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# Wish You Were Here...

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Swimming With Sharks  
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... Oh, there you are!

The one main sideboarding style I left out of last week's re-run "[The Craft of Sideboarding](#)" was the so-called dedicated "Wish" sideboard. I didn't actually intend to write this article this week, but it dawned on me that I have *Planar Chaos* previews the next two weeks (lucky me, lucky you... Did you see the [Black Wrath](#) yet?), and we'll hit the ground running *and hard* for [Extended PTOs](#) from there. If I were going to finish out the sideboarding strategies in time for the only formats where they are relevant – Extended and to a lesser extent Legacy (just like the season itself) – it would have to be this week.

This rare cycle from Judgment is extremely special. It did something that few cards, cycles, and even mechanics can claim: The Wishes changed a basic paradigm of how the game is played, and any deck that plays them will be constructed in a fundamentally different way than non-Wish decks. The most extreme Wish decks will be essentially 75 cards rather than 60 (Wishes all accessing the sideboard), and even the minor Wish deck will show special attention to its sideboard positioning. Don't worry, don't worry... We'll get to all of this.



Now the *Judgment* Wishes all indicate that you can choose any card (of the appropriate type) "from outside the game" but for serious Magic players, that generally means "your sideboard." There are situations even in tournament play where you can select a card that has been *removed* from the game some other way (a particularly annoying move during the battles between disruption and control in the height of *Psychatog* was for *Cunning Wish* to retrieve a *Fact or Fiction* hidden under *Mesmeric Fiend*... how awful), but because we can't approach tournaments *expecting* to be victims of *Final Judgment* and *Faceless Butcher* every game we draw our Wishes, the assumption when we construct decks with Wishes is that we will be at least *mostly* retrieving cards from the side fifteen.

## Wish Basics

There are only three Wishes to consider for serious Constructed decks: *Burning Wish*, *Cunning Wish*, and *Living Wish*. *Golden Wish* would be an All-Star at three mana or fewer, but R&D – probably correctly – costed it prohibitively; as such there are at the time of this writing no notable decks based around *Golden Wish*. *Death Wish* is a tricky one... There have been one or two decks that won via (or really, *despite*) a *Death Wish* (John "friggin'" Rizzo's 2006 Magic Invitational deck is the first one that pops into my mind, but that is because Dave Williams ripped this particular one-outer to beat me with it), but the vast majority off all Wish strategy will center around one of *Burning*, *Cunning*, or *Living Wishes*.

### Burning Wish

This card is both powerful and flexible. It adds layered angles of attack to ostensibly simple beatdown decks, made for hateful fun in mid-range control, and even stolen the show from *Cunning Wish* in true control.



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## Cunning Wish

This is the most expensive of the tournament caliber Wishes, and by design... **Cunning Wish** is the instant equivalent of **Burning Wish**, and if **Burning Wish** is as good as it is at two, **Cunning Wish** would almost certainly be *too* good at the same mana cost. As it is, **Cunning Wish** is probably the most powerful of the trio because of its ability to string together a series of plays without giving the opponent (at least much of) a chance to confound even an intricate plan. It is a natural inclusion in true control, can add combination complexities to true control, or – especially at its "best" – facilitate combinations, especially storm combinations.



## Living Wish

This card is the most flexible of the three as it can retrieve two different kinds of cards. All three of the Wishes can play "toolbox" (see below), but **Living Wish** can also masquerade as a cantrip or land cyclor (and sometimes, *literally*, either). Most otherwise-reasonable two-land hands are generally reasonable keeps, but the worst-case scenario for a two-land **Living Wish** hand will generally be three lands, at least unless the opponent is blue. Like **Burning Wish** and **Cunning Wish**, **Living Wish** can facilitate a combo deck, but because creatures and combos play rarely on the same squads, **Living Wish**'s role in that kind of a deck will be rarer.

There are both positives and sacrifices associated with playing a Wish suite. Wish decks are more flexible than traditional decks. Clever Wish sideboards can present answers for many, most, or all a format's expected threats, and can play with a hateful effectiveness that seems almost pre-sideboarded.

"Wow!" you must be thinking. "Wishes seem great! I'm sure that when *Judgment* came out, everyone ran out to crack packs, buy, and trade for the Wishes relevant to their colors *just to keep up with other people's Wishes!*" Certainly Wishes changed established matchups in the summer of 2002, and had ripple effects that continue all the way to the present Extended. However, Wish sideboards were never and are not today universally adopted, and for good reason. While Wishes *do* increase a deck's flexibility and allow it to change or break certain rules of **Magic: The Gathering**, all this comes at a price. Wish decks are necessarily slower than their non-Wish counterparts (just imagine how fast TEPS would be!) and give up margin in three-game matches. Sideboarded games are statistically more important than Game 1s (theoretically you play both Game 1 and Game 2, a sideboarded game, and sometimes Game 3, also a sideboarded game) and even though Wish decks that play for flexibility and pre-emption have stronger Game 1s, they necessarily have fewer sideboard slots for those 2s and 3s. Definitely there are reasons to play Wish sideboards, but there are also reasons *not* to play Wish sideboards.



