

## The return of the Draft Extravaganza. Five Forties

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**H**as this ever happened to you? You'll be typing at a workstation, or perhaps shuffling something, when suddenly you get The Itch. It's a small feeling, a prickle really, but very, very pervasive. Luckily for most people—you, probably—that itch is easily scratched. Send out the call, "Draft at XYZ's house tonight!" or just fire up **Magic Online** and run a queue there. For some people, an afflicted few, their options are a touch more restricted. I've been happy to fall into that camp. The job is great, and the usual excise of Limited play hardly raises a blip. But once in a while... well, that itch again.

So it was with great pleasure that Seattle once again hosted the Draft Extravaganza. Brainchild of local judge Tony Mayer, this tournament is held once a year, in May. On that happiest of days, the most fanatical drafters in the area get together for one long day of grabbin' and passin'. There are no less than *five* drafts of various format held at the Draft Extravaganza, ergo the event is unsanctioned, ergo Wizards employees are more than welcome to attend, ergo I knew exactly where I and a number of colleagues were going to be that Saturday.

Last year's event was covered in a couple of Limited Information columns [here](#) and [here](#). They were popular enough that the **magicthegathering.com** team and I felt this year's coverage would make another fun article. In fact, they took the task so seriously that both Scott Johns and Kelly Digges attended this year, presumably to make sure the reporting went smoothly. Other Wizards affiliates included Great Designer Search winner Alexis Janson, GDS competitor Mark Globus, digital savant Andrea Shubert, and even flavor-master Rei Nakazawa, who hadn't drafted in *four years* prior to the event. Aside from the employees, there were multiple pro tour gravy trainers in attendance, a level 3 judge, a level 4 judge, and those who have "merely" been playing for over a decade. These kinds of events bring out the crowd, and this year was no exception. Fifty-three people showed up to dedicate their entire day to the draft.



Format-wise, this was probably the Extravaganza's most ambitious sequence. There were some standards of course, but a few branched into the decidedly weird. We'd all appreciate if the readers could post their thoughts on which format seemed the most fun, or any alternate drafts for future Draft Extravaganzas. As you'll soon see, this group is not averse to the experimental.

### **Draft #1: *Time Spiral / Planar Chaos / Future Sight***

Per tradition, the Draft Extravaganza began with the most current format. As things were to get less common, opening with something comfortable allowed people to get their feet wet before the real shenanigans begin.



My first booster had a doozy of a choice: [Lightning Axe](#), [Fiery Temper](#), or [Bogardan Hellkite](#). Poor signaling notwithstanding, no other card in the pack even came close to the power level of these three. I'm sure there are people looking at those cards and know exactly what the correct pick is. Odds are, for each card there are people who are 100% certain their choice is the correct one.

For me, it wasn't so clear cut. I liked [Fiery Temper](#) over [Lightning Axe](#) (slightly); but between the Temper and the Dragon it was quite muddy. Playing the advocate role, why would someone choose the Dragon? Simply put, it's gigantic and has a huge effect on the board. It's really tough to lose after casting it. So why would someone pick [Fiery Temper](#) instead? Because while it's not as splashy, it lets all your other cards work better. If you want to play control, Temper's great. If you want to push through attackers, Temper's great. If your opponent is at 3, Temper's *really* great. The Dragon is intrinsically more powerful, but it comes saddled with a glaring liability: One needs to adjust one's draft around it. That might not seem like a big deal, but it's restrictive in card choices and often by consequence, colors. I'm happy with a great big finisher in my red-black removal decks, I'm pretty unhappy with an 8 mana spell in my red-white early rush deck. [Bogardan Hellkite](#) is amazing, but there are caveats. Temper is safe and still quite good.

But whatever, it's a *Dragon*! Of course they're tough to use; Dragons wouldn't be as awesome without some hoop to jump through. Perhaps in a more formal setting I would take [Fiery Temper](#), sighing, but here, today? Let's have a little fun.

The next packs solidified the red with [Rift Bolt](#), [Orcish Cannonade](#), and [Foriysian Totem](#). My second color was undecided, with both white and blue showing promise. I got a very late [Temporal Isolation](#), but as noted above, I really didn't want to pair the red with the white. Planar Chaos brought that decision to a head, with [Dead // Gone](#) versus [Crovax, Ascendant Hero](#). Conceding the twist of [Bogardan Hellkite](#) to the deck, I eventually took the ridiculously efficient removal card over the powerful legend. The second pack was amusing with a second (foil) Crovax, but thankfully it also had the blue-salvaging [Aeon Chronicler](#). Yay for double rare boosters. In a patently insane concluder, the next booster has a third [Crovax, Ascendant Hero](#). The fellow on my right seemed pleased. But for all that Crovax avoidance, my deck was not unhappy with *Planar Chaos*. A big Magus, the useful [Ovinize](#), my favorite spellshaper, and the underrated [Aether Membrane](#) all make the pile. *Future Sight* rounds it off solidly with [Reality Strobe](#), 2 [4C](#), some more removal, and in a very happy pick 3, another Dragon. Way to pay it forward, brother. Here's the final deck:

### **Draft #1: Time Spiral Block**



## **Main Deck**

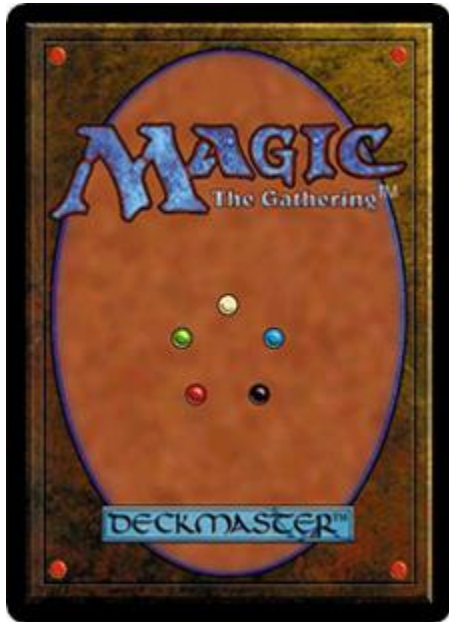
*40 cards*

|                                       |                                     |
|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 8 <a href="#">Island</a>              | 1 <a href="#">Cancel</a>            |
| 10 <a href="#">Mountain</a>           | 1 <a href="#">Dead // Gone</a>      |
| _____                                 | 1 <a href="#">Flowstone Embrace</a> |
| 18 lands                              | 2 <a href="#">Foresee</a>           |
|                                       | 1 <a href="#">Foriysian Totem</a>   |
| 1 <a href="#">Aeon Chronicler</a>     | 1 <a href="#">Leaden Fists</a>      |
| 1 <a href="#">Aether Membrane</a>     | 1 <a href="#">Orcish Cannonade</a>  |
| 1 <a href="#">Bogardan Hellkite</a>   | 1 <a href="#">Ovinize</a>           |
| 1 <a href="#">Dreamscape Artist</a>   | 1 <a href="#">Reality Strobe</a>    |
| 1 <a href="#">Emberwilde Augur</a>    | 1 <a href="#">Rift Bolt</a>         |
| 1 <a href="#">Flamecore Elemental</a> | _____                               |
| 1 <a href="#">Fomori Nomad</a>        |                                     |

