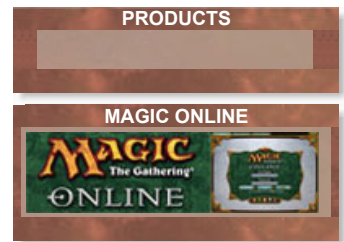


Home > Games > Magic > Magicthegathering.com > Columns



The Return of Limited Information

Noah Weil
Limited Information
 Tuesday, May 2, 2006



Welcome back to the return of Limited Information! I'm Noah Weil, moderate Pro Tour player and Limited enthusiast (which is not to say euthanist). In the coming weeks and months, I'm going to cover anything and everything Limited-based for an interesting, interactive experience. I'm as new to my column as you are, so if there's something you like or don't, please let me know. I hereby promise not to make everyone happy every time, but perhaps with enough feedback and evolution we can create a satisfying exchange as often as possible.

This week is going to be an online draft walkthrough, giving me a chance to explain some of my philosophies regarding drafting *Ravnica* block. Due to deadline concerns, this will be the only week to not include *Dissension*, but since it hasn't been released online yet, RRG still has quite a bit of relevance. Just for the themeo'philes out there: *Azorius Guildmage* is good.

Let's get started!

Pack 1:

Pack 1, Pick 1: Mortipede, Torpid Moloch, Terrarion, Tidewater Minion, Sadistic Augermage, Boros Recruit, Quickchange, Infectious Host, Transluminant, Faith's Fetters, Snapping Drake, Selesnya Sagittars, Mark of Eviction, Mausoleum Turnkey, Hunted Horror

An interesting opener. The best cards from their respective colors are Faith's Fetters, Mausoleum Turnkey, and Mark of Eviction. Snapping Drake and Tidewater Minion are both fine, but the Mark is the strongest (and most annoying) of the three draftable Blue cards, so it's the one to focus on. The Turnkey is an excellent card, providing solid stats and a potentially broken ability. It's near-impossible for it be bad, always returning something or just being a beater on an empty board. It's flexible in that regard, and that's pretty nice for a first pick. Plus there's only one Black mana in the casting cost, so it's an easy splash, right?



My Pick:

Actually, not so much. Yes, you can run it any deck as the only Black card, but is that effective? Consider that a splashed color is the color you can't exactly count on to be there. That means the cards in a splash color need to be useful at all stages of the game, especially the late ones, where you are most likely to have both a splash card and the mana to cast it. The late game is the only reliable time to count on a splash, and in that regard the Turnkey falls short. If the Turnkey is in your extraneous color, you may be forced to cast it late, perhaps turn 8-9+. If that happens, then a 3/2 body, while decent, probably won't break the game wide open. Worse, the ability gives more options to your opponent, i.e. lots of your stuff has perished on the way to the later stages. It's possible your opponent will give you back absolutely nothing of value (your Mourning Thrull against his Viashino Fangtail or Trophy Hunter for example). Finding your third or fourth or fifth color just to play two unimpressive creatures is not exciting. Turnkey is best in the early game, and hence as a component to a dedicated Black deck. We're not ready to make the decision yet.

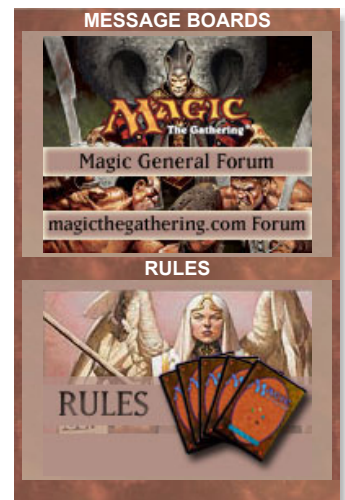
Between Faith's Fetters and Mark of Eviction, I would be satisfied with either. I'd say the Mark has a bit more potential and the Fetters has slightly more consistency, which is certainly a common draft issue. I picked the Fetters because I favor consistency this early in the draft, and sending three Blue cards down the line has appeal.

My pick: Faith's Fetters

Pack 1, Pick 2: Selesnya Sanctuary, Stasis Cell, Roofstalker Wight, Clinging Darkness, Perplex, Dryad's Caress, Caregiver, Skyknight Legionnaire, Conclave Equenaut, Golgari Signet, Oathsworn Giant, Twisted Justice, Vindictive Mob, Breath of Fury

2007 WORLDS

Worlds Recap



Another intriguing pack, with a lot of ramifications for the rest of the draft. The nice thing about this one is that all the potential picks are in our chosen color. The stand out cards are **Selesnya Sanctuary**, **Skyknight Legionnaire**, **Conclave Equenaut**, and **Oathsworn Giant**.

My Pick:

The Equenaut and the Giant are pretty close in power levels and casting costs, which in this case means double White. The Sanctuary is a very safe pick; an almost automatic inclusion into whatever our final deck ends up being. The Legionnaire is probably the strongest of the four, but it adds another color to the mix. The trick with this pack, and *Ravnica* block in general, is that the Giant and Equenaut *also* add another color to the deck, which is White-White. Fetters goes into any deck; it can be the only White card, even as a fourth or fifth color.