## Living Wish in Action

Gary Wise		
Beats – PT Chicago Masters 2003		
Main Deck	Sideboard	
60 cards		
4 <b>Brushland</b>	3 <b>Beast Attack</b>	1 <b>Anger</b>
3 <b>City of Brass</b>	4 <b>Call of the Herd</b>	2 <b>Compost</b>
2 <b>Contested Cliffs</b>	4 <b>Living Wish</b>	1 <b>Contested Cliffs</b>
6 <b>Forest</b>		1 <b>Genesis</b>
1 <b>Mountain</b>	11 other spells	1 <b>Glory</b>
3 <b>Plains</b>		1 <b>Goblin Sharpshooter</b>
4 <b>Wooded Foothills</b>		1 <b>Intrepid Hero</b>
23 lands		3 <b>Naturalize</b>
		1 <b>NullImage Advocate</b>
4 <b>Anurid Brushhopper</b>		1 <b>Silkash Spider</b>
4 <b>Birds of Paradise</b>		2 <b>Worship</b>
3 <b>Exalted Angel</b>		
3 <b>Glory</b>		
		15 sideboard cards

4 Llanowar Elves  
 4 Ravenous Baloth  
 4 Wild Mongrel

26 creatures

### How does this deck work?

Beasts is a straightforward creature deck, and about as "fair" and not so fast as you will likely see in this column. Gary's deck was a metagame call, meaning that he did not pick it based on power or speed, but on the fact that he would be playing against a lot of small creatures; he had eight mana accelerators and fairly big creatures, so he thought he could win a lot of fights. **Glory** was his **Wild Mongrel**'s non-blue equivalent to **Wonder** (and a better **Wonder** than **Wonder** if he had three mana), and his non-Beast flashbacks were very useful; **Call of the Herd** teamed up with **Anurid Brushhopper** and **Exalted Angel** for some nice second turns, and **Beast Attack** teamed up with **Contested Cliffs** (much like **Ravenous Baloth** and the aforementioned Brushhopper) to break **Contested Cliffs** against small, or at least smaller, creatures.

Gary's deck from the Top 8 of the 2003 Chicago Masters is actually one of my favorite deck lists of all time. It was a fierce metagame call, much better overall than it might look at first glance, and illustrates a great many points.

The first one, which bears mention because we are taking an unusual deck list *way* out of context for an initial discussion, is the issue of speed we mentioned earlier. Gary's deck is positively *glass* when compared with the default G/R creature deck from its era. As a point of comparison, here is the G/R deck played by [The Magic Academy](#)'s Jeff Cunningham (ffej) at the same tournament:

Main Deck 60 cards		Sideboard
4 Forest	4 Call of the Herd	2 Boil
4 Karplusan Forest	3 Elephant Guide	4 Compost
3 Mossfire Valley	3 Fiery Temper	3 Ensnaring Bridge
7 Mountain	4 Firebolt	2 Flaring Pain
4 Wooded Foothills	3 Violent Eruption	2 Lava Dart
22 lands	4 Volcanic Hammer	2 Naturalize
	21 other spells	15 sideboard cards
4 Basking Rootwalla		
2 Blistering Firecat		
3 Grim Lavamancer		
4 Llanowar Elves		
4 Wild Mongrel		
17 creatures		

Jeff's deck also has **Llanowar Elves**, **Wild Mongrel**, and **Call of the Herd**, but plays much differently than Gary's. Jeff's deck is much more thematic (almost all of the "spells" have some sort of synergy with **Wild Mongrel**, even Flashbacks **Firebolt** and **Call of the Herd**), much faster, and certainly more base-offensive. You probably could not have built a deck like ffej's using **Living Wish**. His deck relies on getting a fast **Wild Mongrel** and riding it to the max with **Odyssey** mechanics, maybe burning you out Boros-style after his attackers have gotten a few points in. Gary's deck has a more methodical game and is designed to take the time necessary to fill that game out... This is neither here nor there, but ffej's deck, with its greater speed and non-reliance on Wishes, was much better against **Psychatog**.