- 1 [Grinning Ignus](#)                      11 other spells
- 1 [Magus of the Arena](#)
- 1 [Tarox Bladewing](#)
- 1 [Veiling Oddity](#)

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11 creatures



A little mana-heavy, but I certainly have things to do at the top end. The deck's a touch slower than I'd like, but assuming short pressure from the opponent, it should come up with something vicious. People were fully awake now, lambasting or praising their decks as deemed appropriate. For the record, the last time I saw 53 people comparing draft decks was a Limited pro tour. Awesome.

### Round 1 vs. Ray Miller

#### Game 1

Ray and I began with some light conversation about the format and expectations on the day. Ray surprised me with some solid insight, and surprised me further by destroying me in the first game. An early [Deepcavern Imp](#) dealt speedy damage, and allowed Ray to madness out Brain Gorgor. [Dreamscape Artist](#) had to be sacrificed to salve the assault, but that furtherer widened our temporal differences. I tried to hang on with [Aether Membrane](#), but Ray had plenty of madness to undo any card disadvantage. When [Blightspeaker](#) fetched two more [Deepcavern Imp](#) I was finished, having dealt exactly zero points of damage in the game.



## Game 2

On the play, things started a little better. Ray's first [Keldon Marauders](#) dealt 5, but the second one was stopped by a [Flamecore Elemental](#). Ray's [Blightspeaker](#) died on sight, and I spent some time further escalating the card advantage. While there were some attacking options, getting in a race seemed insane, especially with [Foresee](#) and [Aeon Chronicler](#) providing so much long-term advantage. Ray was still in it with removal of his own, but the game was slowed enough to let a Dragon finish the deal.

## Game 3

On the draw, I needed a way to stabilize the board and undo the sharp disadvantage of going second. Ray's deck was powerful and fast, and while I could bury him in card advantage, I needed a way to get the opportunity. As such, [Delay](#) was traded for the eighteenth land. [Delay](#) isn't a card I'm fond of in Limited for its general card-disadvantagery, but in this case the sacrifice seemed worth it. That move turned out to be gold, as a third-turn Imp from Ray took a three-turn break. The breathing room let me get my mana and spells online, enough that I had some defense when the rest of Ray's forces came down. Even so, Ray's deck could deliver a lot of damage awfully fast. While our cards traded back and forth on the ground, the suspended Imp came back and was joined by another. Unfortunately for Ray, he made an error here. Perhaps recalling my supposed vulnerability to [Deepcavern Imp](#) from the first game, Ray discarded a [Kaervek the Merciless](#) to echo, retaining his [Death Rattle](#) to clear the way. Unfortunately for Ray, I was able to take down the Imps at a precarious 6 life, whereas Kaervek definitely would have been game. While Ray wasn't completely out of out, playing defensive gave the deck the room needed to get down the pair of dragons.



## Dragon!

As you might expect, the game ended soon after.

Walking around and swapping stories, I saw Kelly Digges with this pretty board:



Can you spot the combo?

Inspiration for Round 2.

### Round 2 vs. Eric Reasoner

Eric's a strong player and a good friend. He's also the manager of Cardhaus Games, the store gracious enough to host this massive event. It's unfortunate to get matched up against friends in a tournament, but at least you get lots of trash-talking opportunities. According to Eric, and this was out of left field, I'm a "poopy-head."

### Game 1

Eric's main combo in his blue-white deck was Mangara of Corondor with two Whitemane Lion. Eric also had a very solid flying offense and a pair of Marshalling Cry, a card Mr. Reasoner is convinced is excellent. That offense didn't materialize too quickly in the first game, which gave me plenty of time to Dreamscape Artist out bunches of lands. When Eric played the difficult-to-contain Opal Guardian, that just gave me reason to start chucking creatures to Dreamscape Artist as well. Eventually all that mana resulted in a huge suspended Aeon Chronicler. And with that much land removed from the deck, double drawing looked pretty hot. Later, Eric tried attacking with a Whip-Spine Drake, but flashy Hellkite dealt a straight five and attempted to



take down the 3/3. Eric saved it with a Lion, but that just allowed [Reality Strobe](#) to hit the now-active [Opal Guardian](#). Things wrapped up soon after that.

While we were shuffling for the second game, a neighboring player got his [Calciderm](#) enchanted by a searched [Bound in Silence](#), which was amusing and quite effective. Tribal is a super type!

Game 2

Our second game was far more interactive than the last. Eric had Mangara to break up [Reality Strobricks](#) and, far, far worse, [Logic Knot](#) against [Bogardan Hellkite](#). We both dealt damage when possible, but it was slow treading. My [Foriysian Totem](#) threatened escalating offense, to which Eric could only spend his last card to wizardcycle for [Timebender](#), then draw a card and play his morph. In came the Totem, only to be killed via a random [Shaper Parasite](#). That's okay, a [Flamecore Elemental](#) was there to replace. Same deal from Eric, untap, draw, play a morph. The Flamecore attacked... only for *it* to die by a second [Shaper Parasite](#)! Who cut this guy's deck? Eric finally laid the real facedown [Timebender](#) (I checked) and an [Augur il-Vec](#), which began to deal damage.

