

Two Heads Are More Fun Than One continues... Was I Right?

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We're back! Did everyone who read [part one last week](#) go out and play in a Two-Headed Giant tournament like they were supposed to? Did you have a great time? Did you get your butt kicked? *Did you remember to study for the pop quiz?*

Two-Headed Giant *Ravnica* Sealed Deck Article Quiz

Question 1: Who is the King? (10 points)

- a) Elvis
- b) Land Destruction
- c) The giant monkey that just stole my girlfriend
- d) Sol'kanar
- e) Evasion
- r) Viggo Mortensen
- g) Norwood Ranger

Answer: e) Evasion. Remember, the ground gets plugged up with creatures so it's important to be able to fly or landwalk.

Question 2: How do you defeat luck in Sealed Deck? (20 points)

- a) More luck
- b) Superior deck construction
- c) Bring your own cards
- d) You can't, **Magic** is all about luck, that's why I never win despite having such 3733t m@d skillz
- e) Reduce your play errors

Answer: b) Superior deck construction and e) Reduce your play errors. Remember, there's often more than one answer to a tricky board situation so you have to keep your mind open.

Question 3: Who has more *Invasion* Grand Prix top 8s? (30 points)

- a) Randy
- b) Kai
- c) Jon

- d) Darwin
- e) Tommi
- f) Alan
- g) Olle
- h) The Author

Answer: h) The Author. Just don't ask me how I did at the Pro Tours that season...

Question 4: Which of these is NOT true about Two-Headed *Ravnica* sealed deck? (10 points)

- a) Always draw first
- b) Play more expensive spells than usual
- c) You can safely ignore the early game
- d) You should play extra lands for your expensive bombs
- e) Evasion is really important
- f) Bluffing is a valuable tool when used correctly

Answer: d) You should play extra lands for your expensive bombs. Despite how it seems, the extra mulligans and protection of a partner during mana stumbles allows you to play slightly fewer land than you normally would.

Question 5: Milling or decking an opponent is? (10 points)

- a) A specialty of the Boros Guild
- b) Especially good against the Boros Guild
- c) A viable strategy in Two-Headed Giant
- d) Only used by pansies and weaklings, real men attack for two!
- e) For two? Care for some quiche, sissy-boy? REAL men attack for four!

Answer: c) A viable strategy in Two-Headed Giant. And real men *do* eat quiche!

Question 6: What race does Mark Rosewater unfairly favour over our friends the spiders? (20 points)

- a) Elves
- b) Squirrels
- c) Chickens
- d) Elementals and Legendary Spirits
- e) All of the above

Answer: a) Elves. Some may argue for e) All of the above, but I don't believe Mark *unfairly* favours any of the others over spiders just as you can't accuse someone of unfairly favouring his or her children over your own.

If you scored 100 then congratulations, you've got big things ahead of you! 80 points means you'll likely do well at your next tournament but an undefeated record will be tricky. Those of you who scored less than 60 aren't allowed to post in the forums, as you're obviously not paying close enough attention. And don't even think of [emailing me](#).

For the rest of you it's time to delve a bit deeper into the mysteries of Two-Headed Giant. Today we're going to concentrate on cards and classes of cards that behave differently or are valued differently in Two-Headed from traditional limited formats. To do this you have to toss out your pre-conceived notions of how to play limited and look at each card with the fresh set of eyes that comes with a second head. You want to be prepared and perhaps learn from your mistakes of this past weekend - no one wants to lose to a veteran of casual multi-player battles. And if you *are* a casual multi-player veteran, then here's your chance to wipe those arrogantly superior smirks from the tournament players who wouldn't know a complicated board situation if it smacked them in the face!

I've taken enough of your time already so the list is mostly in point form. But there's no quiz next week so feel free to skim quickly and bookmark this as a reference for future study. I've also written out a mini Tournament Report in the forums that has a few extra tips - don't miss it!

Cards that are Better

Cards that can target any creature or player with a beneficial effect are significantly improved with a partner, as there are twice as many opportunities to make use of it. Your Conclave Equenaut may not need the first strike or haste granted by Boros Guildmage but your good buddy's Bramble Elemental probably wouldn't mind the advantage. And why not slap your Flickerform or Flight of Fancy on it too? Benevolent Ancestor, Ursapine, the Golgari and Boros Guildmages, Shambling Shell, Tidewater Minion, Drooling Grootion, Ethereal Usher and Ivy Dancer all improve with a second set of targets as do all the beneficial creature enchantments such as Necromantic Thirst, Pollenbright Wings, Flight of Fancy and especially Moldervine Cloak. It's obvious that Seeds of Strength can save your teammate's creatures, but did you realize Peel from Reality can do it too? In a recent game my Skynight Legionnaire was enchanted with my partner's Necromantic Thirst. Each turn I'd attack and bring back his Civic Wayfinder which he would play to get an additional land, then sacrifice to his Drooling Grootion to kill a creature and pump my Skynight for my next attack. Every turn we hit for 4, killed a creature and drew an extra card for 4BGG - now that's teamwork!