Back to Gary, and back to **Living Wish**... The Wise Beasts deck is fairly thematic – Beasts – but not "just" a Beasts deck. He could get a broken **Exalted Angel** draw on **Birds of Paradise** and **Llanowar Elves**, or play the Beasts game. You can tell that while this deck has a fair amount of Beasts-friendly elements, it wasn't the Berkowitz deck or even the Garfield (yes, *that* Garfield) deck from the same era (no **Canopy Crawlers** and no **Feral Throwbacks**... not enough "real" Beasts). In the same way, while this sideboard is clearly built for **Living Wish**, it's not like it's *only* a **Living Wish** sideboard. Unlike some of the others we might see, Gary's board has some measure of Game 2 flexibility, with **Compost** for black, **Naturalize** for board control and tempo, and **Worship** as a soft lock.

On the other hand, this *is* predominantly a **Living Wish** sideboard. One of the best things about **Living Wish** is that Gary could hide his 24th land in the sideboard and could run the second-turn **Living Wish** with either two lands or a first-turn accelerator and play some kind of a game plan even when he started light. In many decks you will see either a key colored land (I would not have been surprised to see the fourth **City of Brass** in a three-color deck from this era), or sometimes a utility land like **Tranquil Thicket**, depending on the themes involved. Gary got to run a nice cheat in the Beasts deck... He had the hidden 24th land, and made it the fourth



**Contested Cliffs.** This was a land drop (but not the best "worst case scenario" singleton choice) but more importantly an actual strategic element for his game plan.

A fair number of Gary's sideboard cards were dedicated to *his* Wild Mongrels... **Anger**, **Genesis**, and **Glory** are all potentially very good, all best when on the same squad as a certain Savage Bastard. He also has some "get out of jail free" cards, most notably **Intrepid Hero** (kills everything in U/G) and **Silkflash Spider** (not even Akroma crosses this card).

A deck that was clearly influenced by Gary's and got the mention for "best sideboard in recent memory" by Randy Buehler showed up at last year's [Extended Pro Tour](#):

Jeff Novekoff		
BigNTasty – PT Chicago Masters 2003		
Main Deck		Sideboard
60 cards		
2 <b>Bloodstained Mire</b>	4 <b>Cabal Therapy</b>	1 <b>Blinkmoth Well</b>
4 <b>Contested Cliffs</b>	2 <b>Duress</b>	2 <b>Duress</b>
3 <b>Forest</b>	1 <b>Farseek</b>	1 <b>Dwarven Blastminer</b>
3 <b>Llanowar Wastes</b>	4 <b>Living Wish</b>	3 <b>Engineered Plague</b>
1 <b>Mountain</b>	4 <b>Pernicious Deed</b>	1 <b>Eternal Witness</b>
3 <b>Overgrown Tomb</b>	2 <b>Putrefy</b>	1 <b>Genesis</b>
1 <b>Sacred Foundry</b>		1 <b>Goblin Pyromancer</b>
1 <b>Swamp</b>	17 other spells	1 <b>Kataki, War's Wage</b>
4 <b>Wooded Foothills</b>		1 <b>Silkflash Spider</b>
		1 <b>Spiritmonger</b>
22 lands		1 <b>Viridian Shaman</b>
		1 <b>Withered Wretch</b>
4 <b>Birds of Paradise</b>		15 sideboard cards
2 <b>Eternal Witness</b>		
4 <b>Flametongue Kavu</b>		
4 <b>Ravenous Baloth</b>		
4 <b>Sakura-Tribe Elder</b>		
3 <b>Spiritmonger</b>		
21 creatures		

#### How does this deck work?

Jeff's deck was a hybrid of Beasts and The Rock. Thanks to *Ravnica* and its new dual lands, this deck made it possible for the **Contested Cliffs** and big creatures of Beasts to support the gradual card advantage, attrition, disruptive elements, and removal of The Rock. This was actually a powerful combination, as Beasts was good against creatures but not much else and The Rock had for some years been slipping in the threats category; together they could smash creatures with size, unfriendly footing, and Papa Tongue, and rip the most important card out of a combo deck's hand.

Jeff started off savagely (second only to Craig Jones after Day One, and in sole possession of first place by Round 9), but the wheels fell off a bit and he barely squeaked into the Top 32 (31).

We see a lot of the same themes as Gary's deck here... Extant but not dedicated Beasts plan, dedicated but not single-minded **Living Wish** sideboard, singleton specialty land in the 'board. For those of you gearing up for [Extended PTQs](#) in 48 hours, don't forget the **Blinkmoth Well**! Jeff didn't, and he used it to neuter an **Isochron Scepter** more than once.

Jeff's creature selection is more of a toolbox than Gary's. He has the hate creatures – **Withered Wretch** for graveyards, **Dwarven Blastminer** for the 'Tron, **Goblin Pyromancer** for Goblins, and **Kataki, War's Wage** and *that one Sacred Foundry* for you-know-who – but also cards that were just generally good with his strategy... **Viridian Shaman** is a nice out against Affinity or NO Stick, and this is a good spot to illustrate the concept of breaking the Rule of Four.