My [Emberwilde Augur](#) was held off by a [Blind Phantasm](#) enchanted with [Pentarch Ward](#), which in turn was held off by [Veiling Oddity](#). His Augur was getting annoying, but the only answer in hand was [Leaden Fists](#), which seemed poor in this instance. With Eric at 10 life to my 14, I sacrificed the Emberwilde with a plan. If I drew a [Tarox Bladewing](#) that turn, the dragon plus the [Leaden Fists](#) would be enough for the win. Eric, with solid intuition, sacrificed his Augur on his upkeep, bringing us back to quasi-parity. We continued to trade cards, with my [Leaden Fists](#) finally needing to enchant something annoying. Eric's [Whip-Spine Drake](#) dealt some damage before falling to [Rift Bolt](#), whilst I was able to get Eric to 6 with [Aeon Chronicler](#). Finally, the *Future Sight* legend arrived:

Me: "Tarox?"

Eric: "Tarox... Which one is that again?"

Me: "TAROX BLADEWING, SLAYER OF MORTALS , MASTER OF THE IONOSPHERE, AND what's grandeur mean again? He eats his siblings? (thumbs up from Rei) AND COMMITTER OF FRATRICIDE!"

Eric: "Oh *that* guy. He's fine."

Me: "Super. [Flowstone Embrace](#)?"

Eric: "\$%#^"

2-0

A nice start to the tournament. Playing some tight games gets the blood flowing, and judging by the animation in the room, I wasn't the only one with nail biters. People were awake, loose, and eager to extend their lead or turn things around. Seemed like a fine time to start the next draft.

## Draft #2: Mercadian *Masques / Nemesis / Prophecy*

I had mixed feelings coming into this one. I liked doing something new, or at least a format unplayed in over 6 years. Despite the criticisms *Masques* received from a power-level standpoint, I remembered triple-M to be really engaging in limited. Even the addition of another set didn't change much; *Masques / Masques / Nemesis* was rock solid. All the colors were fairly viable, and there was certainly room to innovate. Sadly, that enjoyment was drastically lessened with the addition



of *Prophecy*. For those who haven't had the pleasure, imagine a set where you *hope* your cards work. Or in common parlance, rhythic and its near-kin, "land sacrifice." You think [Temporal Extortion](#) is unreliable? [Rhythic Cave](#)'s Oracle text is "tap." Still, all the classics deserve a spin at least once in a while.

The draft itself was tough to gauge. The opening booster had the choice of [Thunderclap](#) and [Vendetta](#). I'd say [Thunderclap](#) is the stronger card, but in this case it ended up being the wrong pick. The next booster was easy: [Ramosian Lieutenant](#) in an otherwise bereft pack. The [Ramosian Sergeant](#) the pick after was just as welcome. Things were unremarkable after that, although a late [Fresh Volunteers](#) was quickly scooped up.

*Nemesis*'s [Oracle's Attendants](#) looked good, but it couldn't compete with Jaya Junior, known back then as [Arc Mage](#). [Defiant Falcon](#) was fine afterwards, although sadly no Gliders, [Light/Lawbringers](#) or [Lin Sivvis](#) presented. The fourth pick [Ancient Hydra](#) was amazing, and probably a mistake from someone, but white was bone-dry. Black, on the other hand, was doing remarkably well, including a ridiculously late [Volrath the Fallen](#) passed to some lucky fellow. I had passed strong black in pack one, but apparently it didn't take. *Prophecy* was more of the same, good but not great. Disturbingly, nary a [Troubled Healer](#) to be seen. Where did they go?

## Draft #2: *Masques Block*



### Main Deck

40 cards

|                                       |                                     |
|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 9 <a href="#">Mountain</a>            | 1 <a href="#">Disenchant</a>        |
| 8 <a href="#">Plains</a>              | 1 <a href="#">Flowstone Strike</a>  |
| _____                                 | 1 <a href="#">Orim's Cure</a>       |
| 17 lands                              | 1 <a href="#">Panic Attack</a>      |
|                                       | 1 <a href="#">Rhythic Lightning</a> |
| 1 <a href="#">Alabaster Wall</a>      | 1 <a href="#">Seal of Fire</a>      |
| 1 <a href="#">Ancient Hydra</a>       | 1 <a href="#">Thunderclap</a>       |
| 1 <a href="#">Arc Mage</a>            | _____                               |
| 1 <a href="#">Defiant Falcon</a>      | 7 other spells                      |
| 1 <a href="#">Diving Griffin</a>      |                                     |
| 1 <a href="#">Fault Riders</a>        |                                     |
| 1 <a href="#">Flint Golem</a>         |                                     |
| 1 <a href="#">Fresh Volunteers</a>    |                                     |
| 1 <a href="#">Ramosian Lieutenant</a> |                                     |
| 1 <a href="#">Ramosian Sergeant</a>   |                                     |
| 1 <a href="#">Ridgeline Rager</a>     |                                     |
| 1 <a href="#">Scoria Cat</a>          |                                     |
| 2 <a href="#">Soul Charmer</a>        |                                     |
| 1 <a href="#">Spur Grappler</a>       |                                     |
| 1 <a href="#">Zerapa Minotaur</a>     |                                     |
| _____                                 |                                     |

16 creatures



Decidedly meh. When I laid it out on the table it looked decent, but looking now it seems fairly awful. A minor Rebel chain, *some* removal; some aggro and of course, some control. To its credit, deckbuilding was remarkably easy: 22 easy includes and a decision between [Disenchant](#) or an eighteenth land. Christian Robertsen, building his deck next to mine, kept making "whooshing!" noises with his [Predator, Flagship](#), compelling the two-mana instant. Walking around with time to spare, I looked at some decks and talked to people about their experience. There were some truly poor decks out there, leading some people to think the sets were overall weak. Yet there were some really sick constructions out there too, decks with perfect curves and/or [Crooked Scales](#). These people weren't complaining about the strength of the packs, not by a long shot. There wasn't really a difference in power level compared to the previous block; the removal and fliers and bombs in both are comparable. The real differences came from the depth of the boosters, a phenomenon apparently being taken for granted. Back in the day, there was more dross than you could shake a stick at. Your good decks were *really* good when they faced off against some of the awful ones almost undraftable by today's standards. A fun walk down memory lane, but most people seemed grateful for our modern pack quantities. Scott Johns called me over to show off his deck. It wasn't bad at all, with multiple [Silt Crawlers](#) and a (very) late game bomb.



Scott mentioned there was a better card in his *Prophecy* booster, but [Vitalizing Wind](#) had won him a Pro Tour. And this one was foil no less. My horoscope told me not to be superstitious today, but I guess Scott didn't get that signpost.

