

## Bennie Smith returns to his first gig at [magicthegathering.com](http://magicthegathering.com). Endrek Sahr, Master Breeder

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- [Bennie Smith Archive](#)

*"Jam-packed with ideas."*

Those were the [very first words](#) I wrote for [magicthegathering.com](http://magicthegathering.com), back in 2002. My first gig here was writing the periodic Single Card Strategy feature (before its weekly run under Adrian Sullivan), so I'm thrilled at the opportunity to give it another whirl today. Back then, I was generally assigned an uncommon card that had a lot of interesting potential, and my job was to attack it from as many different directions as I could, in the hopes of inspiring deck ideas and strategies.



This time around, Scott told me to pick a card from *Time Spiral* and do a Single Card Strategy for it.

Pick. A card. From freaking *Time Spiral*?!

The problem here is that *Time Spiral* is jam-packed with cool cards just begging to be used and abused. When I first read through the spoiler brainstorming deck ideas for Champs, I literally buried myself in decklists. I had no sooner put together a list than my mind was leaping to another one based around a card just one line down.

Picking just one card to do for this article was a little overwhelming, so I decided to turn the tables just a bit. I suggested to Scott it might be fun to see what *Time Spiral* cards R&D found interesting that might not be getting the attention they deserve. Mike Turian was kind enough to respond:

*A few cards I enjoy:*

- [Mishra, Artificer Prodigy](#)
- [Psionic Sliver](#)
- [Paradox Haze](#)
- [Vesuvan Shapeshifter](#)

- [Curse of the Cabal](#)
- [Endrek Sahr, Master Breeder](#)
- [Ib Halfheart, Goblin Tactician](#)
- [Ignite Memories](#)
- [Thelonite Hermit](#)
- [Scion of the Ur-Dragon](#)

I think all of these are the types of cards you are looking for.

Mike Turian

All of these cards definitely show up on the "fun" and "cool" radar...but that fun and cool House of Cards dude Chris Millar beat me to several of them. He featured [Mishra, Artificer Prodigy](#) and [Paradox Haze](#), and touched on [Curse of the Cabal](#) briefly.



Then we had Aaron Forsythe featuring [Vesuvan Shapeshifter](#), and [Psionic Sliver](#) was touched on in Noah Weil's [Sliver Me Timbers](#) (though, granted, this was a Limited article rather than a full constructed treatment). [Thelonite Hermit](#) was mentioned in a recent Mike Flores article as a Squirrel<sup>!</sup>[Opposition](#)-style update to modern day Glare decks.

So that leaves [Ib Halfheart, Goblin Tactician](#); [Ignite Memories](#); [Scion of the Ur-Dragon](#); and [Endrek Sahr, Master Breeder](#). Of these, I think Dragon fans everywhere need little encouragement to cook up lots of decks built around the Scion, and the same can be said of Goblin fans and Ib Halfheart (and in fact, I ran across a Goblin deck at Champs that featured a couple copies of ol' Ib). [Ignite Memories](#) is certainly interesting but I don't necessarily think it's possibilities are deep enough to warrant a Single Card Strategy treatment.

That leaves the maverick mad scientist and his self-destructive quest to domesticate Thrulls – Endrek Sahr, Master Breeder! Last week's [Magicthegathering.Combos](#) mentioned a couple ideas with him, and Chris Millar had a [cool deck](#) built around [Conspiracy](#) to circumvent the self-sacrifice trigger, but I think we still have plenty of room to run with him. Obviously, he's all about generating Thrull tokens, but there are certainly several different approaches one can take.

## Endrek Sahr on Meds Approach

Endrek Sahr was scheduled for execution during *Fallen Empires* because he was a little too enthusiastic about making Thrulls. The temporal madness of *Time Spiral* snapped Endrek from the chopping block and gave him a second chance. Let's assume that Endrek learned something from his close encounter with the executioner's axe and decided to curtail his Thrull endeavors to a manageable level.



First, we need to make sure that none of our creature spells cost more than six mana but that we have enough five- or six-mana creature spells to make playing Endrek worth the risk you take by playing a five-mana 2/2. Some of the suspend creatures from *Time Spiral* fit perfectly in this plan, giving you a higher-mana creature for a lesser mana investment. [Corpulent Corpse](#) in in-color, and if you suspend it turn one, it should hit play on turn six, hopefully right after you've played Endrek. If you're going green-black, [Durkwood Baloth](#) has the same timing, but with a larger body.

