as you can without tapping so much mana that they can try to kill you. You'll need to get aggressive.

Sideboarding the deck can be tough, since there is often either nothing bad or too much that is bad. Against Tide you'll have a bunch of good choices on what to pull since they simply can't board in men and you will likely have seven or more cards in your board that do nothing, so leave in Disk and Disenchant to guard against rogue board strategies. Against red you want to leave your Disenchants in the deck to guard against Vial and Needle. Akroma's Vengeance gets boarded out as does at least one Crucible of Worlds and Standstill. Aether Vial makes it too likely to become a dead card and your long term advantage is strong enough to win without it. You don't want to lose all the Disks, because four Wrath effects won't be enough. In the mirror you put in what you have, in my case Meddling Mage, and take out the bad cards. The problem is the only actively bad card is Wrath of God and even that you probably want to hold one copy of to guard against Decree of Justice if you don't board in Stifle. That's another reason your board doesn't want to have too many cards for the mirror.

Burn

Try to get the most damage out of whatever creatures you play as soon as possible, then settle in for the burn war. Cursed Scroll is the only way you can hope to win a long game, so only play for the long game if you have it and it can be enough. Don't let your opponent know how close he is to being dead unless you have a good reason, such as making him a lot closer to being dead. Against Goblins you'll want something like Pyroclasm to give you card advantage and then try to win the long game with a

combination of that and cards like Cursed Scroll. Your matchup against Landstill can be won quickly but you will often need to try to win it later on. They don't have as much against your burn as you might think, and you can board Flaring Pain in to deal with Circle of Protection: Red. Strongly consider using mana burn to guard against Pulse of the Fields.

High Tide

Goldfish to get your technique down before you get to the event. If you are winning at instant speed, always plan to go off on turn four but don't try and win if you don't have to. Many decks will put you under no threat, or will only have sorcery speed threats so you can respond to the first one by winning. Threats include killing you, but again that might only happen at sorcery speed, especially if it means attacking. Each turn you wait makes you much less likely to fizzle, but against a control deck time only favors you when it is helping you set up. Go ahead and break any Standstill they play unless you have a very land-heavy draw but even then you'll want to break it once you finish playing your lands out. Test spells are hard to come by - you essentially have to try and go through everything, but some opponents can be fooled. Sideboarding requires a light touch, bringing in blue blasts for red decks and Chain of Vapor for cards like Arcane Laboratory. You may want bounce variety in case they try to use Chalice of the Void over Meddling Mage. For the Sorcery speed versions, go for the win as soon as possible as you never know what might get in your way.

Goblin Charbelcher

Know your role! Know what hands can win and which can't, which you can keep and which you must mulligan. That comes from a lot of goldfish testing and testing against Force of Will. Don't hesitate, go for the throat even in game one but especially after sideboarding. You'll just win a lot of games so you can't be afraid to just lose others. Sometimes you'll kill yourself or end up doing nothing. Protect yourself against Force of Will if you can but remember that if you hesitate they'll get Counterspell online and at that point your life is miserable. You have no long game if a blue deck is awake. Sideboarding out mana is forbidden, so use the board mostly for tuning effects. You could bring in Defense Grid, but what would you take out if you're still going to keep Duress and Xantid Swarm?

Tradewind Survival

You don't need Survival to win, but it helps a lot, especially against control. Against control you have inevitability when you have Survival on the table but without it the game will slip away. You can try and win with something like Genesis but it's going to be rough going at best. Strongly consider throwing back a hand without Survival. Your sideboard plan against control should be Back to Basics or Tsabo's Web to give you more threats and a better chance that there will be one they can't handle. Eternal Witness helps with overloading their counters. Against red you can use Masticore, since Squee is already part of your plan, and outright sideboard cards like Blue Elemental Blast but it's going to be rough going if you don't get the right draw. Wall of Roots and Survival are the key to surviving, probably followed by Spike Feeder to get out of the danger zone. You can tune Survival to handle anything with enough work and slots, but you can't get everything at once.

Other Survival

Red versions should be strong against red decks but they are going to have a lot of trouble against control. Red blasts can hopefully combine with Eternal Witness to get a Survival to stick, which is likely to be your only way to win. The bigger problem for these decks is that they have no real game against combination decks. Even standard sideboard plans won't get you back to where other decks are before sideboarding. Full English Breakfast might be good, but I'm going to be honest and admit that even I don't understand what's going on there. It seems very dependant on Survival.

Elves!?

Your kill is fast, but you have no long game and trying to put one into the deck would destroy the things that make it worth playing. To thine own self be true.

Fish / WW

Neither made much of an impact, and I think that to make either work you'll need to play a deck with elements of both. You need creatures with protection from red, which means Silver Knight and quite possibly Galina's Knight as well, but you also need Force of Will. That means you end up being philosophically close to Solution or Countersliver, at which point you have a base that might turn into something.

Other Combinations

Make sure you have an advantage over the standard ones: Be as fast as High Tide while being less vulnerable, or be as fast as Charbelcher. Then play to the strengths of your strategy.

The Future

As the two main decks become targets and combination technology improves the format should diversify. The other decks are not too far behind and many of them should be able to catch up by tuning their strategies to take on the two main strategies while the main strategies sacrifice overall strength to get good matchups in the mirror and against each other. Everything you've ever seen could come back, from Psychatog to Miracle Grow to Survival of the Fittest and even decks like Elves. The big unknowns are the combination decks. How good is High Tide? How good is Goblin Charbelcher? What about Future Sight with Sensei's Divining Top and Helm of Awakening? And what other decks haven't we even considered yet? With so much mana acceleration, things could get out of hand fast if there is unknown technology. It's an exciting time to be playing Legacy and I highly encourage everyone to check it out. This is your big chance to explore and innovate in an exciting new format!