

Home > Games > Magic > Magicthegathering.com > Columns



Iron Grip versus the Middle East

Noah Weil
 Limited Information
 Tuesday, July 18, 2006



Before we get started, I must confess: I haven't played with *Coldsnap* yet. A wedding forced a missed prerelease, and neither my playgroup nor *Magic Online* has integrated the new set yet. While *Coldsnap* will get its due scrutiny, this won't be the week for it. However, for all you themea'holics out there, *Mouth of Ronom* is good.

Two weeks ago we had a poll about what the readers wanted to see in LI. Here are the results:

How often should Limited Information do a walkthrough of some sort?		
Every 2-4 weeks	4047	79.0%
Every 6-8 weeks	1077	21.0%
Total	5124	100.0%

That last option was difficult to gauge, since that technique hasn't been used yet. However, the fact that it still received a decent percentage of the votes means it will definitely be utilized sooner or later. Draft, though, is the clear favorite.

Do you prefer your walkthroughs utilizing		
Draft with detailed pick explanations and small game walkthroughs.	3150	62.3%
Sealed deck, going over inclusions and exclusions with small game walkthroughs.	1093	21.6%
Highly detailed games using Limited decks.	817	16.1%
Total	5060	100.0%

That's what's known as a "landslide". If that's what the people want, that's certainly what they'll get. This week is a straight up RGD draft walkthrough. Since this column's inception piece, many people have graciously sent in their techniques for draft capture. The one I've found to be the most user-friendly and effective is Draft Cap, designed by Mark Schmit. I highly recommend using some device to review your past drafts, ideally with other players. It's excellent for your game. You can [download Draft Cap here](#). Let's get it started.

Pack 1 (Ravnica)

Pack 1, Pick 1: Goblin Spelunkers, Farseek, Woodwraith Strangler, Nightguard Patrol, Muddle the Mixture, Goblin Fire Fiend, Sundering Vitae, Leave No Trace, Snapping Drake, Gulgari Signet, Viashino Fangtail, Spectral Searchlight, Sunhome Enforcer, Grifter's Blade, Vinelasher Kudzu

My pick:

Things began on a complicated note, with multiple cards at very comparable power levels. After excluding the weakest cards, the choices were reduced to five:

- Snapping Drake
- Viashino Fangtail
- Spectral Searchlight
- Sunhome Enforcer
- Vinelasher Kudzu

While I have an awful lot of respect for *Sunhome Enforcer*, this was not the pack to take it. First of all, it's a two-color card. I like to hold off on making archetype declarations so soon. Even though either half could be splashed in some four-color build, *Sunhome Enforcer* does require plenty of Red mana to be truly vicious. If we are going dedicated Red, then I'd say the Fangtail is the better card of the two, although it is close. The clincher would be Fangtail needing one less color, and its ability being more relevant in *Ravnica* block. That's not to say Fangtail is the right pick, yet.

Spectral Searchlight would be a very interesting first pick, opening up any and all combinations a drafter could fancy. This early in the draft, it's a very safe pick with some degree of potential. It's a safe pick because it clearly goes into every single final deck. As potential, it can provide an access point to the most powerful cards imaginable, allowing the drafter a lot of flexibility in picks down the road. With all that said though, it's just too weak as a first pick from this particular pack. The Searchlight is a great enabler, but by taking the enabler we're

PRODUCTS

MAGIC ONLINE

2007 WORLDS

Worlds Recap

MESSAGE BOARDS

Magic General Forum

magicthegathering.com Forum

RULES

RULES

passing cards we'd actually want to be able to cast. It's hardly effective to have all the means to cast cards with nothing to actually play. In addition Searchlight, while a moderate damage source, is really more of an early-to-middle game card. For my first picks, I like to take cards that have impact at all stages of the game. While **Civic Wayfinder** is best early, a 2/2 and a card draw, even in the late game, makes it a quality first pick. Searchlight just doesn't offer this.

This is also the reason I discarded **Vinelasher Kudzu**. It's phenomenal early, but gets decidedly weaker as the game goes on. It's also enhanced by plentiful bounce lands, but as yet, we don't know if those are available. Again, it's a fine card, but not quite the best first pick out of this pack.

For me, this pick came down to either **Snapping Drake** or **Viashino Fangtail**. In *Ravnica* block, Blue and Red are my two favorite colors. Blue is generally stronger than Red, but like the classic Reese's analogy, they're killer together. Of these two cards, Fangtail is the more powerful card, which makes sense considering it requires more of a color commitment. The decision whether to play it safe or gamble a bit is a classic draft conundrum. I believe, in this block at least, a little risk is a good thing. I wouldn't look down on anyone who took **Snapping Drake** here, but for me, I like to start things off with power.



My pick: **Viashino Fangtail**

Pack 1, Pick 2: Dogpile, Civic Wayfinder, Votary of the Conclave, Tidewater Minion, Sadistic Augermage, Scatter the Seeds, Shred Memory, Island, Golgari Brownscale, Compulsive Research, Svogthos, the Restless Tomb, Chant of Vitu-Ghazi, Duskmantle, House of Shadow, Autochthon Wurm

My pick:

This one was pretty easy. **Civic Wayfinder** is a very fine card, but it's no **Compulsive Research**. I look forward to drafting Izzet whenever possible; this seemed like a good time to start. The presence of another quality Green card in the pack only cemented the decision.

