



Emperor Fun with MaGo

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Into the Aether
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Days of Emperor Fun II

I was really looking forward to Days of Emperor Fun II this past weekend. My minivan's transmission went belly up and, facing a rather large hit in order to get it rebuilt, I really needed to have some fun. Thankfully, Saturday night there were plenty of other players looking for the same thing. The 2/2/all Standard format seemed to shake things up a bit and led to quite a bit more interaction than the more typically played 1/1/1 format seems to bring. I managed to get in about a half-dozen emperor games and by-and-large enjoyed them all.

I decided this would be a good time to try out an Ink-Treader Nephilim deck. I used to have some fun around the game shop tables in multiplayer games with Radiate and Fire // Ice (using the Ice side of course), and I was itching to try the newest incarnation of it. Electrolyze made the update complete, nicely playing the role of Fire // Ice. When searching for another cantrip effect, I ran across Wildsize, which fit perfectly by being able to help my flankers in the middle of combat if necessary.



Of course, with all the card drawing I had to put Niv Mizzet in the deck. In fact, he insisted on calling this a "Niv Mizzet" deck with just a side order of Nephilim magic. You and I know how things really came together, but there's no need to ruffle a dragon's... er, scales. Here's the deck I initially decided to run.



Tread On Me v.1 (Standard, Emperor deck)

By Bennie Smith
 60 cards



2 <u>Island</u>	3 <u>Ink-Treader Nephilim</u>	4 <u>Compulsive Research</u>
1 <u>Mikokoro, Center of the Sea</u>	3 <u>Niv-Mizzet, the Firemind</u>	4 <u>Electrolyze</u>
2 <u>Mountain</u>		4 <u>Fellwar Stone</u>
4 <u>Selesnya Sanctuary</u>	6 creatures	2 <u>Hidetsugu's Second Rite</u>
4 <u>Shivan Reef</u>		3 <u>Moldervine Cloak</u>
1 <u>Skarrg, the Rage Pits</u>		4 <u>Repeal</u>
4 <u>Steam Vents</u>		3 <u>Shadow of Doubt</u>
1 <u>Sunhome, Fortress of the Legion</u>		4 <u>Spectral Searchlight</u>
2 <u>Temple Garden</u>		4 <u>Wildsize</u>
1 <u>Vitu-Ghazi, the City-Tree</u>		32 other spells
22 land		

Since I was running green already, I thought I'd run Moldervine Cloaks as a fine enhancement to my flankers' creatures, and with the card-drawing they would be easy to get back (though I would need to keep in mind not to deck myself between Dredge and the mad card-drawing). Spectral Searchlight played double duty, helping to fix my gross mana requirements or lending an extra mana hand to my flankers who might need it. Oh, and they can also sometimes ping my opponents at inopportune times.

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Overall, I was fairly happy with the deck... until GL2270 demonstrated a serious flaw in my plan.



When he tossed a [Char](#) at my Nephilim, my first thought was “Hm, isn't that going to kill him?” Then with horror I quickly realized that I would control the copies of [Char](#) that [Ink-Treader Nephilim](#) spawned, each hitting me for 2 points of damage. A quick count of the available creature targets around the board and I knew I was toast, literally (some of the creatures in play aren't in the view here because they wouldn't fit on the screen).

Check out my left flanker for this game: limitedinformation! Yes, the newest member of the weekly Featured writers on [magicthegathering.com](#), [Noah Weil](#) came out to get in a couple games of emperor. Like a lot of us who came out to play this weekend, he was new to the format. I tried to get him to send me his decklist to share, but he declined. “It was literally a five minute concoction,” he said. It looked like a nice Green/White deck and he was about to get medieval with [Tolsimir Wolfblood](#) when I had my run-in with a very painful stack.

Anyway, [Char](#) was some serious bad times for me. I debated on whether I should cut the Nephilim altogether, but that would require a major retooling of the deck and, honestly, I really wanted to play with Ink-Treader. Should I just ignore The Fear and keep going with the game plan?

The goblin with the funny hat was my compromise. [Hidetsugu's Second Rite](#) didn't seem to be doing anything but sit in my hand, so I cut those and one [Shadow of Doubt](#) to make room for my hero, [Goblin Flectomancer](#).

