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# The Spirit of Cooperation

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 Limited Information  
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I can't *stand* that guy. He always has some pithy request or comment to make. Lately, he's been getting particularly demanding about a column topic.

"Can you do a *Time Spiral* walkthrough?"

"I need to see a draft *Time Spiral* article!"

"DO CARDS WRITE UP WALKTHROUGH TIME CARD SPIRL!!!"

It's weird that his tone and syntax keep changing, but I get his point. The man (?) likes his walkthroughs.



I like them too, but **Magic** Online wasn't running Draft queues until November 6th. I know that's a yesterday to people reading this, but for stuck-in-the-past guy, it was just too far away. I was about to pull up one of my *Fallen Empires* / *Fallen Empires* / *Arabian Nights* drafting guide reserves when I got the IM rescue:

Eric: "Want to draft tonight?"  
 Me: "Ummm yeah. But I'll need to record every card and every pick."  
 Eric: "...K. We're meeting at 7"

Salvation!

The usual suspects were there, some of Washington's best drafting with intuition, verve, and shockingly flimsy chairs. It's always fun to hang with the boys, but in this case, the draft turned out to be quite interesting as well.

## Pack 1

### Pack 1, Pick 1

Castle Raptors, Tolarian Sentinel, Chromatic Star, Flowstone Channeler, Trespasser il-Vec, Thallid Shell-Dweller, Jhoira's Timebug, Jedit's Dragoons, Savage Thallid, Ancient Grudge, Tectonic Fiend, Smallpox, Phyrexian Totem, Evangelize, Fiery Temper

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This was a solid booster to kick things off, although that seems to be *Time Spiral's* specialty. Of these fifteen, four stood out as reasonable first picks. **Castle Raptors**, **Phyrexian Totem**, **Evangelize**, and **Fiery Temper** were all possibilities and legitimate openings in a draft. I discarded **Phyrexian Totem** first, as it's slightly underwhelming compared to the rest. It's an awfully good card, it just creates a lot of commitment to Black for a fairly narrow card. Everything else was just more flexible, while playing just as powerfully.

Of the two white cards, my instincts went to taking **Castle Raptors**, although it was a very close thing. The Raptors are consistently better, even though **Evangelize** can offer some insane game situations. **Evangelize** is best in a removal-heavy deck though, where you can clear their chaff before stealing something good. That's a few assumptions too many for this early in the draft.

But all this white discussion was moot, as I could just take the red card and send everything else along. **Fiery Temper** is completely excellent, but what really sets it apart here is the great signaling. While the two guys downstream fight over white, I make a play to put myself in the clear for red. **Fiery Temper** is probably the best card in the pack, but even if it were slightly worse, those signals make up for it. A fine opening to the draft.

**My pick:** **Fiery Temper**.

### Pack 1, Pick 2

Durkwood Baloth, Scarwood Treefolk, Amrou Scout, Keldon Halberdier, Mana Skimmer, Cyclopean Giant, Brass Gnat, Savage Thallid, Durkwood Tracker, Foriysian Totem, Truth or Tale, Ith, High Arcanist, Trickbind, Enduring Renewal

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Were I blue or white already, the lth versus **Amrou Scout** question would be pretty interesting. However, I started off red. White, the color my neighbors are squabbling over, plays very poorly with green. Green plays well with red. I think I'll go with the best common in the color that best works alongside my first pick.

**My pick:** **Durkwood Baloth**

**Pack 1, Pick 3**

Nantuko Shaman, Gorgon Recluse, Spiketail Drakeling, Slipstream Serpent, Thallid Shell-Dweller, Detainment Spell, Bewilder, Mindstab, Call to the Netherworld, Brine Elemental, Spirit Loop, Careful Consideration, Darkness



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Nice blue! Is it time to abandon a color? No, I think not. The saturation of blue cards here looks appealing, but it really is too much. I could take a blue card and pass a bunch of blue cards, making the white/lth player very happy. That's a bad spot to be in, when we have such an easy out. I adore suspend, and look, the excellent **Nantuko Shaman** to add to the collection. We may have to pick a new color sometime, but when there's no compelling reason to do so I'm certainly not going to try.

**My pick:** **Nantuko Shaman**

**Pack 1, Pick 4**

Swamp, Coal Stoker, Gaze of Justice, Children of Korlis, Viscid Lemures, Molder, Ophidian Eye, Viashino Bladescout, Coral Trickster, Molten Slagheap, Foriysian Totem, Pandemonium

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See, that lack of red before was just an aberration. Where's the green!?