My pick: **Compulsive Research**

Pack 1, Pick 3: Terrarion, Votary of the Conclave, Drift of Phantasms, Incite Hysteria, Scatter the Seeds, Rally the Righteous, Forest, Grayscaled Gharial, Elves of Deep Shadow, Conclave Equenaut, Carven Caryatid, Carrion Howler, Bloodletter Quill

My pick:

Now this pack had some interesting cards, and I note, upon reviewing this draft, that I have may have made an error. Definitely maybe, as it were. I'll just say right now I took the **Drift of Phantasms**, a card that fits very nicely with control/card advantage decks. Stay alive and ping, stay alive and draw cards; these are all positive formulae. It's just that **Scatter the Seeds** should have been a stronger consideration. I had, so far, been passed **Civic Wayfinder** and two Scatters. Is it possible the player on my right is not Green, and is it further possible that could lead into a Simic situation? That's quite possible, and if it's true, that's a good place to be. Izzet is good, IzzetGruuSim is even better. Some believe R/G/U to be the strongest archetype in *Ravnica* block. I don't know if that's true, but it's certainly a contender.

With the potential to create a strong R/G/U deck - and I'd prefer that over **Conclave Equenaut's** R/U/W - then I'd say Scatter is the pick. Drift is the safe pick, while Scatter could end up being a complete blank. That's the risk, but I think at this point, it was worth taking. What ended up happening was actually rather ironic, but we'll get to that in a bit.

My pick: **Drift of Phantasms**

Pack 1, Pick 4: Gaze of the Gorgon, Coalhauler Swine, Benevolent Ancestor, Surveilling Sprite, Necromantic Thirst, Perplex, Dryad's Caress, Brainspoil, Mark of Eviction, Drooling Groodion, Cleansing Beam, Searing Meditation

My pick:

I required a moment's pause, lest mine eyes deceived me, but really, that was a fourth pick **Mark of Eviction**. People on the backend know the havoc this innocuous-seeming card could create. Briefly, it's cheap as all get out, and continues to fit with the control/card advantage theme we're creating. The fact that it goes oh-so-nice on Izzet's "coming into play" creatures and Simic's grafty dudes is what we call sweet gravy.

My pick: **Mark of Eviction**

Pack 1, Pick 5: Wojek Siren, Convolute, Clinging Darkness, Bramble Elemental, Ordrun Commando, Caregiver, Drake Familiar, Thoughtpicker Witch, Auratouched Mage, Lore Broker, Hunted Dragon

My pick:

On color, the only choices are **Hunted Dragon** and **Lore Broker**. **Lore Broker** is pretty weak, fitting well only in a decking strategy, which this deck is certainly not. **Hunted Dragon**'s not bad *per se*, but its role is clearly that of a finisher. This draft is, at the moment, a control deck. That means we want an iron grip on the proceedings. The actual victory condition is almost incidental, be it **Wee Dragonauts**, **Torch Drake**, or **Rakdos Ickspitters**. **Hunted Dragon** does not let us maintain a firm hold on the game. Rather, it's like pouring hot butter all over the battlefield. A **Hunted Dragon** causes plenty of movement.

For the purposes of this pack, it's time to look at a third color. The **Brainspoil** and **Groodion** from the previous pack could indicate Black is open, and look, a **Clinging Darkness** to start down that path. As a cheap defensive card, **Clinging Darkness** even fits the themes. I still don't like it though; it's a weak card, especially with our other options. **Absolver Thrull**, their **Graft creatures** or **Azorius First Wing** all weaken **Cling** even further. It's the card to pick if we're dedicated to drafting R/B/U, but at this point, I can't imagine why we'd want to.

This pack has the better options of either **Bramble Elemental** or **Auratouched Mage**. Again, this could come down to personal preference; certainly our **Mark** now and potential **Ocular Halo** later make both cards good. **Auratouched Mage** is slightly easier on the mana, and **Bramble Elemental** is (at this point) more consistently powerful. My decider was that Green seems to be flowing right now, and White is all but dry. Regardless of archetype preferences, we should at least go with the colors that are actually being passed.

My pick: **Bramble Elemental**



Pack 1, Pick 6: Viashino Slasher, Golgari Rot Farm, Fists of Ironwood, War-Torch Goblin, Surge of Zeal, Gate Hound, Boros Signet, Recollect, Wojek Apothecary, Golgari Germination

My pick:

That's a very late **Golgari Rot Farm**, once again showing Green and Black are under-drafted. While the **Rot Farm** would be very likely to make the final build, regardless of what we choose for our third color, I don't believe it's the pick here. Instead, since we just finished picking up a **Mark of Eviction** and **Bramble Elemental**, **Fists of Ironwood** is the way to go. It works well with what we have so far and plays very nicely with **Graft creatures** down the road.