Tread On Me v.2 (Standard, Emperor deck)
By Bennie Smith
60 cards

2 Island	3 Goblin Flectomancer	4 Compulsive Research
1 Mikokoro, Center of the Sea	3 Ink-Treader Nephilim	4 Electrolyze
2 Mountain	3 Niv-Mizzet, the Firemind	4 Fellwar Stone
4 Selesnya Sanctuary	9 creatures	3 Moldervine Cloak
4 Shivan Reef		4 Repeal
1 Skarrg, the Rage Pits		2 Shadow of Doubt
4 Steam Vents		4 Spectral Searchlight
1 Sunhome, Fortress of the Legion		4 Wildsize
2 Temple Garden		29 other spells
1 Vitu-Ghazi, the City-Tree		
22 land		

On a side note, I'm curious if any of you have other approaches to [Ink-Treader Nephilim](#) for Standard? Obviously, there are some great “gold-matters” cards in *Dissension* that can make some spectacular plays in a Nephilim deck, but I'm curious about other approaches to a “dedicated” Nephilim multiplayer deck.

This time around the opposing emperor was none other than Doctor Wombat, A.K.A. MaGo himself! Yes, that's [Mark Gottlieb](#), former House of Cards columnist, current R&D developer and Rules Manager, come out to give emperor a whirl. He was sporting a pretty nice pinger deck that could probably pass muster as Tribal Wars Shaman deck.

PING Number (Standard, Emperor deck)
By Mark Gottlieb
60 cards

2 Boros Garrison	1 Arashi, the Sky Asunder	1 Chord of Calling
2 Forest	4 Boros Guildmage	4 Spectral Searchlight
3 Gruul Turf	3 Frostwielder	
4 Mountain	4 Ghost-Lit Raider	5 other spells
1 Plains	3 Ghost Warden	
3 Sacred Foundry	2 Gruul Guildmage	
1 Selesnya Sanctuary	3 Jiwari, the Earth Aflame	

1 Skarrg, the Rage Pits	1 Kumano, Master Yamabushi
4 Stomping Ground	1 Nullmage Shepherd
1 Sunhome, Fortress of the Legion	1 Orochi Eggwatcher
1 Temple Garden	4 Seedborn Muse
1 Vitu-Ghazi, the City-Tree	4 Viashino Fangtail
	31 creatures
24 land	

I was a little worried when I saw one of his flankers was my current arch-nemesis GL2270, but after a while it was apparent he was playing Green/White with no Chars. Whew!

One of my flankers, HurricaneKnapp, had a neat deck using Hunted Creatures. In this format, he can sidestep their drawback temporarily by giving the token creatures to the opposing Emperor. He followed up [Hunted Troll](#) with a [Hunted Dragon](#) next turn and attacked with both critters. I hit my Ink-Treader with [Wildsize](#) to boost both of his creatures and, combined with pings from Niv-Mizzet, it was enough to take down Doctor Wombat's flanker wimalli.

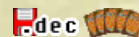


Of course, that left HurricaneKnapp exposed to the Hunted tokens and, at six life, Doctor Wombat made quick work of him. I fought off the tokens with Ink-Treader/[Electrolyze](#) shenanigans and pinged at Mark with Niv-Mizzet. Sadly, my other opponent ended the game soon thereafter with his [Heartbeat of Spring](#) combo deck. "Maga, Traitor to MaGo," Doctor Wombat lamented. Yeah, playing the reigning combo king of Standard flew a little in the face of this "fun" event – especially since flankers can target the emperor directly – but [Revenant](#) did show a little restraint in not executing the combo sooner.

Early in this game, I get a message from none other than Dr. Jay Moldenhauer-Salazar, my esteemed IntoTheEther predecessor and [magicthegathering.com](#) nomad. While he was out of town on business, the Master of Ceremonies for the first Days of Emperor Fun did find time to check in to say hi. Unfortunately, Jay didn't have time to wait around for the next emperor game, but I think he snagged a few pickup duels before he had to go.

For my next game, I decided to play my flanker deck.

Greater Good Beatdown (Standard, Emperor Flanker deck)



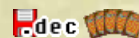
By Bennie Smith
60 cards

4 Brushland	4 Kami of Ancient Law	2 Congregation at Dawn
7 Forest	4 Llanowar Elves	4 Greater Good
1 Gruul Turf	4 Loxodon Hierarchy	3 Moldervine Cloak
1 Mountain	2 Selesnya Guildmage	9 other spells
1 Okina, Temple to the Grandfathers	1 Spelltite Enforcer	
3 Plains	1 Tolsimir Wolfblood	
1 Skarrg, the Rage Pits	4 Watchwolf	
4 Temple Garden	4 Weathered Wayfarer	
1 Vitu-Ghazi, the City-Tree	4 Yosei, the Morning Star	
	28 creatures	
23 land		

This was actually a decklist I had tested out briefly for Team Standard that performed decent enough, but was just not quite up to snuff for serious dueling. I thought it might work well in the slightly slower Emperor format. It was designed primarily for some fast beatdown, hopefully accentuated with [Moldervine Cloak](#). [Greater Good](#) was there primarily to draw some cards in response to creature removal (especially nice in conjunction with [Moldervine Cloak](#), netting 2 extra cards plus dredging back the Cloak itself), but of course you have to play Yosei too!

