

Testing and tuning a control deck of a different color. Remembering Wood

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- [Jay Moldenhauer-Salazar Archive](#)

B lame Chris Millar for this one.

Wait, wait, that's getting ahead of myself.



Hello and welcome to the second installment of "Going Rogue," my attempt to demonstrate what happens when a home-cooked deck strives towards competitive play. The [first time around](#) I tried to build a deck around [Curse of the Cabal](#) and ended up making a monoblack Haakon-[Smallpox](#) deck called "Black Knights" instead. The experiment continued on the [message boards](#), where I chronicled the deck's continued evolution and tournament appearances. Then I became completely obsessed, played hundreds of matches online, and eventually wrote an [epilogue](#) to purge my system of the Black Knights deck.

According to Frank Karsten, my Black Knights deck never really took the online Standard world by storm. This aligns with my personal definition of a rogue deck, though: One in which its creator is its primary champion, piloting it again and again into hostile, net-decking waters. If everyone else copies your deck, you don't have a rogue deck, but rather the Next Big Thing. Rogue decks keep on chugging in the face of scoffs and snickers. They are at the core of what I love about **Magic** precisely because of their underdog qualities. This article series is about building, loving, and nurturing rogue decks.

Okay, *now* you can blame Chris Millar.

See, I knew that Going Rogue 2 would be the same chronicle with a new deck. The first time around I tried (admittedly, not successfully) to build my deck around a single card. This time I would use a different inspiration for my pet deck. What sort of inspiration? Why Chris Millar, of course! He sent me this e-mail mere hours after the first Going Rogue had gone up on the site:

Hey Jay,

[snip]

I really like the 'Going Rogue' idea. I think it fills a gap, and I think there's a huge audience for it (I get asked enough for sideboarding tips for the decks I write about). Almost nobody talks about the process they go through before taking a deck to a tournament, especially not in this much detail.

One of my favourite decks (maybe even the deck that got me excited about Green in the first place) was a deck you built for a tournament: Fattie Wood. Ever since then I've had a bit of a soft spot for mono-Green control decks, and I would be really, really happy if Skyshroud Claim were reprinted. I don't know if you have plans for Going Rogue 2 (you know there's going to be one :)), but I vote for MGC. :) I was planning to attend Ontario Champs, but unfortunately I couldn't. If I could have, though, I would've played something along these lines, an homage to Secret Force, with [Mwonvuli Acid-Moss](#) doing its best Skyshroud Claim impression:

Modern Mono-Green Control - Standard



Main Deck

61 cards

18 Forest	4 Creeping Mold
3 Ghost Quarter	3 Moldervine Cloak
1 Pendelhaven	4 Mwonvuli Acid-Moss
1 Swarmyard	1 Squall Line

23 lands

12 other spells

4 Boreal Druid	Sideboard
2 Gleancrawler	1 Ghost Quarter
4 Llanowar Elves	3 Loaming Shaman
4 Ohran Viper	2 Loxodon Warhammer
4 Spectral Force	4 Penumbra Spider
4 Spike Feeder	4 Serrated Arrows
4 Wall of Roots	1 Squall Line

26 creatures

15 sideboard cards



[snip]

Anyway, keep up the good work. I look forward to Going Rogue 2.

-cheers,

Chris

In my experience, a very real inspiration for deck ideas is previous decks that existed in old, out-of-date formats. People remember fondly their "Fish" (Merfolk) deck, or their first White Weenie creation, or Ernham-Geddon decks of yore, or Urza Block Monoblue Control. When confronted with a new, alien environment like Standard, it's natural to see if these old archetypes translate or not. Although using individual cards is still my most common inspiration for new decks, I find myself using nostalgia quite a bit as well.

And I positively adore mono-green control decks.

It wasn't my aim to make yet another monocolored deck today, but Chris has tickled that part of my brain that fondly remembers [Fattie Wood](#), a deck that won me several local tournaments, and Smokestack Green, which almost won a Pro Tour Qualifier. These are two decks in a long line of mono-green control decks I've tried to make over the years. It's an archetype that resonates with me.



Blame Millar for MGC crawling into my brain and camping out. Ever since his e-mail months ago, I have been dead set on making a mono-green control deck for Going Rogue 2. Then blame *Planar Chaos* for setting me up perfectly with gems like [Hunting Wilds](#) and [Harmonize](#).

I'll use the same diary-style format as last time. To me, these articles are meant to represent a journey, so a chronological structure seems best.

Day 1: Mono-green... Control?

The first question you may be asking yourself is: Why the heck would you make a *Control* deck using [Forests](#)? Isn't that, like, impossible? To that I say: It's **Magic**, baby... Nothing's impossible. Although green doesn't tend to have the countermagic or board-sweeping effects that usually characterize classic "control" strategies, that doesn't mean it can't dominate the board and win long games. My Fattie Wood deck used massive mana-acceleration to fuel cards like [Plow](#), [Under](#) and [Desert](#) Twister. My Smokestack Green deck used token-generators and – you guessed it – Smokestack. Both of these decks ground out wins and did so consistently. In fact, one of the reasons I'm not using Chris' deck as a starting point is that it looks slightly more aggressive than what I'm envisioning.

Below are some control staples currently available to mono-green. This isn't an exhaustive list, but the nucleus of any MGC deck will dip heavily into this cardpool.