My pick: **Fists of Ironwood**

Pack 1, Pick 7: Terraformer, Gaze of the Gorgon, War-Torch Goblin, Boros Fury-Shield, Gate Hound, Lurking Informant, Sewerdeg, Mountain, Selesnya Sagittars

My pick:

Which Blue mana fixer will it be? **Terraformer** is better early as a **Gray Ogre** with a cheap activation cost. **Lurking Informant** is better late, where its activation cost won't be so damaging to development. Between **Compulsive Research** and **Bramble Elemental**, our deck is looking well suited to the later game. Thus, I went with the **Wizard** who plays better early. Since we're packing heavy Blue, double-Green, and double-Red, **Terraformer's** ability could definitely be relevant.

My pick: **Terraformer**

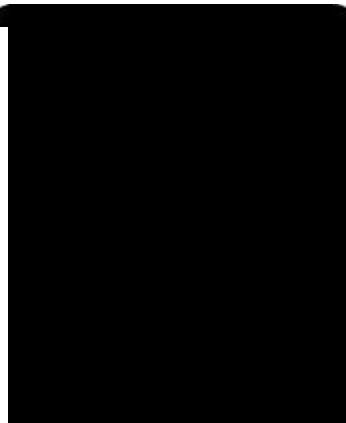
Pack 1, Pick 8: Barbarian Riftcutter, Screeching Griffin, Vedalken Entrancer, Sewerdeg, Smash, Flight of Fancy, Sell-Sword Brute, Leashling

My pick:

This pack had a number of choices, which is surprising for this late in the draft. Although we only had a single Red card up to this point, Red still seems like the best color to pair with Green and Blue. Consider that while we haven't been passed much Red, the person to our left has received even less. **Guildpact** is the best set for getting Red cards and it's being passed from the player who has essentially received nothing. Pairing the G/U with either White or Black makes no sense from a guild model. While it's possible the deck could end up four colors (**Terraformer** woot!), G/U/R should definitely be the main focus.

So I consider the Red cards in the pack still in contention.

Of those, **Riftcutter** can be removed from consideration. It's not unplayable, but in **Guildpact** alone, **Izzet Chronarch**, **Ghor-Clan Savage**, and **Streetbreaker Wurm** all look much better in the five spot. **Sell-Sword Brute** is a little more intriguing, less as a damage source, but rather as a way to slow their early rush. You could make an argument for **Entrancer**



for similar reasons, but in the end I went with **Flight of Fancy**, again as a boost for Bramble and Mark. Due to far different *Dissension* evaluations from the rest of the table, this ends up being the wrong pick. However, even disregarding what actually happens down the road, I think Brute is the slightly better grab. It gives my mana a little breathing room in regards to **Viashino Fangtail**, and it could boost up some Bloodthirst down the road. Alas, dreams of the perfect aura deck distracted. This time my pick was FoF.

My pick: **Flight of Fancy**

Pack 1, Pick 9: **Goblin Spelunkers**, **Nightguard Patrol**, **Muddle the Mixture**, **Goblin Fire Fiend**, **Sundering Vitae**, **Leave No Trace**, **Grifter's Blade**

This pack also made me regret passing the **Sell-Sword Brute**. **Sundering Vitae** would have been a nice pickup, but I couldn't let Spelunkers get past me. Potentially great with Bloodthirst and Graft, it was an easy snag.

My pick: **Goblin Spelunkers**

Pack 1, Pick 10: **Dogpile**, **Votary of the Conclave**, **Sadistic Augermage**, **Shred Memory**, **Svogthos, the Restless Tomb**, **Chant of Vitu-Ghazi**

Besides being slightly underrated, **Dogpile** was also the only card in my colors. With Fists and **Bramble Elemental**, it might even end up being a power card.

My pick: **Dogpile**

Pack 1, Pick 11: **Votary of the Conclave**, **Incite Hysteria**, **Rally the Righteous**, **Forest**, **Festival of the Guildpact**

On the off chance the deck morphs into a hyper-aggressive piece, **Incite** is the better pick. If you need another reason, it's also the card I'd least likely to see played against me.

My pick: **Incite Hysteria**

Pack 1, Pick 12: **Coalhauler Swine**, **Necromantic Thirst**, **Perplex**, **Dryad's Caress**

Hope we don't have to play this one. Still, giving the late Black cards may cement my left hand neighbor into avoiding Red and/or being nice to me with the dregs of *Guildpact*.

My pick: **Coalhauler Swine**

Pack 1, Pick 13: **Wojek Siren**, **Convolute**, **Caregiver**

A mildly playable thirteenth pick. Break out the streamers!

My pick: **Convolute**

Pack 1, Pick 14: **Gate Hound**, **Wojek Apothecary**

Did you know uncommons on *Magic Online* are typically worth 32 per tic?

My pick: **Wojek Apothecary**

Pack 1, Pick 15: **Gate Hound**

My pick: **Gate Hound**

Pack 2 (Guildpact)

Pack 2, Pick 1: **Bloodscale Prowler**, **Infiltrator's Magemark**, **Izzet Boilerworks**, **Withstand**, **Ostiary Thrull**, **Runeboggle**, **Mourning Thrull**, **Cry of Contrition**, **Tin Street Hooligan**, **Lionheart Maverick**, **Leap of Flame**, **Vedalken Plotter**, **Revenant Patriarch**, **Gelectrode**, **Stitch in Time**

[My pick:](#)

Right now, the deck looks decent, although the mana is a little shaky. Knowing that, the Boilerworks looks mighty tempting, but in the end I had to take **Gelectrode**. I love the card so. The fact we already have a pinger to accompany it only makes the card stronger.