Not willing to be outdone, Corbett Gray showed off his own foil *Nemesis* special:



### Round 3 vs. Dan Diamant

#### Game 1

Dan's an old buddy and Nintendo of America employee. He's intimate with games in general, and more than a little competent with draft. I was definitely looking forward to this one.

Losing the die roll stung, as Dan got out his [Troubled Healer](#) out on turn three. I had the [Rhystic Lightning](#), and aiming it at the Healer was like a muscle memory, but it meant forgoing my third turn [Fault Riders](#). That didn't seem too bad at the time; killing [Troubled Healer](#) is basically worth any price. Things got interesting when [Wandering Eye](#) came down. Now if you weren't around back in the day, [Wandering Eye](#) was one of the more defining cards of *Masques Block Limited*. Not because its stats were so mighty, but because the game shifted gears considerably once every



player had perfect information. This usually favored the stronger player, but it sure did take a while to get there. Then and now, it's a really cool card, it just has some unfortunate molasses effects on the game.

As for this situation, it was basically neutral. Both Dan and I were slightly flooded, although that presumably helped [Fault Riders](#) for later. [Stormwatch Eagle](#) was trading hits back, until a proofed-safe [Ancient Hydra](#) hit the table. The next turn the Hydra killed the Eagle, along with quite a number of Dan's lands. His only other card of note was a [Windscouter](#), and while killing it was appealing, I liked the idea of mana suppression alongside a creature that needed recasting. It seemed like a good plan, with [Fault Riders](#) getting in there a bunch of times. The mana dampening part didn't really go anywhere, as Dan just kept drawing lands and hitting with the 3/3 flier, dealing slightly less against my [Alabaster Wall](#). Dan was soon good and low in topdeck mode, and exactly one turn away from being forced to chump with [Windscouter](#). Then, [Troubled Healer](#) #2. Lordy lord, is that card ridiculous to deal with. There wasn't much interesting after that, [Troubled Healer](#) and [Windscouter](#) kept everything at bay while still dealing point after point. I did what I could, but it was effectively over.

Game 2

This was in some ways my most satisfying game of the day. I mulliganed once and kept a sketchy, mana-light hand. The lands didn't materialize, and I was forced to discard more than once. Dan came out very strong with [Troubled Healer](#) and [Defender en-Vec](#) and then that [Wandering Eye](#). The Eye hit the table, I saw immediately I had zero chance to win and conceded on the spot. Saving fifteen minutes of pointless scrabbling to go get lunch? That's definitely *some* kind of victory.

2-1

#### Round 4 vs. Kelly Digges

As you probably know, Kelly Digges is a Wizards literati and editor of our own [magicthegathering.com](#). What some of you may not know, and he keeps this hidden for a reason, is that Kelly is a <AWEOMSE INDIVIDUAL> and an <INSPIRATION TO ALL>. So you can see why I had some trepidation coming into this round.

Game 1: Kelly swore he had never played this format before, which it turns out is not a prerequisite for drafting an extremely strong deck. The [Bog Gliders](#) and [Rathi Intimidators](#) didn't look too threatening, especially since I was primed to go rebel with [Ramosian Sergeant](#) and [Defiant Falcon](#). I even had [ol' Flinty](#) to block the 2/1 fear. Sadly, that was the time that [Golden Age Crovax](#) decided to make an appearance. The searchers went down, Flinty took a blow, and my [Ancient Hydra](#) became utterly stranded. Those black creatures began to hit awfully hard, and when [Defender en-Vec](#) showed up for protection, I was completely through. I noticed Kelly was slightly defensive in the game, although whether it was from genuine passivity or anxiety about unknown cards I couldn't say. Regardless, the game took slightly longer than it needed because of it.

Game 2



Kelly started off badly mana-screwed in this game, although my deck lacked enough offense to really take advantage. My board was pretty well developed, although Kelly's Defender again came to gum things up. We were counting fade counters when Mr. Digges observed how weird it was to go from a block with vanishing to one with fading. True enough. Things were still looking good for the home team, as my army of dorks brought Kelly to a scant 3 life. With a mere four lands out, it seemed Kelly was running out of chances. Alas, hope springs eternal, or more accurately, [Avatar of Hope](#) has impeccable timing. In everyone came. After the Avatar took 8 points, a [Thunderclap](#) finished her off. Kelly was still suffering mana issues and had to pack it in, although he was uncomfortably close to turning things around.

Game 3

[Arc Mage](#) was looking so strong against a [Bog Glider](#) and [Undertaker](#), but [Maggot Therapy](#) does good work. Kelly started working [Undertaker](#) and [Defender en-Vec](#) action, much to my deck's impotence. The best I could counter was search out all the rebels and use the [Alabaster Wall](#) as appropriate. It was looking... neutral, until once again [Ascendant Evincar](#) showed up. His unholy light ripped apart the [Defiant Falcon](#), and again I was on the backpedal. Miraculously, for this player anyway, Kelly couldn't quite finish the job. Those previous slow games had taken their toll, and we ended on a draw. No question, a draw and being done with that stinky deck was a lucky reprieve.

2-1-1

Well, it's not exactly where I wanted to be after four rounds, but I was happy to be above fifty percent. Most people were having a grand time, playing serious games with really fun people. For myself, I was looking forward to the next draft. It promised to be one of the wilder ones, and I was eager to take a crack at it.

Historically, there's always been a multi-colored block drafted at the Extravaganza. *Invasion* was the chosen one, until *Ravnica*'s status as current edged its way in last year. This year created a thorny situation. *Invasion* was older and had a loyal fan base, but most people had to concede *Ravnica* was the overall more enjoyable environment. Was there a compromise? Indeed there was, courtesy of last year's winner Ricky Boyes. Looking for a way to combine the two sets, Ricky came up with the idea for the hybrid draft. A hybrid draft is the combining of two blocks, with alternating boosters through all three sets. For example, this year you would either receive *Invasion* / *Guildpact* / *Apocalypse*, or *Ravnica* / *Planeshift* / *Dissension*, with the drafters on your left and right receiving the opposite. Would it work? No one was sure, but everyone was ready to give it a shot.

### **Draft #3: *Invasion* Block / *Ravnica* Block Hybrid**

This draft, needless to say, was more than a little odd. Compared to the last two drafts, the room was strangely quiet as people devoted all their concentration to the task at hand. The color situation was tough to grasp, and not just in the alternating frame way. When someone did have something to say, it was usually along the lines of "This is so random" and "My brain hurts."