I'll start with land-thinning cards. In my experience, green's best asset when it comes to control decks is its ability to ramp up its mana while also taking land out of the deck. Why is this important?

Because it means that, late in games, you are drawing more and more "business" spells and less and less land. It also means that MGC decks can play around with cards that other colors would find way too expensive, like [Aladdin's Ring](#). Finally, it means that green control decks tend to be a lot more explosive than non-green control decks.

Land-Thinning Staples: [Civic Wayfinder](#); [Evolution Charm](#); [Greenseeker](#); [Hunting Wilds](#); [Mwonvuli Acid-Moss](#); [Rampant Growth](#) (and its two-mana ilk); [Search for Tomorrow](#); [Terramorphic Expanse](#); [Wood Elves](#); [Yavimaya Dryad](#).

Although I think land-thinning is the key, green has other good, non-thinning, acceleration that is its hallmark...



Other Mana Acceleration Staples: [Birds of Paradise](#); [Boreal Druid](#); [Llanowar Elves](#); [Gauntlet of Power](#); [Wall of Roots](#); [Lotus Bloom](#); [Weatherseed Totem](#).

Probably the reason I'm most excited by mono-green control after *Planar Chaos* is the fact that green can actually competently fill its hand. To wit, here are some of the many cards green now has access to...

Card-Drawing Staples: [Biomantic Mastery](#); [Carven Caryatid](#); [Citanul Woodreaders](#); [Fa'adiyah Seer](#); [Gaea's Blessing](#); [Greater Good](#); [Harmonize](#); [Magus of the Library](#); [Ohran Viper](#); [Scrying Sheets](#); [Slate of Ancestry](#); [Verduran Enchantress](#).

So green can produce lots of mana and draw cards. Unfortunately, green's biggest weakness is defense. Here is how I think mono-green can defend itself...

Defense Staples: [Carven Caryatid](#); [Chameleon Blur](#); [Desert](#); [Hail Storm](#); [Wall of Roots](#); [Icy Manipulator](#); [Quicksand](#); [Mouth of Ronon](#); [Serrated Arrows](#); [Silklash Spider](#); [Squall Line](#); [Stuffy Doll](#).

The next group of cards I'm calling "utility cards" because they are the sort of cards I find myself randomly adding to all sorts of strategies, fast and slow. They are generally useful in a broad set of game situations.

Utility Staples: [Chord of Calling](#); [Creeping Mold](#); [Deadwood Treefolk](#); [Evolution Charm](#); [Gaea's Blessing](#); [Indrik Stomphowler](#); [Mirari](#); [Molder](#); [Naturalize](#); [Recollect](#); [Scryb Ranger](#); [Seal of Primordium](#); [Spike Feeder](#); [Viridian Shaman](#).

Finally, we have what green is best at: fat finishers. Any of these could make their way into a MGC deck as the deck's primary win condition. It's a long list, as befits the official fattie color.



Finisher Staples: [Aladdin's Ring](#); [Allosaurus Rider](#); [Arctic Nishoba](#); [Biorhythm](#); [Dark Depths](#); [Force of Nature](#); [Gleancrawler](#); [Golgari Grave-Troll](#); [Hunted Wumpus](#); [Hunting Wilds](#); [Jedit Ojanen of Efrava](#); [Lodoxon Warhammer](#); [Natural Affinity](#); [Phantom Wurm](#); [Phyrexian Ironfoot](#); [Protean Hulk](#); [Selesnya Guildmage](#); [Spectral Force](#); [Squall Line](#); [Timbermare](#); [Triskelavus](#); [Unyaro Bees](#); [Ursapine](#); [Verdant Force](#); [Verdeloth the Ancient](#); [Vinelasher Kudzu](#); [Weatherseed Totem](#); [Wurmcalling](#).

Some of these cards might seem scoff-worthy, but I would challenge you to try them in a mono-green strategy. [Ursapine](#), for example, can be quite scary backed up by an army of green mana-producing dudes.

Hopefully this overall list of cards serves two purposes. First, it lets you know that mono-green control isn't quite so crazy as it seems on the surface (no more crazy than, say, a mono-blue weenie deck). Second, it gives you a menu to start building your own MGC deck if you don't like mine.

Speaking of mine, here's how I'm thinking about my new deck:

I'm starting with land-thinning because, as I said, it's been the foundation of all previous MGC decks I've built. [Hunting Wilds](#) is the most exciting card for me in *Planar Chaos*, so it's the backbone here. After that, [Mwonvuli Acid-Moss](#), [Yavimaya Dryad](#), and [Evolution Charm](#) most suit me. Note that none of these cards are *solely* land-thinning like, say, [Rampant Growth](#). I'll also add [Llanowar Elves](#) and [Wall of Roots](#), which again serve more than one purpose. I should now have more than enough mana to do whatever I want.

Next come card-drawing and utility cards. [Harmonize](#) is the second most exciting card in *Planar Chaos* to me, so it slides right into my deck. So does [Ohran Viper](#), a mono-green all-around staple. Although [Creeping Mold](#) complements my Acid-Mossy ones, I don't have any serious land destruction like [Smokestack](#) or [Plow Under](#) to back them up. As a result, I'm going to try [Indrik Stomphowler](#) as my artifact and enchantment destruction and pseudo-finisher.

