

Home > Games > Magic > Magicthegathering.com > Columns



# Guildpact Release Avatars

Bennie Smith  
Into the Aether  
Thursday, February 2, 2006



## Guildpact hits MTGO 2/27

The light at the end of the tunnel is in sight! In case you haven't seen the announcement, mark your calendars: *Guildpact* hits the Online Store and becomes legal to play Monday, February 27 th at 9:00 am PST, and *Guildpact* Release Events start on Wednesday, March 1st. As usual, the events include Release Leagues (one week long), Draft Queues, Premier Event Flights (2x and 4x Prizes), and the Release Championship. Keep in mind that the Thursday downtime will be hitting as normal, so make sure you're not in the middle of a League game or something when that occurs!

Getting 1st place in the 2x PE or getting Top 4 in the 4x PE will qualify you for the Release Championship where you play for free and booster pack prizes go all the way down to 64th place. Winning the Championship gives you a complete set of *Magic Online* Premium (foil) *Guildpact* cards! 2nd place gets a complete set of regular (non-foils) *Magic Online* *Guildpact* cards!

## Prize Avatars

Playing in a Release League and Premier Event will net you the participation avatar of *Teysa, Orzhov Scion*. Going 5-0 in the League, making Top 2 in a 2x PE, or Top 8 in a 4x PE will all get you the prize avatar *Rumblings Slum*. Longtime readers of Into The Aether know I enjoy making kooky decks around the *Vanguard* avatars, and Release Events are exciting because they give me two extra avatars to tinker with. What a happy coincidence that talking about the *Rumblings Slum* avatar for Vanguard falls on Gruul week! Look, Ma — I'm in theme! Okay, here are the stats (keep in mind that the stats are not necessarily 100 percent final until the release):

### Prize Avatar: *Rumblings Slum*

Hand: +1

Life: +1

At the beginning of your upkeep, *Rumblings Slum* deals 1 to each opponent.

(Since we're showing you the stats of these avatars so early, we can't show you the the graphics, because they're not yet final.)

Note the lack of targeting for the damage, so they can't hide behind *Ivory Mask*! *Samite Healer* on the other hand is a major problem...

**Old-S'Gruul Rumbler (Standard w/Vanguard) by Bennie Smith** txt

Avatar - *Rumblings Slum*  
60 cards

3 <i>Skarrg, the Rage Pits</i>	4 <i>Tin Street Hooligan</i>	4 <i>Shock</i>
4 <i>Stomping Ground</i>	4 <i>Skarrgan Pit-Skulks</i>	4 <i>Moldervine Cloak</i>
4 <i>Karplusan Forest</i>	4 <i>Kird Ape</i>	
5 <i>Mountain</i>	4 <i>Scorched Rusalka</i>	8 other spells
5 <i>Forest</i>	4 <i>Scab-Clan Mauler</i>	
	4 <i>Gruul Guildmage</i>	
21 land	4 <i>Bloodscale Prowler</i>	
	3 <i>Orcish Artillery</i>	
	31 creatures	

The card *Rumblings Slum* is obviously the flagship of the Gruul armada, being a prime Bloodthirst enabler and a heckuva beatdown creature for the mana cost. With this avatar you get to start the party on turn 1, getting the most out of early *Skarrgan Pit-Skulks* and *Scab-Clan Maulers*. *Tin Street Hooligans* will make short work of any random broken Kamigawa equipment lying around, and *Moldervine Cloak* lets your big Bloodthirsties up-size, which is particularly tasty combined with *Skarrg, the Rage Pits*. *Orcish Artillery* can help clear the ground of blockers or just go to the dome with some direct damage, along with help from *Gruul Guildmage*. I topped the curve at three because the Avatar should effectively shave 4-6 points of life from your opponent's total so there shouldn't be much of a late game.

txt

Get Magic Invitational Wallpapers & Sign Up for Messaging!  
[www.mtgmobil.com](http://www.mtgmobil.com)

**PRODUCTS**

*Dissension* *Guildpact*

All Magic products

**RULES**

*Magic* Core Game  
Basic Rulebook  
Comprehensive Rules  
All Magic Rules

**MESSAGE BOARDS**

*Magic* All Magic message boards  
COMMUNITY [magicthegathering.com forum](http://magicthegathering.com/forum)  
Rules Q&A forum  
*Magic Online* announcements