Normally **Magic** decks can only play four copies of any one spell, four **Spiritmongers** or four **Eternal Witnesses**, say. By playing four **Living Wishes**, Jeff actually ups his potential **Spiritmongers** to seven (three actual **Spiritmongers** and four shots to get another one), and he gets more potential **Eternal Witnesses** (six) than he would *by actually playing four main*. This will be a recurring theme among Wish decks, especially those with particular key cards.



Cephalid Brunch		
Lucas Glavin		
Main Deck		Sideboard
60 cards		

1 Adarkar Wastes	4 Aether Vial	1 Battlefield Scrounger
1 Brushland	4 Brainstorm	1 Bone Shredder
1 Caves of Koilos	3 Cabal Therapy	1 Cephalid Illusionist
4 City of Brass	2 Chrome Mox	1 Daru Spiritualist
4 Forbidden Orchard	1 Dragon Breath	1 Dragon Shadow
2 Llanowar Wastes	1 Exhume	1 Energy Field
2 Starlit Sanctum	1 Krosan Reclamation	1 Forsaken City
2 Tarnished Citadel	3 Living Wish	2 Gilded Drake
1 Underground River	1 Reanimate	2 Kami of Ancient Law
1 Yavimaya Coast	4 Vampiric Tutor	1 Nomads en-Kor
	4 Worldly Tutor	1 Rootwater Thief
	1 Worthy Cause	1 Starlit Sanctum
19 lands		1 Uktabi Orangutan
	29 other spells	15 sideboard cards
3 Cephalid Illusionist		
3 Daru Spiritualist		
1 Krosan Cloudscraper		
3 Nomads en-Kor		
1 Shaman en-Kor		
1 Sutured Ghoul		
12 creatures		

### How does this deck work?

Lucas's was actually one of the finest hybrid decks ever created. It is waaaaay defunct because of bannings (**Aether Vial**) and rotations (most of the rest), but I wanted to include it because it was so good and also showed how you might build a **Living Wish** combo deck.

This deck is actually two different combos. The first one is Life (any *en-Kor* plus **Daru Spiritualist** plus **Worthy Cause** or **Starlit Sanctum**). With this combo, the *en-Kor* repeatedly targets the Spiritualist with its damage prevention ability until its toughness reaches some arbitrarily huge number, then the **Worthy Cause** or **Starlit Sanctum** hands Lucas infinite life (before you send me the umpteenth personal email I've gotten on this subject over the past five years, YES THIS WORKS); from there he should be able to win somehow, because he has as many turns as he could possibly need against a non-combo deck to set up.

The other combo is Cephalid Breakfast (*en-Kor* plus **Cephalid Illusionist** plus **Krosan Reclamation**). With this combo, the *en-Kor* repeatedly targets the Illusionist, until Lucas has depleted his deck. Then his entire graveyard is basically his hand. The first play is **Krosan Reclamation** (flashback) targeting (very likely) **Exhume** and **Reanimate**. The target is **Sutured Ghoul**. The Ghoul removes **Krosan Cloudscraper** and a few more creatures to get to 20 power, puts on **Dragon Breath**, and crashes for the kill. The genius of this deck was noticing that Life and Cephalid Breakfast had many cards in common; the Cephalid Breakfast side was helpful in giving Life (a deck that could put itself in a "hard to lose" situation pretty easily) both an alternate *win now* plan and a quick follow-up combo.



Here **Living Wish** does everything. It is a toolbox (**Kami of Ancient Law** for **Aluren**, **Gilded Drake** for **Akroma**, **Bone Shredder** for some other giants), land cyclus (**Forsaken City** and **Starlit Sanctum**), and filthy combo element. **Living Wish** breaks the Rule of Four on multiple (potential) combo pieces, and can get any one leg of either combo (save **Sutured Ghoul**), up to and including **Starlit Sanctum** for the actual finish.

### Burning Wish in Action

I could have run any of a number of historical **Burning Wish** decks here, but I thought that it might be nice to actually show some current and relevant decks and discuss how they roll.

