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# Walk of Ages, Vol. 2

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 Limited Information  
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Last week we covered a *Time Spiral* draft that took an unusual route, into a multiple **Zealot il-Vec** deck. The thought processes behind each pick can be found [here](#). Once again, here's the decklist:

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Main Deck 40 cards		Sideboard
7 Island	1 Ancestral Vision	1 Aether Web
10 Plains	1 Chromatic Star	1 Assembly-Worker
17 lands	1 Fortify	1 Call to the Netherworld
	1 Momentary Blink	1 Chronatog Totem
	1 Snapback	1 D'Avenant Healer
	5 other spells	1 Drifter il-Dal
1 Amrou Scout		1 Hivestone
2 Castle Raptors		1 Jedit's Dragoons
1 Cavalry Master		1 Lightning Axe
1 Crookclaw Transmuter		1 Pandemonium
1 Errant Ephemeron		2 Paradox Haze
1 Fledgling Mawcor		1 Return to Dust
2 Ivory Giant		1 Saltcrusted Steppe
1 Opaline Sliver		1 Screeching Sliver
1 Outrider en-Kor		2 Sidewinder Sliver
1 Pulmonic Sliver		1 Slipstream Serpent
1 Venser's Sliver		1 Thrill of the Hunt
1 Viscerid Deepwalker		1 Traitor's Clutch
4 Zealot il-Vec		1 Trickbind
18 creatures		1 Urza's Factory
		22 sideboard cards

It was an interesting deck in a style I hadn't quite executed like this before. While I thought the chosen draft direction gave me the best chance of winning, I had very little empirical evidence to draw from. Indeed, each game played out in different ways than expected. Since I thought these were very interesting matches, played with an unusual deck, I decided this would be a good time to revisit the popular game walkthrough method. (Now with mostly larger screen shots!) There's a lot of ground to cover this week, so let's get started.

## Round 1 vs. Omegauo (real name: Rob)

Rob started off with a friendly greeting, a compliment to the column, and assurances to play as hard as possible. Who could ask for more? The first decision, as always, was the question of the mulligan. On the play, here was the opening seven:

More land would be nice, but I don't see a problem here. **Ivory Giant** is a great opening with this hand, with two more white creatures that even work well together. The remaining blue creature, while hardly synergy-enhancing, at least has the ability to block through my own **Ivory Giant**, if needed. It's a keeper.

No mulls from the esteemed opponent, and we're off to the races. As planned, a Plains into **Ivory Giant**.

Rob leads with a Mountain and no suspended Halberdier or (shudder) **Greater Gargadon**. All well and good.

My next draw is a very interesting second **Ivory Giant**. This is actually a great pick up, as it lets me burn the **Chromatic Star** for a welcome card along the way to suspending the second Giant. Whatever deck Rob's playing, he can't like that one.

And it's true, it's double frowny-face worthy.

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Rob merely plays a **Fungal Reaches** and passes back, which is a little disquieting. R/G decks need their two drops, especially when they're on the draw. What made this hand so appealing that he'd keep this slow a start? Luckily the obvious answer, **Sulfurous Blast**, is barely a problem versus my pair of 3/4s. Still, I resolve to keep my eyes open for Rob's incentive to stick with his hand.

**Castle Raptors** is awfully good against R/G decks, but land is a more immediate desire. Regardless there's something to play this turn, the always excellent **Outrider en-Kor**.

Then my opponent taps three for...

Cavottaaaaa! There's one reason why Rob liked his seven. Good ol' hot pants herself, **Jaya Ballard, Task Mage**. You might think "☞: kill" legends are good against blue/white decks, and you'd be right. However, it's not an impossible situation.

Jaya requires, besides the tap cost, the price of a card and some mana. In this situation, the card is negligible, while the mana is all important. Now, maybe I could kill Jaya with some bizarre combination of **Zealotry/Mawcor/Blinkdom**. Since I've drawn *none* of those cards up to this point, Jaya Ballard is for all intents and purposes unkillable. So what can we do?

The solution is that of pressure. As it has been stated so many times before, Time = Mana + Life. I don't want my opponent to have time to play with, because given enough time, Jaya does ~~mean~~ above-average things to my team. Luckily enough the solution, take away my opponent's time, is something Jaya does naturally. Recursive **Incinerates** are nice, but the casting of one precludes any other play on the turn, at least in the early stages. The other half of the equation is something this deck wants to do anyway, which is constant attacking. Hopefully enough pressure, either from Jaya's requirements or my deck's creatures, will prevent Rob from going all out. He *might* be able to assassinate my board or he *might* be able to win the race, but there's no way he can do both. Rob has to choose whether he wants to play the control route or the beatdown.

