

Home > Games > Magic > Magicthegathering.com > Columns



Battle of Wits con *Planar Chaos*

Ben Bleiweiss
Building on a Budget
Monday, May 14, 2007



hello everyone, and welcome back to Building on a Budget. Today's column is a continuation of the mega-series of articles dealing with **Battle of Wits**. Yes, **Battle of Wits**—a card so powerful that they had to ban it in Prismatic!

(Okay, granted, it would be problematic in a format that mandates 250 card decks—but I'll take my moral victories where I can get them!)

Before we get started, let me remind everyone of the ground rules for building a budget **Battle of Wits** deck:

1. **Battle of Wits** is the only rare allowed in the deck. This is a budget deck, and 240–250 cards already pushes the boundaries of many budgets.
2. The deck can't contain more than forty uncommons at any given time. When possible, I try to pick uncommons that aren't super-pricy, i.e., not **Remand** or **Harmonize**.
3. This build of **Battle of Wits** is Standard-legal. In this article, that means *Ninth Edition*, *Ravnica*, *Guildpact*, *Dissension*, *Coldsnap*, *Time Spiral*, and *Planar Chaos* are allowed. You already knew this because you read the sidebar at the top of the article, right? *Right?* Sigh. Nobody reads that sidebar, do they? Poor, poor sidebar.

Poor sidebar. Should we put it out of its misery?

- I read that sidebar every week, as I know it contains vital information for this column!
- I never knew there was a sidebar until now.
- Get rid of that eyesore. I hate it, and everything about it!

Submit my Vote

4. The intent is to win with **Battle of Wits**. It's fine if it comes down to alternate win conditions every now and then, but we're not just going to take *Aeon in Flux*, *Sheer Pandemonium*, *Profusion Confusion*, and *The Two Ladies*, mash them up in a cement truck, and see what messy Macedonian architecture spews forth.

To be honest, there weren't many *Planar Chaos* cards that would be good additions to the **Battle of Wits** deck—most of the black and blue uncommons and commons in the set are not silver bullets or card drawing / tutoring spells. Rather than make this a pretty boring article in which I add a single copy of *Piracy Charm* to the deck, I decided to revamp the deck by adding green.

This is a project I've been toying with for a couple of revisions, but now seems to be the best time to move forward. Adding green to the deck covers a couple of glaring weaknesses I've found with the deck in the past, namely removing enchantments, artifacts, and flyers.

Green also allows for a more stable acceleration base. Part of the goal of the deck is to drop a Signet on the second turn, but often the color of the Signet is pretty irrelevant to the deck—for instance, here's the version we left off with from *Time Spiral*:

Battle of Wits
Time Spiral dec

Main Deck
243 cards

4 Dimir Aqueduct	4 Dimir House Guard	4 Battle of Wits
42 Island	4 Dimir Infiltrator	2 Boomerang
42 Swamp	4 Drift of Phantasms	4 Brainspoil
4 Frost Marsh	1 Gravedigger	4 Clutch of the Undercity
4 Terramorphic Expanse	4 Nekrataal	4 Compulsive Research
96 lands	3 Thieving Magpie	4 Consult the Necrosages
	4 Thought Courier	4 Counsel of the Soratami



PRO TOUR—VALENCIA



Click to enable Adobe Flash Player

Update on Rain Delay



MESSAGE BOARDS



RULES



4 Looter il-Kor	1 Cremate
4 Sage of Epityr	1 Darkblast
32 creatures	3 Dark Banishing
	4 Diabolic Tutor
	4 Dimir Signet
	1 Execute
	3 Golgari Signet
	4 Izzet Signet
	4 Last Gasp
	1 Mnemonic Nexus
	4 Muddle the Mixture
	1 Nightmare Void
	3 Repeal
	1 Ribbons of Night
	4 Sift
	1 Slay
	4 Sleight of Hand
	4 Telling Time
	1 Treasure Trove
	4 Azorius Signet
	1 Cancel
	4 Chromatic Star
	1 Grim Harvest
	4 Mystical Teachings
	4 Perilous Research
	4 Prismatic Lens
	4 Rakdos Signet
	4 Simic Signet
	1 Strangling Soot
	4 Sudden Death
	4 Think Twice
	1 Wipe Away
	115 other spells

The deck doesn't run any white cards, yet there's **Azorius Signet**, as a generic "accelerate blue mana" card. Green has plenty of early accelerators that can get the specific color of mana you need, while also providing a shuffle effect to things such as **Sage of Epityr** or **Telling Time**.