My pick: **Gelectrode**



Pack 2, Pick 2: Izzet Signet, Orzhov Euthanist, Ghost Warden, Silhana Starfletcher, Pyromatics, Orzhov Basilica, Cry of Contrition, Beastmaster's Magemark, Izzet Chronarch, Skyrider Trainee, Gigadrowse, Drowned Rusalka, Predatory Focus, Spellthief Enforcer

[My pick:](#)

This pack is far more challenging. Reasonable picks include: [Izzet Signet](#), [Pyromatics](#), [Silhana Starfletcher](#), and [Izzet Chronarch](#). Two mana enablers and two card advantage Izzet specials. The first card I dismissed was [Izzet Chronarch](#). While it's excellent, we don't as yet have the cards to make it the ideal pick here. Only [Mark of Eviction](#) and [Compulsive Research](#) fit that bill. I can also cut [Izzet Signet](#) at this point. If you want a fixer, [Silhana Starfletcher](#) just does the job better.

The decision between [Pyromatics](#) and [Starfletcher](#) turned out to be very close. The red instant fits well with the pinger theme, is a card to help Chronarchs down the road, and is in general a high quality card. [Starfletcher](#) isn't explosive by itself, but it enables much smoother turns down the road. Ultimately, I went with the [Starfletcher](#). The mana was starting to become worrisome; picking a fixer here eased my mind considerably. In addition, its defensive properties work with out controlling deck, and it even carries Auras down the road. [Pyromatics](#) would be a very legitimate choice here, but on the assumption that our deck is about to get a boost in power, the means to cast those future cards wins out.

My pick: [Silhana Starfletcher](#)

Pack 2, Pick 3: Gruul Scrapper, Pyromatics, Infiltrator's Magemark, Absolver Thrull, Train of Thought, Beastmaster's Magemark, Wild Cantor, Poisonbelly Ogre, Guardian's Magemark, Crash Landing, Order of the Stars, Aetherplasm, Culling Sun

[My pick:](#)

As much as I love [Train of Thought](#), between [Compulsive Research](#) and [Flight of Fancy](#), we're doing alright in the card-draw department. The arguments for [Pyromatics](#) remain valid, and this time there's no mana fixer to tempt us away. If there was a [Gruul Turf](#) in the pack, it might have been close, but that wasn't an option this time. Wait though, [Wild Cantor](#) makes mana! Every mana!

My pick: [Pyromatics](#)

Pack 2, Pick 4: Leap of Flame, Benediction of Moons, Silhana Ledge-walker, Mourning Thrull, Train of Thought, Restless Bones, Orzhov Signet, Steamcore Weird, Shrieking Grot-sque, Orzhova, the Church of Deals, Skarrgan Skybreaker, Drowned Rusalka

[My pick:](#)

The decision of either [Steamcore Weird](#) or [Skarrgan Skybreaker](#) was actually fairly difficult. Everyone respects [Streamcore Weird](#), but the [Skybreaker](#) seems to fly under a lot of radars. This card is excellent, being one of the best late game cards a deck could hope for. [Bloodthirst](#) isn't even necessary, although clearly it helps. There was a fair amount of debate, but in the end I was just more interested in making it to the late game than dominating it. Those card advantage spells should help break open any kind of parity situation. In addition, [Steamcore's](#) two points plays well alongside [Fangtail](#) and [Gelectrode](#), working together to take down a bigger monster. It's not as splashy as the [Skybreaker](#), but [Steamcore](#) simply fit the deck better.

My pick: [Steamcore Weird](#)

Pack 2, Pick 5: Orzhov Basilica, Bloodscale Prowler, Ghost Warden, Fencer's Magemark, Skarrgan Pit-Skulk, Lionheart Maverick, Burning-Tree Bloodscale, Crystal Seer, Cryptwailing, Izzet Guildmage, Mizzium Transreliquat

[My pick:](#)

Those Basilicas are really flying around the table, perhaps indicating I didn't cut Red as well as I would have liked. Oh well, there's a more pressing decision at hand - another power versus consistency pick. Both [Bloodthirst](#) creatures are quite strong, whereas the [Guildmage](#) was simply a vanilla 2/2 for two. I ended up picking the [Guildmage](#), to make the mana and early game situation a little more bearable. However, looking back I believe the [Bloodscale Prowler](#) would have been the better pick. The mana for [Prowler](#) is almost as soft as the [Guildmage](#), but it enjoys far more board presence. It fits in particularly well with the pingers and [Fists of Ironwood](#), as well as interacting nicely with the Graft effects of [Dissension](#). Definitely an error but hey, you're not the only one learning from these walkthroughs.