Anyhoo, between **Foriysian Totem** and **Coal Stoker** I lean towards the Stoker. **Coal Stoker** is, frankly, awesome and can lead to some amazing turns. The Totem is rock solid, but it's hard to call it explosive. With Red paired with Green, the need for early alternative mana is also slightly lowered. Adding it up, it's enough to give the edge to **Coal Stoker**.

**My pick:** **Coal Stoker**

**Pack 1, Pick 5**

Fortify, Viashino Bladescout, Flamecore Elemental, Thrill of the Hunt, Shadow Sliver, Sangrophage, Mountain, Mystical Teachings, Phyrexian Totem, Locket of Yesterdays, Voidmage Husher

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One of these red creatures can be cast off **Coal Stoker**, and one can't. Yes, that's a fairly juicy **Phyrexian Totem**, but once again, it's not compelling enough to undo all our previous good works. The pick here is a red creature and I chose **Bladescout**. It seems to work just a little better alongside green's themes and mana curve, but it's a close call. **Flamecore Elemental** would not be a poor decision.

**My pick:** **Viashino Bladescout**

**Pack 1, Pick 6**

Molder, Coal Stoker, Ivory Giant, Gaze of Justice, Eternity Snare, Venser's Sliver, Children of Korlis, Mindstab, Fool's Demise, Flagstones of Trokair

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Excellent, another **Coal Stoker**. There's nothing here to even tempt us away from this pick, although the lack of good green is a concern. But as long as there's something solid in one of our chosen two, I can't worry too much.

**My pick:** **Coal Stoker**

**Pack 1, Pick 7**

Mana Skimmer, Flamecore Elemental, Primal Forcemage, Pit Keeper, Momentary Blink, Ghitu Firebreathing, Fortify, Greenseeker, Gustcloak Cavalier

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That's quite a late **Momentary Blink**. The card is strong and, it appears, still underrated. I hope the lth player enjoys it. As for me, that **Greenseeker** looks great. An early drop and a **Fiery Temper** outlet, it certainly outshines

the Flamecore or **Primal Forcemage**. A spellshaper I'm excited to have.

**My pick:** **Greenseeker**

**Pack 1, Pick 8**

**Gorgon Recluse, Fortify, Detainment Spell, Psychotic Episode, Bewilder, Herd Gnarr, Plated Pegasus, Magus of the Candelabra**

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Ah Plated P, you little **Grapeshot** killer you. And while all these suspend cards and **Coal Stokers** would play very well with storm, it seems we're totally short of representatives! Besides, there's the underrated **Herd Gnarr** staring back at us. We even have a Flash card to make the Gnarr extra tricky special good! An easy grab.

**My pick:** **Herd Gnarr**

**Pack 1, Pick 9**

**Savage Thallid, Trespasser il-Vec, Flowstone Channeler, Jhoira's Timebug, Tolarian Sentinel, Ancient Grudge, Tectonic Fiend**

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Now **Tectonic Fiend** isn't bad, precisely, but its role is clearly that of a finisher. You do some early damage, run out of steam, and Tectonic comes and does the rest. I respect that. It's just, this isn't the deck where that's particularly likely to happen. For explanation I can only point out our second pick, another 6cc in **Durkwood Baloth**. The Channeler, on the other hand, helps out **Temper**, is a sink for **Coal Stoker**, and overall is a fine card to have access to. It fits the mana and it fits the style of the deck. Another happy pick.

**My pick:** **Flowstone Channeler**

**Pack 1, Pick 10**

**Keldon Halberdier, Cyclopean Giant, Brass Gnat, Truth or Tale, Trickbind, Enduring Renewal**

Frankly, I'm surprised to see that Halberdier this late. How can no one have taken it by now? A situation easily remedied.

**My pick:** **Keldon Halberdier**

**Pack 1, Pick 11**

**Detainment Spell, Bewilder, Call to the Netherworld, Spirit Loop, Darkness**

Absolutely zero picks for my deck, so I'll take the card that's potentially the most grievous against me. For sheer potential, it has to be the timeshifted.

**My pick:** **Darkness**

**Pack 1, Pick 12**

**Children of Korlis, Gaze of Justice, Swamp, Pandemonium**

Similar argument to above, although I suppose there is some bizarre scenario where **Pandemonium** could see play. I wouldn't count on it, though.