First, let's get a new mana base in the deck:

Out: 4 **Azorius Signet**, 4 **Izzet Signet**, 4 **Rakdos Signet**, 4 **Frost Marsh**, 14 **Island**, 14 **Swamp**

In: 1 **Golgari Signet**, 4 **Golgari Rot Farm**, 4 **Simic Growth Chamber**, 28 **Forest**, 4 **Rampant Growth**, 4 **Search for Tomorrow**, 4 **Farseek**

First, I added the **Golgari Signet** because it's on-color for both ends. Then, I put in copies of each of the green/X bouncelands from Ravnica block. Last, I put in **Forests** and the three best green mana-acceleration sorceries in Standard.

Adding green also allows me to up the quality of certain removal spells. For instance, **Putrefy** is almost universally better than **Dark Banishing**, so I want to add in a card which can remove both artifacts and creatures, rather than just creatures.

Out: 3 **Dark Banishing**

In: 3 **Putrefy**

Speaking of silver bullets, this deck runs on the strategy that, if you're running a 240-250 card deck with a ton of tutoring and transmute effects, you should be able to have at least one answer to any given situation somewhere in your deck. This time around, I've added **Putrefy** already (to answer artifacts). In addition, I'm putting in copies of **Krosan Grip** and **Naturalize** (for **Muddle the Mixture** / **Dimir Infiltrator** and **Drift of Phantasms** to tutor for), plus **Needle Storm** (in case I face down a bunch of flyers, which has happened in the past) and a single **Ana Battlemage**, as a tutorable body / discard spell.

To make room for them in the deck, I took out four **Perilous Research** (the weakest card-drawing spell), three **Repeals**, and a **Boomerang**. The bounce spells were there to half-cover the deficiency in removing non-creature threats, and now that I'm packing both **Naturalize** and **Krosan Grip**, we should be set there.

In: 1 **Krosan Grip**, 1 **Ana Battlemage**, 1 **Naturalize**, 1 **Needle Storm**

Out: 4 **Perilous Research**, 1 **Boomerang**, 3 **Repeal**



Planar Chaos 1

Main Deck 244 cards

4 Dimir Aqueduct
27 Forest
4 Golgari Rot Farm
28 Island
28 Swamp
4 Simic Growth Chamber
4 Terramorphic Expanse

99 lands

4 Dimir House Guard
4 Dimir Infiltrator
4 Drift of Phantasms
1 Gravedigger
4 Nekkartaal
3 Thieving Magpie
4 Thought Courier
1 Ana Battlemage
4 Looter il-Kor
4 Sage of Epityr

33 creatures

4 Battle of Wits
1 Boomerang
4 Brainspoil
4 Clutch of the Undercity
4 Compulsive Research
4 Consult the Necrosages
4 Counsel of the Soratami
1 Cremate
1 Darkblast
4 Diabolic Tutor
4 Dimir Signet
1 Execute
4 Farseek
4 Golgari Signet
4 Last Gasp
1 Mnemonic Nexus
4 Muddle the Mixture
1 Naturalize
1 Needle Storm
1 Nightmare Void
3 Putrefy
4 Rampant Growth
1 Repeal
1 Ribbons of Night
4 Sift
1 Slay
4 Sleight of Hand
4 Telling Time
1 Treasure Trove
1 Cancel
4 Chromatic Star
1 Grim Harvest
1 Krosan Grip
4 Mystical Teachings
4 Prismatic Lens
4 Search for Tomorrow
4 Simic Signet
1 Strangling Soot
4 Sudden Death
4 Think Twice
1 Wipe Away

112 other spells

Game 1: Vantere (R/G Pandemonium)

He gets a couple of early creatures and drops Pandemonium, and then Primal Forcemage. I Slay the Forcemage and use Mystical Teachings to get Naturalize. Then, I get double Nekkartaal going with Grim Harvest, tutor up a hand full of bounce for a suspended Greater Gargadon, and slowly build my mana with Farseek, Search for Tomorrow and Signets. Finally, with a hand full of removal and bounce, I get Battle of Wits and win.

