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Snow Daze

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The Week That Was
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Normally by the time a Prerelease weekend ends, I'm seeing the new cards in my sleep. But before we dive into post-Prerelease discussion, some explaining is in order...

You see, I had a busy weekend. My good friend and former Neutral Ground columnist Toby Wachter was in town with his lovely girlfriend and I finally got to meet the much-ballyhooed – and rightfully so – Maureen. Ted Knutson also came up to the greater metropolitan area for the weekend for the New York **Magic** experience. He got to have sushi with Finkel but sadly there was no Toro and no Jon-drafting to be had. He did get to take part in a Neutral Ground session that served as an appetizer to the *Coldsnap* Midnight Prerelease, though.

Neither of us could play in Saturday's Prerelease because Mike Flores was hosting a Cliffside birthday party for his two-year old daughter that afternoon. On Saturday evening I had to demonstrate to Ted that the stories of Brook North and I being the regular beneficiaries of free adult beverages were not fabrications. It only happens when Brook and I go drinking together, and only in the most absurd fashion.

After consuming excellent Mexican food we all searched for a purveyor of adult beverages and found a small establishment of roughly 200 square feet. Things seemed normal enough and Brook and I believed we would finally escape an evening in each other's presence unscathed.

Then Shoeless Faux walked in with his stunning arm candy.

I call him that because he was...well...shoeless. Apparently one shoe was on a rooftop across the street and the other was sitting in traffic. He was also sporting a fauxhawk. We had all just come from a child's birthday party with a Hawaiian theme and were wearing appropriate shirts. Shoeless Faux was so taken by our fashion choices that he ordered the bartender to set up a row of small glasses and fill them with treacly beverages.

After two such rounds he ran out into the street and began to reenact the World Cup match from earlier in the day with his shoe as the ball and oncoming traffic as mid-fielders. Once he was out of shoes to kick around he returned, as did the small glasses along the bar.

Brook and I just laughed as Ted stammered in disbelief at the predicted free beverages. I also knew I would not be getting into Neutral Ground early on Sunday for the prerelease. My only experience with the cards over the weekend would be that aforementioned Midnight Prerelease.

Which is really too bad...

You see, I did not fare that well. I did open some juicy rares including **Sunscur**, **Garza Zol**, **Plague Queen**, and **Heidar, Rimewind Master** but I chose to play with the last two rares and not the first one. I was lucky enough to open seven snow lands in my colors; three Snow-covered Swamps, two Snow-Covered Islands, **Tresserhorn Sinks**, and **Boreal Shelf**. I even had a **Dark Depths** but chose not to play with it after someone pointed out that it was essentially a 30-mana creature. The two dual lands allowed me to splash **Garza Zol** and **Jotun Owl Keeper** and the abundance of snow allowed me to start multiple **Balduvian Frostwalkers**. No matter how much I like attacking with lands, the better play would have been to forgo some of the snow synergy and play the updated **Wrath of God**.

The deck I would play in hindsight would look something like this:



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Woulda Coulda Shoulda		
Coldsnap Prerelease, unplayed deck		
Main Deck 41 cards		
1 Boreal Shelf	1 Aurochs Herd	1 Gelid Shackles
8 Forest	2 Boreal Druid	1 Sound the Call
8 Plains	1 Boreal Griffin	1 Sunscur
17 lands	1 Jotun Owl Keeper	1 Surging Might
	1 Kjeldoran Gargoyle	4 other spells
	2 Martyr of Spores	
	1 Phyrexian Snowcrusher	
	1 Rimehorn Aurochs	

- 1 Ronom Hulk
- 1 Ronom Unicorn
- 3 Simian Brawler
- 1 Squall Drifter
- 3 Surging Sentinels
- 1 White Shield Crusader

20 creatures

Instead I played this:

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Coldsnap Midnight Prerelease