My pick: [Izzet Guildmage](#)

Pack 2, Pick 6: Beastmaster's Magemark, Wild Cantor, Poisonbelly Ogre, Guardian's Magemark, Wee Dragonauts, Torch Drake, Absolver Thrull, Izzet Signet, Smogsteed Rider, Orzhova, the Church of Deals

[My pick:](#)

You could make an argument for a flier here, but I thought [Simic](#) would be flowing in the next pack. It's a powerful but expensive guild, and I wanted the mana to cast stuff. [Izzet Signet](#) just seemed so appropriate after an [Izzet Guildmage](#). Interestingly, I may have picked [Torch Drake](#) here if I had taken a [Bloodthirst](#) guy in the previous pack. The ripples of one pick always resonate for the rest of the draft. It makes the draft experience so delightfully challenging. Perhaps [Torch Drake](#) would have been the wrong pick though; having zero Signets and zero bounce

lands up to this point was a bit frightening. **Izzet Signet** does play very well with the deck, equating an extra point of damage off **Pyromatics**, even in the late game.

My pick: **Izzet Signet**

Pack 2, Pick 7: **Wee Dragonauts**, **Runeboggle**, **Gruul Nodorog**, **Fencer's Magemark**, **Poisonbelly Ogre**, **Gruul Turf**, **Ostiary Thrull**, **Souls of the Faultless**, **Exhumer Thrull**

My pick:

Oh happy day, a bounce land to call my own. That's an awfully late **Exhumer Thrull**, confirming the dearth of Black players, but it's far too late to dip my toe now. **Gruul Turf**, welcome home.

My pick: **Gruul Turf**

Pack 2, Pick 8: **Runeboggle**, **Gruul Nodorog**, **Fencer's Magemark**, **Benediction of Moons**, **Infiltrator's Magemark**, **Withstand**, **Schismotivate**, **Vedalken Plotter**

My pick:

I reflected, why are the bounce lands so ephemeral? Are the packs unusually light, or are the players simply taking them higher? If it's the latter, the bounce lands will continue to go missing. Well if we can't have our own, we may as well steal theirs. No lie, I knew for a fact **Vedalken Plotter** was going to be a starter, and furthermore, I was excited to have it!

My pick: **Vedalken Plotter**

Pack 2, Pick 9: **Withstand**, **Runeboggle**, **Cry of Contrition**, **Lionheart Maverick**, **Leap of Flame**, **Vedalken Plotter**, **Stitch in Time**

Two Plotters is possible, although it's unlikely to actually maindeck both. This pick was divided between the **Runeboggle** and **Stitch in Time**. While I like **Runeboggle** more than most, I took the **Stitch** here in case I needed a card to get lucky on. Should they need to get lucky, taking **Stitch in Time** removes them from the possibility. **Runeboggle** fits the same role actually, but having already passed a couple, I couldn't prevent my opponents the option of playing it. So, we grabbed the rare.

My pick: **Stitch in Time**

Pack 2, Pick 10: **Cry of Contrition**, **Beastmaster's Magemark**, **Skyrider Trainee**, **Gigadrowse**, **Predatory Focus**, **Drowned Rusalka**

There was next to zero chance of playing any of these, but of them, **Rusalka** had the greatest likelihood. Very improbable to start, but it does have some merit as a sideboard card against **Faith's Fetters/Plumes of Peace** decks.

My pick: **Drowned Rusalka**

Pack 2, Pick 11: **Infiltrator's Magemark**, **Poisonbelly Ogre**, **Guardian's Magemark**, **Crash Landing**, **Order of the Stars**

Now I know that **Infiltrator's Magemark** looks decent alongside all the Auras, but I really didn't think that capacity would come into play. I had, at this point, very few creatures worthy of being attackers, and lots of spells besides. It's still the correct pick, but it seemed if I actually ended up playing it, something had gone wrong.

My pick: **Infiltrator's Magemark**

Pack 2, Pick 12: **Leap of Flame**, **Benediction of Moons**, **Restless Bones**, **Orzhova**, **the Church of Deals**

Leap was *really* unlikely to be played main, but again, a card with a chance of being sideboard material.

My pick: **Leap of Flame**

Pack 2, Pick 13: **Lionheart Maverick**, **Crystal Seer**, **Cryptwailing**

Not impossible to run, but hopefully we won't have to.

My pick: **Crystal Seer**

Pack 2, Pick 14: **Poisonbelly Ogre**, **Guardian's Magemark**

I suppose the **Magemark** is slightly more dangerous.

My pick: **Guardian's Magemark**

Pack 2, Pick 15: Fencer's Magemark

My pick: Fencer's Magemark

Pack 3 (Dissension)

Pack 3, Pick 1: Carom, Rakdos Signet, Rakdos Ickspitter, Ogre Gatecrasher, Ocular Halo, Gobhobler Rats, Delirium Skeins, Sporeback Troll, Valor Made Real, Enigma Eidolon, Shielding Plax, Patagia Viper, Jagged Poppet, Squealing Devil, Cytoplast Root-Kin

My pick:

This pick was by far the most difficult and time-consuming of the draft, although clearly with some of them I should have taken longer. This one went to the flashing red screen, but I simply could not decide between **Cytoplast Root-Kin** and **Patagia Viper**. Both are four-power worth of creature with a bonus. The Root-Kin has a little more potential to do obscene things, but the Viper is certainly no slouch.