There's a third option for Rob, though: The Panic Button, one **Inferno** on command. I can't do much about it, aside from a sardonic comment on U/W inability to kill Jaya while Jaya does it herself. But that's not really useful at the moment. Option #3 is the tricky one, because that capacity *could* affect my play. If I hold back on guys, Rob may find the time he needs to dig himself out of the double **Ivory Giant** hole. If I push everything, the **Inferno** could destroy my resources, giving Rob leisure time to finish the job. It's tricky, but there's a middle ground. I want to win the game, but barring that, I definitely don't want to lose. If that sounds redundant, consider how often a six-point **Earthquake** makes the game a draw. No matter what I want Rob at six life or less. After that I can make a more informed decision on whether to hold back or push forward, based on his actions up to the seven mana point. With a plan in mind, I look towards the next few turns. Luckily, the **Outrider** allows me to deflect burn damage. That ability might just be the key to winning this game. I'm pretty sure my draw next turn has to be either a guy or the land to cast a guy. Either way, **Outrider's** sticking around for a while.

I draw my card and...crap! A **Deepwalker**?! I'm pretty sure that's the worst card I could have picked up here. It doesn't protect **Outrider** now, and if/when the game is being played when **Deepwalker** resolves, Jaya kills it with the merest flicker of mana expense. Ah well, suspend anyway and bash for two. There's no other move, as I certainly don't want to keep the **Outrider** back for blocking, oh my no. Once **Omegau** is at six we can talk about defense.

P.S. Rob doesn't block (smart).





It's now Rob's fourth turn, and it's a big one. After laying a land, Rob has the choice of Incinerating the **Outrider en-Kor** or playing a guy. In this situation, Rob chose to attack for two and play **Herd Gnarr**. Clearly Rob has picked the aggression path, which means I can pretty much go nuts with my team too. Is this the right move for Rob? It's a judgment call, the merits of which we'll get to in a little bit. For now, it's racing time. 18-18.

I miss another land draw on my turn, but at least I draw a creature, of the **Zealot il-Vec** persuasion. Not the best racing card ever, but I takes what I can get. Playing a guy that can absorb Outrider redirection does make blocking somewhat more appealing, but not enough. On the next turn, Rob is most likely going to play a creature and pump his **Herd Gnarr** to 4/4. I can block with the Outrider and trade my Zealot for four points, which isn't terrible except there's nothing to do with more life points. Whether I'm at 10 or 20 or 30, Rob is far more likely to win the longer the game goes on. In addition, if Rob plays a land and a 3cc creature, he'll still have enough mana left to finish the Outrider off. Losing a great source of damage and a (soon to be) amazing blocker to hold onto some life? It's just not worth it. While not enthusiastic about the incipient beating, I don't see any other avenue other than attack for two, play Zealot, and pass back. Next turn the first Giant hits play. Then things will get interactive.



Next turn Rob taps his five to lay... Jolrael?! What is it with this guy and rare female spellshapers?

**Herd Gnarr** takes a bonus, and in comes everyone for six.

*"I need no blockers. I have my face."*

There's nothing else for Rob to do this turn, as the unsuspecting **Ivory Giant** will tap his side anyway. Ouchie, down to 12. My turn sees **Ivory Giant** come into play and **Fledgling Mawcor** drawn for the turn. Now it's getting interesting.

The first question is figuring out how I win this game. That's soon followed by figuring out how I lose this game. No matter what, there's going to be a morphed **Fledgling Mawcor** in play. Let's figure out the next step. Rob knows he can't leave any blockers back as **Ivory Giant** taps down everything else, even through Jolrael tricks. Therefore Rob will either be attacking with everything or using Jaya and attacking with everything else. The most damage he can deal is land + Jolrael for 13 points of attackers, minus Mawcor getting in the way equaling 10 points of life loss. That means, barring something bizarre, Rob can't kill me next turn. What can I do to Rob? There is a way I can win this game, if a few things fall the right way. [Do you see it?](#)

There are a lot of ways this plan gets disrupted, the most obvious being if Rob kills any white creature, or if I fail to draw a land the next turn. However, what choice is there? Some chance is always better than none. With what's on the board, Rob can't kill me next turn. Between my hand and the board, I have a chance to kill Rob in two turns. With little choice but to cross my fingers, I start the play. In come the attackers, and following combat, down comes **Fledgling Mawcor**. 12-10.



Rob plays **Yavimaya Dryad**. "Gimme the Forest!" I yell at the computer, startling my girlfriend. Rob rudely ignores my impassioned plea and doesn't comply. The next step is crucial. No matter what, that Mawcor is stepping in front of an attacking creature. There's zero reason to hold onto it, as a lack of two Islands and a fresh **Ivory Giant** make it utterly worthless for anything else. Rob makes an error, though, and fries the morph with Jaya. From Rob's side, it *could* be a **Coral Trickster**, which would untap itself post-Giant and deal final damage. That's a genuine concern, but Rob will know the answer after I show whether I'm blocking or not. By killing it before combat, he deals an extra point of damage but takes an extra one himself via the Zealot. Considering Rob's win is all but locked up next turn with Jaya and Jolrael, this is not an exchange he needs. Indeed, this move gives me the opportunity needed to take this game.



Going down to five life, I untap and put the **Ivory Giant** into play. I draw...a land! Yee haw, it's go time.



A quick check confirms the math. In comes the team, no blockers, Transmuter the Giant...

And it's good! Er, evil. Whew, what a game.

Here's an interesting question: Could Rob have won this game? Maybe, but who knows, right? [Turn the page](#) and see...



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