Oathsworn Giant, and especially **Conclave Equenaut**, require a more serious commitment to White; in effect adding a color by omitting the possibility of others. Since all three creatures can alter the color composition of the deck, I went with **Skyknight Legionnaire**, the strongest of the three. Now I can play a White deck splash Red or a Red deck splash White. Options are still on the table. The Sanctuary, while great, just couldn't compare to any of the three quality creatures. With less powerful cards in the pack, or when our needs were more defined, the Sanctuary would have received more consideration.

My pick: Skyknight Legionnaire

Pack 1, Pick 3: Gaze of the Gorgon, Coalhauler Swine, Civic Wayfinder, Tidewater Minion, Conclave's Blessing, Quickchange, Sewerdreg, Siege Wurm, Peel from Reality, Divebomber Griffin, Remand, Golgari Guildmage, Chorus of the Conclave

The next big decision.

My Pick:

A quick look at the cards shows no overwhelmingly strong White or Red cards. There are no playable Red cards at all and the only White card is the adequate but unexciting **Divebomber Griffin**. Since it shoves us into hard White, it's the same as another color as far as our deck is concerned. Is it time make that leap? Here are the options:

Big White: Divebomber Griffin

Blue: Peel from Reality or Remand (Tidewater is worse and it costs double Blue anyway)

Green: Civic Wayfinder, Siege Wurm, or Golgari Guildmage

The other cards are simply worse than these options. For example, if you wanted serious White, Griffin is a far better choice than **Chorus of the Conclave**, and **Golgari Guildmage** is a better choice than **Sewerdreg** in Black. I'm still a fan of keeping options open, so the double colored spells are out. **Keening Banshee** would warrant consideration; **Golgari Guildmage** is a lot lower on the power scale. Luckily for us, the two consistently strongest cards are in single colors anyway: **Peel from Reality** and **Civic Wayfinder**. I like **Remand** an awful lot, but again it's one of those cards that loses impact as a splash.

Now of **Civic Wayfinder** and **Peel from Reality**, I think Peel is the technically stronger card and it goes into a stronger archetype: R/U/W over Wayfinder's R/G/W. However, consider what we've seen and passed so far. There's been zero Red and a lot of Blue. We simply cannot cut Blue right now, we've passed too much. We can make Blue our splash color, but it does not look like much Boros is being passed our way. By taking Peel we're saying we're playing R/W/u, except there's no R/W in our main direction, and no Blue in our second direction. That looks pretty dismal. I see a pack like this and I just imagine the traps in store. We don't know if the Peel was an aberration here. We do know **Siege Wurm** and **Civic Wayfinder** are some of Green's best commons; seeing them both this late says Green is wide open.

That **Civic Wayfinder** is a gold mine. It puts us into a solid combination and it allows us options into any other scenario. Unlike Blue, which we've passed in droves, there has been very little Green sent downward. I think the Boros drafter to our left is going to wake up and start taking Izzet cards in *Guildpact*. We're certainly not going to get any Blue in pack two. Adding all that up, Blue and probably Red are dead to us. Time to jump into Forestland.

My pick: Civic Wayfinder

Pack 1, Pick 4: Tattered Drake, Strands of Undeath, Barbarian Riftcutter, Muddle the Mixture, Sadistic Augermage, Sundering Vitae, Leave No Trace, Zephyr Spirit, Selesnya Signet, Conclave Phalanx, Belltower Sphinx, Sins of the Past

My Pick:

Belltower Sphinx now? Maybe that Blue analysis was too convoluted. Oh well, we can't go back now. At least there's a useful card on-color.

My pick: Conclave Phalanx

Pack 1, Pick 5: Goblin Spelunkers, Farseek, Woodwraith Strangler, Dimir House Guard, Grayscaled Gharial, Shred Memory, Rain of Embers, Selesnya Evangel, Ethereal Usher, Sunhome, Fortress of the Legion, Flow of Ideas

My Pick:

Wow, a 5th pick **Selesnya Evangel**. Now we know we're in the right place; there might be Green drafters and there might be White drafters but it looks like we are the only G/W drafter. That's excellent, but what's even more

shocking is that 5th pick Dimir-House Guard. It's one of Black's best commons; to see it this late is quite peculiar. We still haven't seen quality Red cards since pack 2; it definitely looks like Red is not going to be a primary factor in this deck. The House Guard is roughly analogous to the Evangel, but I'd prefer another indication that Black is actually available.

My pick: Selesnya Evangel

Pack 1, Pick 6: Coalhauler Swine, Courier Hawk, Surveilling Sprite, Dimir House Guard, Drake Familiar, Shred Memory, Seeds of Strength, Surge of Zeal, Flight of Fancy, Flow of Ideas

My Pick:

A 6th pick House Guard? That would do it. There is probably no combination of cards in a pack that the fearfully good skeleton would go this late, but since it's being offered on a silver platter, why not? Passing one House Guard then taking another is unusual, but if Limited is anything it's about adaptability.

