



Lessons from the Future

Quentin Martin
Limited Information
Tuesday, May 1, 2007



Are you ready? It's here—the future has arrived. For the next few weeks we'll be leaving the basics behind and focussing on what *Future Sight* has brought to Limited. With the Prerelease behind us, it is time to look at the changes the new set has brought to the Draft environment.

There was a [Pro Tour](#) whilst the Prerelease was being held, so I have yet to do a Sealed Deck—my first will probably be at [GP-Stockholm](#) this Saturday. However, the Pros' favourite past time before evening falls at the PT is to draft, and I managed to squeeze six high-level drafts in, posting a 14-4 record against some of the world's best. Some of the drafts crawled to a halt as the site ran out of English packs, resulting in painfully slow picks whilst Masashi struggled to translate such new quirks as "Whenever a Rigger you control would assemble a Contraption, it assembles two Contraptions instead"... Six may be a small sample to work with, but it gave me a good impression of what the future has brought.

As usual, the third set is packed full of powerful cards, cards I imagine R&D feared to print earlier in the set in case they spoiled the draft format. Normally, once players have got to grips with the third set, white-blue emerges as the most solid draft archetype; we will have to see whether this proves true once more. Certain commons have already proven game dominating and several wacky draft decks have sprung forth. I saw Jelger Wiegersma running a [Wild Pair](#) deck, Masashi Oiso with an enchantment deck, Julien Nuijten with a token deck running [Muraganda Petroglyphs](#), Tomohiro Kaji running out a [Mistform Ultimus](#) with a [Steamflogger Boss](#) in play, and Gabriel Nassif playing green-white hard control with [Evangelize](#), [Sprout Swarm](#) and [Magus of the Moat](#), to mention but a few.



There are many options out there and it will only be through playing the set a lot that we will discover the best colour combinations and in-depth pick orders. These I will hopefully bring to in future articles, but for now, I will highlight the cards that stood out to me. Not in the blatant 'play me because I'm obviously amazing' way, but rather more subtly. Before I move onto these, let's take a quick look at the contenders for best common.

[Ichor Slick](#) has a lot going for it other than just having a cool sounding name. Every part of this card is powerful: be it three-mana removal, cycled to dig for land, or madnessed off a Looter *il-Kor*. Its most likely shape will be when its two abilities combine. For six mana, this will kill a guy and draw you a card, far more powerful than any common has a right to be.

[Gathan Raiders](#) are comparable with [Zombie Cutthroat](#). It should be noted that this card is not really red, but an artifact. It can unmorph for free and will probably be the terror of players everywhere when they contemplate what to do about an opponent's morph. There are quite a few madness spells throughout the block, and this is yet another outlet for them. On top of all this, once hellbent this guy is huge. If he falls short of being the best common, he will probably be the card that every other is compared to in power assessment. He is the benchmark of strength in this set, much like [Prismatic Lens](#) and [Terramorphic Expanse](#) were in *Time Spiral*.

The last contender is a card that seems to initially slip beneath the radar. At first glance, it seems like something cute that casual players will fight over, or a card that should find its niche in theme



PRODUCTS

[Future Sight Planar Chaos](#)
All Magic products

RULES

[Core Game](#)
[Basic Rulebook](#)
[Comprehensive Rules](#)
[All Magic Rules](#)

MESSAGE BOARDS

[All Magic message boards](#)
[magicthegathering.com forum](#)
[Rules Q&A forum](#)
[Magic Online announcements](#)

MAGIC ONLINE

[Download Now!](#)
[Magic Online III Launch Info](#)

NOVELS

[Future Sight Time Spiral Cycle, Book III](#)
by [Scott McGough](#) and [John Delaney](#)

deck. Sprout Swarm is far from either of these assessments. It will dominate most games it is played in, more so than Wurmcalling ever tried to. If the game is a stalemate, this card will win. It can provide an endless stream of chump blockers which will eventually multiply into an army that cannot be effectively attacked into, and it will then become an army of overlapping sacrifices that will end the game in short note. This card will probably mean cards like Subterranean Shambler and Mindstab go up in value; it is that powerful. Whether or not it is the best common, only time will tell.