Which to pick: ground demon or flyer+? Up to this point I hadn't played with **Cytoplast Root-Kin**, although the one time it was played against me was absolutely devastating. This guy had out **Vigean Hydropon** and a bunch of Bloodthirsted men. **Cytoplast Root-Kin** was a very big nail in the coffin. I had also watched the card do some amazing things at Pro Tour: Charleston. Those experiences colored my view, and ultimately led to the wrong pick.

First of all, watching a card beat the crap out of somebody is valid, but it can be misleading. Any card has the potential to be a superstar, but that certainly doesn't mean every card is consistently good. Second, seeing a card work in Constructed makes absolutely no sense for draft. Have you watched **Early Harvest** do good things in *9th Edition* Limited lately? My limited experience with the card was a little more relevant, but even then, it doesn't correlate. My opponent already had **Graft** creatures and a bunch of Bloodthirst. **Graft** was still possible, but my Bloodthirst count was a big zero. **Guildpact** is done with; there's no more chance of any Gruul cards. So I'm favoring a card that works well with cards I *might* get and cards I definitely *won't* get. Doesn't sound too logical, does it?

Really, **Patagia Viper** is the pick here for two reasons. One is that it's far easier on the mana. While **Bramble Elemental** is going to be played, double Green is definitely going to be a pain. Second, **Patagia Viper** fits the deck better. The flying is nice, and more tokens work well with the pingers and **Dogpile**. Adding this up, means **Patagia Viper** is the right pick. No shame in a 4/4 for four of course, but the **Patagia Viper** just fits this deck better. Ah, hindsight.

My erroneous pick: Cytoplast Root-Kin

Pack 3, Pick 2: Entropic Eidolon, Cackling Flames, Rakdos Signet, Aurora Eidolon, Azorius Chancery, Verdant Eidolon, Vision Skeins, Coiling Oracle, Whiptail Moloch, Thrive, Haazda Exonerator, Hellhole Rats, Novijen, Heart of Progress, War's Toll

My pick:

Thankfully, this one was a bit simpler. Cheap, effective removal made it a no-brainer.

My pick: Cackling Flames

Pack 3, Pick 3: Kill-Suit Cultist, Azorius First-Wing, Simic Initiate, Vision Skeins, Riot Spikes, Rakdos Signet, Aurora Eidolon, Azorius Chancery, Verdant Eidolon, Assault Zeppelin, Psychotic Fury, Vigean Intuition, Skyscribing

My pick:

Another easy one. **Guildpact** had kind of let the deck down, so we were in need of more potent monsters. **Assault Zeppelin** fits this description perfectly.

My pick: Assault Zeppelin

Pack 3, Pick 4: Simic Growth Chamber, Azorius Signet, Simic Ragworm, Stealing Stance, Soulsworn Jury, Enemy of the Guildpact, Utvara Scalper, Thrive, Shielding Plax, Brain Pry, Might of the Nephilim, Stormscale Anarch

My pick:



Feast or famine. We've got a very desirable bounce land, an effective combat trick, another combative monster, and **Stormbind-in-a-box**. **Might of the Nephilim** is darn good, but it doesn't compare to the other choices. That Growth Chamber was very tempting, but I could not pass the rare. As above, I thought the deck was lacking in the power cards. At least at this point, I knew Red was going to be heavily supported, and the Anarch has the potential to absolutely dominate games. There are times when a 2/2 for four is too small for a speedy tempo match, but whenever you're at parity and get a chance to untap with it, **Stormscale Anarch** simply goes nuts on creatures and/or life totals. Frankly, I was surprised to find it this late.

My pick: **Stormscale Anarch**

Pack 3, Pick 5: **Street Savvy**, **Azorius First-Wing**, **Writ of Passage**, **Vesper Ghoul**, **Helium Squirter**, **Helium Squirter** (foil), **Carom**, **Entropic Eidolon**, **Utopia Sprawl**, **Kindle the Carnage**, **Haazda Shield Mate**

[My pick:](#)

If I had to see two **Helium Squirters**, why couldn't they be over two packs? As long as we have the Root-Kin, we may as well get some grafters to play with.

My pick: **Helium Squirter**

Pack 3, Pick 6: **Beacon Hawk**, **Overrule**, **Utvara Scalper**, **Soulsworn Jury**, **Ogre Gatecrasher**, **Ocular Halo**, **Aurora Eidolon**, **Bond of Agony**, **Stomp and Howl**, **Anthem of Rakdos**

[My pick:](#)

One more aura, and it's a good one. With defenders and tokens, Halo doesn't lack for targets. In addition, more cards in hand goes nicely with the Anarch we just picked up. **Ocular Halo** is a nice grab this late; hopefully a **Simic Ragworm** will table.