Look for other ways to discount creature costs, such as cards with affinity for artifacts like [Somber Hoverguard](#) or affinity for lands like [Spire Golem](#) (since Endrek is so splashable). In a deck with all swamps, you could cast Endrek on the fifth turn and then immediately cast [Dross Golem](#) for five Thrulls. The recently "timeshifted" [Stormscape Familiar](#) can trim costs too, along with [Urza's Incubator](#), [Scourge's Warchiefs](#), [Krosan Drover](#), [Stone Calendar](#), and [Planar](#)

[Gate](#). Using alternate ways of casting creatures is another approach, such as the built-in abilities of [Saprazzan Legate](#), [Skyshroud Cutter](#), and [Vine Dryad](#).

Secondly, we'll need a way to manage our Thrulls so that Endrek doesn't attract the authorities for making too many Thrulls. Luckily, there are a ton of good sacrifice effects that would love tasty Thrull fodder. [Nantuko Husk](#), [Fallen Angel](#), [Carrion Feeder](#) and [Phyrexian Plaguelord](#) spring to mind. [Ashnod's Altar](#) can generate an obscene amount of mana for you. The combo-rific [Food Chain](#) is another idea, letting you keep the creature you cast but still be able to generate mana to cast an even bigger one. [Altar of Dementia](#) could go buck-wild on the milling. [Spawning Pit](#) could convert two Thrulls into a 2/2 artifact Spawn creature. Even little ol' [Brine Shaman](#) can really dominate a board with a steady stream of sacrifices. [Goblin Bombardment](#) adds improved [Fireballs](#) to each of your creature spells, as does [Blasting Station](#). [Martyr's Cause](#) is a great way to protect your Endrek from damaging effects while protecting yourself as well. [Lyzolda, the Blood Witch](#) draws you mad cards off sacrificed Thrull tokens. [Corpse Harvester](#) turns each sacrificed Thrull into another creature to play and make even more Thrulls.

## Endrek Sahr Gone Mad Approach

Of course, then we can go the other way: Endrek gets rescued from the chopping block, but instead of learning from the experience and being more cautious, he revels in the notion that he gets another chance to make more and more thrulls!

<Insert mad laughter here>



In this case we're going to burn Endrek out in a blaze of glory, pumping out as many thrull tokens as we can from the poor fellow. Much like before, it'll help to utilize alternate methods of casting high-cost creature spells, only this time we don't care so much about Endrek's safety - the bigger the better! [Avatar of Woe](#) (and other [Avatars](#) in the cycle) springs to mind, perhaps in a dredge deck so you can stock the graveyard quickly enough to cast for just ☠☠. [Delraich](#) is another interesting possibility if you happen to have a couple Thrulls around to sacrifice; I'm thinking he could be a brutal follow-up to Endrek and then [Dross Golem](#). Some of the higher cost suspend creatures work well too, particularly [Greater Gargadon](#). In fact, with Endrek's sacrifice trigger on the stack, you could sacrifice some of the tokens from the first [Greater Gargadon](#) getting played to knock off time counters from a second suspended [Greater Gargadon](#).

With Endrek in play, [Allosaurus Rider](#) may be worth the cost of pitching two green spells to play him. Toss Endrek in a Rats deck and play [Patron of the Nezumi](#) via its Rat Offering ability. Go five colors and cast [Bringer of the Black Dawn](#) and the other [Bringers](#) for just five mana, or go nuts and play [Draco](#)!

Let's not forget about affinity for artifacts here either, considering that there are quite a few "big mana" creatures with the ability that you can discount considerably, such as [Myr Enforcer](#), [Quicksilver Behemoth](#), [Broodstar](#), and [Mycosynth Golem](#).

## Strength in Numbers

Okay, whether your Endrek is taking his meds or gone mad, your plan is to generate a good amount of creature tokens. Obviously, [Beast of Burden](#) and [Coat of Arms](#) are no-brainers. There's a particularly scary synergy with [Carnival of Souls](#), but running white is easy, so you can play [Soul Warden](#) to make things much less scary so long as you come up with an appropriate mana sink. Similarly, [Mana Echoes](#) can generate a ridiculous amount of colorless mana. [Dark Depths](#), anyone? [Aura Shards](#) can make sure that no artifact or enchantment sticks around past your main phase. What's better than a horde of 1/1 Thrulls? How about a horde of 2/2 Thrulls and a gigantic Human Knight? [Juniper Order Ranger](#) to the rescue! Also keep in mind that you can't have an Endrek party if no one shows up. [Timid Drake](#) or [Cloudstone Curio](#) can help keep the good times coming.