Cards that just fell short of the mark are Ghostfire, Infiltrator i/-Kor, Riddle of Lightning, and Judge Unworthy. Riddle is more powerful than it seems for its ability to randomly steal games when pointed at the opponent's dome. Infiltrator might be powerful enough to seriously increase the presence of maindeck Piracy Charms and Feeblenesses. Ghostfire is a gorgeous card, one that would probably have been Dan Paskin's non-creature Invitational submission, but it is simply great and not broken. Whilst Judge Unworthy is cheap removal that digs you through your deck, it fails to deal with very large creatures and ones that fail to stray into the red zone. All of these cards will be first picks, but I do not think they are strong enough contenders for the title of best common.

The rest are cards whose true import I feel will be missed on first read. Some of these cards I feel have either been overrated or underrated or have a use other than those first supposed. I focus mainly on commons because not only are they the ones that I've played with the most, but when it comes to Limited, commons are far more important than rares.

Two uncommons that I saw dominating game after game were Boldwyr Intimidator and Nacatl War-Pride. The first cracked me up with the text line "Cowards can't block Warriors" before I realised that Cowards is now a creature type. Not only is he as unblockable as he wants to be but, for the price of a few mana, he can make your other guys hard to deal with too. At first I thought that seven mana was too much to pay for this guy, but he is powerful enough, and with cards like Griming Ignus he can easily show up early.

The War-Pride demands instant removal. If he stays alive for an attack he is going to deal a lot of damage—killing almost all defending creatures and letting all your other attackers go unblocked (I can't wait to Trickbind his trigger, so I can block all my opponent's other guys that attack too...). If you have removal or a pump spell, he will likely do exactly the same the following turn. Triple green might be a downside, but this guy will swing games single-handedly.

Lumithread Field and the other non-creature morphs pose an interesting take on an old ability. To start with, I thought they were amazing, because they always survive being unmorphed (as only creatures can die from damage); and when a morph takes down an opposing 2/2 and then unmorphs to survive, we all know that's a good thing, because it's card advantage. However, these morphs do not unmorph to leave a solid creature behind, they tend to unmorph into something unspectacular—be it a land or a poor man's Millstone. As themselves, they don't serve much of a purpose. Sure, it's nice that they survive, but they should be treated more as 2/2s that leave an okay residual effect behind when they die rather than thinking of them in terms of solid card advantage. I may be proved wrong in the future, but Lumithread Field seems the better of the cycle, and a 2/2 that dies to leave a Blessed Orator's effect behind is nothing to get too excited about.

Whip-Spine Drake deserves a brief mention whilst we are on the topic of morphs. This card is almost from the Azorius Guild. It is both a white card and a blue card; and it is very good in both! A 3/3 flyer for five mana has always been an excellent card in Limited, as has a morph that unmorphs to survive combat. At worst, this is a  3/3 flyer. A great card—one I do not expect to see to late in a pack.

I had to read Putrid Cyclops several times before I could work out whether it was good or not. There's so much text on there to get a three-mana 3/3, but it has scry so surely it must be good? Wrong. This card is a pile. Scry 1 means that you are limited in deciding the revealed card's fate, so you do not have much control over whether the Cyclops dies or not. On top of that, the only cards that let the Cyclops survive are land and cards that cost two or less. Do you really want to be drawing one of these on your fourth turn?



Mistmeadow Skulk is a fine card. It is almost Beloved Chaplain and Mourning Thrull combined with a little extra and a little less on the side. It will often happily hold off your opponent's largest attacker, forcing them to overlap it to attack past it and, even then, you gain one life each time. It will often attack unimpeded too, for a little life swing that will add up. It is also hard to remove, having protection from most cards in the format. Ironically, only the cards that your opponent would want to use to kill it actually do. Plus, the guy has some groovy, spaced out eyes to boot.

Riftsweeper is one of those cards whose power varies from game to game. Some games it will be a two-mana Flametongue Kavu, others it will be uncastable, and sometimes it will simply be a Grizzly Bears. It should be noted that it has to target something, so it isn't too hot to cast if you have something suspended whilst your opponent does not. However, the times when it does catch your opponent's suspended card will outweigh those when it might hit yours, making this a stealthy card that might make its way around later than it deserves.