My pick: **Ocular Halo**

Pack 3, Pick 7: **Sandstorm Eidolon**, **Slaughterhouse Bouncer**, **Cytospawn Shambler**, **Enigma Eidolon**, **Valor Made Real**, **Nettling Curse**, **Kill-Suit Cultist**, **Ignorant Bliss**, **Ghost Quarter**

[My pick:](#)

My pick: **Ignorant Bliss**

Does **Ignorant Bliss** look insane compared to **Cytospawn Shambler**? Perhaps, but consider: I was woefully short on mana acceleration. I had **Stormscale Anarch**, a card that gets better the more lands you hold onto. I was loaded to the brim with four-casting cost cards already, making a seven mana creature seem rather greedy. Finally, **Izzet Guildmage** can copy it, and it duplicates a **Gelectrode** ping. I simply couldn't imagine a game where the Shambler would actually matter. It would either be uncastable or my creatures and card advantage spells would make it irrelevant. So, I took the cantrip instant, another way to get to the magic four mana spot.

Pack 3, Pick 8: **Whiptail Moloch**, **Writ of Passage**, **Haazda Exonerator**, **Delirium Skeins**, **Aurora Eidolon**, **Entropic Eidolon**, **Novijen**, **Heart of Progress**, **Supply // Demand**

[My pick:](#)

Two uncastable Eidolons, an uncastable split card and a land that, while it fits the colors, actually does nothing in this color-intensive deck. That's pretty much a blank pack, although again I took the card that had a teeny-tiny chance of making the final build.

My pick: **Novijen**, **Heart of Progress**

Pack 3, Pick 9: **Ogre Gatecrasher**, **Ocular Halo**, **Gobhobbler Rats**, **Delirium Skeins**, **Valor Made Real**, **Enigma Eidolon**, **Jagged Poppet**

A 9th pick **Ocular Halo**? That's very surprising for such a powerful card that's so easy on the mana. This pick could have been **Ogre Gatecrasher**, since a second Halo meant **Flight of Fancy** was pushed out, but Halo can be just unfair. I wanted that potential.

My pick: **Ocular Halo**

Pack 3, Pick 10: **Aurora Eidolon**, **Verdant Eidolon**, **Vision Skeins**, **Whiptail Moloch**, **Haazda Exonerator**, **Novijen**, **Heart of Progress**

Not a complicated pick, although I didn't expect "dirty verde" to make the final build.

My pick: **Verdant Eidolon**

Pack 3, Pick 11: **Kill-Suit Cultist**, **Vision Skeins**, **Aurora Eidolon**, **Vigean Intuition**, **Skyscribing**

You could D draft an **Aurora Eidolon** if you wanted, although the fact the multiple tabled indicates no one much cares about it. I just took the most playable uncommon, perhaps setting up good will ten drafts from now.

My pick: [Vigean Intuition](#)

Pack 3, Pick 12: [Steeling Stance](#), [Utvara Scalper](#), [Shielding Plax](#), [Brain Pry](#)

There was no way I was taking another creature enchantment here. [Utvara Scalper](#) was actually a great pull; an early game creature that wears [Ocular Halo](#) beautifully.

My pick: [Utvara Scalper](#)

Pack 3, Pick 13: [Street Savvy](#), [Writ of Passage](#), [Vesper Ghoul](#)

Goodwill only extends when there's an uncommon to draft. Besides, you've got to send the cards you want them to play with.

My pick: [Vesper Ghoul](#)

Pack 3, Pick 14: [Utvara Scalper](#), [Bond of Agony](#)

One Scalper is plenty, thank you very much


My pick: [Bond of Agony](#)

Pack 3, Pick 15: [Valor Made Real](#)

Doesn't anyone know this spell can cause multiple creatures to perish!?

My pick: [Valor Made Real](#)

Here's the final deck:

Limited Information RGD Draft 		
Main Deck 40 cards		Sideboard
4 Forest	1 Cackling Flames	1 Bond of Agony
1 Gruul Turf	1 Compulsive Research	1 Coalhauler Swine
5 Island	1 Fists of Ironwood	1 Convolute
6 Mountain	1 Ignorant Bliss	1 Crystal Seer
16 lands	1 Izzet Signet	1 Dogpile
	1 Mark of Eviction	1 Drowned Rusalka
	2 Ocular Halo	1 Fencer's Magemark
	1 Pyromatics	1 Flight of Fancy
1 Assault Zeppelin	9 other spells	1 Gate Hound
1 Bramble Elemental		1 Guardian's Magemark
1 Cytoplast Root-Kin		1 Incite Hysteria
1 Drift of Phantasms		1 Infiltrator's Magemark
1 Gelectrode		1 Leap of Flame
1 Goblin Spelunkers		1 Novijen, Heart of Progress
1 Helium Squirter		1 Stitch in Time
1 Izzet Guildmage		1 Valor Made Real
1 Silhana Starfletcher		1 Verdant Eidolon
1 Steamcore Weird		1 Vesper Ghoul
1 Stormscale Anarch		1 Vigean Intuition
1 Terraformer		1 Wojek Apothecary
1 Utvara Scalper		
1 Vedalken Plotter		
1 Viashino Fangtail		
15 creatures		20 sideboard cards

Overall, I was disappointed. First of all, there were some mistakes in the draft. Then the packs had the annoying habit of being either full of picks or completely lacking them. The final build is a deck that had some power, some card advantage, some evasion, but not enough in any one category. The mana issues in particular were unfortunate, especially the two double-Green spells in what turned out to be my lightest color. On a good day this deck could win, it just wasn't a build I was excited about. That [Drift of Phantasms](#) from way back when turned out to be the right card; I was very happy to have a little early game defense while I tried to put the mana together.