**MAGIC ONLINE**

*Magic* ONLINE  
Download Now!  
*Magic Online* Academy  
*Magic Online* FAQ

**NOVELS**

*Dissension*  
Ravnica Cycle, Book III  
by Cory Herndon

## Gruulzhov Bleeder (Standard w/Vanguard) by Bennie Smith

Avatar - Rumbling Slum  
60 cards

3 Orzhova, the Church of Deals	4 Festering Goblin	4 Orzhov Signet
4 Caves of Koilos	4 Orzhov Guildmage	4 Pillory of the Sleepless
4 Godless Shrine	4 Orzhov Pontiff	
6 Plains	2 Souls of the Faultless	8 other spells
7 Swamp	1 Teysa, Orzhov Scion	
	4 Blind Hunter	
24 land	4 Ghost Council of Orzhova	
	3 Belfry Spirit	
	2 Skeletal Vampire	
	28 creatures	

Interestingly, **Rumbling Slum** has an Orzhov feel if you think about it. Many Orzhov cards win by slowly bleeding your opponent to death, so why not use the big Rumble as an anti-coagulant? I particularly like the Pontiff in Vanguard because of the power of the Erhnam avatar's swarm deck. His battle cry would be "I pontificate you!" We can only hope not. **Belfry Spirit** and **Skeletal Vampire** ought to give plenty of token madness to feed your Ghost Council, a card that [Zvi found to be surprisingly powerful](#).

## Rumbling Control (Standard w/Vanguard) by Bennie Smith

Avatar - Rumbling Slum  
60 cards



4 Quicksand	0 creatures	4 Repeal
4 Adarkar Wastes		4 Sleight of Hand
2 Cloudcrest Lake		4 Mana Leak
7 Plains		4 Remand
7 Island		4 Telling Time
24 land		4 Hinder
		4 Terashi's Grasp
		4 Rewind
		4 Wrath of God
		36 other spells

Finally, there are those who will look at **Rumbling Slum**, not as the aggressive ball of furious vengeance, but as a nice tidy package perfect for... control. With a small life boost, increased hand-size, and a kill condition that goes to work turn 1, what more could you ask for? I put this together as an exercise in ultimate control, with zero win-conditions outside of the Avatar ping-pong. Yeah, I definitely don't want to run into **Loxodon Hierarch**! Truth be told, I should probably add a couple **Meloku**, the **Clouded Mirror**, but honestly what deck sporting **Islands** *shouldn't* run a couple Meloku? Anyway, the **Rumbling Slum** avatar should shave the number of attack phases you'll need to put the game away by a turn or two once you do drop your kill condition.

Yeah, I know that last deck was a bit blasphemous and I fully expect the Gruul to come calling on the battlefield to extract some paycheck. So as penance, why don't we take the participation avatar and twist it to the Gruul agenda? Here are her stats (again, keep in mind that the stats and avatar graphics are not 100 percent final until the release):

### Participation: **Teysa, Orzhov Scion**

Hand: +0

Life: -2

Whenever a non-token creature is put into a graveyard from play, put a 1/1 white, Spirit creature token with flying into play.

## Gruul Scion (Standard w/Vanguard) by Bennie Smith

Avatar - Teysa, Orzhov Scion  
60 cards



4 Stomping Ground	2 Wild Cantor	4 Long-Forgotten Gohei
3 Skarrg, the Rage Pits	4 Frostling	4 other spells
4 Karplusan Forest	4 Scorched Rusalka	
6 Forest	4 Ember-Fist Zubera	
7 Mountain	4 Dripping-Tongue Zubera	
24 land	4 Hearth Kami	
	4 Elder Pine of Jukai	
	4 Rumbling Slum	
	2 Rootrunner	
	32 creatures	

Teysa certainly gives **Scorched Rusalka** more bangs for the buck, and lets you go nuts with **Dripping-Tongue Zuber**. With all the spirit action going on, I figured why not go ahead and run **Long-Forgotten Gohei** since, well, it has been so long forgotten? Your own personal **Crusade** should turn all those little 1/1 fliers into more than just annoyances.

