

Home > Games > Magic > Magicthegathering.com > Columns

# Before the Party Started

Mike Flores  
Swimming With Sharks  
Thursday, August 17, 2006



No surprises: There have always been Black/Red decks.

I sometimes like to talk about how I was first seduced by the addictive hook of deck design by the card **Kird Ape**, that the Red one-drop that loves a Forest turned on a switch that had me - for the past dozen years or more - searching for the secret pass codes and cheats that allow you to navigate the backwater paths of the **Magic** universe (don't get me started on my 1994 first viewing of **Magical Hack**)... But really, B/R is - and always has been - even more obvious than G/R even, when a stamp reading "Play. Me. In. Your. Green. Deck." is printed on your favorite Red one-drop.

Black. Red. B/R. These are the bad boy colors. They are the wow that makes Timmy want to grow up to be **Lord of the Pit**, crapping on the little people with **Flashfires** (have you *seen Flashfires?*) on the way up his curve. Black. Red. These are the colors of destruction, of breaking things. The synergy between the two was obvious from the outset because - twelve years and more before the **Dissension** printing of **Wrecking Ball** - we all already knew that Black and Red were the colors of wrecking *stuff*. There have always been B/R decks because they existed in our imaginations from our first glances of **Terror** and **Lightning Bolt** in our first booster packs, our dreams and fantasies of violence and annihilation long - or at least weeks (days?) - before we realized one might want to do something, I don't know, **Blue**.



My earliest B/R decks joined the colors in question at a hip called land destruction, in a time when you - believe it or not - could play *four copies* of **Black Vise** in Standard (then Type II). I am not, nor was I then, a collector of out of print cards, but even in-print sets in the mid-1990s offered more than enough possibilities for a €€ 75 (or so)-card B/R land destruction deck. **Fissure** and **Blight**... **Stone Rain** and **Icequake**... These were cards that, when played together, would make the already devastating **Black Vise** really, *really*, hard to beat. A manascrewed opponent would have fewer resources than ever to play out his hand, making the **Vise** - **Vises** really - all the more dangerous (they were already plenty dangerous). You see that even in the low tech mid-1990s, the parties attended by B/R decks were about one-sided fun only. While it may be silly to talk about 75 or more cards in our early decks (especially as we adhered to strict 20 land guidelines, and basic lands for the most part), the beauty of B/R was that **Strip Mine** was essentially a "spell" slot that could drive the mana count up to 24 without a lot of additional coaxing... Thank **Goð** Rakdos.

Now MaRo likes to write about what the two member colors of a Guild actually have in common. In the case of my mid-1990s B/R decks, land destruction gave way to "disruption" in general (and for certain the then-not-restricted **Hymn to Tourach**), especially when **Black Vise** was put on the Restricted List. Anyway, players were starting to get wise on the **Land Taxes**. **Lightning Bolt** aimed at **Mishra's Factory** was a favorite at the time because 1) I still got to kill some guy, and 2) I was killing a land anyway (awesome). However at the same time actual Pros were finding better, tighter, synergies between the colors, the most important of which was specifically to kill white.

PRODUCTS

MAGIC ONLINE

MAGIC The Gathering ONLINE

MAGIC WORLDS

2007 World Championships Video Coverage

MESSAGE BOARDS

Magic General Forum

magicthegathering.com Forum

RULES

RULES

Bentley Necro, July '96	
Main Deck 60 cards	Sideboard
2 <b>City of Brass</b>	1 <b>Black Vise</b>
4 <b>Strip Mine</b>	4 <b>Dark Ritual</b>
4 <b>Sulfurous Springs</b>	1 <b>Dystopia</b>
14 <b>Swamp</b>	1 <b>Fireball</b>
24 lands	4 <b>Hymn to Tourach</b>
	4 <b>Icequake</b>
	1 <b>Ivory Tower</b>
4 <b>Black Knight</b>	4 <b>Lightning Bolt</b>
4 <b>Hypnotic Specter</b>	3 <b>Necropotence</b>
4 <b>Order of the Ebon Hand</b>	1 <b>Zuran Orb</b>
12 creatures	24 other spells
	1 <b>Contagion</b>
	2 <b>Dance of the Dead</b>
	2 <b>Dark Banishing</b>
	3 <b>Dystopia</b>
	1 <b>Infernal Darkness</b>
	1 <b>Jester's Cap</b>
	2 <b>Serrated Arrows</b>
	1 <b>Shatter</b>
	2 <b>Stromgald Cabal</b>
	15 sideboard cards