Emilio Lopez Campos		
2006 World Championships – Extended		
Main Deck		Sideboard
60 cards		
1 Blood Crypt	4 Burning Wish	1 Chainer's Edict
2 Bloodstained Mire	4 Cabal Therapy	1 Devastating Dreams
3 Forest	3 Devastating Dreams	2 Duress
4 Forgotten Cave	3 Life from the Loam	1 Hull Breach
2 Hallowed Fountain	2 Putrefy	1 Life from the Loam
1 Overgrown Tomb	4 Seismic Assault	1 Nostalgic Dreams
3 Stomping Ground		3 Pithing Needle
4 Tranquil Thicket	20 other spells	4 Ravenous Baloth
4 Wooded Foothills		1 Shattering Spree
24 lands		15 sideboard cards

4	Birds of Paradise
4	Terravore
4	Vinelasher Kudzu
4	Wall of Roots
16 creatures	

### How does this deck work?

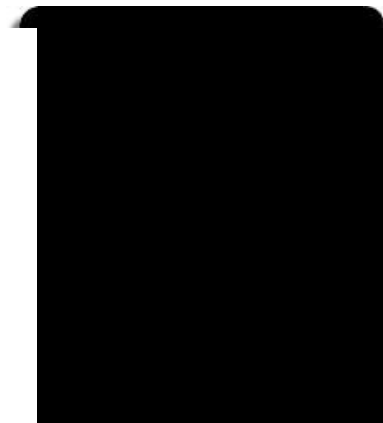
Emilio's deck can play like a "regular" Loam deck, drawing a ton of cards with **Life from the Loam** and cycling lands during the middle turns, getting ahead with card advantage, attrition, and removal until it finishes big on **Seismic Assault** (which wins very quickly with 10 lands in hand), or it can go for the "other" big finish, the even more dramatic **Terravore + Devastating Dreams**. This combo will kill most opponents in a single turn; Emilio can jack his hand with **Life from the Loam** well past the number of lands the opponent controls, then play **Terravore + Devastating Dreams** with five or more mana (which he is probably getting from **Wall of Roots** and **Birds of Paradise**); everything will go away but **Terravore**, which will be in the 10/10 or bigger range almost naturally. Even if the opponent can take the first hit, he is not likely to be able to answer such a threat with his next land drop only.

The Campos deck runs **Burning Wish** for a light toolbox (**Duress** access main, singleton breakers like **Chainer's Edict** for big threats, **Shattering Spree** for Affinity, **Nostalgic Dreams** for big Loam value), but the main goal here is breaking the Rule of Four with specifically **Life from the Loam** and **Devastating Dreams**. As we have seen in the Novekoff and Glavin deck lists, it is desirable to play as many copies as possible of one's key spells. Emilio's deck basically doesn't run without **Life from the Loam**, and **Devastating Dreams** is his big breaker with **Terravore**... He's got seven of each, kind of.

Main Deck 60 cards		Sideboard		
3	Gemstone Mine	1	Channel the Suns	
4	Geothermal Crevice	4	Duress	
4	Sulfur Vent	2	Empty the Warrens	
4	Tinder Farm	1	Hull Breach	
15 lands		1	Mind's Desire	
0 creatures		3	Orim's Chant	
	4	Burning Wish	1	Pyroclasm
	4	Cabal Ritual	2	Tendrils of Agony
	2	Channel the Suns	15 sideboard cards	
	4	Chromatic Star		
	4	Chrome Mox		
	4	Darkwater Egg		
	2	Infernal Tutor		
	4	Lotus Bloom		
	3	Mind's Desire		
	2	Plunge into Darkness		
	4	Rite of Flame		
	4	Seething Song		
	3	Sins of the Past		
	1	Tendrils of Agony		
	45 other spells			

### How does this deck work?

You really should know, because some version of Ritual Desire or TEPS (the Extended Perfect Storm) is almost certainly going to be the strongest deck of the new format at the onset... Multiple great players had strong finishes with decks like this; I am using Raph's because it happens to be the one I am using for my own playtesting, and because Levy said that in his ten-plus year career, it was the best deck he has ever played. The baseline plan is to take a fourth turn where you just play a bunch of mana accelerators into **Mind's Desire**. You break all your lands and have a ton floating, but each mana accelerator adds to the storm count, so they do not cost you card economy provided the Desire hits. The deck has manipulation to find Desire and can revisit the same Desire with **Sins of the Past**.



The actual process of winning with the deck is probably more involved, but you basically just want to jack the storm count, play **Mind's Desire**, and flip some more mana and some way to play either more **Mind's Desires** or a **Tendrils of Agony** with Storm = 10 or more. **Empty the Warrens** is the fall-back kill card. One thing to note if you've not played (against) this archetype yet: It really does win a fair amount on the *second* turn with the right draw, and has a powerful ability to come back because the lands are all so valuable, if even for one turn (it only needs the one turn).

Ultimately, for our purposes, the **Burning Wishes** here look to break the Rule of Four on **Mind's Desire** with the "three main, one side, four Wishes" configuration, and it is actually a bit dependent on its Wishes to win (only one legitimate kill condition starting). In addition, Raph has a mana accelerator hiding in his sideboard in case he needs a quick pick-me-up; literally every piece of disruption – *all four Duresses* – are in the side here,



meaning that if the Hall of Famer wants to clear the way in Game 1, he'll need to Wish first.