Record: 1-0

Game 2: Snort71 (Battle of Wits)

He gets stuck on three mana and Boomerangs one of my bounce lands. I just keep dropping lands, and when he taps out to play Strangling Soot on my Sage of Epityr, I drop Battle of Wits and win.

Record: 2-0

Game 3: Razzorrat (R/W Pyrohemia)

He drops down Guardian of the Guildpact and Seal of Fire. I get Farseek, Rampant Growth, Golgari Signet and Search for Tomorrow by turn four. I also drop Dimir Infiltrator to block his 2/3 guy, but he uses Seething Song to get out Pyrohemia and uses that to kill my board. I Mystical Teachings for Putrefy to kill his Guardian, which, in turn, kills his Pyrohemia. He passes the turn, and I flash back the Teachings to get Clutch of the Undercity and transmute that into Diabolic Tutor, which fetches Battle of Wits to finish the game.

Record: 3-0

Game 4: Coccobill (G/B Aggro)

He gets an early Penumbra Spider and Putrefies a Looter il-Kor. I get another Looter, and drop both Dimir House Guard and Dimir Infiltrator to stop his guy. He plays Llanowar Elves and I strip the rest of his hand with Consult the Necrosages, including a Krosan Grip. He plays Gravedigger and Golgari Brownscale, and I set up my board to get Battle of Wits via the transmute / Diabolic Tutor route, with Strangling Soot in hand just in case.

Record: 4-0

Game 5: Nitz007 (R/W Slivers)

He gets triple **Two-Headed Sliver** with **Sinew Sliver**. I nearly stabilize, but I die to a second **Rift Bolt** at 2 life after locking up the board with **Thought Courier**, **Nekrataal**, and **Drift of Phantasms**.

Record: 4-1



All right, it's time for me to grouse again—there really needs to be an uncommon black board sweeper somewhere in Standard. Right now, you need to play red in order to remove weenies en masse in anything less than the rare slot (**Pyroclasm**, **Sulfurous Blast**), so this deck still has a weakness against a rush of smaller creatures. I miss the days of **Infest** and **Hideous Laughter**.

Well, since we're playing green, we have one sort-of removal spell (**Rolling Spoil**, which also gives the deck a way to kill a land, if need be). I can also add in life gain, so that I can buy a turn or two if I'm low on life. The cards I want for this slot are **Natural Spring** (a great one-shot lifegain effect) and **Sophic Centaur**. I often have a lot of cards in hand, and **Sophic Centaur** seems like it can make a huge difference if left unchecked.

In: 1 **Rolling Spoil**, 1 **Natural Spring**, 1 **Sophic Centaur**
 Out: **Strangling Soot**, 4 **Chromatic Star**