Card drawing is better in Two-Headed as the games go long and often both teams end up in top-deck mode so it's worth the investment. You also don't risk losing to fast draws so the temporary setback of tapping out or not playing a creature is less costly as you pick up a bunch of extra cards with Flow of Ideas, Compulsive Research or Consult the Necrosages.

Because life is cheap and plentiful, a few cards become marginally better. It's pretty tough to die to your own Moroi or Bloodletter Quill, for example, and Savra's black ability will always be payable. Carrion Howler can always hit for 4 and is a good target for toughness enhancing abilities. Dark Confidant should still keep to the side as your spells are going to be a bit more expensive, but Moonlight Bargain really is a deal when you're effectively paying half the price.

Not only is the Quill better with more life, it also benefits from being an artifact. While there are scary artifacts in the format there are no absolute bombs or unbeatable equipment that will dominate games. As such, there's little need for dedicated artifact destruction such as Sundering Vitae and no second game to bring them in. This makes each artifact slightly more permanent, but that doesn't mean there aren't answers such as Putrefy and Nullmage Shepherd so I wouldn't get too cocky.

Transmute improves not only because you have more time to search for the cards you need, but also because you have a second person to help you remember what's in your deck. Particularly helpful for players who have gotten lazy playing *Magic Online* with the ability to always view the contents of your library.

The "Hunted" creatures get even better. Not only is it much more likely that between you and your partner there will be the appropriate number and colour of blockers to negate the free creature(s) on the enemy side, the Hunted creatures also have evasion in a format where evasion is king (see Question 1). While I would still hesitate to use the Hunted Horror, the Dragon and the Phantasm are top-quality bombs.



Hex: Speaking of bombs, no card goes up in value in this format more than Hex. You never have to target your own creatures and once you've cleared the board you have twice as many attackers that can take advantage of the extra room. Donate to your local charity every time you open a Hex as you have reason to be thankful, and don't forget to include your transmute and recovery cards to get it out faster and use it multiple times.

Netherborn Phalanx: As just mentioned, early on this guy transmutes into one of your other bombs. Later on he often comes down for a dozen points of life loss or more to finish up the game.

Spectral Searchlight: Not only do you have an additional opponent to inflict mana burn on, you can also aid a teammate in playing big spells sooner or accessing a splash colour.

Mortipede: If you can keep him alive, the combination of ground stalls and extra players allows you to swing with a lot more creatures to devastating effect. And the high power allows him to trade with the frequently seen Rotwurms and Bramble Elementals (among others).

Glare of Subdual: The only "bomb" enchantment, the Glare benefits from single game matches as there aren't enough quality enchantment threats to make dedicated enchantment removal worth starting and without a second game no one has a chance to bring it in. If you have a milling deck and a glare deck then look forward to a long day with a top 8 at the end!

Chant of Vitu-Ghazi: With all the extra creatures in play and lots of time to get to eight mana, the potential damage doubles and the life swing is huge as your entire team blocks knowing they'll survive. Even better if you can bluff your opponents into wasting combat tricks before you play it – it was insult added to injury when we played our Seeds of Strength to dominate combat and ended up killing nothing and our opponents suddenly had 20 more life!

Sunhome, Fortress of the Legion: Can also target your teammate's creatures and with long games you'll definitely have the mana to use it.

Tunnel Vision: Not only can you use it on your teammate to help find his or her bomb, you can also use it on your opponents as a milling tool. And it's an auto-win against Junktroller!

Mindleech Mass: The extra cost is easier to handle in the longer games and with two opponents you're more likely to catch non-land cards in their hand, especially if you bring in some bounce spells to stack the odds.

Mnemonic Nexus: If you're not using the mill archetype but are fearful of those who will be, this is the surprise answer that will save your butts some games and sit staring at you doing nothing in others. It also serves as an awkward answer to dredge tricks. It would have been so much better with Transmute!

Smash, Seed Spark: Smash should always be started as every team will have a couple of artifacts even if they're just Signets so it's free card advantage, but they're often just Signets so you don't want to play Sundering Vitae. As mentioned earlier, Glare of Subdual is the only bomb enchantment that doesn't get attached to creatures so dedicated enchantment removal isn't generally a good idea unless it comes with benefits. The extra two tokens aren't a huge benefit but they're probably sufficient to fit Seed Spark into your deck as the 1-game format means you won't have a chance to use it later.