There are a couple of interesting things to note here for a combo deck: 1) Raph has some answers he can set up with his Wish, **Pyroclasm** against beatdown and **Hull Breach** against something along the lines of an **Ivory Mask**, and 2) even though this deck is a combo deck with a hyper-dedicated Wish sideboard of twelve sorceries, he has still got three instants.

Pierre Canali		
2005 World Championships – Extended		
Main Deck	Sideboard	
60 cards		
3 <b>Bloodstained Mire</b>	3 <b>Burning Wish</b>	1 <b>Chainer's Edict</b>
3 <b>Flooded Strand</b>	3 <b>Counterspell</b>	1 <b>Cranial Extraction</b>
8 <b>Island</b>	1 <b>Deep Analysis</b>	1 <b>Deep Analysis</b>
1 <b>Mountain</b>	4 <b>Fact or Fiction</b>	3 <b>Duress</b>
1 <b>Oboro, Palace in the Clouds</b>	4 <b>Fire // Ice</b>	1 <b>Haunting Echoes</b>
1 <b>Sacred Foundry</b>	4 <b>Memory Lapse</b>	4 <b>Kataki, War's Wage</b>
2 <b>Shivan Reef</b>	1 <b>Opt</b>	1 <b>Pyroclasm</b>
1 <b>Sulfurous Springs</b>	4 <b>Remand</b>	1 <b>Reprocess</b>
1 <b>Swamp</b>	2 <b>Repulse</b>	1 <b>Upheaval</b>
2 <b>Watery Grave</b>		1 <b>Vindicate</b>
23 lands	26 other spells	15 sideboard cards
3 <b>Flametongue Kavu</b>		
1 <b>Meloku the Clouded Mirror</b>		
4 <b>Nightscape Familiar</b>		
3 <b>Psychatog</b>		
11 creatures		

### How does this deck work?

**Psychatog** is the best creature ever printed. It beats almost anything else in a fight, and with enough card advantage or a big enough graveyard, it can go from 1/2 to extremely lethal in the blink of an eye. **Upheaval** is the quintessential teammate, allowing **Psychatog** to win immediately from nine mana, wiping out the opponent's entire board on the way to setting up more than enough cards to win the game. The unique element here is **Nightscape Familiar**, unseen in 'Tog decks since the days of ZevAtog; **Nightscape Familiar** has powerful synergies with colorless mana costs, allowing the deck to go turn-two Familiar, turn-three **Flametongue Kavu**, or turn-two Familiar, turn-three 'Tog with ♣ open for one of the single ♣ counters.

This is actually a deck from 2005 Worlds and Extended. I just get a kick out of an Extended 'Tog deck that runs **Burning Wish** instead of **Cunning Wish**, and only three **Counterspells**, but four each of **Memory Lapse** and **Remand**.

**Burning Wish** is actually arguably better than **Cunning Wish** in 'Tog because you can go immediately for **Upheaval** for the combo kill finish. **Reprocess** is the little-known "faster **Upheaval**," used to generate a large pool of **Psychatog** fodder at only four mana (it really helps when the other guy has no blocker). Most of the rest of the board is made up of one-ofs and bullets, but the last four cards are as unexpected as they are ingenious. Thanks again to *Ravnica, City of Guilds* for the one **Sacred Foundry**!

### Cunning Wish in action

Eugene Harvey		
Grand Prix – New Orleans		
Main Deck	Sideboard	
60 cards		
12 <b>Island</b>	4 <b>Accumulated Knowledge</b>	1 <b>Capsize</b>

4 Polluted Delta	4 Brainstorm	1 Coffin Purge
3 Swamp	4 Counterspell	1 Corpse Dance
4 Underground River	3 Cunning Wish	1 Deep Analysis
23 lands	3 Fact or Fiction	3 Duress
	3 Force Spike	1 Fact or Fiction
4 Psychatog	2 Intuition	1 Mana Short
1 Wonder	3 Mana Leak	3 Powder Keg
5 creatures	4 Smother	1 Shadow Rift
	1 Thwart	1 Terror
	1 Upheaval	1 Vampiric Tutor
	32 other spells	15 sideboard cards

### How does this deck work?

**Psychatog** is the best creature ever printed. It beats almost anything else in a fight, and with enough card advantage or a big enough graveyard, it can go from 1/2 to extremely lethal in the blink of an eye. **Upheaval** is the quintessential teammate, allowing **Psychatog** to win immediately from nine mana, wiping out the opponent's entire board on the way to setting up more than enough cards to win the game.

Up until Antoine's win in L.A., most **Psychatog** decks have been running three **Cunning Wishes** since Carlos Romao's World's win (the Wishes' big floor debut). Of the many possible inclusions for this archetype, I have listed Eugene's deck because it has so many different ways to finish via **Cunning Wish**. This is not *just* a showcase of versatility but a study in ending the game unexpectedly.