My pick: Dimir House Guard

Pack 1, Pick 7: Votary of the Conclave, Terrarion, Sewerdreg, Smash, Rally the Righteous, Elves of Deep Shadow, Seed Spark, Cyclopean Snare, Dimir Machinations

My Pick:

Seed Spark or **Elves of Deep Shadow**? This was one of the tougher picks. **Seed Spark** is quite strong when it hits and it's in the colors we know we're playing. **Elves of Deep Shadow** are fine if you're playing G/B, but *only* if you're playing G/B. At some point we need to make that call. Analysis so far seems to indicate Black will be a component in the final build, so I trusted that judgment and went with the Elves.

My pick: Elves of Deep Shadow

Pack 1, Pick 8: Stasis Cell, Viashino Slasher, Muddle the Mixture, Sundering Vitae, Caregiver, Dizzy Spell, Peregrine Mask, Autochthon Wurm

My Pick:

Is there a 9/14 Wurm in that pack? In our colors? And it has trample!? Sorry I'm... just not seeing it. Neither did the rest of the table, and I doubt it was because of the Green/White part. I like to pick up an artifact/enchantment kill spell at some instance, now seems fine.

My pick: Sundering Vitae

Pack 1, Pick 9: Torpid Moloch, Terrarion, Sadistic Augermage, Boros Recruit, Quickchange, Infectious Host, Hunted Horror

At least 3 and maybe 4 colors? **Terrarion** is a winner. Too bad the **Selesnya Sanctuary** didn't come back.

My pick: Terrarion

Pack 1, Pick 10: Stasis Cell, Roofstalker Wight, Perplex, Dryad's Caress, Vindictive Mob, Breath of Fury

B/U is *highly* unlikely, but there's nothing else for us here at all. When that happens, take the card that you want to least see played against you.

My pick: Roofstalker Wight

Pack 1, Pick 11: Coalhauler Swine, Conclave's Blessing, Quickchange, Sewerdreg, Chorus of the Conclave

My pick: Chorus of the Conclave

Not bad for 11th pick, and it might even make the maindeck

Pack 1, Pick 12: Muddle the Mixture, Sundering Vitae, Zephyr Spirit, Sins of the Past

My pick: Sundering Vitae

There are instances where we'd want to side in two...

Pack 1, Pick 13: Woodwraith Strangler, Grayscaled Gharial, Rain of Embers

My pick: Rain of Embers

If only there was a way to get our opponents to play the other cards in their decks. Well, giving these to them is a good first step.

Pack 1, Pick 14: Shred Memory, Surge of Zeal

My pick: Shred Memory

Might even make the maindeck if we play enough Black.

Pack 1, Pick 15: Votary of the Conclave

A mildly playable 15th pick! Once again we know we're in the right colors.

My pick: Votary of the Conclave

Pack 2

Pack 2, Pick 1: Convolute, Golgari Rot Farm, Dogpile, Sabertooth Alley Cat, Bramble Elemental, Benevolent Ancestor, Golgari Brownscale, Gate Hound, Clinging Darkness, Last Gasp, Galvanic Arc, Wojek Embermage, Dowsing Shaman, Goliath Spider, Spawnbroker

My Pick:

This is one of the most interesting picks in the draft. I don't think anyone would argue that **Last Gasp** is the strongest card in the pack, and between **Civic Wayfinder** and **Elves of Deep Shadow**, we will play it. However, **Galvanic Arc** is quite good as well, and Red could still be a main color. What complicates the issue is that **Dowsing Shaman** in the uncommon spot. Is there a chance it could table? Absolutely, there are better Green cards in there. We know Green is under-drafted, and there are even excellent picks in other colors to reduce Shaman temptation. There is a good chance that we'll see **Dowsing Shaman** again, and if we do that Arc might be the stronger pick.

This was a difficult decision. Ultimately I went with my instincts and took the **Last Gasp**, simply on the assumption that Red is just not going to be a component in the final deck.

Galvanic Arc is a reason to go four colors, but when we have a technically stronger card in our base three combination, there's no need to get fancy. We can take the better card in the better color and leave the romantic interactions for another time.



My pick: Last Gasp

Pack 2, Pick 2: Wojek Siren, Convolute, Dimir Aqueduct, Sabertooth Alley-Cat, Gather Courage, Boros Fury-Shield, Seismic Spike, Stone-Seeder Hierophant, Incite Hysteria, Seeds of Strength, Galvanic Arc, Boros Guildmage, Pollenbright Wings, Pariah's Shield

My Pick:

Again I spoke too soon. **Galvanic Arc** is the best card, but **Boros Guildmage** and **Pollenbright Wings** are no joke either. I do enjoy the Guildmage but as a mono-White card, it's not exceptional. If it's going to be part of a Red contingent, then the Arc is the better card. Between Arc and Wings:

Galvanic Arc over **Pollenbright Wings** has two pluses for it - the deck we're drafting and the cards we've passed. That **Dowsing Shaman** argument from before is just as valid in favor of Arc. Further, **Pollenbright Wings** does not look like a superstar right now. It's perfectly fine, but it does appreciate deckbuilder assistance, say an **Auratouched Mage**. Or at least a creature with power above two. It's better as an aggressive card, and this deck is shaping up to be a controlling build. Taking **Galvanic Arc** puts us solidly in four colors, but I'm ok with that. It's the strongest card in the pack, and we might even luck out and get that **Dowsing Shaman** back.

