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The Boros Legion Brings the Beatings

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The Play's The Thing
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Before I jump into today's *Ravnica* preview card, a quick note. Though this column has so far been based on investigating interesting play situations in something of a Q&A format, that's not *all* this column will be doing. "The Play's the Thing" is a broad umbrella to work under, and while those articles you've come to expect will be the meat and potatoes of this column, I'll occasionally be taking other approaches to tackling the issue of playing better, much in the same spirit as JMS's "interlude" articles in his Building on a Budget column. In addition to that, Scott's going to have me covering other topics as well from time-to-time, such as running preview articles for *Ravnica*.

The Role of Non-basic Lands

The job of any non-basic land is to provide you with options. A basic land does its job well, but it only does one job. The most fundamental nonbasic lands are duallands of various types. At a price, they will provide you with your choice of two or more colors of mana. That allows you to play two or more colors and still have a solid mana base, which is vital if you are going to take advantage of all the multicolor cards in *Ravnica* block. *Ravnica* has some of the best duallands since the originals. Playing multiple colors is what *Ravnica* is all about, and you are provided with powerful tools to help you. Even without *Ninth Edition* you can play three colors with a better mana base than you would have had trying to play two colors several months ago in Standard. With *Ninth's* help, the sky is the limit.

Like most things in **Magic**, you don't want to pay for more color than you need. You'll need a lot of color, but by making color so cheap the cards have opened the door once again for colorless lands to go into multicolor decks. Every dualland that you play is an additional source of colored mana. If the price of exchanging a basic land for a dualland is cheap enough, it starts to become worthwhile to exchange two basic lands for a dualland and a colorless land in order to take advantage of what that land has to offer. You need a certain number of lands to avoid mana screw, and by trading surplus colored mana for options that can impact the game and use your extra mana you can guard against mana flood as well.

In fact, a land that costs a lot of mana to activate and offers you a powerful effect is a perfect way to balance out your mana. If you don't have enough mana it provides mana, and if you have too much then you can pick up its powerful effect at little cost. You invest very little and can reap great benefits. In this case, there is a land tailor-made for creature decks looking to use many of the new monsters in *Ravnica*:



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