**My pick:** **Pandemonium**

**Pack 1, Pick 13**

**Mystical Teachings, Mountain, Locket of Yesterdays**

Kinda tricky, cause you need lands to cast spells but the Locket means you need less lands. I wasn't quite sure which direction to assert, so I took the card that may do something sometime. As opposed to the card that can't do anything, or the card you get for free when you make your deck. I feel good about my choice here.

**My pick:** **Mystical Teachings**

**Pack 1, Pick 14**

**Children of Korlis, Fool's Demise**

**My pick:** **Children of Korlis**

**Pack 1, Pick 15**

**Ghitu Firebreathing.**

**My pick:** **Ghitu Firebreathing**

Draft analysis: So far I've got **Fiery Temper** and guys. Lots and lots of guys. They're fine creatures, but a little spell flexibility would not be amiss. I'm not quite sure if I'm in the right colors, but I'd be willing to bet at least one half is correct. Is it strange I don't know which half? Either way, pack 2 should go well.

## Pack 2

### Pack 2, Pick 1

Gaze of Justice, Strangling Soot, Fathom Seer, Flamecore Elemental, Gemhide Sliver, Feebleness, Two-Headed Sliver, Blazing Blade Askari, Shadow Sliver, Ophidian Eye, Fool's Demise, Tromp the Domains, Vampiric Sliver, Stronghold Overseer, Fire Whip

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Nice Pack.

Seriously, that's some hotness all over the rainbow. For the narrator, we've got **Flamecore Elemental**, **Gemhide Sliver**, **Blazing Blade Askari**, **Tromp the Domains**, **Strangling Soot**, and **Fire Whip**. The Soot may look out of place, but that **Greenseeker** and other discard outlets certainly make it viable.

Overseer is a scary card, but not scary enough to sacrifice one of the amazing cards in this booster (incidentally, no card in the game would be scary enough to sacrifice one of the amazing cards in this booster). The creatures are all good, but I had to let them go in favor of the spells. Of those three, I first pitched **Strangling Soot**. While it's a fine card to include, taking an arguably comparable card *in color* is just too appealing. Even if Soot is the best spell of the three, it loses a point for lacking reliability. Again, there's no reason to get feisty when we have such fine cards available in our original combination. Of the two remaining spells, I wavered back and forth but in the end had to go with the Aura. **Nicol Bolas** tricks aside, **Fire Whip** is just really good and really cheap. I wanted more removal and it plays alongside the **Flowstone Channeler** from before. Tromp deserves plenty of respect, and its potential is quite high. This time I went with the card with comparable possibility and just a touch more consistency.



**My pick:** Fire Whip

### Pack 2, Pick 2

Gorgon Recluse, Chromatic Star, Looter il-Kor, Venser's Sliver, Clockspinning, Bogardan Rager, Fool's Demise, Fathom Seer, Herd Gnarr, Fortify, Wormwood Treefolk, Thick-Skinned Goblin, Might Sliver, Cockatrice

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Another close pick. The Thick-Skinned may have gotten a look if we had gone Flamecore crazy from before, but as it is, it's a minor two-drop and a good sink for the Stokers. The green creatures are a little more worthwhile. Of them, the **Herd Gnarr** and **Treefolk** hit the bench. The **Treefolk** is strictly average and the **Gnarr**, while better, just didn't have the snap of the other two.



Between **Might Sliver** and **Cockatrice** it's a close call. They both reside in the same spot of the mana curve, but they have very different functions. **Might Sliver** is certainly the more powerful of the two, at least in theory. Having gone the safe route previous, I was ready to take a chance this time. Perhaps in a perfect world that **Gemhide Sliver** would table. Either way...

**My pick:** **Might Sliver**

#### **Pack 2, Pick 3**

Keldon Halberdier, Benalish Cavalry, Feebleness, Looter il-Kor, Spinneret Sliver, Viashino Bladescout, Mystical Teachings, Thrill of the Hunt, Children of Korlis, Sangrophage, Volcanic Awakening, Sulfurous Blast, Dodecapod

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Ding ding, we have a winner. All that agonizing effort in setting colors and staying the course; we finally hit a payoff. Sisyphus made it over the hill, and we've added a crazy strong card to the deck. The creatures are nice, but they ain't no S-Blast.