My pick: Galvanic Arc

Pack 2, Pick 3: Farseek, Boros Garrison, Induce Paranoia, Sparkmage Apprentice, Fists of Ironwood, Centaur Safeguard, Thoughtpicker Witch, Seismic Spike, Elvish Skysweeper, Brainspoil, Svogthos, the Restless Tomb, Chant of Vitu-Ghazi, Duskmantle, House of Shadow

My Pick:

Not even a question here, after that **Galvanic Arc** I couldn't pick **Boros Garrison** fast enough. I know, **Farseek** looks pretty good when you're four colors, right? Well, yes and no. The advantage of playing four or more colors is you get a deck steeped in power over some degree of consistency. I think with G/W being under-drafted, and our strong splash potential, we will not lack for playables. Therefore, **Farseek** literally removes a good card from the final deck. **Farseek** does not replace a land; it really does cost $\{1\}$. The Garrison actually does replace a land

(or two!), giving us additional slots for our strong cards. It even provides the fourth color A.K.A. the color we'd **Farseek** for anyway. If your goal is to take a fixer in this pack, and I think that's a fine idea, the Garrison is the best one.

My pick: Boros Garrison

Pack 2, Pick 4: Viashino Slasher, Golgari Rot Farm, Consult the Necrosages, Incite Hysteria, Centaur Safeguard, Screeching Griffin, Drake Familiar, Thoughtpicker Witch, Goblin Fire Fiend, Boros Signet, Blockbuster, Reroute

My Pick:

See above, but replace **Farseek** with **Boros Signet**. The Rot Farm is a *huge* pull, and it makes me feel very confident about casting all that chromatic goodness.

My pick: Golgari Rot Farm

Pack 2, Pick 5: Terrarion, Votary of the Conclave, Ordrun Commando, Boros Recruit, Smash, Golgari Brownscale, Brainspoil, Sell-Sword Brute, Voyager Staff, Perilous Forays, Loxodon Gatekeeper

My Pick:

Another interesting pack, finally we get to take a color intensive spell. I think the Brownscale is right out, it's just too weak. **Brainspoil** and **Loxodon Gatekeeper** are a little more worthy. The Gatekeeper is a remarkable 5th pick; an excellent card on offense and defense. The **Brainspoil** is perfectly playable, if a little inefficient. I think this pick comes down to personal preference. I went with Gatekeeper because I believe White will be a bigger factor in the deck than Black, and because I wanted more creatures. There's no shame in taking **Brainspoil** here; my decider was that, unlikely as it is, I just *hate* playing against **Loxodon Gatekeeper**. Sometimes drafting is an emotional experience.

My pick: Loxodon Gatekeeper

Pack 2, Pick 6: Woodwraith Strangler, Strands of Undeath, War-Torch Goblin, Boros Fury-Shield, Rain of Embers, Stone-Seeder Hierophant, Leave No Trace, Cyclopean Snare, Dark Heart of the Wood, Privileged Position

My Pick:

Which enchantment do we want in our deck? **Privileged Position** is very effective at what it does, but what it does is pretty narrow. I think it's a great sideboard card, but I find it a little disappointing maindeck. Strands, on the other hand, always makes the cut. It would still go well with that ephemeral **Dowsing Shaman**. It's another close call, but I just believe the Strands has more impact, more often.

My pick: Strands of Undeath

Pack 2, Pick 7: Barbarian Riftcutter, Courier Hawk, Ordrun Commando, Zephyr Spirit, Sell-Sword Brute, Vitu-Ghazi, the City-Tree, Suppression Field, Wizenod Snitches

My Pick:

Very, very nice. An endless supply of creatures to go with our control deck. A great pull this late into the draft.

My pick: Vitu-Ghazi, the City-Tree

Pack 2, Pick 8: Gaze of the Gorgon, Goblin Spelunkers, Gather Courage, Dromad Purebred, Grayscaled Gharial, Necromantic Thirst, Fiery Conclusion, Instill Furor

My Pick:

Gaze and Gather do roughly the same thing, except Gaze costs four and Gather costs... less.

My pick: Gather Courage

Pack 2, Pick 9: Convolute, Golgari Rot Farm, Dogpile, Sabertooth Alley-Cat, Gate Hound, Goliath Spider, Pariah's Shield

Boo, no **Dowsing Shaman**. However, yay, another bounce land. They really shouldn't go to 9th pick, but it's lovely to get all the same.