Dennis Bentley's B/R Necro from the 1996 U.S. National Championship was a key blow in the war of glory for B/R, and more importantly, a hateful blow against white. You will notice that Bentley played both **Black Knight** and **Order of the Ebon Hand** - two different Protection from white creatures - which was not an unusual decision for any **Necropotence** decks of the era (which often played ten or more copies). However the innovation presented by combining Black with Red specifically was to ensure B/R could defeat **White Knight**, **Order of the White Shield**, and other such creatures which came packaged with the ability "Protection from Black." Bentley's deck was particularly hateful towards white in that it played **Dystopia** main deck! And not only did Dennis finish his play set with the sideboard... but he added **Stromgald Cabal** too. Not a chance for white.

### How did Bentley Necro work?

As with all **Necropotence** decks we will discuss, Bentley used the most powerful draw engine in the history of the game to, simply, draw more cards than his opponent and overwhelm him with efficient threats. The best **Necropotence** decks tend to focus on one-and two-mana spells so as to most efficiently deploy an overwhelming number of threats each turn, maximizing their mana usage rather than allowing the opponent to essentially keep pace with one-for-one solutions. Traditionally **Necropotence** decks, and especially decks of Bentley's era, used **Nevinyrral's Disk** to manage the board *and* remove **Necropotence** from play, **Drain Life** as a two-in-one board control solution and pint of gasoline for the old Necro tank, and the then-restricted Artifacts **Ivory Tower** and **Zuran Orb**, again, to supplement their life gain. Otherwise **Necropotence** decks until at least Pro Tour Rome in 1998 – and realistically until Pro Tour Chicago a year later – played as straightforward aggressive and disruptive decks, just with seven cards in hand. There is a great deal of **Necropotence** strategy and lore – truly there is no other card or strategy so closely examined nor expansively developed in all of **Magic** – that would differentiate a truly great **Necropotence** player like Erik Lauer from a rather mediocre one, but the fact of the matter is that the card was so powerful and the amount of advantage so dominating that even repeated slips, hiccups, blunders, and other errors could not always keep a player from, say, the finals of the World Championships.



Dennis's U.S. Nationals version of **Necropotence** was a forerunner of the so-called "Suicide" Necro school. He played no **Nevinyrral's Disk**, and therefore had no way to destroy his own **Necropotence** (a maverick decision in that misguided time, especially given the popularity of the macro archetype).

Instead of focusing on board control as did many other **Necropotence** decks, Bentley played quick beatdown (turn 1 **Hypnotic Specter** or a Knight "bear" curve) and used **Necropotence** to fuel either endgame burn or disruption (**Hymn**, **Icequake**, and **Strip Mine**), all of which would ultimately allow him to maintain an obvious advantage afforded by his quick, if small, creatures at a time when opposing players were still willing to dish out four or five mana for **Erhnam Djinn** and **Serra Angel**.

The main deck **Dystopia** assisted in fighting **Land Tax** in addition to White (and Green) creatures in general. When asked how he did so well with such an unconventional version, with no **Drain Life** even, and only **Ivory Tower** to gain life, Bentley commented that "If I can draw eight more cards than my opponent and still lose, I deserve to."

Tom Champheng 1996 World Champion		
Main Deck 60 cards		Sideboard
1 <b>Kjeldoran Outpost</b>	1 <b>Armageddon</b>	2 <b>Arenson's Aura</b>
4 <b>Mishra's Factory</b>	1 <b>Balance</b>	1 <b>Black Vise</b>
15 <b>Plains</b>	4 <b>Disenchant</b>	4 <b>Divine Offering</b>
4 <b>Strip Mine</b>	1 <b>Land Tax</b>	1 <b>Energy Storm</b>
24 lands	1 <b>Lodestone Bauble</b>	1 <b>Exile</b>
	1 <b>Reinforcements</b>	1 <b>Kjeldoran Outpost</b>
	1 <b>Reprisal</b>	1 <b>Reprisal</b>
4 <b>Order of Leitbur</b>	1 <b>Sleight of Mind</b>	2 <b>Serrated Arrows</b>
4 <b>Order of the White Shield</b>	4 <b>Swords to Plowshares</b>	1 <b>Sleight of Mind</b>
2 <b>Phyrexian War Beast</b>	1 <b>Zuran Orb</b>	1 <b>Spirit Link</b>
4 <b>Savannah Lions</b>	16 other spells	15 sideboard cards
2 <b>Serra Angel</b>		
4 <b>White Knight</b>		
20 creatures		