## "Oh, Thrull-Boy!"



Lastly, let's not forget Endrek's Fallen Empire roots. While Thrulls have cropped up throughout **Magic's** history, when they were first printed they were a full-bore tribal theme. It was quickly apparent that "Thrulls mattered" back then, and there are casual fans out there that still have the old Thrull cards. Endrek is a perfect complement to that theme, functioning as an improved [Breeding Pit](#) - giving you a larger burst of Thrulls who are also capable of mounting an assault on their own (unlike the [Breeding Pit's](#) glacial trickle of 0/1 small-fry). [Ebon Praetor](#) loves ol' Endrek! He hits the turn after Endrek, collecting a burst of six thrulls to feast off and get larger. [Soul Exchange](#) is a great way to get back Endrek and while making him larger in the process. [Thrull Champion](#) of course is happy to boost the troops, though [Coat of Arms](#) obviously makes for a bigger horde of Thrulls. How ironic that the maker finds himself enslaved and used by his subjects...

## Two Decks: Bringing It Together

I'd like to wrap things up by presenting a couple decks utilizing some of these ideas. First up is "Bad Breeding." This deck is in the mold of Endrek on meds, loading up on sacrifice effects to make sure your Thrull population doesn't overwhelm the Master Breeder. I've included an "arbitrarily large" engine here with [Cloudstone Curio](#) and [Dross Golem](#) (assuming enough swamps in play),

replaying [Dross Golem](#) over and over after sacrificing the Thrulls to make a huge [Carrion Feeder](#) or [Nantuko Husk](#), mowing down blockers with [Plagued Rusalka](#) and banking some extras in the [Spawning Pit](#). [Cabal Therapy](#) helps peek at your opponent's hand to make sure he can't throw sand in your engine once you try and fire it up.

## Bad Breeding – Extended



### Main Deck

60 cards

- |   |                                    |
|---|------------------------------------|
| 3 <a href="#">Cabal Coffers</a>               | 4 <a href="#">Cabal Therapy</a>    |
| 21 <a href="#">Swamp</a>                      | 4 <a href="#">Cloudstone Curio</a> |
| _____   | 4 <a href="#">Spawning Pit</a>     |
| 24 lands                                      | _____                              |
|   | 12 other spells                    |
| 4 <a href="#">Carrion Feeder</a>              |                                    |
| 4 <a href="#">Dross Golem</a>                 |                                    |
| 4 <a href="#">Endrek Sahr, Master Breeder</a> |                                    |
| 4 <a href="#">Nantuko Husk</a>                |                                    |
| 4 <a href="#">Plagued Rusalka</a>             |                                    |
| 4 <a href="#">Twisted Abomination</a>         |                                    |
| _____   |                                    |
| 24 creatures                                  |                                    |



Lastly let's take a wack at an old-schooler's Thrull theme deck. The card that jumped out at me right away was [Armor Thrull](#), a great way to try and buff up Endrek so that a random [Lightning Bolt](#) doesn't take him out. Since we're going to be sacrificing Thrulls to the cause, let's go full bore on that theme and use a great old favorite of mine, [Oath of Ghouls](#). [Blood Pet](#), [Thrull Surgeon](#), and [Blood Vassal](#) can all take one for the team but come back for more fun turn after turn with an Oath in play. It's important that you keep an eye on the number of actual Thrull cards you have in play before you drop Endrek, since you'd hate to have to immediately sacrifice him without extracting any Thrulls from his bony hide. The ever-amazing [Cabal Therapy](#) can help trim the Thrull population and is quite synergistic alongside [Thrull Surgeon](#) (who happens to have fantastic flavor text). Since there's a whole lot of sacrificin' goin' on, might as well run some [Grave Pacts](#), right?

### **A Man Among Thrulls – Vintage**



#### **Main Deck**

*60 cards*

2 <a href="#">Cabal Cooffers</a>	4 <a href="#">Cabal Therapy</a>
21 <a href="#">Swamp</a>	4 <a href="#">Grave Pact</a>
1 <a href="#">Volrath's Stronghold</a>	4 <a href="#">Oath of Ghouls</a>

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24 lands

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12 other spells

4 [Armor Thrull](#)  
4 [Blood Pet](#)  
4 [Blood Vassal](#)  
4 [Ebon Praetor](#)  
4 [Endrek Sahr, Master Breeder](#)  
4 [Thrull Surgeon](#)

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24 creatures



So, that wraps up my nostalgic revisit to Single Card Strategy - how very *Time Spiral*-ish of me! The set is really chock full of great cards that are just begging to have decks built around them. Whether you're a Johnny, Timmy or Spike, take some time to look at some *Time Spiral* cards that are just a little off the radar and do some brainstorming. You're bound to find quite a few gems that will prove to be great fun and more powerful than at first blush.