I'm a sucker for single-copy legends, so in goes one Jedit. After that, I'm thinking that I don't have any good mana sinks for all of that mana I should be generating. As crazy as it sounds, maybe [Unyaro Bees](#) is just what my deck needs? Worth a shot, especially since it makes me grin. [Squall Line](#) also happens to be one of Green's best finishers, since it's essentially green direct damage (and, hey, it's defensive too).

As for land, [Desert](#) is a card that wrecked my Black Knights enough to warrant a look. [Terramorphic Expanse](#) and [Pendelhaven](#) make some sense, too. The rest of the deck is plain old [Forests](#) that my [Charms](#), Acid-Mosses, Dryads, Expanses, and [Hunting Wilds](#) can fetch. After looking at my list, I dropped [Wall of Roots](#) for [Boreal Druid](#) because I think a second-turn Viper or Dryad is going to be really important for my deck's tempo. Here, then, is where I'm beginning. As you should know from last time, it's a safe bet it's not where I'll be ending:

Wood 2007 v.1.0



Main Deck 60 cards

4 Desert	3 Evolution Charm
11 Forest	4 Harmonize
1 Pendelhaven	4 Hunting Wilds
4 Terramorphic Expanse	4 Mwonvuli Acid-Moss
_____	2 Squall Line
20 lands	_____
	17 other spells
4 Boreal Druid	
3 Indrik Stomphowler	
1 Jedit Ojanen of Efrava	
4 Llanowar Elves	
4 Ohran Viper	
3 Unyaro Bees	
4 Yavimaya Dryad	

23 creatures	



What I usually do after throwing a deck like this together is to try it out in the Casual Decks room of **Magic Online**. This isn't because I want to beat up on the poor casual saps, but rather because I want to work out any obvious kinks before I find myself in a best 2-of-3 match. It's also a way for me to actively think about a sideboard as I see how the deck plays.

Suffice it to say, I played ten games in the Casual Decks room, going 8-2. Until I see stiffer competition, the only card that strikes me as wrong is [Unyaro Bees](#). It was a fun idea, but the Bees don't go well with my colorless mana like [Boreal Druid](#) and [Desert](#). It also tends to cringe away from [Squall Line](#).

Meanwhile, I was never sad to draw [Indrik Stomphowler](#), which may or may not be true once I start playing tournament-worthy decks but suggests to me that I should try a fourth copy. I also felt the deck could use more big-time finishers. [Wurmcalling](#) is tempting, as is a second copy of Jedit. I'd like to include a non-green damage source, though, so I'm trying one copy each of [Aladdin's Ring](#) and [Biorhythm](#). At some point I'm sure have fewer "one-of" cards in my deck.

-3 [Unyaro Bees](#)

+1 [Indrik Stomphowler](#)

+1 [Aladdin's Ring](#)

+1 [Biorhythm](#)

The other thing I noticed was that [Terramorphic Expanse](#) bugged me. If it tapped for mana I would be in heaven, but any delay when I so desperately need my mana each and every turn is no good. Also, as odd as it sounds, with only eleven [Forests](#) I was actually running out of them in the deck. Thus another easy change is:

-4 [Terramorphic Expanse](#)

+4 [Forest](#)

I also now feel like I have enough information to cobble together a sideboard. Here's a quick rundown of my choices and why chose them. At this point, it doesn't do me much good to obsess about sideboard cards so consider this the most draft part of the decklist:

- 4 [Carven Caryatid](#) (for defense against aggressive decks)
 - 4 [Scragnoth](#) (anti-blue)
 - 3 [Serrated Arrows](#) (more anti-weenie... I'm afraid of aggro)
 - 3 [Spectral Force](#) (they feel like they should be maindeck)
 - 1 [Biorhythm](#) (against creatureless or creature-light decks)
- Here is, then, what I'll be trying tomorrow in the Tournament Practice room:

Wood 2007 v.1.1



Main Deck 60 cards

- | | |
|--|--------------------------------------|
| 4 Desert | 1 Aladdin's Ring |
| 15 Forest | 1 Biorhythm |
| 1 Pendelhaven | 3 Evolution Charm |
| _____ | 4 Harmonize |
| 20 lands | 4 Hunting Wilds |
| | 4 Mwonvuli Acid-Moss |
| 4 Boreal Druid | 2 Squall Line |
| 4 Indrik Stomphowler | _____ |
| 1 Jedit Ojanen of Efrava | 19 other spells |
| 4 Llanowar Elves | Sideboard |
| 4 Ohran Viper | 1 Biorhythm |
| 4 Yavimaya Dryad | 4 Carven Caryatid |
| _____ | 4 Scragnoth |
| 21 creatures | 3 Serrated Arrows |
| | 3 Spectral Force |
| | _____ |
| | 15 sideboard cards |



That's a lot of thinking for the first day. Tomorrow should be a lot of doing.

Day 2: The Biggest Loser

Okay, I'm home sick (really!) and so it's time to fire up **Magic Online**. I head over to the Tournament Practice room, where I'll be playing the rest of my games for this article.



I got off to a weird start. I played a bad (not being rude here, but the guy was using [Honor Guard](#)) white-black weenie deck and crushed it 2-0 despite a slow opening hand in Game 1 and mulliganing to

five cards in Game 2. I was very happy to win the first game via [Aladdin's Ring](#) and second game via Jedit. Go, go, one-of finishers!