Main Deck
 40 cards

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Boreal Shelf 4 Island 1 Mountain 1 Plains 3 Snow-Covered Island 2 Snow-Covered Swamp 5 Swamp 1 Tresserhorn Sinks <hr/> 18 lands	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2 Balduvian Frostwaker 2 Disciple of Tevesh Szat 3 Drelnoch 1 Garza Zol, Plague Queen 1 Gutless Ghoul 1 Heidar, Rimewind Master 1 Jotun Owl Keeper 1 Krovikan Scoundrel 1 Phobian Phantasm 1 Phyrexian Snowcrusher 1 Ronom Serpent 1 Zombie Musher <hr/> 16 creatures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Forgotten Card 1 Grim Harvest 3 Rune Snag 1 Surging Aether <hr/> 6 other spells
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I just felt so lucky to have opened that many snow lands along with relevant cards like the Rimewind Master, the **Zombie Musher**, and the Frostwakers – which would actually have allowed me to attack with **Dark Depths**, albeit only for two – that I was reluctant to give up on it. There is no question in my mind that **Sunscour** is the absolute best rare you can hope to open in Sealed Deck. The Sealed Deck gods smiled on me and I shunned them for the prospect of attacking with a flying **Tresserhorn Sinks**.

I also think I should have played 18 lands and left either the flying Plague Queen or the Owl Keeper on the bench. *Ravnica* block has spoiled us in regard to mana. It is much tougher to splash in this new environment unless you have **Into the North** and on-color dual lands. The overall casting costs of the creatures – in keeping with the flavor of *Ice Age* – skew a tad higher than in recent sets and it is essential that you hit all your land drops. With a seven-mana spell like Garza Zol or **Sunscour** that will win you the game when it resolves, you really want to be playing 18 lands in Sealed.

Draft is going to be a slightly different story, probably requiring 17 lands over the popular 16 from *Ravnica* block. I have played 16 in this new format but only when I have multiple alternate mana sources such as

Boreal Druid and **Coldsteel Heart**.

If you have managed to do any drafts then you are already aware of how good Ripple is in this format. I have seen decks with seven **Surging Flames** and six **Surging Sentinels**. I won a match this week when I enchanted my two-drop Auroch with **Surging Might** and rippled into two more copies. My opponent had no answer to an 8-power trampler on his third turn and conceded.

Ripple is obviously a dedicated Limited mechanic. The only way I can see the ripple making a ripple in Constructed is by combining **Thrumming Stone** with the only spell you can have more than four copies of in your deck. For your amusement I present:

Ripple Rats

Main Deck
 60 cards

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 4 Blood Crypt 4 Bloodstained Mire 2 Mountain 4 Polluted Delta 8 Swamp <hr/> 22 lands	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 22 Relentless Rats <hr/> 22 creatures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 4 Chrome Mox 1 Mass Hysteria 4 Seething Song 3 Sensei's Divining Top 4 Thrumming Stone <hr/> 16 other spells
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The idea behind the deck is to get to three mana and 'ritual' out a **Thrumming Stone**. The following turn you should be able to put all your rats into play and set up enough extra ripples to float your **Mass Hysteria** to the top of your deck. From there it is a simple matter of flipping your Top and playing the **Mass Hysteria**. Add Haste and attack for around 400.

The list is just a first pass and is the product of Friday night conversations with Steve Sadin, Jon Fiorillo, Ted Knutson, and anyone else at our table. It is likely too slow to be a competitive Extended deck but I would not completely dismiss it. It does not seem radically worse than decks like Cephalid Breakfast or **Sutured Ghoul**. Feel free to hammer away at the numbers and the mana base and post your comments and ideas in the forums.

Other cards that got my inner throwback deckbuilder revving were **Tamanoa** and snow lands. I tried to abuse snow-covered lands with **Whiteout** when they first appeared, which would return the Instant to my hand from the graveyard if I sac'd a snow-covered land. At Pro Tour-Charleston I remember watching Ben Rubin's team playing **Searing Meditation** along with **Skullmead Cauldron** as an ersatz **Stormbind** and it inspired me to throw everything into the cauldron and see what it cooked down to.