You will see the 1996 World Champion was geared up to beat the destructive, beloved, Black decks. Now white was setting up to beat both Black and Red with **Sleight of Mind** (Champheng could theoretically turn a **White Knight**, functionally, into a **Silver Knight**)... However in this case white, um, *forgot* to play **Adarkar Wastes**, and **Sleight of Mind** was just a dead card, meaning that the Red removal would - for the tournament at hand, at least - would continue to be useful in taking out [usually] difficult-to-kill threats. However the presence of this kind of

strategy, even when implemented in a hilariously botched way, necessarily implied the need for Black and Red to link elbows on their hop and skip through the tournament universe, in their goal to extirpate white.

Pikula's Hybrid NecroDeck, November 24th 1996		
<b>Main Deck</b> 60 cards		<b>Sideboard</b>
1 City of Brass 1 Lava Tubes 4 Mountain 1 Strip Mine 4 Sulfurous Springs 12 Swamp <hr/> 23 lands  4 Black Knight 4 Hypnotic Specter 2 Knight of Stromgald 4 Order of the Ebon Hand <hr/> 14 creatures	1 Black Vise 4 Dark Ritual 3 Drain Life 1 Fireball 1 Hymn to Tourach 3 Incinerate 4 Lightning Bolt 3 Necropotence 2 Shatter 1 Zuran Orb <hr/> 23 other spells	4 Anarchy 1 Contagion 4 Dystopia 1 Infernal Darkness 1 Ivory Tower 1 Necropotence 2 Pyroblast 1 Shatter <hr/> 15 sideboard cards



Probably the next important finish by a B/R deck was Chris Pikula's Top 4 at Pro Tour--Dallas in November of 1996. Worth Wollpert scored a Top 16, and I... um... *Is 134th a good first Pro Tour?*

While it shares the same colors as Bentley's deck, Chris's Standard – despite sharing a very similar card pool – was bound by very different limitations. The most important was that *Hymn to Tourach* received a much-needed restriction. As *Stupor*, a poor replacement Hymn by all accounts, could not “protect” a *Nevinyrral's Disk* the same way that the *Fallen Empires* bad boy could, Chris elected not to play it, instead opting, again, for Red removal in lieu of *Magic's* then-premiere combo-breaker.

An interesting decision by Pikula in this very “Suicide”-oriented deck, was to move *Ivory Tower* to the sideboard: “... against most decks, the Tower would simply get blown up before I gained any life. I had no artifacts, not even *Factories* to suck up *Disenchants*. *Black Vise* does its damage before the game starts, and, as we say on the Pro Tour, '*Zuran Orb* is a sorcery.'”

Because he didn't play *Nevinyrral's Disk*, Pikula needed an out against *Circle of Protection: Red* and other dangerous permanents [that could not be, say, *Bolted* or *Shattered*]. Some players ran *Gloom* at the time, but of

course *Gloom* is a potential disaster against decks like *Champheng's* (provided they remember the *Adarkar Wastes*). Chris ran *Anarchy*, a mass murderer of white if ever there was one, and also a solution to resolved White enchantments, viz. *Karma*.

### How did PikulaPotence work?

In addition to the conventional aggressive / disruptive plan we talked about initially, *PikulaPotence*, sometimes called “The Midwest Deck,” used *Necropotence* in much the same way that a *Howling Mine* burn deck uses its artifact draw engine to supply its deadly fire. In this deck, *Necropotence* could be leveraged to over-draw into burn cards that could either be aimed at pesky creatures, or more likely, the opponent's face... While still ending a turn at seven cards in hand.

The chief distinctions of the *Pikula* deck were a more tightly tuned configuration than the *Bentley* deck (even when we consider the differing card pools), as Chris was better prepared to deal with opposing *Necropotence* decks both due to his burn *and* because with more threats, he was less likely to end up exhausted in a Necro-on-Necro duel; more specific attention to the individual numbers, details, and inclusions / exclusions; and most importantly, that trademark *Pikula* ire (of course) that has continued to ruin players' days with *Hymn to Tourach*... as recently as last year's *Grand Prix--Philadelphia*.