This time Doctor Wombat was my emperor, and he switched up decks.

Aura Goldfinger (Standard, emperor deck)



By Mark Gottlieb
60 cards

3 Boros Garrison	4 Auratouched Mage	4 Cloudstone Curio
4 Island	4 Kitsune Mystic	1 Confiscate
1 Izzet Boilerworks		2 Copy Enchantment
5 Plains	8 creatures	1 Faith's Fetters
1 Sacred Foundry		3 Flickerform
3 Selesnya Sanctuary		2 Flight of Fancy
1 Steam Vents		1 Followed Footsteps
1 Stomping Ground		2 Galvanic Arc
1 Temple Garden		2 Mark of Eviction
4 Tendo Ice Bridge		1 Moldervine Cloak
		4 Spectral Searchlight
		1 Spirit Link
		4 Three Dreams
24 land		28 other spells

Doctor Wombat: "Note that I don't think I've ever played Emperor before, so I was just taking a wild stab with my strategies! The Aura deck would have ideally given my flankers' creatures flying, first strike, and +3/+3 when I started moving Auras around, but the game didn't last nearly that long (and I was being heavily disrupted)."

Unfortunately for this game, opposing emperor HurricaneKnapp had taken a page from Two-Headed Giant Constructed's banned list by playing [Erayo, Soratami Ascendant](#).



Ironically, Mark himself [wrote back in September](#): "The first card to be honored with the distinction of being banned in 2HG is [Erayo, Soratami Ascendant](#). This little sucker is quite easy to flip when two players are casting enough cheap spells to make it happen, and once it has "ascended," it does double-duty by countering the first spell played on each turn by each player on the opposing team. Teams can essentially get "locked out" of the game on turn 2 or so with startling regularity. As 2HG is mainly a format for fun, we don't want to encourage turn-two locks."

Well, if it's easy to pull off in two-player teams, in three-player teams it is obviously a breeze! On top of that, Gekko450's flanker deck was apparently designed to mostly ignore the opposing flanker and just toss flame directly at the dome of the opposing emperor. If both opposing flankers utilized that strategy the game would be a short, brutal, and most un-fun affair.

Just like any "fun" format, a Spike approach can spoil it, but by and large, most people I had the privilege of playing with over the weekend brought decks to have fun with. I think the second Days of Emperor Fun II was a rousing success and I hope that people continue playing the format and having a good time with it. I know I will keep a 2/2/all emperor and flanker deck handy when I get the urge for something different.

One nice side benefit of Days of Emperor Fun II seemed to be a lot of "regular" games of emperor 1/1/1 being played. No matter what style of play you prefer, I think the Emperor format offers a nice change of pace.

Visions Release Champion – schtuffy Wins!

The *Visions* Release Championship was bumped back a week due to the *Dissension* prerelease tournaments, so it ran this past weekend. I tracked down the winner to share his winning decks and tell us a little bit about himself.

"My name is Eric Smith A.K.A. schtuffy online. I'm 20 years old, and I'm currently studying physics as an undergraduate student at Penn State University.

"I haven't played that many premier events online, but I have been fairly successful in the ones that I have played. I'm currently 7 for 12 in making Top 8s online. All of these events have been Limited, and most (all but 1) have been release events.

"I've been playing **Magic** since 1997, but I only started playing it regularly my senior year of high school. I have yet to play in a sanctioned tournament with paper cards, but I hope to remedy that this summer.

"Building your *Mirage-Visions* sealed deck is very dependant on what you open of course, but in general there are a few good things to note. The first is that most games will not go

into a complete stall in sealed. The format has good, maindeckable landwalkers in the common slots as well as flyers to break stalls.

“I also don't like splashing in the format, as there are a lot of cards that have double color costs, but it's usually a good idea to splash red for the Torch or Rock Slide that you opened, especially if you have a couple of color fixers. In my sealed pool I was lucky enough to be able to play a great deck with only two colors - this made my deck very consistent.

“I've only drafted MMV 3 times, so I don't feel all that qualified to comment on the format in particular. I do have an anecdote I'd like to add. In my draft, I first picked Enfeeblement in a weak pack and then was passed Volcanic Geyser, with a common missing. This meant to me that the guy on my right had probably taken a Torch. I went for the Geyser anyway (over Pacifism); red is just that good.”