**My pick:** **Sulfurous Blast**

#### **Pack 2, Pick 4**

Think Twice, Sage of Epityr, Divine Congregation, Mindlash Sliver, Thallid Shell-Dweller, Cancel, Empty the Warrens, Icatian Crier, Bonesplitter Sliver, Harmonic Sliver, Phantom Wurm, Thornscape Battlemage

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Well, there's that storm card we mentioned before. And look, more Slivers. All fine and dandy, but they're not Nekretaals that can also hit players. Another gift for staying on target, and it's rude not to accept a present.

**My pick:** **Thornscape Battlemage**

#### **Pack 2, Pick 5**

Orcish Cannonade, Brass Gnat, Tolarian Sentinel, Screeching Sliver, Savage Thallid, Call to the Netherworld, Benalish Cavalry, Cyclopean Giant, Phantom Wurm, Dread Return, Dementia Sliver

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More green fat. While there is room in our deck for more high-end stuff, as we can see here, filling that hole isn't too difficult. There's also more room for cantrip removal spells, and filling *that* void takes some determination. Admittedly, there is a limit to the number of Cannonades one can play in a deck. Seeing as how our first shot is in the middle of pack two, I'm not precisely worried about hitting the ceiling. The first one plays *really* well.

**My pick:** **Orcish Cannonade**

#### **Pack 2, Pick 6**

Skulking Knight, Plunder, Thallid Germinator, Brass Gnat, Thrill of the Hunt, Watcher Sliver, Terramorphic Expanse, Ignite Memories, Gustcloak Cavalier, Dandan

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You could make an argument here for **Thallid Germinator**, but I think that's a disappointing pick. This isn't a **Thallid** deck, nor is it a particularly green one. At this point I'm not worried about getting to 23, and all the Germinator represents is filler. **Watcher Sliver** is a little more defensible, and probably a legitimate pick. Had I taken that, it would have led to some very interesting situations down the road. Instead, I went with **Terramorphic Expanse**. I'm not a deep fan of the card, but between it and **Greenseeker**, it does provide some potential for a splash card later. I know that scenario hasn't been realized yet, but no card in this pack is better than the negative feelings I would get had I skipped the land search option for something lame. **Terramorphic Expanse** will definitely make the deck, and it may even do something great later on (hint: it does).

**My pick:** **Terramorphic Expanse**

#### **Pack 2, Pick 7**

Screeching Sliver, Pentarch Ward, Thallid Germinator, Ironclaw Buzzardiers, Ancient Grudge, Savage Thallid, Return to Dust, Urza's Factory, Mishra, Artificer Prodigy

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An easy pick here in the Buzzardiers. They fit well with the **Coal Stokers** at any point in the game and will probably deal more damage than any of the **Thallids**. **Urza's Factory** wouldn't be bad, but it would require playing 18 lands and at this point, I don't think we need it.

**My pick:** **Ironclaw Buzzardiers**

#### **Pack 2, Pick 8**

Ashcoat Bear, Basal Sliver, Drifter il-Dal, Durkwood Tracker, Think Twice, Mogg War Marshal, Ghostflame Sliver, Hivestone

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A surprisingly deep pack for this late in the draft. The Bear and **Tracker** didn't really interest me, even though they do have a place in green decks. The War Marshal did have some potential as a boost to **Herd Gnarr** or a surviving remnant off **Sulfurous Blast**.

Yet I took the **Hivestone** instead. For one, it's a fine combo alongside **Might Sliver** or whatever else I can find. Secondly, it's a savage little sideboard card against dedicated sliver decks. Whether anyone's drafting that deck is another matter, but if so here's the silver bullet. It's hard to articulate why **Hivestone** drew me in, except that I was getting sick of adding more guys to the deck. **Hivestone** gave me a non-combat way to swing a game around, and that's an appealing trait no matter how you slice it. **Mogg War Marshal** would do good things in the deck, but the **Hivestone** could be great. At this point, with a deck this established, I was ready to take that leap.

**My pick:** **Hivestone**

#### **Pack 2, Pick 9**

**Two-Headed Sliver**, **Blazing Blade Askari**, **Flamecore Elemental**, **Gaze of Justice**, **Shadow Sliver**, **Ophidian Eye**, **Fool's Demise**

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The deal is, after you take a risky but narrow card, you need to start drafting cards to make it less narrow. Otherwise, it's a wasted pick or a sideboard card. **Flamecore Elemental** looked good as a survivor of the Blast, but our four-slot was getting full with no plans to change anytime soon. **Two-Headed Sliver**, on the other hand, represented a continuation of the theme and a genuine player in the as-yet unconquered two drop zone. Not a great card by any means, but getting better.