Much has been said about the genius of *LauerPotence*, the deck *Grand Wazir* of *Magic: The Gathering* *Randy Buehler* used to win his first Pro Tour. However, while that deck was primarily Black and Red, we cannot in good conscience discuss it in this forum because, rather than hating Whitey outright (despite a suite of entirely *Protection* from White creatures, including the big, fat, *Ihsan's Shade*), *Erik / Randy* contaminated their otherwise ingenious listing with vile inclusions *Disenchant*, *Honorable Passage*, and – *say it ain't so* – *Circle of Protection: Black*. Instead we give you “*Pimpsta-potence II*” by *AustiKnight Adrian Sayers*, from the same Pro Tour Top 8.

Pimpsta-Potence II	
<b>Main Deck</b> 60 cards	<b>Sideboard</b>


4 Bad River	2 Contagion	1 Contagion
4 Badlands	3 Demonic Consultation	3 Dystopia
2 Lake of the Dead	4 Drain Life	3 Hydroblast
2 Mishra's Factory	1 Fireball	1 Nevinyrral's Disk
7 Swamp	4 Hymn to Tourach	2 Pyroblast
4 Underground Sea	4 Lightning Bolt	1 Serrated Arrows
	4 Necropotence	2 Shatter
23 lands	3 Nevinyrral's Disk	2 Terror
	1 Serrated Arrows	
4 Black Knight	26 other spells	15 sideboard cards
1 Knight of Stromgald		
4 Order of the Ebon Hand		
2 Wildfire Emissary		
11 creatures		

There are two notable things about the Sayers deck beyond its obvious similarities to other **Necropotence** decks: 1) Adrian actually played **Bad River**, a *Mirage* forerunner to the now-celebrated *Onslaught* duals (Chris Pikula commented after Dallas that he should have run **Rocky Tar Pit** in place of **Lava Tubes** and some other sub-optimal choices to clean up his mana). 2) Really wanting to get white, he included **Wildfire Emissary**, which was a direct out-class of **White Knight** and company. While **Black Knight** and **White Knight** have stared across the Red Zone from one another, never interacting since Alpha, **Wildfire Emissary** can stop **White Knight** on defense, then run right past it on offense. Immune to **Swords to Plowshares** and capable of a nearly limitless front end, this creature was quite scary in its day.

### How did Pimpsta-Potence II work?

A common trend of the successful Chicago 1997 **Necropotence** decks, shared by both Sayers and Lauer / Buehler, was *not* playing **Dark Ritual**, and instead relying on **Lake of the Dead** to fuel huge X-spells for the endgame. Note that Adrian can set up this "combo" quite easily with **Demonic Consultation** (Buehler's groundbreaking deck played *four* copies), and can use **Necropotence** to keep land flowing indefinitely, even given the potential downside of the Lake.

Note that while **Drain Life** was a staple of these decks to continue fueling **Necropotence**, it is important to remember that while a Necro player may run willy-nilly with his life total, dropping to one life or jumping past the usual starting point, *the opponent* would usually be constrained to just twenty, so it's not as if one would need a whole lot of **Drain Life** to win a game, especially when supplemented by **Lightning Bolt**, etc



One season later, at the next Extended Pro Tour, we would see, not surprisingly, yet another Rakdos forerunner, another B/R **Necropotence** deck.

Main Deck		Sideboard
60 cards		
2 Bad River	3 Contagion	4 Bottle Gnomes
4 Badlands	4 Dark Ritual	2 Dread of Night
2 Lake of the Dead	3 Demonic Consultation	2 Meltdown
2 Sulfurous Springs	4 Drain Life	2 Perish
9 Swamp	4 Duress	4 Pyroblast
4 Wasteland	2 Firestorm	1 Spinning Darkness
23 lands	4 Hymn to Tourach	
	4 Necropotence	15 sideboard cards
	2 Yawgmoth's Will	
4 Knight of Stromgald	30 other spells	
2 Sedge Troll		
1 Sengir Vampire		
7 creatures		

One thing to note about Kostanczer's metagame: Although he still played a number of white-killing elements, including **Knight of Stromgald** and sideboarded **Dread of Night**, and even though the Top 8 included White beatdown decks by both Hall of Fame member Olle Rade and Hall of Fame-eligible Justin Gary, Kostanczer's real enemy this time was the **Tolarian Academy** deck, that is, Blue and Artifact combo. Andre's decisions, playing more disruption main (though, to be fair, this would have been the first tournament where you could run **Duress**

and Hymn to Tourach), all four copies of **Pyroblast** and **Meltdown** in the sideboard, rather than running, um, **Lightning Bolt**, um, *anywhere* influenced his tuning process.