To wrap things up, let's use Teysa for an actual Teysa deck:

**Kay Tey-sa Tey-sa (Standard w/Vanguard) by Bennie Smith** .txt

Avatar - Teysa, Orzhov Scion  
60 cards

1 <b>Miren, the Moaning Well</b> 4 <b>Caves of Koilos</b> 4 <b>Godless Shrine</b> 6 <b>Plains</b> 9 <b>Swamp</b> <hr/> 24 land	4 <b>Soul Warden</b> 4 <b>Plagued Rusalka</b> 4 <b>Festering Goblin</b> 4 <b>Teysa, Orzhov Scion</b> 4 <b>Twilight Drover</b> 4 <b>Ghost Council of Orzhova</b> 4 <b>Belfry Spirit</b> 4 <b>Skeletal Vampire</b> <hr/> 32 creatures	4 <b>Orzhov Signet</b> <hr/> 4 other spells
--	--	--

C'mon, you know you've been itching to break off **Twilight Drover**! Teysa the card lets all your bat token creatures be reborn as spirits, and Teysa the avatar does the same for all your creature cards. Non-Green token madness is here, and it feels much cooler than slowly cranking out Pegasus tokens with **Sacred Mesa**. I wanted to squeeze **Promise of Bunrei** here but the three-mana slots were already pretty full.

Come March 1st, we'll have our chance to try out the new kids on the Vanguard block. If any of you want to toss your Vanguard creations against one of these decks, come find me online and I'll be happy to play.

Do you think these Avatars will make a splash in the Vanguard metagame? It looked like Akroma won again in this past Saturday's 2x Standard Vanguard tournament, and I saw a several **Prodigal Sorcerers** in the Top 8. It's interesting to see some folks simply take a good Standard decklist and add **Prodigal Sorcerer** to improve consistency. Does this make for better decks than ones built exclusively around the Avatar's abilities like I tend to do here? I'm curious to hear what you think.



**Generally, do you tend to build your Vanguard decks by starting with the Avatar and building around that, or do you take an already built deck for the format and add an Avatar to enhance it?**

Start with the Avatar first  
 Start with a deck first, then pick the Avatar  
 I don't really play Vanguard

## So You Have Picked My Gunslinging Decks!

[Last week](#) I talked about gunslinging for Star City's Pete Hoefling at [Grand Prix Richmond](#) this weekend, and I asked you to pick two decks for me to play. The results are in, and I am pleasantly surprised to announce you all picked each of the decks I voted for myself! Interestingly, both are control decks, but they are not anything alike and are certainly not your garden-variety control decks. I look forward to putting Grand Prix Richmond duelists through the paces at the gunslinger tables this weekend!

Which deck should I play as my Standard gunslinging deck for Grand Prix Richmond?		
Eminent Domain	1466	28.9%
Red Deck Wins (and Wins and Wins)	1318	26.0%
FungusFire	1170	23.1%
URzatron	1113	22.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>5067</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

**Eminent Domain (Standard) by Adrian Sullivan** .dec

1st Place Wisconsin Champs

Main Deck 60 cards		Sideboard
1 Island	4 Shock	4 Pyroclasm
2 Mountain	4 Wildfire	3 Soratami Savant
4 Shivan Reef	4 Annex	3 Execute
4 Tendo Ice Bridge	4 Remand	3 Shadow of Doubt
1 Minamo, School at Water's Edge	4 Dimir Signet	2 Overwhelming Intellect
1 Shinka, the Bloodsoaked Keep	4 Dream Leash	15 sideboard cards
1 Shizo, Death's Storehouse	3 Spectral Searchlight	
4 Dimir Aqueduct	4 Icy Manipulator	
2 Mikokoro, Center of the Sea	31 other spells	
2 Miren, the Moaning Well		
1 Oboro, Palace in the Clouds		
23 land		
3 Keiga, the Tide Star		
3 Kokusho, the Evening Star		
6 creatures		