**My pick:** **Two-Headed Sliver**

#### **Pack 2, Pick 10**

**Bogardan Rager**, **Fool's Demise**, **Wormwood Treefolk**, **Herd Gnarr**, **Venser's Sliver**, **Clockspinning**

**Herd Gnarr** would have been an easy pick had we taken the War Marshal from before. Since I randomly decided to go the sliver route at the tail end of pack two, Venser's gets the nod here. Besides, that satiated four-drop argument above still holds water. Venser's, welcome to the team.

**My pick:** **Venser's Sliver**

#### **Pack 2, Pick 11**

**Sangrophage**, **Viashino Bladescout**, **Keldon Halberdier**, **Thrill of the Hunt**, **Volcanic Awakening**

A nice gift in another early drop suspend creature. **Keldon Halberdier** is *probably* the worst suspend creature, but since it's a creature with suspend, it's still really good. A nice grab this late.

**My pick:** **Keldon Halberdier**

#### **Pack 2, Pick 12**

**Divine Congregation**, **Mindlash Sliver**, **Sage of Epityr**, **Harmonic Sliver**

Mustn't let them kill the **Hivestone**!

**My pick:** **Harmonic Sliver**

#### **Pack 2, Pick 13**

**Screeching Sliver**, **Call to the Netherworld**, **Dementia Sliver**

Mustn't let them, uh, cast a 3/3.

**My pick:** **Dementia Sliver**

#### **Pack 2, Pick 14**

**Ignite Memories**, **Brass Gnat**

I've definitely seen **Ignite Memories** deal damage. I cannot say the same about **Gnatty Gnat Gnat**.

**My pick:** **Ignite Memories**

#### **Pack 2, Pick 15**

**Screeching Sliver**

**My pick:** **Screeching Sliver**

### **Pack 3**

#### **Pack 3, Pick 1**

Corpulent Corpse, Cancel, Empty the Warrens, Icatian Crier, Bonesplitter Sliver, Tendrils of Corruption, Children of Korlis, Sangrophage, Viashino Bladescout, Mystical Teachings, Barbed Shocker, Return to Dust, Foriysian Totem, Ith, High Arcanist, Psionic Blast

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Right, there's Ith and there's a Psi Blast. Packs like these make me awfully glad our group doesn't do the rare drafting bit. The winner of our eight-man gets all the rares, at the least including one delicious **Psionic Blast**. Great card, but it's not my pick here.

**Foriysian Totem** could almost be correct, and in a "normal" deck it probably would be. For good or bad, this deck is sliding into Sliver-mode, and as such, we can't let the **Bonesplitter Sliver** go. It would be nice if there was something more exciting to take, but one works with what one gets. Congrats to the people down the line however.

**My pick:** Bonesplitter Sliver

### Pack 3, Pick 2

Ophidian Eye, Molder, Benalish Cavalry, Coal Stoker, Fortify, Deathspore Thallid, Tolarian Sentinel, Mwonvuli Acid-Moss, Evil Eye of Urborg, Griffin Guide, Premature Burial, Magus of the Jar, Honorable Passage

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These are some dry pickings, tragic so early into pack 3. By this point a third **Coal Stoker** would seem really excessive, as this deck is far away from storm builds and continues to add cards in the four-spot. One could justify hate-drafting here, I suppose, but what would you take? Everyone who looks at this pack who isn't playing red-green is going to get something good.

Actually there is something fine here: the enchanto-riffic **Griffin Guide**. It fits the curve, it fits the philosophy, and, thanks to that Terramorphic pickup from before, it is genuinely castable in the deck. It's not a mortal lock to play, but it best marries quality with defense. A good reason to add another color, and it's the right pick here.

**My pick:** Griffin Guide

### Pack 3, Pick 3

Herd Gnarr, Chromatic Star, Looter il-Kor, Gorgon Recluse, Ground Rift, Eternity Snare, Skulking Knight, Sidewinder Sliver, Forest, Brine Elemental, Outrider en-Kor, Sedge Sliver, Avalanche Riders

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Feast or famine. **Sedge Sliver** is one of the best Slivers in *Time Spiral*, so we're happy to see it here third. The only issue is that irksome **Swamp** requirement. Clearly we can add the land, but it would mean losing the **Plains/Griffin Guide** option. Is that worth it here? **Avalanche Riders** is quite good, and doesn't require any fancy mana juggling. For that matter, the **Outrider en-Kor** stays within the G/R/w scheme, and the Star could simply let us cast all these pipe dreams. A lot of options in this pack.