Mirage-Visions Sealed Deck

By Schtuffy



Main Deck 40 cards		Sideboard
8 <u>Forest</u>	1 <u>Elven Cache</u>	1 <u>Azimaet Drake</u>
7 <u>Mountain</u>	1 <u>Fireblast</u>	1 <u>Basalt Golem</u>
1 <u>Mountain Valley</u>	1 <u>Flare</u>	1 <u>Betrayal</u>
	1 <u>Kaervek's Torch</u>	1 <u>Blistering Barrier</u>
16 land	1 <u>Simoon</u>	1 <u>Boomerang</u>
	1 <u>Spider Climb</u>	1 <u>Breathstealer</u>
1 <u>Burning Palm Efreet</u>	1 <u>Spitting Earth</u>	1 <u>Breezekeeper</u>
1 <u>Dwarven Nomad</u>		1 <u>Builder's Bane</u>
2 <u>Dwarven Vigilantes</u>	7 other spells	1 <u>Civic Guildmage</u>
1 <u>Jungle Wurm</u>		1 <u>Coercion</u>
1 <u>King Cheetah</u>		1 <u>Dark Privilege</u>
1 <u>Lichenthrope</u>		1 <u>Dazzling Beauty</u>
2 <u>Matopi Golem</u>		1 <u>Death Watch</u>
1 <u>Nettletooth Djinn</u>		1 <u>Dirtwater Wraith</u>
1 <u>Quirion Elves</u>		1 <u>Divine Offering</u>
1 <u>Quirion Ranger</u>		1 <u>Dormant Volcano</u>
1 <u>River Boa</u>		1 <u>Dream Fighter</u>
1 <u>Suq'Ata Lancer</u>		1 <u>Ebony Charm</u>
1 <u>Talruum Champion</u>		1 <u>Enfeeblement</u>
1 <u>Viashivan Dragon</u>		1 <u>Fallen Askari</u>
1 <u>Wall of Roots</u>		1 <u>Femeref Knight</u>
		1 <u>Femeref Scouts</u>
17 creatures		1 <u>Firebreathing</u>
		1 <u>Fire Diamond</u>
		1 <u>Grim Feast</u>
		1 <u>Harbor Guardian</u>
		1 <u>Hearth Charm</u>
		1 <u>Helm of Awakening</u>
		1 <u>Infantry Veteran</u>
		1 <u>Inspiration</u>
		1 <u>Jolt</u>
		1 <u>Jungle Basin</u>
		1 <u>Karoo</u>
		1 <u>Knight of Valor</u>
		1 <u>Man-o'-War</u>
		1 <u>Meddle</u>
		1 <u>Melesse Spirit</u>
		1 <u>Merfolk Raiders</u>
		1 <u>Mind Bend</u>
		1 <u>Mtenda Herder</u>
		1 <u>Mundungu</u>
		1 <u>Parapet</u>
		1 <u>Phyrexian Dreadnought</u>
		2 <u>Phyrexian Walker</u>
		1 <u>Power Sink</u>
		1 <u>Prismatic Boon</u>
		1 <u>Regeneration</u>

1	Relic Ward
1	Remedy
1	Resistance Fighter
1	Sandstorm
1	Sapphire Charm
1	Shadow Guildmage
1	Sisay's Ring
1	Taniwha
1	Tar Pit Warrior
1	Teremko Griffin
1	Undiscovered Paradise
1	Undo
1	Urborg Mindsucker
1	Vanishing
1	Village Elder
1	Vision Charm
1	Warrior's Honor
65 sideboard cards	

It's hard to argue with success, but would you have built this sealed pool differently? Comment in the forums!

Main Deck 40 cards		Sideboard
8	Mountain	1 Armorer Guildmage
9	Swamp	1 Binding Agony
17 land		1 Blistering Barrier
1	Armorer Guildmage	1 Crash of Rhinos
1	Crypt Rats	1 Dark Privilege
1	Dirtwater Wraith	1 Disempower
1	Igneous Golem	1 Dwarven Nomad
1	Necrosavant	1 Ersatz Gnomes
2	Python	1 Ivory Charm
1	Restless Dead	1 Jungle Troll
1	Sand Golem	1 Karoo Meerkat
1	Searing Spear Askari	1 Mire Shade
1	Sewer Rats	1 Mortal Wound
1	Talruum Minotaur	1 Phyrexian Walker
1	Viashino Warrior	1 Rampant Growth
13 creatures		1 Relentless Assault
		1 Righteous Aura
		1 Solfatara
		1 Song of Blood
		1 Tar Pit Warrior
		1 Urborg Mindsucker
		1 Wild Elephant
		22 sideboard cards

Correction!

In [last week's column](#) I listed pcjr's Prismatic deck and the sideboard got run into the rest of the deck. The last 15 cards (starting with [Acquire](#)) are actually his sideboard. Sorry about any confusion that may have caused.

Send Me Your Links!

I am collecting links to all things *Magic Online*. What web pages do you have bookmarked that specifically relate to *Magic Online*? Drop me an email or post it in the forums!

*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.*



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