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The Evolution of Fractured Crusading Sliver Fungus (Part 1 of 3)

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Building on a Budget
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Tap Tap Tap

hey you - yes, you! On the other side of this computer screen. Do you know what time it is?

It's Super-Fun Theme Deck Evolution Time!

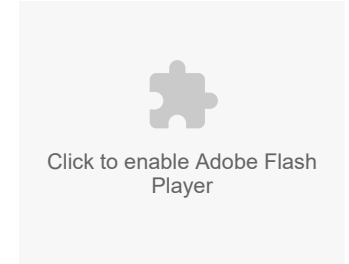
Last week I asked which deck you wanted me to evolve, and you spoke with four far-from-unified voices and came up with these results:

Which <i>Time Spiral</i> Theme Deck would you like to see Ben doctor first?		
Fun With Fungus	2674	37.7%
Sliver Evolution	1757	24.8%
Reality Fracture	1716	24.2%
Hope's Crusaders	950	13.4%
Total	7097	100.0%

- Building on a Budget is dedicated to making decks that cost 30 tickets or less on **Magic Online**. Weekly deck testing is done using **Magic Online**.
 - This week's deck focuses on the evolution of a theme deck from *Time Spiral*. Assume the cost of a theme deck is 12 tickets.
 - Theme deck evolutions will always focus on Standard. The legal sets right now are *Ravnica*, *Guildpact*, *Dissension*, *Coldsnap*, and *Time Spiral*.
 - Before I forget, and *9th Edition*. Poor *9th Edition* - no one ever remembers him. Perhaps the Alamo?



PRO TOUR-VALENCIA



Update on Rain Delay

We're always aiming to please here at Building on a Budget, so I have a deck that has a little something for everybody! May I present to you: "I Hope to have Real Fun with the Evolution of Fractured Crusading Sliver Fungus!"

I Hope to have Real Fun with the Evolution of Fractured Crusading Sliver Fungus!



Evolution of Fractured Crusading Sliver Fungus

Main Deck
240 cards

21 Forest	2 Giant Oyster	1 Avoid Fate
1 Gemstone Mine	3 Icatian Javelineers	3 Claws of Gix
12 Island	2 Spined Sliver	1 Serrated Arrows
17 Mountain	2 Thallid	1 Whispers of the Muse
1 Pendelhaven	2 Zhalfirin Commander	1 Assassinate
31 Plains	3 Benalish Cavalry	1 Careful Consideration
10 Swamp	3 Bonesplitter Sliver	2 Clockspinning
1 Dreadship Reef	2 Brass Gnat	1 Divine Congregation
2 Terramorphic Expanse	2 Cavalry Master	1 Dread Return
96 lands	1 Celestial Crusader	3 Empty the Warrens
	1 Clockwork Hydra	2 Fallen Ideal
	1 Cloudchaser Kestrel	1 Feebleness
	2 Coal Stoker	1 Fortify
	3 Deathspore Thallid	3 Gaze of Justice
	1 Deep-Sea Kraken	4 Grapeshot
	2 D'Avenant Healer	1 Ground Rift
	2 Errant Doomsayers	2 Ignite Memories
	1 Errant Ephemeron	1 Krosan Grip
	2 Foriysian Interceptor	1 Might of Old Krosa
	1 Fungus Sliver	1 Molder
	2 Fury Sliver	1 Rift Bolt
	4 Gemhide Sliver	1 Sarpadian Empires, Vol. VII
	1 Gustcloak Cavalier	2 Spirit Loop
	1 Harmonic Sliver	2 Sprout
	2 Herd Gnarr	4 Strength in Numbers
	1 Icatian Crier	2 Sudden Death
	1 Ivory Giant	2 Thunder Totem
	1 Jhoira's Timebug	1 Verdant Embrace
	2 Keldon Halberdier	
	3 Knight of the Holy Nimbus	
	2 Might Sliver	

47 other spells

2 Outrider en-Kor
 1 Pardic Dragon
 2 Pendelhaven Elder
 1 Pentarch Paladin
 1 Pulmonic Sliver
 3 Quilled Sliver
 3 Riftwing Cloudskate
 1 Sage of Epityr
 2 Savage Thallid
 3 Sidewinder Sliver
 2 Sporesower Thallid
 3 Thallid Germinator
 3 Thallid Shell-Dweller
 1 Thelon of Havenwood
 2 Two-Headed Sliver
 2 Venser's Sliver
 3 Viscerid Deepwalker
 3 Watcher Sliver
 1 Wormwood Dryad

97 creatures

"But Ben," I hear many of you screaming from the future forums, "this deck is a jumbled mess! It makes no sense, it has 240 cards, and the lands are all wrong? Plus, four theme decks is wayyyyyyyyyyyy over budget! Is this the end of all civilization as we know it?"