My pick: Golgari Rot Farm

Pack 2, Pick 10: Wojek Siren, Convolute, Sabertooth Alley Cat, Seismic Spike, Stone-Seeder Hierophant, Pariah's Shield

There's very little chance of playing the Siren, although it does have some sideboard merit. If a player wanted to defensive draft the **Convolute** here, there'd be no shame in that.

My pick: Wojek Siren

Pack 2, Pick 11: Induce Paranoia, Thoughtpicker Witch, Seismic Spike, Svogthos, the Restless Tomb, Duskmantle, House of Shadow

A nice gift with our City Tree and Evangel.

My pick: Thoughtpicker Witch

Pack 2, Pick 12: Smash, Goblin Fire Fiend, Blockbuster, Reroute

The **Smash** is pointless with our two Vitae. **Blockbuster** could *theoretically* have an impact against us. We're safe now, we don't need to first pick **To Arms!**

My pick: Blockbuster

Pack 2, Pick 13: Votary of the Conclave, Boros Recruit, Perilous Forays

I do so hope we don't have to play this.

My pick: Votary of the Conclave

Pack 2, Pick 14: Woodwraith Strangler, Stone-Seeder Hierophant

See above.

My pick: Woodwraith Strangler

Pack 2, Pick 15: Zephyr Spirit

We're short about 6 **Moldervine Cloaks** to make this viable.

My pick: Zephyr Spirit

Deck appraisal: Our mana is solid and we have good removal. Adding in more difficult-to-stop creatures, and maybe some cheaper guys as well, will give us a nice well-rounded concoction.

I'm always doing in-draft analysis like this. Online it's easier since it's much simpler to track your progress. In paper Magic drafts, take the time between packs to examine holes in your deck, so you don't need to worry too much with a difficult decision during actual picking time.

Pack 3

Pack 3, Pick 1: Wee Dragonauts, Skarrgan Pit-Skulk, Lionheart Maverick, Burning-Tree Bloodscale, Crystal Seer, Pyromatics, Orzhov Basilica, Steamcore Weird, Shrieking Grotesque, Castigate, Necromancer's Magemark, Drowned Rusalka, Belfry Spirit, Cryptwailing, Sanguine Praetor

[My Pick:](#)

Belfry Spirit and **Shrieking Grotesque** are a good start to the "adding quality creatures" plan. Grotesque is cheap and works well with our removal and **Strands of Undeath**. However, **Belfry Spirit** is just incredible. A lot of power in a difficult to stop package, and the price is right too. **House Guard** and **Thoughtpicker Witch** even give **Haunt** applications. This one is a no-brainer.

My pick: Belfry Spirit

Pack 3, Pick 2: Ghost Warden, Ghor-Clan Savage, Repeal, Scab-Clan Mauler, Izzet Boilerworks, Cry of Contrition, Beastmaster's Magemark, Izzet Chronarch, Sky rider Trainee, Gigadrowse, Izzet Guildmage, Predatory Focus, Hypervolt Grasp, Skarrgan Firebird

[My Pick:](#)

Firebird looks nice, but we're barely playing any Red at all. Casting it will be tough, buying it back practically impossible. Furthermore, with such a difficult casting cost, it might not even be possible to find two red on a turn where we can actually do damage to the opponent. These are just too many strikes against it. It's not a tragedy



though, **Ghor-Clan Savage** is very efficient beater. We can certainly get double Green easily enough, and a 5/6 will fit into this deck's style well. As opposed to the decks that don't like 5/6s. Which this one is not.

I took the 5/6.

My pick: **Ghor-Clan Savage**

Pack 3, Pick 3: **Mourning Thrull, Cry of Contrition, Tin Street Hooligan, Lionheart Maverick, Leap of Flame, Infiltrator's Magemark, Absolver Thrull, Scab-Clan Mauler, Gruul Turf, Scab-Clan Mauler*, To Arms!, Revenant Patriarch, Leyline of Lightning**

[My Pick:](#)

Gruul Turf had some appeal, but more high power creatures would be nice as well. The mana is set up, let's get the cards to cast already. In that vein, **Revenant Patriarch** looks promising. This guy/girl/ghoul seems to be quite underrated, offering attention-grabbing power and a moment's respite. It's a fine package, and it's the right grab.

My pick: **Revenant Patriarch**

Pack 3, Pick 4: **Burning-Tree Bloodscale, Cremate, Skarrgan Pit Skulk, Benediction of Moons, Tin Street Hooligan, Shrieking Grottesque, Necromancer's Magemark, Gruul Scrapper, Gruul Turf, Primeval Light, Exhumer Thrull, Earth Surge**

[My Pick:](#)

This one was a close call. I was staring at the **Exhumer Thrull** for a very long time. It's quite powerful and easy on color requirements. Unfortunately, we just added three five-mana cards to the deck, so mana curve concerns are starting to crop up. It still would have been the right call if there wasn't the excellent **Grottesque** in there. The 2/1 flier is cheap and efficient, and at this point, it fits our curve and color requirements perfectly.