#### 1) Corpse Dance

You have no living **Psychatog** and your opponent thinks he is safe, and has probably sent an alpha strike. At the end of his turn, after at-end-of-turn effects have gone on the stack, you Wish for **Corpse Dance** and thusly reanimate your **Psychatog** (possibly with the buyback). Kill at your leisure, perhaps via **Wonder**.

#### 2) Mana Short

Before **Cunning Wish**, **Psychatog** decks tended to be dogs to do-nothing black control decks. The black decks could wait until the appointed turn (usually one turn before the **Psychatog** player had the mana for **Upheaval** + **Psychatog**) and tear apart the opponent's hand with **Duress**, **Cabal Therapy**, and **Persecute**. Even if the 'Tog player got his combo off, the black player could float mana for one or more **Smother**s, and even if that or those were answered, still play **Swamp**, **Innocent Blood**. With **Mana Short**, the 'Tog player could prevent a single disastrous turn by out-time managing the black player, preventing him from a big disruption turn, or if it was all he needed, *just* the multiple **Smother**s post-**Upheaval** + **Psychatog**. The **Innocent Blood** could be dealt with for one mana by **Circular Logic** or, here, **Force Spike**. **Mana Short** was also a useful tool in control mirrors, a test spell if nothing else, a kind of end-of-your-turn **Duress** that could get mana tapped and set up the **Upheaval** + **Psychatog**.

#### 3) Shadow Rift

This is for anyone who thought he could leave back a **Troll Ascetic**, **Nimble Mongoose**, or other hard-to-remove creature to soak up or chump the 'Tog. It's even a cantrip!

#### 4) Vampiric Tutor

This is actually the most devious of the group. We said earlier that **Burning Wish** was great because you could **Burning Wish** for the **Upheaval**. A **Cunning** selection of **Vampiric Tutor** was the blue equivalent of the same play!

Because it is an instant, you will tend to see **Cunning Wish** skewing more towards the endgame or setting up multiple plays than either of the other tournament caliber Wishes. There are no hard and fast rules, but **Living Wish** is much more of an early game card due to its ability to get a second or third land, or make even a "first" play, and the nature of sorceries as a class makes **Burning Wish** more of a middle turns card (get a strategic **Duress** or **Pyroclasm**); the mighty **Cunning Wish**, as an instant, can end games in the ways illustrated above with Eugene's deck, or ramp up storm to cheat the rules and out-play opponents who expect to be at the advantage.



Osyp Lebedowicz		
Pro Tour – Boston		
Main Deck	Sideboard	
60 cards		
4 Adarkar Wastes	4 Accumulated Knowledge	3 Brain Freeze
4 Flooded Strand	1 Brain Freeze	2 Echoing Truth
7 Island	4 Brainstorm	1 Intuition
1 Plains	4 Chrome Mox	1 Mana Leak
1 Polluted Delta	3 Cunning Wish	1 Meditate
17 lands	2 Deep Analysis	1 Prismatic Strands
	3 Intuition	1 Rebuild

4 Cloud of Faeries	2 Merchant Scroll	1 Snap
3 Sunscape Familiar	4 Mind's Desire	1 Stifle
7 creatures	4 Sapphire Medallion	1 Stroke of Genius
	3 Snap	2 Turnabout
	2 Turnabout	15 sideboard cards
	36 other spells	

### How does this deck work?

Like TEPS, this deck sought to create a large Storm count and follow up with **Mind's Desire**. Rather than sequence actual mana accelerators like **Rite of Flame** and **Channel the Suns**, Osyp would play down "discount" twos like **Sunscape Familiar** and **Sapphire Medallion**, to play his 1 or 2 cards for just 1. He could therefore play **Cloud of Faeries** for 1, float an extra mana, and untap two lands, steal a mana, then **Snap** the creature at 1, steal another mana, and repeat with the Cloud, stealing a third; with just one discount permanent and two cards, Osyp could play three free spells, steal three mana *with just two lands*, and still have those two lands untapped to play **Mind's Desire** (for five) flipping four cards. Imagine what he could do if he weren't stuck on lands and maybe had more than three cards in hand! Though it had only 17 lands, Osyp's deck played numerous one- and two-mana cantrips like **Brainstorm** and **Accumulated Knowledge** to cheat the mana gods.

This is actually the purest **Cunning Wish** – or *any* **Wish** – sideboard I could find. It is fifteen instants. Many of the cards are either redundant kill (**Brain Freeze**), or there to warm up the **Snap** engine (**Turnabout**, **Intuition**, **Meditate**), or both, or either (**Stroke of Genius**). Osyp played a couple of answers, too, including bounce cards, permission, and a kind of overpowered **Fog** in **Prismatic Strands**. With **Sunscape Familiar**, he even got a free flashback cheat available to very few combo decks.