Well heck, I say to you - maybe it's my birthday! Maybe my grandma scrimped and saved for months so she could mail me a bucketful of shiny nickels, COD, so I could open up the bucketful of shiny nickels to pay the mail delivery guy for the bucketful of shiny nickels? Did you ever think about that?

I didn't think so.

In all seriousness though, I had an idea of taking all four theme decks, throwing them together, and then cutting cards 20 or so at a time until we ended up with a sixty card deck. After five games with this monstrosity of a deck, I scrapped that idea. Let's just say that this deck breaks virtually every rule of deckbuilding - and plus which, the nice folks at Wizards gave us some slightly more functional decks to toy around with. Decks like this:

Reality Fracture

Time Spiral Theme Deck

Main Deck
60 cards

<p>12 Island 11 Mountain 1 Dreadship Reef</p> <hr/> <p>24 lands</p>	<p>2 Giant Oyster 1 Clockwork Hydra 2 Coal Stoker 1 Deep-Sea Kraken 1 Errant Ephemeron 1 Jhoira's Timebug 2 Keldon Halberdier 1 Pardic Dragon 3 Riftwing Cloudskate 1 Sage of Epityr 3 Viscerid Deepwalker</p> <hr/> <p>18 creatures</p>	<p>2 Claws of Gix 1 Serrated Arrows 1 Whispers of the Muse 1 Careful Consideration 2 Clockspinning 3 Empty the Warrens 4 Grapeshot 1 Ground Rift 2 Ignite Memories 1 Rift Bolt</p> <hr/> <p>18 other spells</p>
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I chose to start with Reality Fracture because it focuses the most on the new mechanics of *Time Spiral* - in this case, suspend. Suspend is a really interesting ability, because it has multiple game play implications.

1) You can trade time for mana. **Errant Ephemeron** is a 4/4 flyer - much like **Air Elemental**. **Air Elemental** would cost five mana, but **Errant Ephemeron** costs seven. Doesn't seem like a deal so far, right? Well, here's the catch - you can suspend **Errant Ephemeron** on turn two and have it come into play as a hasted 4/4 flyer on turn six. You know what else comes into play as a hasted 4/4 flyer on turn six? **Volcanic Dragon**. The difference is, **Volcanic Dragon** makes you tap out turn six. **Errant Ephemeron** allows you to have all your mana open for other spells.

2) Suspend allows you to store up cards for future consideration. Take, for example, **Rift Bolt**. Let's say my opponent casts **Llanowar Elves**. I suspend **Rift Bolt**, and it changes my opponent's choices. Maybe they were going to drop **Ohran Viper**. If they do, then it will surely get fried by the bolt. If they don't, that's one less Elf they'll have.

3) Suspend works really, really well with storm. When you remove the last suspend counter from a card, that's when it counts as "being played." This allows the Reality Fracture deck to set up some really big turns, in which

multiple cards become unsususpended at once, and then a storm spell (*Empty the Warrens*, *Grapeshot*, *Ignite Memories*) copies itself five or six times. Good stuff.

Let's take a look at the contents of the Reality Fracture deck, so we can understand what makes it tick.

Creatures with Suspend:

- 1 Deep-Sea Kraken
- 1 Errant Ephemeron
- 2 Keldon Halberdier
- 1 Pardic Dragon
- 3 Riftwing Cloudskate
- 3 Viscerid Deepwalker

(11 Total)

For a deck that relies half on suspend and half on storm, this deck is awfully light on suspend creatures. There's only eleven here, and they don't even seem to be the right eleven. *Errant Ephemeron* is almost always better than *Viscerid Deepwalker*, and *Pardic Dragon* can be kept out of play by an opponent who plays, you know, spells. Unfortunately, *Greater Gargadon* is the only other Suspend creature in red or blue not represented in this deck. (Note to everyone: lth does not count.) I'm sure that if I evolve the deck towards the suspend theme, this configuration of creatures will change.



Creatures without Suspend:

- 1 Clockwork Hydra
- 2 Coal Stoker
- 2 Giant Oyster
- 1 Jhoira's Timebug
- 1 Sage of Epityr

(7 total)

All right, here's the problem - the support creatures in this deck are on the essage side of depressive. *Jhoira's Timebug* makes a lot of sense in this deck - it helps you accelerate all of your suspend cards by a turn (or push them back, if you want to delay them for some reason - like if you have a *Riftwing Cloudskate* about to come into play and your opponent has no creatures). The other four creatures are dubious at best.