### How did Kostanczer's **Necropotence** work?

It is probably humorous from our “modern” view (by the way, I actually think of *Urza's Saga* as a “recent” set), but at the inaugural *Urza's Saga*-legal Pro Tour, they let you play as many **Yawgmoth's Wills** as you wanted to! The unspeakable power of this card was overshadowed at the time by **Time Spiral** and friends (the card, not the set), which you can clearly see from Andre's not playing four copies. That said, he went *back* to **Dark Ritual** acceleration due to the explosive synergy with **Yawgmoth's Will**.

At the time, though, 'Will was essentially a proxy-**Necropotence**, less powerful than the greatest card drawing engine of all time, but good enough to completely annihilate a comparatively unarmed opponent when itself left unchecked. In this case, the ability to start on **Duress**, **Dark Ritual**, and **Hymn to Tourach** and then immediately re-play the lot via **Yawgmoth's Will** was quite relevant in the format. The strategy both illustrated the general effectiveness of top tier Black disruption against combination decks (provided a clock was in place, and Andre played an efficient suite), and exposed the core weakness of discard: No amount of **Duresses** can stop a topdeck, and if you let Academy topdeck, it was going to topdeck **Time Spiral**.

Tony Dobson Pro Tour-Chicago 1999		
	<b>Main Deck</b> 60 cards	<b>Sideboard</b>
4 <b>Badlands</b>	1 <b>Aura of Silence</b>	1 <b>Abeyance</b>
4 <b>City of Brass</b>	4 <b>Dark Ritual</b>	3 <b>Aura of Silence</b>
4 <b>Gemstone Mine</b>	4 <b>Demonic Consultation</b>	1 <b>Defense of the Heart</b>
3 <b>Peat Bog</b>	4 <b>Duress</b>	2 <b>Mana Short</b>
3 <b>Phyrexian Tower</b>	3 <b>Enduring Renewal</b>	2 <b>Peacekeeper</b>
4 <b>Scrubland</b>	4 <b>Goblin Bombardment</b>	4 <b>Pyroblast</b>
22 lands	1 <b>Mana Vault</b>	2 <b>Wasteland</b>
4 <b>Academy Rector</b>	3 <b>Mox Diamond</b>	15 sideboard cards
2 <b>Phyrexian Walker</b>	4 <b>Necropotence</b>	
4 <b>Shield Sphere</b>	28 other spells	
10 creatures		

*Author's Note:* I know that we elected not to discuss the Grand Wazir's Chicago 1997 deck list due to its inclusion of White cards, but are now discussing Tony Dobson's Chicago 1999 deck list – also a B/R violated by white – and that might seem inconsistent. However it is Rakdos Week, and we are currently unpredictable in our hedonism; expecting consistency would be a violation of theme and an insult to our patron and Parun. I suggest you take it up with the **Skullmead Cauldron** if you have a problem.

Now the morphing of a once proud white-hating strategy to a somewhat anti-combination strategy by Kostanczer in Rome ended up being a forerunner of horrific proportions come the following year's Extended Pro Tour. Even with corrections such as the banning of **Tolarian Academy**, the huge card pool of Extended began to foster naught but the fastest, tightest, proactive decks, and at some point the efficiency, speed, and pure vigor of **Necropotence** was caught in the evolutionary wake.

Philosophically, Dobson's deck “The Skull Catapult” was perfect (at least until the unveiling of Trix, the most hated deck of all time, which is not strictly a B/R deck so we will not discuss it further at this point). **Necropotence** was the most powerful card, and maximizing **Necropotence** was the best strategy. Therefore the theory was to just play as many **Necropotences** as possible, and to put **Necropotence** in play as quickly as possible. As you can see, Tony played as many **Necropotences** as they would let him, as many **Demonic Consultations** (proxy 'Potences) as they would let him, and as many **Academy Rectors** (Moats and **Necropotences** both) as they would let him. He also played lots and lots of power mana, like **Dark Ritual**, **Mana Vault**, **Mox Diamond**, and **Peat Bog**. The goal was clear... but the outcome wasn't.