My pick: **Shrieking Grottesque**

Pack 3, Pick 5: **Benediction of Moons, Silhana Ledgewalker, Mourning Thrull, Train of Thought, Restless Bones, Fencer's Magemark, Ghost Warden, Wild Cantor, Silhana Starfletcher, Orzhova, the Church of Deals, Leyline of the Meek**

[My Pick:](#)

It's nice to see that late **Starfletcher**. The color enabling is helpful, and she has decent defensive properties as well. **Mourning Thrull** is certainly cheap enough, but I'm just not a fan. I think the **Starfletcher** provides more life overall by blocking the 2/2s. The **Thrull** loses a lot of appeal in a controlling deck, especially with no way to pump it. Once again, the pinch of being short 6 **Moldervine Cloaks**.

My pick: **Silhana Starfletcher**

Pack 3, Pick 6: **Bloodscale Prowler, Runeboggle, Gruul Nodorog, Fencer's Magemark, Poisonbelly Ogre, Leap of Flame, Order of the Stars, Souls of the Faultless, Exhumer Thrull, Petrified Wood-Kin**

[My Pick:](#)

Wow and double wow. Not only does the **Thrull** provide a good body and card advantage on its own, we just finished adding another "comes into play" creature and another mana source! The perfect addition, and a real bonus as late as 6th pick.

My pick: **Exhumer Thrull**

Pack 3, Pick 7: **Castigate, Wild Cantor, Cremate, Gruul Nodorog, Guardian's Magemark, Gigadrowse, Drowned Rusalka, Feral Animist, Hatching Plans**

[My Pick:](#)

The **Animist** is ok, but by the time we can reliably cast it, the opponent will have lots of blockers and/or ping effects. **Castigate** may or may not make the maindeck, but at least we know we can cast it while it will still matter.

My pick: **Castigate**

Pack 3, Pick 8: **Withstand, Train of Thought, Wild Cantor, Poisonbelly Ogre, Guardian's Magemark, Crash Landing, Thunderheads, Quicken**

[My Pick:](#)

A nice, cheap trick that enhances our controlling/card advantage strategy. Easy grab.

My pick: **Withstand**

Pack 3, Pick 9: Skarrgan Pit-Skulk, Lionheart Maverick, Crystal Seer, Castigate, Necromancer's Magemark, Cryptwailing, Sanguine Praetor

There's zero chance the Praetor will make it in the final build. Mostly it's a card we just don't want to see on the other side of the table.

My pick: Sanguine Praetor

Pack 3, Pick 10: Cry of Contrition, Beastmaster's Magemark, Skyrider Trainee, Gigadrowse, Izzet Guildmage, Predatory Focus

That's an awful late Izzet Guildmage; seems almost criminal to give it the person we passed Peel from Reality to. If there were a more playable card for us here it would be taken, but as there isn't, an easy D-draft.

My pick: Izzet Guildmage

Pack 3, Pick 11: Cry of Contrition, Lionheart Maverick, Infiltrator's Magemark, Scab-Clan Mauler, Leyline of Lightning

Getting to the dregs now, but a small chance it could make the cut.

My pick: Scab-Clan Mauler

Pack 3, Pick 12: Cremate, Skarrgan Pit-Skulk, Benediction of Moons, Primeval Light

My pick: Cremate

Slight sideboard card and/or cantrip. After the two Sundering Vitae, Primeval Light has no appeal.

Pack 3, Pick 13: Benediction of Moons, Fencer's Magemark, Wild Cantor

My pick: Wild Cantor

Even with four colors, this would be a depressing inclusion.

Pack 3, Pick 14: Gruul Nodorog, Poisonbelly Ogre

Either one is mildly playable in the deck, but we do have an Evangel and Vitu-Ghazi already, so Poisonbelly Ogre graces the left.

My pick: Gruul Nodorog

Pack 3, Pick 15: Gigadrowse

Giga-last pick.

My pick: Gigadrowse

Draft analysis

Doing an analysis of the trends at the table is a productive exercise right before deck building (time permitting). Sometimes a gauge of the table will give you info that alters how you build your deck. Looking at the packs and our inevitable four-color deck, I think it's safe to say the draft was a bit random. Either people were switching colors or the packs were unusually dense in certain areas. I know this deck was pretty much on course, but other peoples' choices affected our own, to the rainbow creation we ended up with. That's just the nature of the beast; in a closed system like an 8-man draft, one person's decisions ripple across the table. What does that mean for us? Well, if everyone is spending turns trying to fix their colors, that gives us a little breathing room as well. Perhaps we can err on the slow side for this deck, should that option present itself.



Hmmm, looks like an error. The deck wants 15-16 lands. We'll say 16 since our color requirements are evenly divided and Vitu-Ghazi doesn't help in that regard. However, even with just 24 cards for the maindeck, I think we're short one quality inclusion. Looking back at the packs, I think a **Cry of Contrition** would have been fine to get, maybe even a **Skyrider Trainee**. Normally online it's a good idea to keep track of your playables. I was recording all the cards and picks, so there simply wasn't time to make a careful analysis of the deck-in-progress. I am new at the draft recording; I'll definitely try to improve that in the coming weeks.