My draft was fairly reasonably, albeit all over the place for colors. Things began in the Invavnica set with [Sunforger](#), followed by [Exotic Curse](#) and later, a [Bloodstone Cameo](#). A pair of Acolytes were picked up to hold the [Sunforger](#), giving the deck a preference for red-white-black. Planepact had similar focus, with [Magma Burst](#) and [Pyromatics](#) being very strong cards that went particularly well

with my first pick. I tried to stay on top of RWB, but a late [Ertai, the Corrupted](#) offered some reward for dabbling. Dissenalyse was the real power for the deck, with [Razorfin Hunter](#), [Jilt](#), and fliers and mana fixing rounding things out. The deck ended up surprisingly short of black cards, but I had enough fixers to make what I did have free anyway. Wrap your heads around this one:

### **Draft #3: Invasion / Ravnica Hybrid**



## **Main Deck**

*39 cards*

|                                      |                                    |
|--------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 1 <a href="#">Crosis's Catacombs</a> | 1 <a href="#">Azorius Signet</a>   |
| 4 <a href="#">Island</a>             | 1 <a href="#">Bloodstone Cameo</a> |
| 3 <a href="#">Mountain</a>           | 1 <a href="#">Devouring Light</a>  |
| 1 <a href="#">Orzhov Basilica</a>    | 1 <a href="#">Exotic Curse</a>     |
| 6 <a href="#">Plains</a>             | 1 <a href="#">Magma Burst</a>      |
| 1 <a href="#">Rakdos Carnarium</a>   | 1 <a href="#">Plumes of Peace</a>  |
| <hr/>                                |                                    |
| 16 lands                             | 1 <a href="#">Pyromatics</a>       |
|                                      | 1 <a href="#">Sunforger</a>        |

|   |                |
|---|----------------|
| 1 <a href="#">Bloodscale Prowler</a>      | 8 other spells |
| 1 <a href="#">Crimson Acolyte</a>         |                |
| 1 <a href="#">Dega Disciple</a>           |                |
| 1 <a href="#">Disciple of Kangee</a>      |                |
| 1 <a href="#">Ertai, the Corrupted</a>    |                |
| 1 <a href="#">Freewind Equenaut</a>       |                |
| 1 <a href="#">Goblin Spelunkers</a>       |                |
| 1 <a href="#">Living Airship</a>          |                |
| 1 <a href="#">Minister of Impediments</a> |                |
| 1 <a href="#">Prison Barricade</a>        |                |
| 1 <a href="#">Rabble-Rouser</a>           |                |
| 1 <a href="#">Razorfin Hunter</a>         |                |
| 1 <a href="#">Screeching Griffin</a>      |                |
| 1 <a href="#">Surveilling Sprite</a>      |                |
| 1 <a href="#">Vigean Graftmage</a>        |                |

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15 creatures



Pretty aggressive, especially for a four-color deck. I was hoping to sneak in early and burn them out before they got their colors online. A quick poll showed just under half the players were with four or more color decks. I think we'll be doing this one again.

### Round 5 vs. Chris Larson

#### Game 1

This game was decided by the silly [Crimson Acolyte](#). Chris was playing a rock-solid red-black-blue deck, but the Acolyte was a constant foil the whole time. The little 1/1 held off much larger creatures, while allowing the rest of my guys to get through unimpeded. Chris' [Helium Squirter](#) could have been an issue, but a [Devouring Light](#) took care of it before it could move any counters around. Eventually Chris was low enough he had to use [Recoil](#) and [Rushing River](#) defensively, not the ideal use of those cards. With the Acolyte still mucking things up, Chris had to concede.



#### Game 2

If one Acolyte was good, bringing in the Obsidian complement seemed even better. Yet despite drawing it, I was reeling the whole time. I couldn't keep the white open to both cast and protect my critters. Chris came out very strong this game with [Morgue Toad](#), [Hellhole Rats](#), [Helium Squirter](#), and [Recoil](#) and [Rushing River](#) to push through. I salvaged what I could, but the Squirter ended up dealing too much.

#### Game 3

I made two big errors in this game. The first mistake was forgetting that his [Daggerclaw Imp](#) couldn't block. Embarrassingly, I randomly kept some guys back so I could Razorfin the 3/1 later. Of course immediately after I said go I realized the error, and then made my second mistake. I could have stayed silent on the misplay and perhaps have gotten Chris to leave back his Daggerclaw for supposed defense, as he did kill the [Razorfin Hunter](#). But instead I said a naughty word and chided myself for going soft, ironically proving it and giving Chris the green light to swing in with the Imp. Shaking it off, I got back to the task of winning. With cards like [Jilt](#) and [Sunforger](#) in hand, it wasn't impossible. The [Jilt](#) definitely created inroads for that plan, which allowed me to hit hard with [Sunforger](#). It became unequipped later to play and replicate [Pyromatics](#) for a fairly sick move. In fact, I had the game almost locked up on the next turn, ready to equip and attack with a creature, then search out [Magma Burst](#) for the win. Sadly I drew the worst card possible on the next draw step, that very same [Magma Burst](#). Theoretically Chris could have stabilized at this point, but he was out of gas. Laying down a hand full of blanks, he conceded on the following turn. Whew.

3-1-1

Walking around the tables, this pic was too amusing not to share:



**Round 6 vs. Eric Bare**



## Game 1

Eric had a highly focused red-green-white deck, a pretty impressive feat considering the lack of experience with the formats. Is red-green-white the best deck to build in this kind of draft? Who knows! Eric came out quite well in this game with a kicked [Gruul Scrapper](#) and [Nomadic Elf](#), which I matched with a [Minister of Impediments](#) and [Freewind Equenaut](#). We were trading hits for a bit until [Ertai, the Corrupted](#) showed up large. It promised more than it delivered though, as my creatures were too few to sacrifice with abandon. The game drew to a standstill as I couldn't keep a creature on the board long enough to deal consistent damage. On turn forever, Eric's [Gruul Guildmage](#) took an obvious counter. I decided to allow Eric's next creature, a slightly enhanced [Petrified Wood-Kin](#), to enter play. It did take a [Plumes of Peace](#), an extra counterspell should the need arise. It ended up not coming up, as eventually [Prison Barricade](#) of all things was able to go the distance, backed up by [Dega Disciple](#) and lots of removal.