Tamanoan Meditation Technique		
Main Deck 60 cards		
3 Arctic Flats	4 Loxodon Hierarch	4 Faith's Fetters
3 Highland Weald	4 Tamanoa	4 Into the North
2 Mouth of Ronom		2 Life from the Loam
1 Scrying Sheets	8 creatures	4 Lightning Helix
5 Snow-Covered Forest		4 Lightning Storm
7 Snow-Covered Mountain		4 Searing Meditation
5 Snow-Covered Plains		4 Skullmead Cauldron
26 lands		26 other spells

Life from the Loam replaces **Whiteout** as the card advantage engine. **Tamanoa** combos with **Searing Meditation** to turn all your lifegain into a cascade of damage. Every time you gain life it will trigger the Meditation, which if you pay 2 will trigger the **Tamanoa** which will in turn trigger the Meditation which if you pay 2...

I thought about playing **Firemane Angels** – which were in the Charleston deck that Rubin played – but without **Compulsive Research** to draw/discard them. Of course, I could dredge them with **Life from the Loam** but I wanted to build in some snow synergy and ended up not having room. **Tamanoa** turns your sometimes recursive **Mouth of Ronom** into an uncounterable **Ribbons of Night** that can be tutored up with **Into the North** or **Scrying Sheets** (which can also be tutored up with **Into the North**). Feel free to bang away at the decklist so they fit in.

The deck seems like it will be a lot of fun to play – if not play against – and I will certainly be giving it a whirl in the casual rooms on MTGO as soon as I can get my virtual mitts on a **Coldsnap** set. Again please feel free to mess around with this primordial build and post your thoughts in the forums.



WSOP Bracelet Applications Now Being Taken

Earlier this week **Magic** Invitationalist Dave Williams won his first World Series of Poker Bracelet in Las Vegas. I first met Dave years ago when he teamed with me and several other Neutral Ground guys for the Merchant Team Challenge at Worlds. Then a couple days later in Vegas my Monkey Dog teammate Eric Kesselman – we finished 14th at Pro Tour-New York – won the first bracelet of his poker career along with \$300,000.

Way to go guys!

I expect former teammates Dan Burdick and Brook North will be heading to Vegas shortly. I will be taking applications for teammates in the forums all week.

An Edict Has Been Issued

A new feature here in TWTW kicks off today. I will now be spoiling each month's new [Friday Night Magic](#) foil and it starts off with this little goodie.



I always get email from players looking for suggestions about how to improve as tournament players. I can tell you as a former store owner who ran FNM Sealed Deck tournaments before there was ever such an abbreviation that playing in these tournaments – whether they are Limited or Constructed – is the best way to get your feet wet playing competitive **Magic**. You learn the rules, the players, and the formats while trying to win cool foil promos. I have also seen the list of upcoming foils and I can tell you that you will want to be on top of your game in the coming months to win some of these.

Rewarding the Amateurs

Lost in the shuffle of the comings and goings on the Pro Tour are some of the one-of events Wizards of the Coast runs every year. One such event is the [Amateur Championships](#), coming up July 22 at San Diego Comic Con. On what may be the busiest day of the **Magic** calendar – with two Grand Prix, French Nationals, and *Coldsnap* Release Tournaments going on around the world – the amateurs gathered in California can get their hands on some sweet stuff.

First off is a shiny foil *Psychatog* for all participants. Who doesn't want a tricked-out version of the best creature ever made? Speaking of tricked out, the winner will receive a new laptop with *Magic Online* pre-installed. Second place will get a portable DVD player along with Season One of "The Family Guy", and all Top 8 members get "**Magic** cards for a year."

So if you don't have any lifetime Pro points and you're within driving distance of San Diego, what's stopping you? Even if you aren't an amateur anymore, there are side events running from Thursday through Sunday.

Firestarter: Deconstructing *Coldsnap* Decks

I need your help with the two decks I posted. How can we make the Ripple Rats deck more competitive? Does *Tamanoan* Meditation Technique have any hope of stressing out opponents? Go the forums and share your thoughts on these two decks and what we can do to tighten them up.



Brian David-Marshall has been involved in **Magic** since 1994 when he was violently shaken by someone searching for the game. He has organized tournaments, run a store, and is currently the Pro Tour Historian. His latest venture is Top8Magic.com, the publishing house that is releasing Michael J. Flores: Deckade.



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