Reality came crashing down after that. First I lost to a pretty typical [Dragonstorm](#) deck 0-2. In the first game I had a bunch of 1/1 guys and a Dryad that took him to four life before he went off. In the second game I was just about to play [Biorhythm](#) for the win when he cast a [Bogardan Hellkite](#) to off my little guys and kill me. Then a mono-green aggro deck hammered me 1-2. The two games I lost were both to [Moldervine Cloak](#) on some unblockable weenie. The one I won allowed me to Acid-Moss my way to Jedit and control his creatures with [Serrated Arrows](#). I then lost to a Boros aggro deck 1-2. All three games were close and most depended on whether my mana guys survived the first turn or not.

Next I lost to a black-white Control deck 0-2. The first game was a slaughter, with him [Deathmarking](#) and [Darkblasting](#) my Elves. The second was much, much closer. I kept him at bay with [Serrated Arrows](#) on his (now 1/1) [Angel of Despair](#), then I knocked him down to two life with [Hunting Wilds](#). I had one turn to draw one of my two [Squall Lines](#) or [Biorhythms](#), and it turned out that a [Squall Line](#) was the card on top of my library after I lost. Ah well. I lost my next match, too, 1-2 to a green-blue aggro deck. [Silhana Ledgewalker](#) pumped by green effects killed me on the two games I lost, with lots of card drawing and [Hunting Wilds](#) winning me the second game.

Okay, at this point I have taken enough lumps and learned a ton about my deck. 5-10 in Tourney games is a sobering beginning, but not completely unexpected given my current decklist. Here's what I've learned:

- My deck has a hard, hard time against foot-to-the-floor aggro. As a result, I need more defense, particularly against Mono-green Aggro, which can beat me down with, like, umpteen gazillion unblockable guys.
- In fact, if there's one deck I should aim to beat it's MGA, since otherwise why am I playing a different mono-green build? I will narrow my focus to beat MGA first, and everyone else second.
- I seem to do too little with two mana. This is an odd observation, but when I had two mana open it felt awkward.
- I am way too reliant on a first-turn mana dude. Without one, I either mulligan or lose. I'm very, uh... exposed to [Wrath of God](#) and [Damnation](#) effects.
- Cards that seem a lot more mediocre than I expected: [Evolution Charm](#), [Yavimaya Dryad](#), [Ohran Viper](#), [Carven Caryatid](#). The [Charm](#) is comfortingly versatile, but it seems like the high school player on a college team. Both the Dryad and Viper seem to do too little too slowly to be right for my deck (I had the good fortune of having writer Rivien Swanson watching my matches, and he pointed this out to me). I sided in [Carven Caryatid](#) against my aggro opponents, and it seemed to slow down absolutely nothing.
- Cards that are a lot better than I expected: [Indrik Stomphowler](#), [Squall Line](#), [Biorhythm](#). I found myself constantly praying for a topdecked Stomphowler. [Squall Line](#) both finished games and helped me dig out of a hole in several others. [Biorhythm](#) keeps almost every game winnable.
- Cards exactly as awesome as I expected: [Harmonize](#), [Hunting Wilds](#), [Serrated Arrows](#). This is good news, since [Harmonize](#) and [Hunting Wilds](#) are sort of the whole reason I'm excited about trying mono-green control.

So, armed with these observations, I'm limping back to the drawing board.



I need something defensive maindeck that isn't [Carven Caryatid](#). Rivien and I kicked around a lot of ideas, focusing on the fact that it would be really nice to have an answer for [Silhana Ledgewalker](#). The best thing we could come up with, honestly, was [Cockatrice](#). It sounds crazy, but also oddly clever. Of course, I'm home sick in bed so it also might be a horrible, horrible idea.

I've also been thinking about adding another first-turn play since my deck seems so reliant on early mana acceleration to fuel the bigger accelerants like Acid-Moss and [Hunting Wilds](#). [Birds of Paradise](#) makes me way, way too vulnerable to creature-sweeping spells, so it's out. [Search for Tomorrow](#) doesn't do anything but thin land, but I've liked it in some of my casual decks and am willing to try it here.

Finally, I need a bit of oomph to put opponents on the defensive and to fill that two-mana slot. One of the things I've lost sight of is that my earlier MGC applied early pressure on my opponents. [Vinelasher Kudzu](#) seems *perfect* given my tendency to add land to the table.

So...

-4 [Yavimaya Dryad](#)

-4 [Ohran Viper](#)

-3 [Evolution Charm](#)

-1 [Aladdin's Ring](#)

+4 [Cockatrice](#)

+4 [Search for Tomorrow](#)

+4 [Vinelasher Kudzu](#)

This is a big packet of changes, which signifies that I'm in the "flailing" stage of deckbuilding. It'll settle down eventually (he says, brimming with optimism). My guess is that one or two more major overhauls are in my future given where the deck is right now.

As for the sideboard, Caryatid has been unimpressive, Arrows is a four-of must, and I apparently need something to combat graveyards based on my previous games. I also need more enchantment destruction and lifegain. You can see my thinking below.