Elvish Skysweeper, Trophy Hunter: Fliers are numerous and threatening so every extra answer is a good one. The Hunter is just a great card in general while the Skysweeper only has to take down a single Cerulean Sphinx or Blazing Archon for you to make them MVP.

Breath of Fury: I haven't had a chance to play with or against this spell so far so I'm not sure if it's worth it or not. I can say that with two sets of attackers, getting an extra attack phase should be twice as damaging. Potentially useful only as a finishing tool as you continually sacrifice your evasion creatures to keep it running, I suspect it will unexpectedly allow some teams to deal 20 or more points of damage in a single turn. But more often than not it will probably sit in their hand and do nothing.

Master Warcraft: Another card I haven't had a chance to try out, this is an effect that gets more powerful the more creatures there are in play. With four players there are lots of creatures and forcing a foolhardy attack on a team will often cost them the game – I suspect it's a bomb of the nuclear variety.

Cards that are Worse

When card advantage is better, discard is worse, and it's twice as bad when your opponents are drawing two cards a turn. Knocking one of three cards out of their hand reduces their total spells by 33%, but knocking one of six cards out of their two hands is only half as effective, much like creatures need to be twice as large to really



hurt someone. Discard favours short games as it is optimal early on when everyone is holding spells and lands are still valuable. This is not a short game format.

As expected, when life is cheap, life gain is worse. Gaining a point a turn or three or four life from a single effect is nice but not something you want to spend a lot of energy on. Firemane Angel is unlikely to race your opponents successfully from the graveyard and Centaur Safeguard isn't likely to make the difference between winning and losing unless you need some early drops. From a more mathematical perspective, Dark Heart of the Wood previously returned 15% of your starting life total for each Forest but now only gives you 7.5%. While previously negating an attack and a half from the average 2-power creature, that same Forest only stops a single beating from the bigger creatures of 2HG. Fifty or sixty life is even harder to get through than the already difficult 40 each team starts at, but we already know a lot of teams will be using a decking archetype, and if they're not then they'll be hitting with big creatures for four or more points a turn, neither of which supports a slow life-gain strategy. If you're attempting the mill strategy yourself, of course, life gain is a bit more reasonable as you often only need a couple of extra turns.

Swarms of small 1/1 token creatures aren't as good. There are twice as many blockers so you need an equivalently larger swarm and there just aren't that many ways to do it in your average sealed deck. Normally eight tokens can rush by three blockers and deal a significant amount of damage, but now there are six blockers and the damage is half as significant so keep the tokens back on defence and look for bigger hitters. Fists of Ironwood is bad, Scatter the Seeds is marginal and Selesnya Evangel is reasonable but not amazing.

Land destruction shifts from nearly unplayable to totally unplayable as the odds of crippling both of your opponents' mana bases is non-existent. The longer games means you're more likely to draw it when it's useless, and even if you shut down one player the other one can often hold on until the first one recovers and you've ended up exchanging valuable spells for land. The special lands can be a threat, especially Sunhome, but the odds of facing one that makes a significant difference aren't the best – Sunhome is no Contested Cliffs. Keep LD in the sideboard.

Convoke is an alternative form of mana acceleration but as we saw earlier, aggression is rarely an effective strategy in Two-Headed. Getting a fifth turn 5/5 Siege Wurm is nice but isn't likely to steal the game before your opponents can gum up the ground with 4/4 and 3/3 blockers. Once that's done, all your early weak creatures that allowed you the fast convoke spells are stuck doing nothing – you've paid two or more cards to deal an early ten damage and now they're at 30 and playing fliers. That isn't to say that Siege Wurm or Conclave Equenaut are bad cards, far from it, it is the convoke mechanic and deck archetype that has suffered.

Radiance is also weaker as both teams will have creatures of every color so the effects have to be carefully worked out ahead of time. Incite Hysteria is generally useless, Bathe in Light is no longer effective as a Falter-like finisher and Wojek Siren may end up saving a few guys from their team as well. This already dubious aggressive mechanic should remain in individual play.

While making a recent splash in constructed for its ability to fill up the graveyard, Dredge suffers greatly for that same reason in Two-Headed. If you're not facing a milling archetype then everything is good, though with the games going long I wouldn't bring back that Stinkweed Imp more than a few

times. But with milling decks always a threat, you have to be constantly on the watch for how many draws you want to replace.

Overwhelm: This only affects your creatures and not your teammates so a massive attack with everything isn't as clean an option as your opponents can chump your big guys and negotiate superior blocks on your teammate's men. Because of the higher life totals, it's trickier to force them into making bad blocks to keep themselves alive so you risk getting attacked back. While it's certainly playable even as six extra damage on two evasion creatures and a chance to throw little guys into the fray and make reasonable trades, it's not quite as scary as it was.