## Game 2

This game turned out to be a lot less interactive, although our opening decisions were interesting. Eric mulliganed and kept a draw he declared "a real gamble." On the draw, I looked at these opening seven:



One-landers should almost always be tossed, but this one had a lot of promise. All the colors of mana, leading to perfectly enhanced [Dega Disciple](#) and [Jilt](#). It was slightly worrisome, but I couldn't deny the flexibility the hand offered if I drew even one more land. I did miss a land for a couple of turns, but luckily enough, so did Eric. The mana did eventually materialize, while Eric was still too far behind. Not the best way to end an engaging match in a fascinating format, but these things do happen. We wished each other luck and went on our way.

The deck probably wasn't good enough to reliably 2-0, but I wasn't complaining. The organizers gave a ten-minute coffee break, then we got back together for a format only slightly less taxing.

## **Draft #4: *Onslaught / Legions / Scourge***

OLS was by no means a simplistic format, but I felt some confidence going in. I've probably drafted this format more than any other on **Magic Online**, although whether that was because I wasn't working at the time or vice versa is too chicken-and-egg to get into now. The point was some degree of optimism in playing a format where one has literally drafted every single card at one time or another, multi-year absence notwithstanding. Does one *need* to have experience in a format to do well? Certainly not; there are Limited tenets that are very close to universal. That being said, environments do twist rankings. One needs only to look at [Shatter](#) in *Eighth Edition* and [Shatter](#) in *Mirrodin* for a classic example. Knowledge of a set won't just help you know what's strong, it will help you know what's strong in relation to everything else. *That* can make all the difference.

The opening booster of *Onslaught* had two cards of major quality: [Cruel Revival](#) and [Goblin Sharpshooter](#). I debated the merits of each until I recalled Randy Buehler's famous [article on the Sharpshooter](#). After recalling those sage pearls of wisdom, I was happy to start the draft with the rare. I was more than pleased with the next booster. A Constructed-caliber [Lightning Rift](#) was quickly taken and added to the pile. The rare was missing, so it's possible a card better than Rift was taken. Either way, I liked where this draft was going. The third pick had what was by far the most difficult of the draft. With not a single red card to be found, I narrowed the choices to [Festering Goblin](#) or [Mage's Guile](#). Weak-seeming, both cards had the potential to be synergistically awesome in the right deck. [Festering Goblin](#) plays awfully well in black-red goblins, as a useful one-drop and with sacrifice outlets in all three sets. [Mage's Guile](#) was certainly worse on the power level, but [Lightning Rift](#) appreciated it all the same. In the end I went with the blue instant, thinking that a passed [Cruel Revival](#) would push my neighbor into black. [Lightning Rift](#) deserved the attention; nothing's more frustrating than having it out there doing absolutely nothing.

In the end this turned out to be the wrong pick, although another Festering came later. I was happy to grab [Riptide Shapeshifter](#) next, but the then blue dried up completely. A gift of a late [Swat](#) practically screamed black was the color to be in, and when both [Goblin Sledder](#) and [Dirge of Dread](#) came late, I knew I was at the right place. *Legions* began with the choice of [Skinthinner](#) or [Imperial Hellkite](#). I've got nothing against Skinny, but a dragon is a dragon. They had been good to me so far on the day. *Legions* was overall quite excellent, with a pair of [Gempalm Polluters](#) feeding the Rift, a [Corpse Harvester](#) to find them, a couple of Slivers to hold the ground, and two very underrated [Crested Craghorns](#). Those two were especially welcome since I had passed on all the ways to deal with higher-toughness creatures. I was a little upset to pass triple [Echo Tracer](#) to the right, but you can't have everything. Scourge had more bonuses in [Carbonize](#), and an amazing third-pick [Form of the Dragon](#). When it rains it pours. Here's the deck:

### **Draft #4: *Onslaught* block**



**Main Deck**  
*40 cards*

- |                                       |                                      |  |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--|
| 9 <a href="#">Mountain</a>            | 1 <a href="#">Carbonize</a>          |  |
| 8 <a href="#">Swamp</a>               | 1 <a href="#">Dirge of Dread</a>     |  |
| <hr/>                                 |                                      |  |
| 17 lands                              | 1 <a href="#">Form of the Dragon</a> |  |
|                                       | 1 <a href="#">Lightning Rift</a>     |  |
| 1 <a href="#">Blade Sliver</a>        | 1 <a href="#">Scattershot</a>        |  |
| 1 <a href="#">Carrion Feeder</a>      | 2 <a href="#">Spark Spray</a>        |  |
| 1 <a href="#">Corpse Harvester</a>    | 1 <a href="#">Swat</a>               |  |
| 2 <a href="#">Crested Craghorn</a>    | <hr/>                                |  |
| 1 <a href="#">Crypt Sliver</a>        | 8 other spells                       |  |
| 1 <a href="#">Festering Goblin</a>    |                                      |  |
| 2 <a href="#">Gempalm Polluter</a>    |                                      |  |
| 1 <a href="#">Goblin Sharpshooter</a> |                                      |  |
| 1 <a href="#">Goblin Sledder</a>      |                                      |  |
| 1 <a href="#">Goblin Taskmaster</a>   |                                      |  |
| 1 <a href="#">Goblin Turncoat</a>     |                                      |  |
| 1 <a href="#">Imperial Hellkite</a>   |                                      |  |
| 1 <a href="#">Spined Basher</a>       |                                      |  |
| <hr/>                                 |                                      |  |
| 15 creatures                          |                                      |  |



One of the best ONS decks I had ever drafted. I spoke with my right-side neighbor about what he had drafted over some of the amazing things he had passed. In the first booster he took a [Dragon Roostover](#) [Lightning Rift](#), which was interesting. I can say with confidence that pack 1, pick 1 [Lightning Rift](#) is the stronger card, but how would he know that? How could you know how pervasive something like cycling is in a set you've never seen before? Perhaps you could guess that Wizards would support an enabler, but tell that to [Steamflogger Boss](#). The card this gentleman took over [Form of the Dragon](#) was [Torrent of Fire](#), still a strong card but not on the level of Form. Would my deck have been

as strong without having a neophyte on my right? Probably not, but getting more experience with a format is how players can get edge. Putting the time in pays dividends.