Yet for all that, I can't let the **Sedge Sliver** go. It's truly excellent, and its effect on the game at least rivals that of **Griffin Guide**. We've basically been building a deck to take advantage of this guy. It would be a shame to pass it by. **Griffin Guide** is out. The **Swamp** is in. **Sedge Sliver** is in.

**My pick:** Sedge Sliver

### Pack 3, Pick 4

Flamecore Elemental, Venser's Sliver, Fortify, Mana Skimmer, Molder, Coral Trickster, Plunder, Spiketail Drakeling, Eternity Snare, Paradox Haze, Fortune Thief, Dragon Whelp

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Over dinner one night in Kobe, we got to talking about which was better: **Dragon Whelp** or **Pardic Dragon**. Each side had its advocates, although my instincts and the majority of the people did align with **Dragon Whelp**. The fact that Whelp can even be compared to **Pardic Dragon**, and that Whelp might be the better of the two, should give you some idea on just how strong this creature is. To see it here fourth pick is simply an error in someone's judgment, but an error I'm happy to take advantage of.

**My pick:** **Dragon Whelp**

### **Pack 3, Pick 5**

**Flamecore Elemental, Detainment Spell, Feebleness, Jedit's Dragoons, Chromatic Star, Foriysian Interceptor, Aetherflame Wall, Primal Forcemage, Spike Tiller (foil), Chronosavant, Gaea's Liege**

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I've always been a big fan of the Spikes. Innocuous-seeming, but their effect on the board is really pronounced. Tiller is pricey, but offering the inherent Spike ability or *nine* power worth of creatures is a great deal. **Chronosavant** may have been interesting had this deck still been with white, but as it is, I like the Tiller here as a late game gem.

**My pick:** **Spike Tiller**

### **Pack 3, Pick 6**

**Pentarch Ward, Dementia Sliver, Ophidian Eye, Dreadship Reef, Viscerid Deepwalker, Shadow Sliver, Ashcoat Bear, Mistform Ultimius, Chronatog Totem, Amrou Seekers**

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I know **Ashcoat Bear** has its supporters, but I find it a little too weak for main stage play. For every good thing it does, there are three instances of it having miniscule effect on the board. Had I taken it here, I was 100% sure it wouldn't be in the maindeck, nor was it very likely I'd side it in.

Instead, I snatched up the 4cc **Venser's Sliver Rebel, Mistform Ultimius**. By far it was the card I least wanted to see played against me; seeing it this late was a surprise in and of itself. But with genuinely nothing reasonable available in my colors, it's a card I was happy to remove from the others' consideration.

**My pick:** **Mistform Ultimius**

### **Pack 3, Pick 7**

**Dream Stalker, Goblin Skycutter, Skulking Knight, Brass Gnat, Ancient Grudge, Plunder, Undying Rage, Aspect of Mongoose, Restore Balance**

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According to everyone, **Undying Rage** is really good. Not **Moldervine Cloak** good, the card its most often compared to, but quite excellent all the same. In one of draft's most common ironies, there's not one card but two I'd like to add to the deck, even at pick seven. With its cheap cost and solid ability, **Goblin Skycutter** would certainly find a home in the final build. But it's no **Undying Rage**, a card that can win games all by itself. In answer to my own question from above, Red was clearly the right place to be this week.

**My pick:** **Undying Rage**

### **Pack 3, Pick 8**

**Mindlash Sliver, Pit Keeper, Divine Congregation, Sage of Epityr, Tolarian Sentinel, Truth or Tale, Plated Pegasus, Trickbind**

Another instance of hating with no cards left for the deck, the victim this time was **Tolarian Sentinel**. Incidentally, while hate drafting is still fundamentally flawed, *Time Spiral* does improve the process with its depth of playables. I can throw a few more picks out the window knowing I'll still end up with a 40 full of solid cards. The flaw with that plan is that the same depth gives other people strong decks too. While you're tossing picks to take theirs, they're merely taking the best card for their deck. In the end, you'll have a decent deck but they'll have an excellent one. Oh I know that one player you hindered will be in the same boat, but what about the other six? Defensive drafting is slightly more viable if you really are sure there's no pick you will use, but knowing *that* takes some legwork. When in doubt, take the card for yourself first and worry about other decks later. In this case, that wasn't an issue.