Battle of Wits		Main Deck	
Planar Chaos 2		242 cards	
4 Dimir Aqueeduct	4 Dimir House Guard	4 Battle of Wits	
27 Forest	4 Dimir Infiltrator	1 Boomerang	
4 Golgari Rot Farm	4 Drift of Phantasms	4 Brainspoil	
28 Island	1 Gravedigger	4 Clutch of the Undercity	
28 Swamp	4 Nekrataal	4 Compulsive Research	
4 Simic Growth Chamber	3 Thieving Magpie	4 Consult the Necrosages	
4 Terramorphic Expanse	4 Thought Courier	4 Counsel of the Soratami	
99 lands	1 Ana Battlemage	1 Cremate	
	4 Looter il-Kor	1 Darkblast	
	4 Sage of Epityr	4 Diabolic Tutor	
	1 Sophic Centaur	4 Dimir Signet	
	34 creatures	1 Execute	
		4 Farseek	
		4 Golgari Signet	
		4 Last Gasp	
		1 Mnemonic Nexus	
		4 Muddle the Mixture	
		1 Naturalize	
		1 Natural Spring	
		1 Needle Storm	
		1 Nightmare Void	
		3 Putrefy	
		4 Rampant Growth	
		1 Repeal	
		1 Ribbons of Night	
		1 Rolling Spoil	
		4 Sift	
		1 Slay	
		4 Sleight of Hand	
		4 Telling Time	
		1 Treasure Trove	
		1 Cancel	
		1 Grim Harvest	
		1 Krosan Grip	
		4 Mystical Teachings	
		4 Prismatic Lens	
		4 Search for Tomorrow	
		4 Simic Signet	
		4 Sudden Death	
		4 Think Twice	
		1 Wipe Away	
		109 other spells	

Game 6: (Mono-Red)

He gets **Keldon Halberdiere** and **Foriysian Totem** and **Greater Forgeling**. I take them out with **Putrefy**, **Sudden**

Death and Last Gasp. I then use Think Twice and Thought Courier to draw through my deck, eventually getting Battle of Wits. His board at the end of the game? Double Fortune Thief.
Record: 5-1

Game 7: Gary Peh (R/U/B Storm)

He tries to go off, and I counter a Seething Song. That keeps him from Demonfiring me to death, but he gets me down to six with Demonfire, Char and Grapeshot. I begin mounting a comeback, culminating in drawing a Natural Spring with four mana up. He plays Demonfire for 6 the next turn, killing me.
Record: 5-2

The only ways to stop storm are Stifle, Voidslime and Trickbind right now, so it's a wash.

Game 8: (G/W Aggro)

He gets Vinelasher Kudzu, Birds of Paradise, and Yavimaya Dryad within the first four turns. I get a Signet and Battle of Wits on turn four, ending the game.
Record: 6-2

Game 9: Gdepa624 (R/U Izzet)

I draw a ton of lands during this game. He gets me down to four with Leyline of Lightning and double Gelectrode, but I take care of them with Naturalize and Rolling Spoil. I then tap out to transmute and cast Battle of Wits, only to walk into Mana Leak. I draw lands and card drawing spells the next few turns, and eventually he gets Niv-Mizzet and kills me.
Record: 6-3

Over the past few games, I've been stuck with a ton of lands, and not enough action. The addition of eight more Ravnica-Block bouncelands has probably pushed my land count over the top, so I can afford to lose a few lands in favor of spells. Out go two copies of Swamp, Island and Forest, and in come three Dizzy Spells (to allow me to transmute for one-drop answers), Piracy Charm (works with Dizzy Spell!), Molder (what'd I just say?), and a copy of Macabre Waltz—a way to get multiple creatures back at once that I lost when Death Denied rotated out of Standard.

Out: 2 Swamp, 2 Island, 2 Forest

In: Macabre Waltz, Piracy Charm, 3 Dizzy Spell, Molder



Battle of Wits		Planar Chaos 3	
Main Deck			
243 cards			
4 Dimir Aqueduct	4 Dimir House Guard	4 Battle of Wits	
26 Forest	4 Dimir Infiltrator	1 Boomerang	
4 Golgari Rot Farm	4 Drift of Phantasms	4 Brainspoil	
26 Island	1 Gravedigger	4 Clutch of the Undercity	
26 Swamp	4 Nekrataal	4 Compulsive Research	
4 Simic Growth Chamber	3 Thieving Magpie	4 Consult the Necrosages	
4 Terramorphic Expanse	4 Thought Courier	4 Counsel of the Soratami	
94 lands	1 Ana Battlemage	1 Cremate	
	4 Looter il-Kor	1 Darkblast	
	4 Sage of Epityr	4 Diabolic Tutor	
	1 Sophic Centaur	4 Dimir Signet	
	34 creatures	3 Dizzy Spell	
		1 Execute	
		4 Farseek	
		4 Golgari Signet	
		4 Last Gasp	
		1 Mnemonic Nexus	
		4 Muddle the Mixture	
		1 Naturalize	
		1 Natural Spring	
		1 Needle Storm	
		1 Nightmare Void	
		3 Putrefy	
		4 Rampant Growth	
		1 Repeal	
		1 Ribbons of Night	
		1 Rolling Spoil	
		4 Sift	
		1 Slay	
		4 Sleight of Hand	
		4 Telling Time	
		1 Treasure Trove	
		1 Cancel	
		1 Grim Harvest	
		1 Krosan Grip	