### Round 7 vs. Greg Peloquin

#### Game 1

I've already written on how important going first has been in previous formats, even quasi-nonexistent ones. With the strong players faced so far, getting first crack at development is a tangible benefit. That advantage is especially true for *Onslaught* block, a format well known for being tempo-based. Indeed, Greg swore after this game that a major reason he lost was because he lost the die roll. While the overpowered cards take some credit, there's no doubt going second didn't help matters



On the play I led with a Turncoat, [Blade Sliver](#), and soon after, a highly useful [Crypt Sliver](#). Greg has plenty of creatures, the problem is they keep dying. A [Festering Goblin](#) sacrifice here, a [Swat](#) there; every time Greg played a creature he just took more damage. Greg was staying afloat with [Cabal Archon](#), but I consistently had more creatures out than he did. Greg's trump, a potential stop sign in [Twisted Abomination](#), fell to a randomly topdecked [Carbonize](#). It's like they were made for each other. After that brutality, Greg crumpled.

#### Game 2

This game was arguably even more lopsided. A second-turn [Lightning Rift](#) looked good, but Greg played right and started running guys out. There's really no other way to beat [Lightning Rift](#) but to hope they run out of cycling cards before you run out of creatures. This almost would have worked, too; I needed one more land to get Polluter out there with activation. Alas for Mr. Peloquin, the land was forthcoming. At least three creatures died to the Rift, creating a pretty wide divide. The deck drew excellent mana for the rest of the match and led out a steady stream of creatures. Greg had to concede, simply outmatched.

5-1-1

We were pretty high in the standings, but not quite at table 1. If you want to know what it takes to reach the upper echelons of Limited events, look no further than this combo by Charles Dupont.



Super.

I liked my deck plenty, but Charles's looked like it could be a fighter. Thankfully we didn't need to test that.

### Round 8 vs. Jon Loucks

Jon and I actually attended a class together at the University of Washington taught by Skaff Elias and Richard Garfield. Jon's someone who's remained interested in the totality of the game, active on the Northwest boards and infrequent writer to some of the independent sites. I'm always happy to see players going beyond the basics when they're trying to improve or give back to the game, and as evidenced by Jon's record, it wasn't doing him much harm. In fact, Jon gave me one of the closest games of the entire day.



Game 1

On the play (mise), I led off strong with [Festering Goblin](#) and [Blade Sliver](#). Interestingly, at the end of my third turn Jon physically fumbled and dropped a [Scattershot](#) on the table. This certainly *seemed* like relevant info, as I wouldn't want to play anything else and lose some men. So on the following turn I merely attacked with my team and passed. Jon spent the end of my turn by cycling [Krosan Tusker](#). Unbelievable! Did I really just fall for the fake reveal? I had to tip my hat to Jon, who swore the Scatterdrop was totally an accident. Regardless, the turn after I again attacked and passed with no play, after which Jon did the same. On the next turn I drew a [Carrion Feeder](#) and again attacked. After combat I played the Feeder, thinking I could mitigate the [Scattershot](#) with some sacrifice. Of course this was a big mistake, as Jon responded to the spell by killing both creatures. Hmm, maybe I didn't remember as much of the format as I thought. With free reign to start playing creatures, Jon laid a [Wirewood Hivemaster](#) and a morph on the board. On the following turn in came the lowly 1/1 Feeder, with [Carbonize](#) backup. I liked this attack. If the Hivemaster blocked or Jon took damage I was happy. If the morph blocked, I would simply [Carbonize](#) it before damage. Why not do that before combat? A little problem called [Zombie Cutthroat](#). Jon would probably be happy to pay the five life to save a creature, but pay five to trade with a [Carrion Feeder](#)? Less likely. As it was, Jon just traded straight up, blocking with the Hivemaster. Seeing that Jon did care about the morph, I aimed the [Carbonize](#) at it. It turned out to be a [Treespring Lorian](#).

As for actually winning the game, I did have a plan. Jon hadn't put much pressure on me at all; rather he had laid a land every single turn of the game. I was able to use [Corpse Harvester](#) and [Gempalm Polluter](#) to get Jon below 6, which was important with an [Imperial Hellkite](#) lurking. Jon finally found his damage source, and it was a good one, a very active [Flamewave Invoker](#). Twice I missed a critical land to actually play the Dragon, so I was forced to play it face down along with another creature. I still needed land to turn the dragon face up, so various little guys were sacrificed to the Harvester, all while [Flamewave Invoker](#) was ticking off five points. Jon did have the opportunity to kill the morph, but chose to deal five more instead; most of the time the right call. But in this cast the math worked. At five life I drew an amusing [Form of the Dragon](#), but by this point I also had the eighth land. [Imperial Hellkite](#) turned up and swung in. Jon could have done well here with a variety of cards, but nothing materialized and we shuffled up for Game 2.

Game 2

While we were sideboarding I asked Jon about the [Scattershot](#) reveal, repeatedly complementing him on the crafty maneuver. Jon begged off, swearing it was an accident. I have to agree, if he hadn't shown the removal spell I would have played right into it instead of continuing to attack and conserve. Jon would have had a bunch more life to play with, and may have won the game because of it. Still an interesting move to keep in mind for the rare opportunity.

This second game saw Jon keep a slow hand and get punished for it. He did eventually get down [Krosan Tusker](#) and [Noble Templar](#), but I had the time to play [Form of the Dragon](#). [Flamewave Invoker](#) never showed up, so the rare enchantment won the match.

6-1-1

Things were starting to wind down by this time, hour eleven. Yet we had also reached the main event of sorts, potentially the most wacky and complex draft conducted yet. Just two rounds to go...

**Draft #5: (see below)**

A while back I wrote an article for ["What If" Week](#), examining what **Magic** would be like if you played with your hand face up, a.k.a. [Wandering Eye](#) World. The current format was missing the cards I wanted to get certain points across, and I had no interest in plumbing old blocks for perfect iterations. Instead I made up a format that could justify using old and new cards to craft scenarios. The format was called Grab Bag, and as the title suggests, you'd reach into a bag and grab what you were drafting with. In my head it looked something like this:



If only...

Creating (and publishing) that article had two unintended consequences. One of those was readers being confused on what the "alternate reality" premise actually was. In retrospect this made sense. There were two things not found in our reality in that article. The second consequence was the creation of a popular new format. Oh the letters received from people wishing grab bag was for real. Flash forward to a month ago, with Tony and the gang ironing out the formats for the Draft Extravaganza. With a public call to suggest formats, someone, perhaps a handsome someone, suggested the previously fictional grab bag. The idea caught on.