- 4 [Carven Caryatid](#) (sideboard)
- 3 [Spectral Force](#) (sideboard)
- +3 [Gaea's Blessing](#) (sideboard)
- +2 [Molder](#) (sideboard)
- +1 [Squall Line](#) (sideboard)
- +1 [Serrated Arrows](#) (sideboard)

Wood 2007 v.1.2



Main Deck

60 cards

- | | |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 4 Desert 15 Forest 1 Pendelhaven <hr style="width: 100%;"/> <p>20 lands</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 4 Boreal Druid 4 Cockatrice 4 Indrik Stomphowler 1 Jedit Ojanen of Efrava 4 Llanowar Elves 4 Vinelasher Kudzu <hr style="width: 100%;"/> <p>21 creatures</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Biorhythm 4 Harmonize 4 Hunting Wilds 4 Mwonvuli Acid-Moss 4 Search for Tomorrow 2 Squall Line <hr style="width: 100%;"/> <p>19 other spells</p>
<p>Sideboard</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Biorhythm 3 Gaea's Blessing 2 Molder 4 Scragnoth 4 Serrated Arrows 1 Squall Line <hr style="width: 100%;"/> <p>15 sideboard cards</p> |
|--|---|



Back to the Tourney room I went, this time with better results. I beat a blue-black "Pickles" deck 2-0. The critical play in the first game was using [Mwonvuli Acid-Moss](#) on his sole land, a [Dimir Aqueduct](#). There was no critical play in the second game, as I played [Forest](#), Druid, Kudzu, [Forest](#), Druid, [Pendelhaven](#), Acid-Moss. He couldn't recover from the start, and a [Scragnoth](#) sealed it for me. I then beat a green-white Elves deck 2-1. In the first game I mulliganed to four and lost to [Elvish Champion](#). In the second and third games I controlled the board with [Serrated Arrows](#) and [Cockatrice](#), eventually winning with [Hunting Wilds](#) and Jedit, respectively. I then beat a red-blue [Wildfire](#) deck 2-1. It's embarrassing that I lost a game, actually, but he was able to double-[Wildfire](#) me with a [Magnivore](#) on the table. In the other two games, I thinned, thinned, thinned land and won with Stomphowler and Jedit, respectively.

I played a cool red-black [Empty the Warrens](#) combo deck that was very explosive, and beat it 2-1. In the first game he made about, literally, twenty Goblin tokens to kill me. In the second game I was about to kill him when he "went off" and fell one mana short. In the last game, I got a second-turn Kudzu, third-turn Acid-Moss, fourth-turn Stomphowler on his [Lotus Bloom](#), causing him to concede. I ended the night with a win over a slightly-budget Boros aggro deck 2-1. The first game he ran me over and killed my mana guys. In the second game I stabilized the board at 10 life with [Desert](#) and [Serrated Arrows](#), then won with two [Indrik Stomphowlers](#). The final game wasn't close. I had an explosive start, and despite three [Calciderns](#) on his part I was able to stall with Arrows and [Cockatrice](#), load up on land, and win via 3/3 lands and 2/2 Cat tokens.

It's always weird to realize that a dozen cards can mean the difference between 5-10 in games and 10-4. But let's not get carried away. The deck still feels rough, albeit getting smoother, and I still don't feel as if I've played the best opponents wielding the best decks. My rogue deck definitely needs more work.

Day 3: Shaking My Green Fist at [Dragonstorm](#)

I woke up the next morning thinking about lifegain. I seem to be playing a lot of aggressive decks in the Tournament Practice room, and I greatly fear [Dragonstorm](#). Lifegain should theoretically be good

against both strategies, right? Meanwhile [Scragnoth](#) has been sitting anemically in my sideboard; I haven't played a single deck using Teferi or Dralnu, and it dies to [Wildfire](#) as quickly as a [Boreal Druid](#). I wonder what would happen if I tweaked my sideboard a bit like so:

-4 [Scragnoth](#) (sideboard)

+4 [Spike Feeder](#) (sideboard)

Only one way to find out. Time to head back to **Magic Online**...



I lost to a mono-red deck 1-2. The first game I fell to [Empty the Warrens](#) for one-superjillion and the third game I lost to six copies of [Ignite Memories](#) while holding [Indrik Stomphowler](#), [Harmonize](#), and [Hunting Wilds](#). Luckily, all three games were close and I won the second on the strength of Acid-Moss, [Hunting Wilds](#), and an 8/8 Kudzu. I followed my loss up by beating a white-blue-black Reanimator deck 2-0. In the first game I had a second-turn Kudzu that grew while I blew up two of his land with Acid-Mosses, eventually winning with [Hunting Wilds](#). The second game was simply me getting lots of acceleration early, him not finding [Wrath of God](#), and me playing [Biorhythm](#). Wow, Standard is diverse these days.

In the next game... Yes! I clobber a tuned Mono-green Aggro deck 2-0. The first game wasn't actually that close, with me winning once again with the combination of Kudzu, Acid-Moss, and [Hunting Wilds](#). The best part was him needing to block my 9/9 Kudzu with [Spectral Force](#) to survive. The second game was closer, but [Serrated Arrows](#) was a huge help, along with two Kudzu, [Harmonize](#), and two 3/3 Lands. The tricky part was playing around [Groundbreaker](#), which I guess is something I'll have to get used to.