You see at some point, you have all **Necropotences** and fast mana, and no way to win. Look at the tension between Dennis Bentley's deck and Chris Pikula's, from a much simpler time. Look at how many creatures Dennis played, and how Chris struggled to add just a couple more. With all the **Necropotences** Tony was playing, with all the ways to get **Necropotence**, and play **Necropotence** consistently, he could never have played a “fair” **Necropotence** deck. For want of deck room, the only *possible* route was a combo deck.



### How did The Skull Catapult work?

**Necropotence** was present in the deck merely to set up its combination and was not actually strategic to the outcome. The inclusion of the game's greatest and scariest draw engine was essentially borrowed from *Rome-ra* Dred Panda Roberts, and would *be* borrowed later by Trix to set up its *two*-card combo.

The kill was a three-card combination of **Enduring Renewal**, **Goblin Bombardment**, and one of the zero-mana creatures. With **Enduring Renewal** in play, Tony could sacrifice the same **Phyrexian Walker** to **Goblin Bombardment**, get it back, re-play it, and sacrifice it again any number of times. The Skull Catapult was a [dirty, very dirty] three-card infinite combo deck.

While **Necropotence** was still legal and unrestricted in relevant formats, it showed us any number of beatdown, disruptive, burn-oriented, destructive, and even combination decks. The loss of **Necropotence**, while probably essential to the continued health of **Magic: The Gathering**, was a blow to the level of complexity and technology of B/R decks for some time. We conclude *Swimming With Sharks*'s contribution to Rakdos week with two more recent B/R decks, one from the present block, and one from the last time we had a multicolored set.

Tom Van De Logt		
Main Deck 60 cards		Sideboard
6 Mountain	4 Dark Ritual	3 Addle
4 Rishadan Port	4 Duress	1 Crypt Angel
4 Sulfurous Springs	4 Terminate	1 Flametongue Kavu
6 Swamp	3 Urza's Rage	2 Persecute
4 Urborg Volcano	3 Vendetta	3 Phyrexian Arena
24 lands	18 other spells	1 Pyroclasm
		4 Scoria Cat
		15 sideboard cards
4 Blazing Specter		
2 Crypt Angel		
2 Flametongue Kavu		
3 Phyrexian Scuta		
4 Plague Spitter		
3 Skizzik		
18 creatures		

Van De Logt won the 2001 World Championships with a B/R deck bereft of **Necropotence**. His Top 8 included a famous and controversial win over fan favorite Dave Williams, and a generally Rakdos-approved destructive air. **Plague Spitter** may not look like much, but he hates not just **Ramosian Sergeant** (white's representative at the time), but everyone, viz. Saprolings. **Crypt Angel** has no love for white. **Urza's Rage** shows white why **Lightning Bolt** no longer sees play (you aren't allowed to play this ungodly card) versus why **Healing Salve** never really saw play (it sucks).

Terry Soh		
Main Deck 60 cards		
4 Blood Crypt	4 Dark Confidant	4 Char
6 Mountain	4 Giant Solifuge	3 Demonfire
4 Rakdos Carnarium	4 Lyzolda, the Blood Witch	4 Hit // Run
5 Swamp	4 Rakdos Augermage	3 Rise // Fall
4 Watery Grave	4 Rakdos Guildmage	3 Seal of Fire
23 lands	20 creatures	17 other spells

It wouldn't be Rakdos Week without a genuine Rakdos deck... This is the **Rakdos Augermage**'s own.

While his team didn't make Top 8, Terry fronted to my knowledge the best individual record at Pro Tour--Charleston, at 12-2. His minimum requirement for a deck was playing four copies of himself; the Augermage did a great deal in this deck... Basically drawing elimination away from the real game winner, **Dark Confidant**, a.k.a. Bob Maher, a.k.a. **Necropotence** (kind of).

There have always been B/R decks. Terry's recent success shows us that there will always *be* B/R decks, and like Van De Logt's World Championship build, they'll be as good as they are recklessly destructive.

*Mike has been a leading voice in the game's strategy for as long as there has been a **Magic** Internet. He is the former editor of *The Magic Dojo* and a sometime Pro player. Michael J. Flores: *Deckade*, is a compilation of Mike's first ten years of strategy and theory (i.e. before he joined **magicthegathering.com**), and is available at <http://www.top8magic.com>.*



---

[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](#)