But for now, what should the 24th card be? There are a few adequate options, like **Scab-Clan Mauler**, **Cremate**, **Shred Memory**, **Sundering Vitae**, and **Gruul Nodorog**. The Vitae is the "safe" card, being a nice out if the opponent uses an overpowered rare or uncommon (**Mark of Eviction**, **Sword of the Paruns**, etc.). **Cremate** and **Shred** are fine anti-ghost and anti-dredge cards, with a little utility thrown in. I threw out the Nodorog because its casting cost was just too high and the ability was way too inconsistent to either use and/or have an effect.

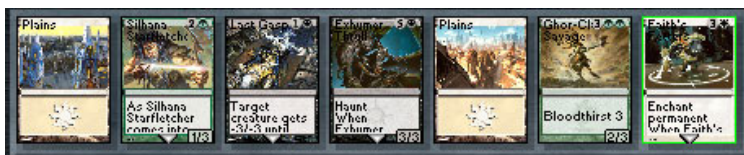
I ended up going with **Scab-Clan Mauler**, simply because I don't like having sideboard cards maindeck. Too often they're a pure mulligan, while the Mauler can usually do something. I wasn't super happy adding another Red card, but I figured by the time I found a source of Red mana, I could set up the board well enough to trigger **Bloodthirst**. Looking back, I think the Mauler was a mistake. Instead of the creature, it should have been **Shred Memory**. Finding a **Castigate**, **Selesnya Evangel**, or especially a **Last Gasp** seems very useful, even in the late game. I'm not sure why I didn't give **Shred Memory** more consideration, but it was definitely an error. As it turned out, I never drew the Mauler game 1 anyway, and it always got sided out. Sometimes you can get lucky like that.

So how did the games go?

Round 1-Grga. Limited Rating: 1814. Real name: Grgur. R/G/w

This has to be one of best parts of playing **Magic Online**. Here I am, sitting in a coffee shop in Seattle, and suddenly I'm locked in mortal combat with a genuinely nice fellow from Croatia. It's not just about talking with people halfway across the world, it's also about getting to interact over a common passion. Just an amazing opportunity.

After the pleasantries were exchanged, on the draw I look down at the following opener:



That's a tough keep, even on the draw. Nothing is castable, and the only land I can draw is a Green source to play my cards. The **Ghor-Clan Savage** and **Exhumer Thrull** look like they're going to be stuck in the hand for a while, even with all the colors. No good, gotta send it back.



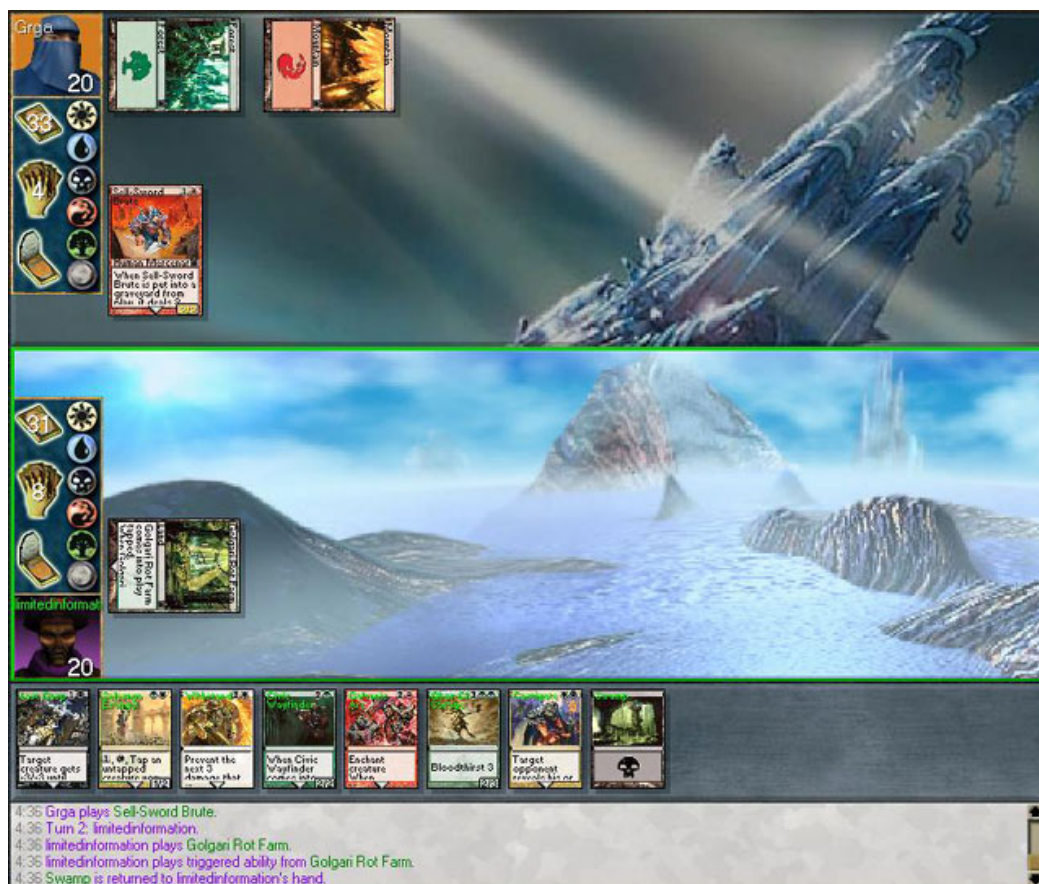
There are times where that looks like a mulligan, what with all White cards and no White producing lands. However I liked this hand. **Terrarion** kindly gives the double White for **Belfry Spirit**. That in turn provides color and boost for **Conclave Phalanx**, which in turn negates any kind of speedy start an opponent might have. **Faith's**