Round 1 "Ostracize" Limited Rating: 1814. Real name: (see below)

If the readers would oblige me, I'd like to take this time to relate a story that took place a number of years ago. I promise this does relate.

In 1999, two other Minnesota players and I qualified for and attended Pro Tour--London (Urza's Block booster draft). Of the three of us, only Ken Bearl managed to make Day 2. Now while Ken is probably worth his own column on magicthegathering.com, he's not the subject of this particular story. If you'd like to learn more about "The Bearl", [you can click here](#). The information is completely accurate, although I must say that picture makes him look awfully crotchety.

Anyway, Ken was the sole competitor on Day 2. The other Minnesota player that weekend was a man named Jason Webster, a good friend and a fine player. We were cheering on Ken for a while, but after he cast Steam Bath[sic] during his opponent's attack step, at the Pro Tour, we decided to go off and fend for ourselves. Luckily for us, there was a Team Sealed event just about to start. Unfortunately we were short one player. We wanted to play as "two men and a bye", but the tournament official told us, laughingly, that if we were to make the final rounds' draft, we'd certainly need a third person to play with.

Time was running out on registration; we needed a third ASAP. Looking around the room for someone, anyone really, we saw a very young man looking particularly waifish and woebegone. We introduced ourselves and told him of our plight. He told us, in excellent English, that his name was Uri, he was from Israel, and he'd love to join us, although we'd probably need to guide him on deck construction.

So was born the blinding presence of Team Uri. And wouldn't you know it, we opened strong cards and played well together. Uri actually forgot to show up for one of the rounds, earning a sarcastic תודה ("todah") from us, despite all that, we ended up winning the tournament anyway. We all warmly shook hands and went our separate ways.

Jason Webster retired from professional **Magic**, started a family, and bought a store, Dreamers Games. I of course continued to play, and Uri Peleg, perhaps inspired by our victory team victory, went on to win Israeli Nationals. Three times.



Uri Peleg, Baruchi Kimchi and Ayal Hassidim from 2000 World Championship

So back in the present, here I am playing Ostracize, A.K.A. Uri Peleg. This is quite an extraordinary set of circumstances. First of all, I'm playing a gentleman from Israel, thousands and thousands of miles away. Perhaps our modern, globalized, internet culture makes that passé, but I'm still impressed. Further, and this is a rarity I assure you, I know this Israeli! There might be three people in Israel whom I could say I've spoken with, and here's one again. And wait, we're interacting over **Magic**, a passion we continue to share, regardless of language or hemisphere. Finally, Uri was a guy I met and played with over 7 years ago, and he's still playing **Magic**! So am I! This is some game.

Game 1: Uri was playing a five color special, with a lot of signets and bounce lands. My little **Vedalken Plotter** ended up being the MVP this game, stealing a crucial bounce land off Uri's diverse assortment. His draw was awfully slow as well; **Utvara Scalper** did at least 6 points. The big move from this end was playing **Ocular Halo** on **Bramble Elemental**. Not only did that put a couple of tokens into play, but thanks to the **Azorius Chancery** I stole, I could also give it vigilance! Swift beats commenced.

In the second game, his deck came out far more efficiently. I was stuck on four mana for far too long when I desperately needed five. His **Spectral Searchlight**, which must have been a heady fifth pick for him, was hurting me and helping Uri perfectly. While I was trying to hold on as best as possible, Uri played **Coiling Oracle** into **Auratouched Mage**. The Mage fetched out **Moldervine Cloak** and things started to look quite dire. An **Ogre Savant** from Uri sealed up the game.



At this point, I was feeling the pinch of missing out on a **Sundering Vitae** or **Stomp and Howl**. These are the exact kinds of decks I like to have a **Disenchant**-type effect waiting in the sideboard for, but in this draft, that option didn't materialize. The third game had both of us drawing all our colors, which if you're wondering, favors a five color deck over a three. Uri again played the **Auratouched Mage**. Forced into an unpleasant position, I cast **Cackling Flames** on the Mage in response to the trigger. That meant that the Cloak would go to his hand instead of in play, barely an answer, but it was all I had available. It did let me attack with some guys, but the real hope was that Uri was simply out of creatures to play. That plan was quickly dashed when Uri played **Coiling Oracle** into a **Dimir House Guard**. If you'd like to, take a moment to review in the decklist which cards of mine handle a 5/6 Regenerating Fear creature. That didn't take very long. A last ditch **Stormscale Anarch** was my last chance, and that chance involved some very lucky discards. Alas, Uri had the **Seal of Fire** and it wrapped up the game and the match. We wished each other good luck in future events and went our separate ways.

While in no way could I be accused of enjoying a loss, this one was merely bittersweet. My tournament was over, but I learned some useful lessons and got to reconnect with an old acquaintance. That's quite a range of experiences over a little online draft.

That's all we've got this time, so thanks for reading.

This is some game.

-Noah Weil



[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](#)