Clockwork Hydra, *Giant Oyster*: Both of these are designed to work with *Clockspinning*. The problem is, *Clockspinning* is mainly here for Suspend, and the effects of *Clockwork Hydra* and *Giant Oyster* are both underwhelming. Moreover, *Giant Oyster* needs to have a tapped creature to work. There's no ways in this entire deck to artificially tap a creature. Is there an *Icy Manipulator* in the house? Mangara, did you bring your *Amber Prison*? Anyone?

Am I playing to a dead house in here?

Coal Stoker is a neat trick to use to improve your storm count...but if you aren't going to storm, chances are you're getting a *Hill Giant* with three points of mana burn. If I wanted that, I'd play *Serpent Warrior*.

Sage of Epityr helps you set up your draws, but doesn't necessarily have anything to do with either storm or suspend. However, since setting up all your suspend spells in the early game can help allow for one huge storm-

count turn, the Sage helps there.

Storm Cards:

3 Empty the Warrens
4 Grapeshot
1 Ground Rift
2 Ignite Memories

(10 total)

These all seem fine, except for **Ground Rift**. I wouldn't play **Panic Attack** in a constructed deck, and I definitely wouldn't play a bad version of **Panic Attack**. I'm going to play a few games with this deck to get a feel for it, but **Ground Rift** does too little for its effect. If I wanted to remove all blockers, I'd just kill or bounce them. For the love of Pete, I'm playing blue and red! It's not like blue and red have problems getting rid of guys on the board. This isn't green/white, fellahs!

Other:

1 Careful Consideration
2 Claws of Gix
2 Clockspinning
1 Rift Bolt
1 Serrated Arrows
1 Whispers of the Muse

(8 Total)

Claws of Gix is in the deck solely to pump storm count, since you can drop it for free. It might as well read "0: All your storm spells storm for one more." **Clockspinning** works with counters (as in on permanents or on suspend cards, not as in counterspells, which are noticeably missing from this deck in any way, shape or form), **Serrated Arrows** is just good, solid creature kill, **Rift Bolt** is missing three other copies, and **Whispers of the Muse** and **Careful Consideration** are random blue card drawing spells thrown into the deck for good measure.

Lands:

12 Island
11 Mountain
1 Dreadship Reef

Do not like **Dreadship Reef**? I don't see an X-spell in this deck - why is a half-off color land in a deck that tends to not need extra mana thanks to suspend? Also, there are 23 blue-mana symbols in the costs of spells in this deck, and 17 red. Of these, many of them need to be online by turn two (the suspend cards), so if a deck ever needed a **Gemstone Mine**, it's this one. (Why is that in the Sliver deck and not this one? Woulda worked well with **Clockspinning**, folks!)

In short, this deck wants to suspend a bunch of guys, time them so they all come into play around the same turn, and then hit large storm counts. Unfortunately, the wrong quantities of each suspend creature are in this deck, the support spells and creatures are pretty awful, and there's too little theme (**Jhoira's Timebugs** and **Clockspinning**) and too much chaff (**Ground Rift**, **Clockwork Hydra**, **Claws of Gix**).

I don't expect the first few practice games to be pretty.

Game 1: Darktama (Modified Reality Fracture)

Ha ha, funny - my first practice game with the non-modified Reality Fracture deck is against a modified Reality Fracture deck! I mulligan a one-land hand. On my first turn, I suspend a first turn **Viscerid Deepwalker**, and on the second turn, **Keldon Halberdier**. He suspends **Wheel of Fate** and then drops a lot of mana artifacts (**Prismatic Lens**, **Izzet Signet**) and **Confiscates** an **Island**. I respond by **Clockspinning** my **Halberdier** and throwing **Riftwing Cloudskate** into the aether. The **Halberdiers** and **Viscerid Deepwalker** come into play and hit him, and I suspend **Rift Bolt**.

Wheel of Fate goes off, and he **Remands** the **Cloudskate** (but why? He has no creatures!) and then suspends **Deep-Sea Kraken**. He steals two more lands, leaving me with one. I play **Sage of Epityr**, get a second land, and suspend **Riftwing Cloudskates** on consecutive turns. He **Electrolyzes** the **Halberdier** and **Confiscates** the **Deepwalker**. I drop **Claws of Gix** (which would have been good against all his **Confiscating/Annexing** action), land my first **Cloudskate** (returning the **Deepwalker** back to my hand), and then eat **Pyroclasm**.

On my next turn the second **Cloudskate** comes onto the stack, which removes the last counter from his **Kraken**. The **Kraken** comes into play, then my **Cloudskate** comes into play, bouncing his **Kraken**. Ka-ching! I make a note that being able to engineer the time that my **Cloudskates** come into play (through **Timebugs** or **Clockspinning**) will be really powerful. He **Boomerangs** my **Cloudskate**, and I cast **Grapeshot** for 4 to finish him off.