Fetters does similar work while we're getting the mana together. On the play it's a bit tougher, but drawing first, I think it's a safe keep.

Things went askew when Grgur played two **Tin Street Hooligans** on turns 2 and 3, blowing away the **Terrarion**. Drawing the card was nice, but that White mana would have been very nice. Luckily, I drew the perfect card a turn later: **Civic Wayfinder**. Now I had a creature to block one of Grgur's, plus the Plains to cast almost everything. Through the whole game, I just kept trading creatures and gaining life. Grgur did play **Pollenbright Wings** near the end, but I had the removal in hand. **Exhumer Thrull** and **Belfry Spirit** eventually made their appearances and the card advantage was just too much for the speedy Gruul deck to overcome.

Sideboard: Two **Tin Street Hooligans** requires an artifact check. If I had any Signets here, I would definitely take them out at this point. It seems my only artifact is the eminently destroyable **Terrarion**. The **Scab-Clan Mauler** seemed awful against a deck that required a lot of blocking, I switched it up for **Sundering Vitae**.

In the second game Grgur had to mulligan playing first, although he still came out well with **Sell-Sword Brute**. I again had the turn 2 Karoo, but this time with no one-drop and no mulligan, I was forced to discard. So with these eight cards, what's the right one to throw away?



It took me a bit of time, but I ultimately went with the **Galvanic Arc**. If I knew with certainty I would draw a Plains in the next turn, I could keep the Arc and find a Mountain. Otherwise, I was going to have to use a fixer to find a White source. I would then be stuck with an uncastable card in hand and one less way to find a Red source. All of this in addition to having to discard some other card of moderate value. I felt the hand was strong enough that I didn't need to try to get lucky, so I tossed the Arc, to the great amusement of my opponent. The next draw was a Plains, but I still believe the logic was sound.

It ended up not mattering as the card advantage spells worked a number on my Croatian friend. **Strands of Undeath** protected **Selesnya Evangel**, and **Withstand** protected me. A steady stream of tokens led to a gentle fungal demise.

Round 2 RobbyD. Limited Rating: 1788. R/U/W

Robby was quiet sort who gave off the impression of dissatisfaction with his deck, the reasons behind becoming apparent. My early **Skyknight Legionnaire** flew over Robby's **Junktroller** while I massed an army of saproling tokens courtesy of **Vitu-Ghazi**, **the City-Tree**. Robby played a **Train of Thought** at one point, but basically kept his hand full until turn 8 when down came **Razia**, **Boros Archangel**. It looked like Robby had built a classic combo draft deck, staying alive and drawing cards until the big threat came down. It's not a bad strategy at all. In this instance, due to Robby playing so little, I had a hand full of cards, one of which happened to be **Last Gasp**. A frowny face from Robby and I was up game 1.

Again, out went Mauler and in went Vitae. I appreciated the aggression of **Scab-Clan Mauler** against Robby's slow deck, but destroying a **Junktroller** or a Signet seemed equally worthwhile.

In the second game, Robby chose to draw first, which my bounce land deck certainly appreciated. A turn 4 Dimir-House Guard led into a pumped **Ghor-Clan Savage**. Robby attempted to stabilize off **Drift of Phantasms** and **Benevolent Ancestor**, but **Exhumer Thrull** was brutal, setting up two excellent returns with the **Dimir House Guard**. Robby did fight back a bit with fliers at the end, but he was too low in life and cards to make it a success.

Round 3 I offered to play, but MattenCarlos wanted to split, citing a wish to draft more. I couldn't argue with the logic. With that, my first LI draft came to a close.

Next week, *Dissension* gets some much-needed attention. Thanks for reading.

-Noah Weil

Limited information on ***Magic Online***



[Discuss](#) on the message boards



[Respond](#) via email



[Noah Weil](#) archive

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

© 1995-2007 Wizards of the Coast, Inc., a subsidiary of Hasbro, Inc. All Rights Reserved.
[Terms of Use](#) - [Privacy Statement](#)