I then beat a Rack deck 2-1, winning the first game thanks to two [Indrik Stomphowlers](#), losing the second game to three [Smallpoxes](#) and a [Mortivore](#), and winning the third game thanks to Stomphowler, [Molder](#), and [Serrated Arrows](#). I beat a blue-red Urzatron deck 2-0. They were stressful games, and I won them both in odd ways. In the first game, he tapped out to play [Bogardan Hellkite](#), so I responded with a [Squall Line](#) for five. On my next turn I used a [Squall Line](#) for three to end the game, leaving mana open for [Mana Leak](#). In the second game, two Acid-Mosses kept him away from reaching the Urza land cycle, then, after he tapped out to [Repeal](#) my [Indrik Stomphowler](#), I played [Biorhythm](#) on my second main phase for the win.

I lost the next two matches to [Dragonstorm](#) decks 1-2. They were both boring. In both, my opponent went off in the first game, I played [Biorhythm](#) in the second game, and he went off in the third game. I then lost to a [Dragonstorm](#) deck 0-2 without putting up much of a fight. I really need Acid Moss and [Biorhythm](#) to win this matchup, which is something I'll have to ponder.

My last match of the day started off with [Shivan Reef](#), which had me rolling my eyes because of my previous three matches. It turned out, though, to be a [Magnivore](#) deck, which I beat 2-0 thanks to – believe it or not – [Cockatrice](#) both games. He never played [Wildfire](#), but even if he had I think I would have recovered more quickly than my opponent in both games.

Time to regroup again and think about my deck.

- The deck is getting more respectable and feeling smoother to play.
- I can't currently beat [Dragonstorm](#).
- I need to play against more MGA opponents.
- [Vinelasher Kudzu](#) is probably the key card in my deck because it allows me to be explosive when otherwise it would simply be slow.
- Cards that feel like the weakest links: [Cockatrice](#) and [Search for Tomorrow](#). Unfortunately, they both fill holes that my deck needs filled. [Cockatrice](#) gives me an answer for not just [Silhana](#) [Ledgewalker](#), but [Calcidern](#), [Skeletal Vampire](#), [Lightning Angel](#), [Giant Solifuge](#), and even [Akroma](#), [Angel of Wrath](#). [Search for Tomorrow](#), on the other hand, provides just the extra mana boost I need to fuel the deck. Could I lose a copy of each card? It's worth testing.

Thus I have fewer thoughts as this point, but this probably reflects the obvious weakness to [Dragonstorm](#) and the fact that the deck seems to be doing fine against everything else.

Day 4: Calling All 3/3 Tokens

When confronted with a deck that your deck simply cannot beat, you have two choices. First, you can change the cards in your maindeck and/or sideboard to specifically combat your nemesis, knowing that this probably weakens your deck against the rest of the field. Second, you can ignore your nemesis and hope the Gods of Matchup Luck smile favorably upon you. Which choice you make clearly should depend on how popular the deck is where you play.



In the case of [Dragonstorm](#), it looks popular enough that I can't afford to completely ignore it. It also seems clear that my current sideboard "answers" – four [Spike Feeder](#) and a second [Biorhythm](#) – aren't nearly effective enough. [Biorhythm](#) is great, but with only two copies I need a lot of luck to have it swing a game in my favor.

So what's out there in mono-green to combat this deck? As far as I can tell, the options are [Chameleon Blur](#), [Jester's Cap](#), [Jester's Scepter](#), [Disrupting Scepter](#), [Teferi's Puzzle Box](#), additional land destruction and lifegain. That's not a very inspiring list, but I think [Jester's Cap](#) is the most disruptive to a [Dragonstorm](#) deck, and may be reasonable against other decks like [Empty the Warrens](#) and [Dralnu](#). It's easy to try out swapping [Spike Feeder](#) for [Jester's Cap](#) to see what happens.

-4 [Spike Feeder](#) (sideboard)

+4 [Jester's Cap](#) (sideboard)

Is that enough against [Dragonstorm](#)? Probably not. I may need to resort to [Chameleon Blur](#) or something else as well.

I'm also rethinking some of my other sideboard choices. [Gaea's Blessing](#) is a weak answer to graveyard-based decks. I knew this was true but had hoped it was passable. It's not, so I probably need to resort to either [Loaming Shaman](#) or [Tormod's Crypt](#) against [Magnivore](#), [Mortivore](#), and Reanimator decks. Oddly enough, I think [Crypt](#) does a better job hanging around to mess up [Dralnu](#) or a [Llurgoyf](#) than [Loaming Shaman](#) does.

My third [Squall Line](#) has been sitting in my sideboard, unsure when to come into the game and when to stay on the sidelines. I can probably drop it without missing it at all.

[Molder](#) is probably too much enchantment and artifact destruction when I have other holes to fill, and it doesn't often come in against aggressive decks where I need the lifegain. [Indrik Stomphowler](#) will have to carry the load for the time being.

[Biorhythm](#) has been fantastic, but it's a little weird to have one copy each in both the maindeck and sideboard. I should commit to one or the other, and I think I now have enough room in my sideboard to move it there. This gives me an opening in the maindeck, which I'll widen slightly by putting a copy of [Cockatrice](#) from the maindeck into the sideboard.

Looking back at my initial list of mono-green staples, I'm interested in whether my deck is most in need of additional card-drawing, utility, or finishers (certainly the mana-acceleration and land-thinning

are fine right now). If I've dropped [Biorhythm](#), it seems like finishers are where I most need to put my attention.



Because this article is long enough already, I won't go through all of my potential options and why I think they're good or not for my deck. Instead, I'll say that I tried four copies of [Timbermare](#) for a while, but it messed up my own blocking guys too often. I then played several matches with four [Spectral Forces](#) that were consistently countered. (I should note that I ran into a string of Teferi decks here after largely avoiding them to this point. Yes, the irony that I recently took out [Scragnoth](#) is not lost on me.)