**My pick:** **Tolarian Sentinel**

### **Pack 3, Pick 9**

**Viashino Bladescout, Children of Korlis, Mystical Teachings, Cancel, Sangrophage, Barbed Shocker, Return to Dust**

Here, the Bladescout probably wouldn't do much for the deck, but that opportunity was better than taking the middle-of-the-road **Cancel**. I could see siding in the Bladescout, where I can't see actively going after **Cancels** when something better is around.

**My pick:** **Viashino Bladescout**

### **Pack 3, Pick 10**



## Round 1 vs. Tony Mayer

Organizer of [Draft Extravaganzas](#) and slightly too handsome for his own good, Tony had drafted one of the more interesting *Time Spiral* decks I've seen yet.

**Game 1:** Tony started off well with a **Chromatic Star**, **Stormscape Familiar**, and **Dreadship Reef**. He used all the mana and fixing to pop out a really early **Mishra, Artificer Prodigy!** The 4/4 was definitely the biggest thing on the board, and looked really spicy when Tony cast Stars two and three, earning serious card advantage.

Yet my deck wasn't leaving me in the lurch. An early suspended Baloth was promising big things, and a later **Coal Stoker** led to **Sedge Sliver** with regen mana up. The Familiar was hitting each turn, but with Mishra contained I had some breathing room. Tony made his big mistake here, and decided to attack with his Mishra one turn as well. I put him on a trick (Tony was also playing white), but there was really no option other than the double block. Even if **Snapback** or **Temporal Isolation** hit, it would give my Baloth a chance to have impact later on. Surprisingly, Tony had nothing, and I was able to trade my 3/3 for his 4/4. After that setback, my deck started to produce credible threats. Tony still had his Familiar and a morph he seemed reluctant to put in combat. Towards the end of the game, Tony made his push with each of us at lowish life.

Opponent (11 life): In play - **Dreadship Reef** with two counters on it, 3 Islands (all untapped), 2 Plains (both untapped), a morph (tapped and attacking), and a **Stormscape Familiar** (tapped and attacking).

Me (8 life): In play - **Spike Tiller** with 3 counters on it (untapped), **Dragon Whelp** (untapped), Swamp (untapped), Forest (untapped), 2x Mountain (untapped), **Sedge Sliver** (tapped), 2x Forest (tapped), and 2x Mountain (tapped)

With me at 8 life and Tony at 11, what's the play? [Click here.](#)

It's pretty obvious that the face-down is a **Brine Elemental**. As such, I was interested in killing it before its stats or ability became a real issue. The play here is to minimize the damage it can do by unmorphing while making sure it's dead no matter what it could be. Before blockers, I spent two mana to make the Tiller a 2/2 and an untapped land a 3/3. The land and Tiller jumped in front of the morph, and the Whelp stepped into the Familiar. The Brine did unmorph, and damage both its blockers. I used the last two mana (creature land and regular land) to animate something else. All Tony's creatures died, and I was left with a **Dragon Whelp** and two 3/3s. Not bad.

After that, Tony couldn't come back, and my creatures took him down.

**Game 2:** The second game was probably the best draw the deck could find. **Greenseeker**, **Sedge Sliver**, **Might Sliver**, **Fire Whip**, **Fiery Temper**, **Mountain**, **Mountain**, and **Forest**. Amazing. Tony led again with the Familiar, proclaiming its excellence. I had to agree, which was why I shot it out of the sky via **Fire Whip**. The **Greenseeker** started doing its thing, and Tony couldn't overcome a pair of 5/5 regenerators, even with **Momentary Blink** / **Defiant Vanguard** tricks.

## Round 2 vs. David Derekson

David had just come back from a successful trip to [PT - Kobe](#), where he was eager to show his motley crew exactly what he had picked up in the mysterious Orient.

**Game 1:** I showed David what I learned over there by drawing my single **Swamp** alongside **Sedge Sliver** and **Hivestone**. Channeler was big, **Spike Tiller** was big, **Dragon Whelp** was really big. David tried to pull something off with **Strangling Soot** on the **Sedge Sliver**, but I decided to keep the **Swamp** open and just move a spike counter over. David literally slumped in his chair after that move and packed it in.