#### Which deck should I play as my Extended gunslinging deck for Grand Prix Richmond?

Helldozer Control	1468	35.9%
Elemental Bidding	1148	28.0%
Boomstick Deck Wins	745	18.2%
Friggorid	732	17.9%
<b>Total</b>	<b>4093</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Main Deck 60 cards		Sideboard
12 Swamp	4 Duress	3 Consume Spirit
2 Bloodstained Mire	4 Pernicious Deed	3 Wrench Mind
4 Polluted Delta	4 Distress	3 Skeletal Scrying
4 Overgrown Tomb	3 Staff of Domination	2 Visara the Dreadful
4 Cabal Coffers	2 Haunting Echoes	4 Shadow of Doubt
26 land	4 Putrefy	15 sideboard cards
3 Helldozer	3 Decree of Pain	
3 creatures	4 Chainer's Edict	
	3 Mutilate	
	31 other spells	

I had the pleasure of watching several of Elgin's games in action while he battled through the top seats to win the coveted blue envelope, and along with some experience with *Torment-era* Mono-Black Control, I feel fairly confident in playing his deck. **Helldozer** was an absolute beating in an environment chock full of *Ravnica* and *Apocalypse* non-basic lands, especially with **Cabal Coffers** to fuel him! **Staff of Domination** seemed an odd choice, but it's not a bad additional mana sink for **Cabal Coffers**. If nothing else it can help untap your **Helldozer** if he has to munch on basic lands.

Sullivan's deck on the other hand is completely alien to most anything I've played, so if any of you out there have some experience playing the deck and have any advice, please post in the forums. I'm going to be furiously playing this deck on MTGO this week to try and get up to speed. Luckily, [Adrian wrote about the deck](#) so I have a primer to jump-start me.



I'll also likely tweak the sideboards a little to better handle the most current environment. Any thoughts on that? What do you think people are going to bring to the gunslinging table?

So are you going to Grand Prix Richmond? If so, please come up and say hi, and if you have time, jump across from me at the gunslinger table with your favorite deck or Grand Prix cards and let's get a match in! Also, make sure to check out my [Guide to Dining and Nightlife in Richmond](#) over on Star City for information on how to get around the area and where to go for some R&R away from the **Magic** tables.

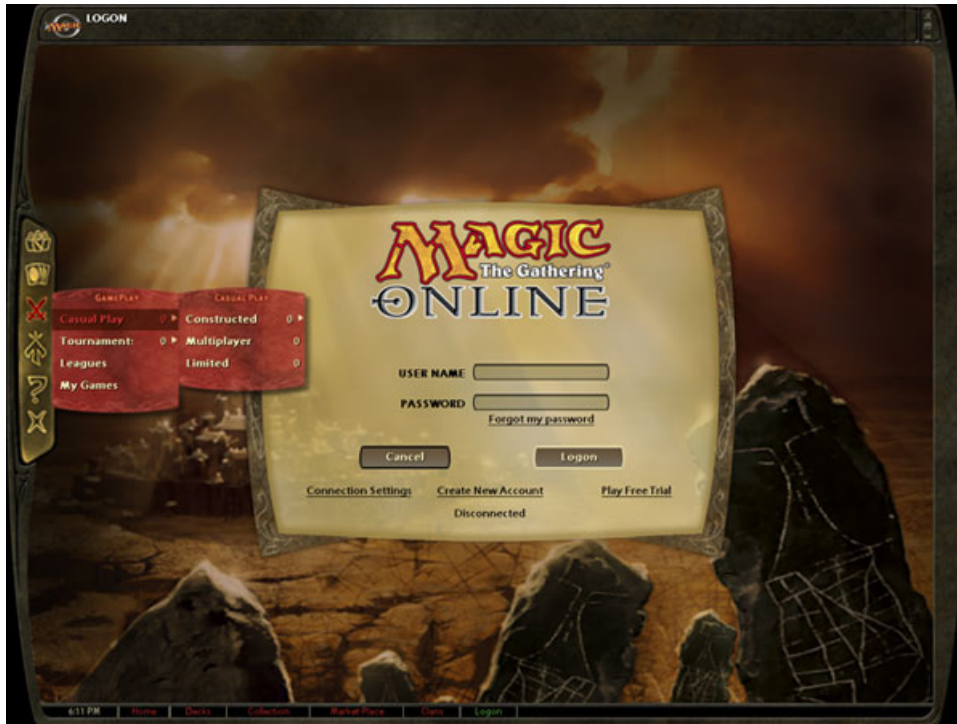
## Can You Handle Even *More* 3.0 Info?