What I settled on is [Call of the Herd](#). It's not as sexy as [Timbermare](#) or [Spectral Force](#), but it's reasonably useful against aggro, control, countermagic, discard, and Wrath effects. If there's a deck that should be able to make good use of Call in Standard today, mine certainly feels like a candidate. Let's review...

- 1 [Biorhythm](#)
- 1 [Cockatrice](#)
- 1 [Jedit Ojanen of Efrava](#)
- 1 [Search for Tomorrow](#)
- 3 [Gaea's Blessing](#) (sideboard)
- 2 [Molder](#) (sideboard)
- 1 [Squall Line](#) (sideboard)
- +4 [Call of the Herd](#)
- +2 [Tormod's Crypt](#) (sideboard)
- +2 [Hail Storm](#) (sideboard)
- +1 [Biorhythm](#) (sideboard)
- +1 [Cockatrice](#) (sideboard)

Which means that here is my current decklist:

Wood 2007 v.1.4



Main Deck

60 cards

4 Desert	4 Call of the Herd	
15 Forest	4 Harmonize	
1 Pendelhaven	4 Hunting Wilds	
<hr/>		
20 lands	4 Mwonvuli Acid-Moss	
	3 Search for Tomorrow	
	2 Squall Line	
	<hr/>	
4 Boreal Druid	21 other spells	
3 Cockatrice	Sideboard	
4 Indrik Stomphowler	2 Biorhythm	
4 Llanowar Elves	1 Cockatrice	
4 Vinelasher Kudzu	2 Hail Storm	
<hr/>		
19 creatures	4 Jester's Cap	
	4 Serrated Arrows	
	2 Tormod's Crypt	
	<hr/>	
	15 sideboard cards	



Back to the Tourney Room I went, and I'll give you the very abbreviated results. I beat a green-blue aggro deck 2-1, beat a black-green dredge deck 2-0, beat a red-green-white Zoo deck 2-1, lost to a Dralnu deck 0-2, lost to a [Dragonstorm](#) deck 1-2, lost to a green-red aggro deck 1-2, beat a black-blue aggro-control deck 2-0, beat a mono-green aggro deck 2-0, beat a mono-red aggro deck 2-0,

lost to a white-red-blue [Lightning Angel](#) deck 1-2, beat the same white-red-blue deck 2-1, beat a green-red aggro deck 2-0, beat a black-white control deck 2-0, beat a Dralnu deck 2-1, lost to a white-black-green control deck 0-2, beat a mono-black Rack deck 2-1, and finally beat a blue-red "instants" deck 2-0.

12-5 in Tournament Room matches isn't going to knock anyone's socks off, but it's certainly respectable. Note the dearth of MGA and complete lack of [Dragonstorm](#) opponents... This isn't quite the testing I would have hoped to do. The beauty of Standard today, though, is that in a Friday Night **Magic** or 8-man online Standard tournament, I could see literally anything.

[Cockatrice](#) still seems underwhelming-but-necessary for my deck, unfortunately. In fact, overall I would say that the deck feels like it's reached some equilibrium until I have a lot more testing and/or tournament experience behind me.

The only necessary change right now, it seems to me, is to get rid of [Hail Storm](#) from the sideboard. Although it can sometimes cripple an opponent, it turns out to hurt me about as much because of my overwhelming reliance on 1/1 mana producers. Besides, I've also faced a lot of attackers whose toughness is greater than two while looking anemically at the [Hail Storms](#) in my hand.



I still need something to combat aggro, and it would be nice to shore up the [Dragonstorm](#) matchup as much as possible. The two cards that help in this regard are [Chameleon Blur](#) and [Loxodon Warhammer](#). I tried both, and I can see arguments for going either way. [Chameleon Blur](#) can cripple an unwary MGA opponent who spends an entire turn loading up a creature with instant-speed creature pump effects, along with [Groundbreaker](#) and [Spectral Force](#). It delays [Dragonstorm](#)'s win, making them kill you with their four 5/5 Dragons rather than direct damage. [Loxodon Warhammer](#), meanwhile, can provide a life cushion against both strategies and against aggro prevents a 1/1 from blocking my, for example, 8/8 Kudzu. Blur sounds like it should be the better deal, but I've ended up liking the Warhammer because it can also come in against black and blue decks that can't remove it from the table.

One other minor tweak is to replace a [Boreal Druid](#) with the fourth [Search for Tomorrow](#). Rivien again talked me into this one, arguing that [Search for Tomorrow](#) helps Kudzu, can't be killed, and continues the theme of thinning land from the deck. Although I don't like that *all* Search does is thin land, I think Rivien has a point.