**Game 2:** I got steamrolled here. Keeping my slow draw was definitely an error, as David continued to upgrade his forces, ending in the 8/8 **Spectral Force**. Luckily for me, I wasn't playing black permanents. Unfortunately for me, I was playing with a life total, which **Spectral Force** is also very good against. A sad attempt at a double block with **Keldon Halberdier** and **Bonesplitter Sliver** ended in scoopage when David flashed the **Feebleness**.



**Game 3:** Easily the most interesting and interactive game of the night. I again started with **Hivestone** and **Sedge Sliver** and Halberdier, but David had a good answer in double **Gorgon Recluse**. We're in a bit of a race, as David was willing to lose creatures and take some damage to kill my guys and give some damage. The reason for his trades became clear, when after I spent spike counters and a creature to kill a Recluse, he brought it back via **Pit Keeper**. Still, our damage was adding up, and the creatures were developing to Gorgon-killing size. The little Persei made me so proud.

Our problem was a classic one; whomever made their move first lost. At 8 life apiece with David at no cards in hand, I saw a sequence that ended in my victory, assuming David drew nothing for about 3-5 turns. I played **Undying Rage** on his **Basal Sliver** and attack with Halberdier. It got blocked by a Recluse, trading it up. Meanwhile I was still using **Greenseeker** like mad, trying to sift all the lands out of the deck. Leaving the one **Swamp** up, I was still able block and regenerate anything against his 5/5 Basal. David turned my plan on its ear when he played **Vampiric Sliver**. Now not only was I shut down from attacking, but (thanks to **Undying Rage**) he had enough good creatures to begin attacking me. Indeed, his next attack brought me to 4 life. Holding a **Sulfurous Blast** that appeared to do nothing, I drew the quality **Flowstone Channeler**. Once again, the game was winnable if things fell into place. What was the play?

Opponent (8 life): In play - **Ashcoat Bear** (untapped), **Gorgon Recluse** (untapped), **Pit Keeper** (untapped), **Basal Sliver** (tapped) enchanted with **Undying Rage**, and **Vampiric Sliver** (tapped), 5 Forest (all untapped), and 5 Swamp (all untapped). No cards in hand.

Me (4 life): In play - 5 Mountains (all untapped), 3 Forest (all untapped), Swamp (untapped), **Venser's Sliver** (untapped), **Sedge Sliver** (untapped), **Greenseeker** (untapped), and **Hivestone** (untapped). In hand - Mountain, **Sulfurous Blast**, and **Flowstone Channeler**.

At 4 life to my opponent's 8, what's my move? [Click here](#).

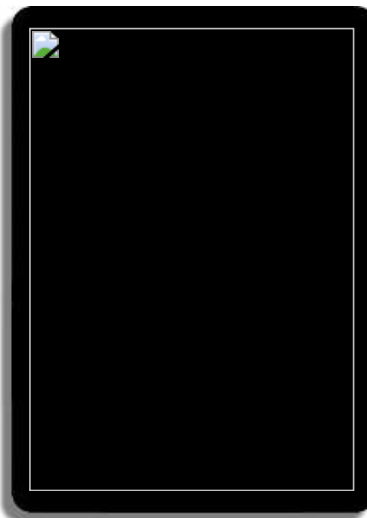
The play is to cast **Flowstone Channeler** and say go. Two things have to go right on the next turn. David needs to attack with his Slivers, and he can't play a creature with toughness 3 or greater. If both of these things happen, I win.

On David's turn he again attacked with the Slivers. My **Greenseeker** jumped in the way of one and Venser's blocked another, with Venser's regenerating. David tapped three and played... **Trespasser il-Vec**. Woot.

My turn was an attack with all three remaining creatures, a **Sedge Sliver**, **Venser's Sliver**, and 3/3 **Flowstone Channeler**. In the combat step before blockers, **Sulfurous Blast** for two points killed all of David's blockers but the Recluse. The Recluse blocked the 4/4, leaving the two 3/3s to deal damage. Those 6 points plus the 2 from the Blast was 8, and enough for the match win.

The other finalist of our draft was perennial champ Ricky Boyes. We split the rares down the middle and called it a night. As I collected my cards (Psi Blast came back after all) and shuffled out the door, I heard Ricky calling out an invitation for a 2 on 2. He had a bunch of takers. They're fun guys.

Have a good week, and if you happen to be at [Grand Prix - New Jersey](#) this weekend, be sure and say hi. Thanks for reading.



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