This week I'd like to introduce you to Brian Lindley, the Producer for *Magic Online*.

---

Although Justin and Scott normally do most of the talking for *Magic Online*, I'm excited to have the opportunity to start introducing you to some of the cool new aspects of the Version 3.0 user interface. For those of you that don't know me, my name is Brian Lindley and I am the Producer for *Magic: The Gathering Online*. I have worked at Wizards for 5½ years, and have been working on *Magic Online* for the last 3 years. As Producer, I oversee the technical production of all new releases for *Magic Online*, including new card sets, any special projects, and the much-anticipated Version 3.0. As such, I work closely with our developers, artists, and Quality Assurance (aka "QA") team to ensure that the software we create is of high quality and meets the expectations of our players and the team here at Wizards. My *Magic Online* account name is B\_Lind, so if you see me online sometime, say hello!

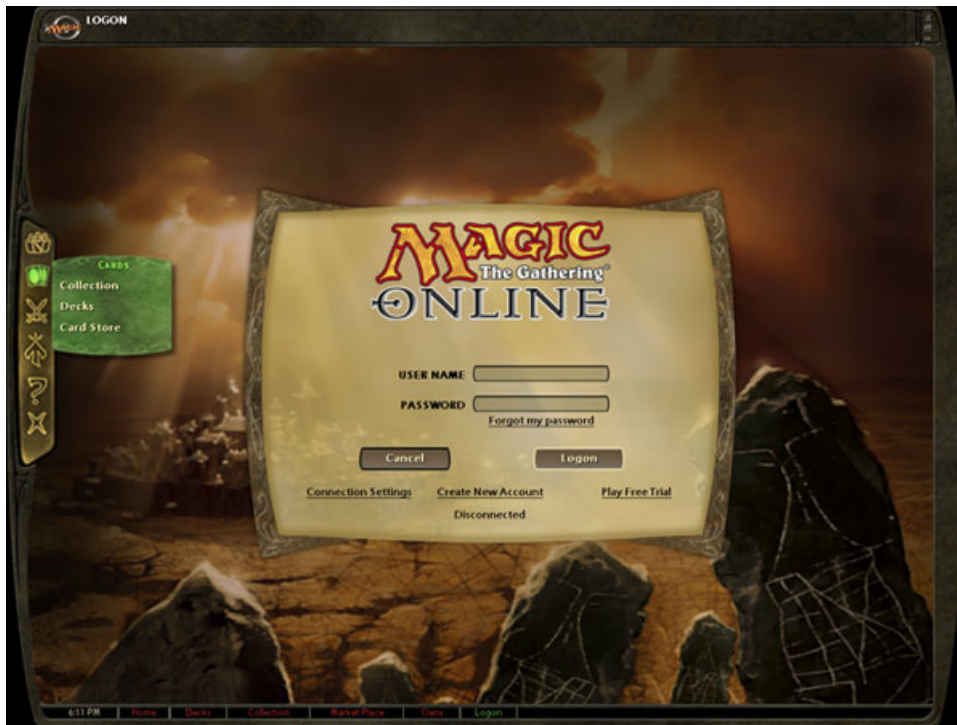
This week I want to give you a sneak peek at one of the cool new features of the Version 3.0 user interface: the navigation menu. The navigation menu was designed as a way to further our goal of making the Version 3.0 GUI (graphical user interface) as convenient and easy to use as possible. So, instead of having to click through multiple screens or rooms, users can access any game feature or location within one or two mouse clicks.