Rain of Embers, Rolling Spoil, Viashino Fangtail, Wojek Embermage: With the overall enhancement in creature quality there are very few 1-toughness creatures you should expect to see (at least not ones that stay at 1) so the opportunities to gain card advantage with these spells are limited. As we saw earlier, swarms of token creatures are not as powerful and thus not generally something to be afraid of. And with 40 life, doing an extra one to the head isn't going to change the world. While the Fangtail remains solid just for its size and ability to mess up combat, the others should be carefully considered before including. That being said, you don't want to waste a Brainspoil to kill a Thundersong Trumpeter if you don't have to, so if kill is sparse these might make the cut.

Frenzied Goblin, Sabretooth Alley Cat, Screeching Griffin: Removing a single blocker isn't as helpful when the early game doesn't matter so much and everyone has lots of creatures. While the Cat has a form of evasion and evasion is good, it still only deals two points of damage for a significant mana investment. Similarly, you'll likely need to spend up to twice as much mana to get through the air with the Griffin and still only hit for two points making it playable, but not exciting.

Lurking Informant: As a milling tool in a milling archetype he's playable if not amazing. But as a method of restricting your opponent's draws or improving your own, he suffers because there are so many extra cards drawn by each team that the effect is negligible.

Privileged Position: Instead of making all of your opponents' targeted spells useless, they just direct them to your teammate instead. Not worth the card slot unless your deck has all the bombs.

Indentured Oaf: They're always playing red so more often than not he's just a 4/3 blocker. That being said, he's a very reasonably priced 4/3 blocker and loves a good Flight of Fancy. He's worse, but far from unplayable.

Cards that are Different

Most cards can be judged as either better or worse in this new format, but a few are dependent on what other cards are in your deck and how you can best take advantage of them. In particular, cards that deal damage to each player deal that combined damage to the team. This means that cards such as Hammerfist Giant, Blockbuster and Rain of Embers do eight, six and two points of damage respectively to each team. That's neither good nor bad, it's just something to keep in mind when you're thinking of activating them.

Coalhauler Swine, on the other hand, can easily change the outcome of the game if you're not careful, and not always in your favour. Attacking him into two Siege Wurms will do 20 points of damage to each team! If you're winning 35 to 10 then attack with a grin, but if you're up 18 to 4 then the Swine should be left at home to block or you'll be playing a rare second game. I suspect the Swine should stay in the sidebar as they are a liability if you're winning and hurt you a bunch when you're losing – but if your opponents are foolish and haven't read this article, keep in mind the opportunities to force a re-match through judicious blocking.

Savra, Queen of the Golari: Unfortunately Savra doesn't say “each opponent” but rather picks on “each other player”. While you're still sacrificing one creature to remove two (as well as the original sacrifice), you have to be aware of the liability.

Woebringer Demon: Similar to Savra, each player has to sacrifice a creature so you're exchanging two creatures for two creatures each turn. Of course, you're hitting them with a 4/4 flier while you're doing this so it's likely worth the exchange.

Conclusion

So have you written that email to Mark about the spiders yet? What are you waiting for? [Get to it!](#) Only then are you worthy of reading the conclusion.

If you've made it this far then I doubt I have to say anything more about how much fun Two-Headed Giant is to play. For many serious players, chatting and hanging out with friends will bring back the early days of **Magic** but this time you actually know the rules. It's nice to no longer have to think of all of your friends as enemies and opponents, now they can be on your side!

And don't just think of your friends; also think of your loved ones. No, no, don't start playing **Magic** with your mom – it would be too embarrassing when she kicks your butt. I'm talking girlfriends and wives and such. Many of you have experienced the pain of playing with beginning players where the skill disparity makes it no fun for anyone. Yet you want to spend time with both your friends and your significant other. Two-Headed Giant is an excellent opportunity to bring it all together as you can have a great time playing at your level against your buddy while still teaching your novice partners without having them lose every game.

Also fun is the chance to play with big bombs and deal really large amounts of damage. During testing we were often dealing 15 points of damage or more in a well-planned final attack phase for victory. There's something viscerally satisfying about attacking with large creatures and sharing the experience with a friend. Instead of fleeing when you want to rehash old **Magic** victories and bad beats, now your close friends will be reminiscing right along with you!

So for those of you who played in a Two-Headed tournament over the weekend, am I full of it, or am I a certified genius? Are you kicking yourself for making deck-building mistakes or are you wondering why they pay me to write these? Let me know in the forums along with any combos or synergies I might have missed! For those of you that haven't played Two-Headed Giant yet, what are you waiting for? All you need is two decks, two brains and two friends!

I'd like to thank Steve Wolfman, Stuart Kovinsky and Michael Ferneyhough for helping me test the format and Steve in particular for showing me how he kept kicking my butt. It was a lot of fun!