I wanted to point this deck out not just because of the purity of its sideboard, but because, to me, it is the quintessential Extended **Mind's Desire** deck, forerunner to both the Heartbeat and TEPS schools. While it was a "Mind's Desire" combo deck, the key card was actually **Cunning Wish**. What many inexperienced but fairly well read opponents might have not understood was that this deck didn't actually need **Mind's Desire** to win. An uncommon, but deadly, plan was to just play **Cunning Wish** for 1 with two copies of **Sunscape Familiar** and / or **Sapphire Medallion** in play, **Wishing** for **Cunning Wish** repeatedly to jack the Storm count, then win with one or two **Brain Freezes**. This play is significant because it takes an inherent limitation of the Wishes (being removed from game instead of put in the graveyard) and makes a bonus out of it. Rumor has it that Chris McDaniel actually won a game with his **Heartbeat** Desire deck in this way at Pro Tour – L.A. while **Orim's Chant** was on the stack, through two **Counterspells**, using the **Wish** / instants rather than card draw / **Mind's Desire** game plan.



Main Deck 61 cards		Sideboard
2 Centaur Garden	1 Acorn Harvest	1 Alter Reality
10 Forest	4 Careful Study	1 Bearscape
12 Island	1 Cunning Wish	3 Envelop
24 lands	3 Grizzly Fate	1 Howling Gale
	4 Mental Note	1 Krosan Reclamation
4 Basking Rootwalla	4 Quiet Speculation	1 Moment's Peace
4 Werebear	4 Roar of the Wurm	2 Phantom Centaur
4 Wild Mongrel	1 Upheaval	1 Ray of Revelation
3 Wonder	22 other spells	3 Squirrel Nest
15 creatures		1 Upheaval
		15 sideboard cards

### How does this deck work?

**Quiet Speculation** / **Grizzly Fate** was an in-block popular variation on U/G, but lesser known (yet more powerful) than either **Madness** or **Threshold**. The deck had elements common to both the more popular decks (**Mental Notes** and **Werebears** from **Threshold**, **Basking Rootwallas** from **Madness**), but featured a different engine and dominating end game plan. **Quiet Speculation** could set up three copies of **Roar of the Wurm**, making that card better, in a sense, than it was in either **Madness** or **Threshold**. Moreover, the deck had a **Grizzly Fate** late game that neither of the other versions played. **Mental Note**, **Careful Study**, and **Quiet Speculation** were all essentially threshold enablers here, because four Bears is, um, *twice* as good as two; you would not ideally use **Quiet**

Speculation to find a **Grizzly Fate**, but in a pinch, and with sufficient mana, that could still be a heck of an 8/8. **Acorn Harvest** was an interesting inclusion... In a deck that could make the best offensive two drop of all time, or two-mana 4/4s, or four-mana 6/6s, two Squirrels might not seem very good... and that's why they were! Sorry **Innocent Blood**! Sorry **Chainer's Edict**! You don't get anything relevant; you get one of these – free – chattering losers!

Rob's **Cunning Wish** is the most unusual placement I could recall, and that is largely due to the fact that he positioned his lone Wish in a deck that was so dedicated to another branch of manipulation (**Quiet Speculation** engine). He only played one, and he played the forbidden 61st card to get it in the list. This Wish shows something that none of the earlier decks did as Wish decks: the freedom to *not* commit to anything. Rob certainly had available instants in his sideboard, but they weren't particularly strategic... He didn't even play an **Aura Graft** (the archenemy of **Squirrel Nest**, and the reason the 'Tog decks started beating the **Opposition** decks). Rob's Wish gave him a tiny bit of flexibility, an unexpected **Fog**, an answer to **Wonder**, or a one-mana permission spell in an archetype not known for its answers. Note that literally all of Rob's instant singletons had flashback so that any of them could have been reasonable sideboard bullets eligible for **Quiet Speculation** selection; **Cunning Wish** in this deck *demand*ed nothing different, even if it offered something *more*.

So that's the Wish Annex to the sideboard primer! **Extended PTQs** start this weekend. I hope that this article gave you an idea of when best to dedicate yourself to Wishes (combo decks that don't actually want to sideboard) and the pitfalls to playing them even when they are great (opportunity cost in Game 2 and Game 3). We looked at numerous models for each of the three main Wishes, from dedicated sideboards of all one card type (Osyp) to sideboards that look like they could give or take the Wish engine (Dougherty), to decks that make the Wishes look really fantastic (Levy) to decks that use them for pinpoint solutions (Novekoff). Hopefully somewhere in that sea of information you will be able to figure out which ones work for you, and choose accordingly. Good luck!

*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>.*



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