Located in the left side of the window frame, the navigation menu will appear whenever the mouse cursor is positioned over the area marked by the stream of white particles. The menu stays visible as long as the mouse cursor remains over the menu or any of the sub-menus. As soon as a user selects an item in the menu or moves the mouse cursor away off of the menu, it disappears. Additionally, if you check out the screenshots or the video, you will notice that the items in the menu are organized by a series of color-coded icons. These icons and their colors represent the various feature categories in *Magic Online*:

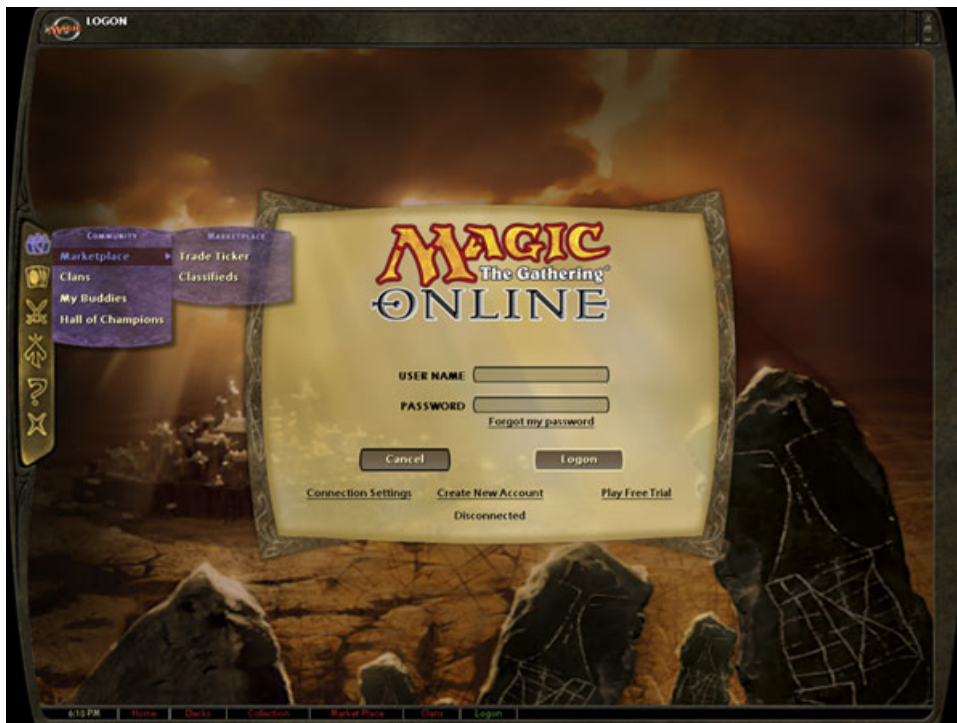
- **Purple** - Community features such as clans, buddies and trade.
- **Green** - Card-related features such as collection, deck editor and online store.
- **Red** - Gameplay features including casual play rooms, tournaments and leagues.
- **Blue** - Settings
- **Gold** - Help features

We use these colors throughout the interface to distinguish each section of the game, making it easy to know where you are at a glance.



Quick point of clarification on the Marketplace options shown in the screen shots: We have renamed the trade areas in Version 3.0 to better represent their function, we have not made any significant changes to **Magic Online** trade features with Version 3.0A. Enhancements to the **Magic Online** trade system are planned for **Magic Online** V3.0B and beyond. The name changes in V3.0A are as follows:

- Version 2.0 Marketplace is named "Trade Ticker" in Version 3.0.
- Version 2.0 Message Board is named "Classifieds" in Version 3.0.



Want to see it in action? [Click here](#) for a 5MB downloadable Zipped Quicktime (.zip/.mov) file.

I hope you enjoyed this week's quick preview of the Version 3.0 interface. Please remember that Version 3.0 is still under development, so items discussed here may change before the public release. Stay tuned as we reveal more information about Version 3.0 in the coming weeks. See you online!

- Brian

## Tip of the Day

Aaron Larson wrote in with this interesting suggestion:

*"In your last article you wrote about the laments of a younger **Magic** Onliner that doesn't have access to a credit card. Well he can get a Visa gift card from almost any bank and use that for MTGO purchases - they work like a debit card only you put money on them when you buy it, and you don't have to be 18 to get one! Hope that helps!"*

Join us next week as I recap my adventures at Grand Prix Richmond and announce whose decks made the first cut for my [Tombstone Stairwell Deckbuilding Challenge!](#)

*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](#)