1	Macabre Waltz
1	Molder
4	Mystical Teachings
1	Piracy Charm
4	Prismatic Lens
4	Search for Tomorrow
4	Simic Signet
4	Sudden Death
4	Think Twice
1	Wipe Away
<hr/>	
115 other spells	

Game 10: LordGhost (R/G Storm)

He suspends **Wheel of Fate**, and then I get wrecked by **Ignite Memories** for 8. I **Natural Spring**, and then **Wheel of Fate** goes off. I get wrecked again for 16 by another **Ignite Memories** but stabilize the board with creatures and **Darkblast**. I drop **Battle of Wits**, and he topdecks **Blaze** to kill me.

Record: 6-4

Game 11: Chaem (Slivers)

He gets the **Dormant Sliver / Darkheart Sliver** build, and I don't have any sort of mass-removal that can take care of multiple Slivers at once.

Record: 6-5

Game 12: DragonRyderX (B/G/R Mana Generation)

I kill double **Magus of the Coffers**, **Nightmare Void** a **Roiling Horror** from his hands, and kill him by transmuting **Brainspoil** into **Battle of Wits**.

Record: 7-5

Game 13: Rukland (Saprolings)

I get a turn-five kill with **Battle of Wits**.

8-5

Game 14: Cruzader (Mono-Green)

He gets stuck at one land, and after I **Last Gasp** his **Llanowar Elves** and drop a **Thieving Magpie**, he concedes.

Record: 9-5

Game 15: ZOGO (B/W/G Control)

I get a second-turn Signet, and he **Naturalizes** it. I cast **Nightmare Void** on turn five, see he has no enchantment removal in hand, and then play **Battle of Wits** on turn six. He doesn't draw a **Mortify** or another **Naturalize**, and I win.

Record: 10-5

Once again, a very respectable record pulled with this deck. I really recommend building this (or some version) of **Battle of Wits** if you play **Magic Online**. **Battle of Wits** really takes advantage of the online format, since you don't have to sit there shuffling a monstrous deck after every game or tutoring effect. **Battle of Wits** is a great test of deckbuilding. Unlike an ordinary deck, where you're tuning to get the tightest draw possible within a sixty-card limit, **Battle of Wits** makes you fit in a ton of extra cards for the benefit of playing a card that says "3: You win the game." This gives you an opportunity to play niche cards, fringe cards, pet cards, and fun cards, ones that you normally wouldn't be able to jam into a tuned deck.

If you have suggestions for this build of **Battle of Wits**, or ideas of which cards should be added come **Future Sight**, please chime in on the forums! I have a feeling that we're going to ratchet up from three to four colors come the next build...

And before I go for the week, here's some poll results from last week. Thank you all again for joining me, and I'll see you in seven!

Do you want to see a Battle Royale between these 10 decks?		
Yes! Which deck will reign supreme?	7158	87.3%
Just get on with building more decks, you budgeteer!	1040	12.7%
Total	8198	100.0%



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



[Discuss](#) on the message boards



[Respond](#) via email



[Ben Bleiweiss](#) archive

© 1995-2007 Wizards of the Coast, Inc., a subsidiary of Hasbro, Inc. All Rights Reserved.

[Terms of Use](#) - [Privacy Statement](#)