Record: 1-0



Game 2: SkunkliX2004 (U/R Izzet)

I mulligan, and draw four **Islands** and two creatures. I suspend **Viscerid Deepwalker**, and then cast **Sage of Epityr**. He drops four **Islands** as well. **Viscerid Deepwalker** hits, and then I draw a **Mountain** to cast **Ignite Memories** with one storm. It reveals **Cerulean Sphinx** and **Flame Wave**, taking him to 5. He never gets a **Mountain**, and the Deepwalker finishes him off.

Record: 2-0

Game 3: Aegil (W/G Elves)

I get my third mulligan in three games, as I have only one land in my opening hand. I get stuck at two lands for the entire game, and I die to a horde of **Guildmages** and **Saprolings** with a hand of double **Grapeshot**, **Giant Oyster**, and **Serrated Arrows**.

Record: 2-1

Game 4: Prebunk (B/R Burn)

This time around, I draw eleven lands and four spells. Two of those four spells get hit by a pair of **Rise // Fall**, and my two guys die to a hail of burn.

Record: 2-2

Game 5: Montegue (R/G/W Weenie)

I suspend **Errant Ephemeron** on turn two, and **Riftwing Cloudskate** and **Viscerid Deepwalker** on turn three. He casts turn-three **Sunforger** and turn-four **Lightning Helix** (at me) to allow for a 3/3 **Scab-Clan Mauler**, and then he smacks me for 7 on turn five, bringing me to 10. I play **Clockspinning** with buyback on my **Cloudskate**, getting the Mauler off the board. I finally draw my first **Mountain** of the game that turn, I **Clockspin** **Errant Ephemeron** into play, hit him for 6 hasted damage, and then cast **Empty the Warrens** for eight. This draws a concession.

Record: 3-2

Although I ended up with a winning record, I had to exercise all my self control to keep from heaving my keyboard across the room. Although there is some luck involved in **Magic**, I completed five straight games where I had mana problems in each and every game. The above games involved three mulligans, one land flood, and four games where I didn't draw a second color of mana until past turn four. Mana issues take any fun out of the game, since you literally sit there not being able to play spells while your opponent wails on you.

The first change I made to **Reality Fracture** was to add in four **Izzet Boilerworks**. These would smooth out the mana a lot and would keep me from having as many lack-of-mana issues in future games. To make room for them, I took out the **Dreadship Reef**, two **Islands**, and a **Mountain**.

I also wanted to play around more with the cards which allow my suspended guys to resolve earlier, so I added in two **Jhoira's Timebug** and took out a **Clockwork Hydra** and a **Ground Rift**. I didn't want to fiddle too much with the deck, since my mana issues had prevented me from really seeing the deck in full action. What I did see showed a lot of potential - huge turns with multiple suspend cards resolving at once, resulting in 5-6 **Grapeshots**, 12-20 damage from **Ignite Memories**, or 8-12 **Goblins** coming into play at once.



Reality Fracture 2		
Main Deck 60 cards		
4 Izzet Boilerworks	2 Giant Oyster	2 Claws of Gix
10 Island	2 Coal Stoker	1 Serrated Arrows
10 Mountain	1 Deep-Sea Kraken	1 Whispers of the Muse
24 lands	1 Errant Ephemeron	1 Careful Consideration
	3 Jhoira's Timebug	2 Clockspinning
	2 Keldon Halberdier	3 Empty the Warrens

1 Pardic Dragon	4 Grapeshot
3 Riftwing Cloudskate	2 Ignite Memories
1 Sage of Epityr	1 Rift Bolt
3 Viscerid Deepwalker	17 other spells
19 creatures	

Out: Dreadship Reef, Ground Rift, 2 Island, Mountain, Clockwork Hydra
In: 4 Izzet Boilerworks, 2 Jhoira's Timebug

Join me next week as I continue to evolve the Reality Fracture deck - with 300% more **Rift Bolts**, guaranteed.

Where should Ben focus his efforts for the Reality Fracture deck?

- Suspend! It holds up the pants.
- Storm! November showers bring December flowers.
- Counters! And I mean in the **Giant Oyster/Serrated Arrows** sense. Boo **Cancel!** Down with **Spell Burst!**

Submit my Vote

*Ben Bleiweiss has written about his obsession with **Magic: The Gathering** for over a decade. He's travelled the world because of **Magic**, both as a player and a writer. When not spending time playing **Magic**, writing about **Magic**, or thinking about **Magic**, Ben is employed by StarCityGames.com, where he works with **Magic** cards all day long. He lives with his wife in Virginia, and they sleep comfortably at night under their Orgg down comforter.*



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