I thought that Centaur Omenreader was just a good Hill Giant that would make your deck more often than not. Until Ruud Warmenhoven attacked me with it on his fifth turn and then played a Plague Sliver, a Llanowar Empath, and a Mire Boa! This won't happen all the time, but it will often generate you at least two mana, meaning that it is in your opponent's best interests to kill it before you make your second main phase. This will probably force them to make a bad block, walking into any pump that you may have, especially if you are on the play. I'm not even going to think about what might happen if you accelerate to it a turn early.

I forgot to mention another whacky deck earlier. Bernardo de Costa Cabral was playing a red-blue deck, splashing Nicol Bolas without any Swamps or storage land! He had a Tolaria West to transmute for an Urborg, Tomb of Yawgmoth—how cute was that? The point that I am getting at is that this card can tutor up several powerful cards—the new Keldon Megaliths for a start—whilst also acting as a rather expensive fixer, but a fixer nonetheless.



There are still many rares out there which I have yet to see play and, thus, cannot comment accurately on. However, Heartwood Storyteller has potential. It probably has to be in the correct type of deck but, being green, I doubt it should be too hard. If you are heavy on creatures, anything over the fourteen mark, then you probably want this card. It might seem symmetrical, but you can offload all your tricks before casting him. Ideally, you want to play it on a board that is at least even, if not in already in your favour. For example, if the board is fairly stable except for an Uktabi Drake of yours attacking, then this guy will rock. It is likely that you will draw more creatures than your opponent, so you will likely stay ahead in the race, and when he finally has to off the Drake, you will draw another card to keep you ahead.

The Pact cycle is very powerful in Limited as well as its Constructed brethren. The white Intervention Pact is less than stellar, but it might have the opportunity to crop up favourably, catching them unawares whilst you are tapped out. The green Summoner's Pact is also fairly weak as there aren't too many green men I would like to tutor up for. It essentially let's you put the best green guy left in your deck into play with echo —not the most promising package. It is the others that are interesting.

Makihiro Mihara came close to destroying me with Pact of Negation in one game, and trying to play around it in the next was painfully annoying. Late in the game, it lets you tap out with the knowledge that you always have the trump up your sleeve. The downside is that late in the game you can often leave the mana up for something like Cancel—so it is playable but will probably not always make the maindeck.

Slaughter Pact is obviously insane. It's like a Dark Banishing with a buy now, pay later scheme built in. But it's Pact of the Titan that I want to talk about. The other two offer a straight one-for-one. The Titan has far more potential. It's like half a Beast Attack with even more of a surprise factor. For an example of how powerful it is, I was playing Kenji Tsumura, it was Game 2, and he had already seen it in the first game and he still could do nothing but walk into it! If it can trick the world's best, it is good in my books. Just be sure you don't lose to a bounce or land destruction spell! Is it malicious of me that I cannot wait to win a game by trash-talking an opponent through their upkeep after they've Pacted? Prison rules!

That's it for now on the individual card spotlights. One of the things that I have picked up from playing is that, much like in the other

sets, green is deep—deeper than any other colour, I think. It has [Edge of Autumn](#), [Kavu Primarch](#), [Llanowar Empath](#), [Nessian Courser](#), [Sporoloth Ancient](#), [Sprout Swarm](#), and [Thornweald Archer](#) all as excellent playables that you would be loathe not to maindeck. That's seven out of twelve very strong cards!

That's all for now. Hopefully, I'll discover more in the next few weeks and you'll be amongst the first I share it with.

Q



*Widely considered one of the world's foremost Limited competitors, Quentin Martin has four Limited Grand Prix Top 8s and a Top 8 at Pro Tour–Prague 2006. Between his **Magic** expertise and a background in philosophy, it's no surprise Quentin is well known for his strategic insight and theories on the game.*



[Discuss](#) on the message boards



[Quentin Martin](#) archive

[About Us](#) | [Jobs](#) | [New to the Game?](#) | [Inside Wizards](#) | [Find a Store](#) | [Press](#) | [Help](#) | [Sitemap](#)

© 1995-2007 Wizards of the Coast, Inc., a subsidiary of Hasbro, Inc. All Rights Reserved.
[Terms of Use](#) - [Privacy Statement](#)