- 2 [Hail Storm](#) (sideboard)
- 1 [Boreal Druid](#)
- +2 [Loxodon Warhammer](#) (sideboard)
- +1 [Search for Tomorrow](#)

So, for those keeping score at home, here is my significantly-polished Monogreen Control deck:

Wood 2007 v.1.5



Main Deck

60 cards

- | | | |
|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|--|
| 4 Desert | 4 Call of the Herd | |
| 15 Forest | 4 Harmonize | |
| 1 Pendelhaven | 4 Hunting Wilds | |
| <hr/> | | |
| 20 lands | 4 Mwonvuli Acid-Moss | |
| | 4 Search for Tomorrow | |
| | 2 Squall Line | |
| | <hr/> | |
| 3 Boreal Druid | 22 other spells | |
| 3 Cockatrice | Sideboard | |
| 4 Indrik Stomphowler | 2 Biorhythm | |
| 4 Llanowar Elves | 1 Cockatrice | |
| 4 Vinelasher Kudzu | 4 Jester's Cap | |
| <hr/> | | |
| 18 creatures | 2 Loxodon Warhammer | |
| | 4 Serrated Arrows | |
| | 2 Tormod's Crypt | |
| | <hr/> | |
| | 15 sideboard cards | |



You know, as I look at the deck, I bet I would have landed on almost the exact same place if I had started with Chris' decklist. Freaky.

Day 5: March Madness

One of the few complaints from the first Going Rogue was that the article felt incomplete, since you had to root through my Message Board posts to find out how my deck did in tournaments. Since I'm just sure Kelly Digges won't mind me adding length to this behemoth of an article, I thought I would take my new Wood deck to an online 8-man Standard tournament (which is fairly equivalent to a Friday Night **Magic**) to see what happens.

So, on the Sunday before my article deadline, I fired up **Magic Online**. How did Wood handle this new generation of Standard?

Well, I lost 2-1 to a blue-white control deck in the first round.

That's not satisfying. Let me try that again...

In Match 1 of my second tourney, I played a blue-black Pickles deck (using Teferi and morph guys) and beat it 2-1. Game 1 had me riding a big [Vinelasher Kudzu](#), two Acid-Mosses, and two [Indrik Stomphowlers](#) to victory, basically overpowering his sparse countermagic. Game 2 he strung the game out, and though I dropped him to four life via an 8/5 Kudzu wielding a [Loxodon Warhammer](#), he got the [Vesuvan](#) Doppelganger-[Brine Elemental](#) combo going and wore me down. Thankfully I had the dream hand in Game 3, and went [Forest](#), [Boreal Druid](#), [Vinelasher Kudzu](#), [Forest](#), [Search for Tomorrow](#), [Llanowar Elves](#), [Forest](#), Acid-Moss, [Llanowar Elves](#). Yeah, that was by turn three. Needless to say a 7/7 Kudzu and two 3/3 lands finished the game before he could blink. "btw," my opponent typed before signing off, "cool deck."



In Match 2, I played a green-blue aggro deck. He busted out in Game 1 with a [Scryb Ranger](#) and a couple of [Birds of Paradise](#). I got two early [Vinelascher Kudzus](#) and pumped out loads of land via [Acid-Moss](#), [Search for Tomorrow](#), and [Hunting Wilds](#). I used [Squall Line](#) for one when he tried to pump his Ranger, then I played [Hunting Wilds](#) with kicker. My opponent dropped to 2 life, and on my next turn he conceded, saying that he didn't know the lands stayed 3/3s permanently. Game 2 I blocked his [Ohran Viper](#) with an Elephant token, then blocked [Spectral Force](#) with [Cockatrice](#) while dropping to one life. He had two cards in hand, but apparently neither of them was a counter as I played [Loxodon Warhammer](#) and swung my way back to 6 life, then 11. "nice deck," my opponent typed before conceding.

So, in Match 3, my opponent and I split in the finals. I asked to play anyway and my opponent graciously agreed. He was playing a blue-black Teferi-Dralnu deck and beat me 2-0. In the first game I took him to 2 life with a quick start, but he stabilized the board with Teferi and [Skeletal Vampire](#). After Dralnu hit the table, I died slowly over several turns. Game 2 I had a great start with two [Vinelascher Kudzus](#) and two [Search for Tomorrows](#), but he had a [Repeal](#) for one and a [Last Gasp](#) for the other. I used Jester's Cap to remove his lone copies of Dralnu, [Skeletal Vampire](#), and [Seize the Soul](#) from the game, but he eventually won through sheer stubborn card advantage and me topdecking a bunch of land. He ended the game at 10 life, after an eternity of a game. "Your deck is sweet," he offered.

And you know what? My deck *is* sweet. It's nice to know that Wood has a fighting chance in the new, strange world of *Planar Chaos* Standard, though as before I don't expect it to take the world by storm. Honestly, MGA probably still beats me more than it doesn't, and probably gives you a better chance at winning a tournament than my wonky MGC deck. I'm proud, but not delusional.

As before, too, I'm sure that the deck isn't done evolving. How would you change it? What cards have I missed? Have you built a different MGC deck and want to show it off? What did you think of the article format? Any feedback at all? Fire up the "Discuss" button on the bottom of the page and let me

know what you think. I'd prefer Boards commentary to e-mail, because then everyone can benefit from your wisdom.

If I get inspired by your ideas (which means good, solid rationale is helpful), I will surely keep tinkering with the deck. And if I keep tinkering with the deck, I'll tell you all about it on the Message Boards. I can already see me getting obsessed again and needing to write another epilogue. My poor free time. It already feels abused.

Don't worry, though: I won't blame you for my insomnia.

Personally? I blame Chris Millar.

Think hard and have fun,

-jms
(GoingRogue on **Magic Online**)

P.S. Going Rogue was an experiment concocted by me and Scott Johns. We have another experiment coming at you in two weeks. Stay tuned!