### The Rules for Grab Bag Draft

- Every table gets the same booster pool. Each table's packs go into a bag. The table's participants reach in and grab three out. Once each player has three packs, the next table goes through the motions.
- Draft order is first sets first, second sets second, and third sets last. If there are two of the same slot in a pull, than whichever was released earliest chronologically is drafted first. For example, if someone received *Planar Chaos*, *Tempest*, and *Stronghold*, the draft order would be *Tempest-Stronghold-Planar Chaos*.

And what were we playing with? Here's a photo:



If that's too small to make out, each table was drafting one booster of the following: *Ice Age, Alliances, Homelands, Coldsnap, Mirage, Visions, Weatherlight, Tempest, Stronghold, Exodus, Urza's Saga, Urza's Legacy, Urza's Destiny, Mercadian Masques, Nemesis, Prophecy, Odyssey, Torment, Judgment, Mirrodin, Darksteel, Fifth Dawn, Champions of Kamigawa, Betrayers of Kamigawa, Savivors of K*

*amigawa*, *Time Spiral*, *Planar Chaos*, *Future Sight*. Note that the 8-card *Homelands* pack was opened and used to supplement the *Alliances* booster, as it contained only 12 cards.



If that wasn't impressive enough of an array, there was one additional bonus. A single *Legends* booster had been donated for the draft, so one "lucky" table received a pack of *Legends*, replacing a pack of *Coldsnap*. Now while *Legends* does have a few platinum hits for the secondary market, it's hideously bad for Limited play. Still, people wanted a shot at cracking a pack of *Legends*, and one table had the honor. I'm told the rules insert went before [Energy Tap](#), which sounds correct.

Before all that, our table had to determine its permutation. My random pull was *Time Spiral*, *Saviors of Kamigawa*, and *Future Sight*; not bad all in all. The champ of the table definitely went to Noah Sandler, who received *Tempest*, *Urza's Saga*, and *Darksteel*!

My opening booster was rough, with only [Nightshade Assassin](#) being above average. The gentleman on my right was kicking off with *Torment*, so taking a black card here was kind of risky. The next booster was devoid of all black, so I went with [Arrogant Wurm](#). Nice start for a madness deck! As expected, the black quickly dried up, but the green was flowing nicely. [Skyshroud Troopers](#), a gift of [Banshee's Blade](#), a juicy late [Woolly Spider](#), and a tabled [Acorn Harvest](#) were the highlights of the first rotation. For *Saviors*, my eyes first rested on [Elder Pine of Jukai](#). Er, Spirit or Arcane spell? *Soulshift*? Not so hot in this format (and let's not get started on Ripple). I did end up with a soulshift card, but [Kami of the Tended Garden](#) offered other bonuses as well. I wavered between blue and red as the second color for the rest of the draft, but mostly stuck with the green. The last set had the bomby [Sprout Swarm](#) and the always-welcome [Elephant Guide](#). It wasn't dragony, but I thought it could snag a couple of wins for our final portion.

### **Draft #5: Grab Bag**



### **Main Deck**

40 cards

- |   |                                     |  |
|---|-------------------------------------|--|
| 11 <a href="#">Forest</a>                   | 1 <a href="#">Acceptable Losses</a> |  |
| 4 <a href="#">Island</a>                    | 1 <a href="#">Acorn Harvest</a>     |  |
| 2 <a href="#">Mountain</a>                  | 1 <a href="#">Banshee's Blade</a>   |  |
| <hr/>                                       |                                     |  |
| 17 lands                                    | 1 <a href="#">Elephant Guide</a>    |  |
|   | 1 <a href="#">Oxidize</a>           |  |
|   | 1 <a href="#">Rough // Tumble</a>   |  |
| 1 <a href="#">Acridian</a>                  | 1 <a href="#">Scent of Ivy</a>      |  |
| 1 <a href="#">Arrogant Wurm</a>             | 1 <a href="#">Sprout Swarm</a>      |  |
| 1 <a href="#">Ashcoat Bear</a>              | 1 <a href="#">Thirst</a>            |  |
| 1 <a href="#">Breezekeeper</a>              | 1 <a href="#">Utopia Vow</a>        |  |
| 1 <a href="#">Feral Deceiver</a>            | <hr/>                               |  |
| 1 <a href="#">Jackalope Herd</a>            | 10 other spells                     |  |
| 1 <a href="#">Kami of the Tended Garden</a> |                                     |  |
| 1 <a href="#">Marker Beetles</a>            |                                     |  |
| 1 <a href="#">Mistblade Shinobi</a>         |                                     |  |
| 1 <a href="#">Plated Rootwalla</a>          |                                     |  |
| 1 <a href="#">Skyshroud Troopers</a>        |                                     |  |
| 1 <a href="#">Thalakos Dreamsower</a>       |                                     |  |
| 1 <a href="#">Woolly Spider</a>             |                                     |  |
| <hr/>                                       |                                     |  |
| 13 creatures                                |                                     |  |



People definitely seemed amused by the format, although after 11.5 hours of straight **Magic**, I wouldn't call anything ironclad. Personally, part of my enjoyment of Limited is how much you need to react on the fly. This format takes the concept to the extreme. Are you going to memorize pick orders

for every set, ever? Probably not; you have to keep track of your deck and look at each booster with fresh eyes and new context. It's exciting, literally having no idea what the next pack will look like. The players really did seem to have fun, although considering the amount of concentration this required, I may push for this to be #2 or #3 in the rotation next year. For more immediate concerns, there was a ninth round opponent to face.

### **Round 9 vs. Noah Sandler**

Noah had a great name, and an even better deck. But why take my word for it?



Game 1



Bad.



## Worse.

Mr. Sandler had my number this time. Game 2 was more of the same. A [Sosuke, Son of Seshiro](#) was amazingly bad for me. [Arrogant Wurm](#) was set to block but fell to *Alliances'* [Reprisal](#). After that I was outclassed in every way and again quickly fell.

6-2-1

After that speedy defeat, I got to walk around and watch board situations too bizarre to explain. Some of the decks were amazingly synergistic, and some were quite the opposite. More amusing was the random hosers sprinkled into sets. Cards carefully selected for balance go haywire when introduced to every card ever. Case in point: Mark Globus getting utterly wrecked by an equipment (searched by a [Trinket Mage](#) no less!).



[Soldevi Steam Beast](#) is good, but there are a lot of tappers in the universe.

Everyone was still having a good time, but energy was definitely winding down. The grab bag helped perk the players up, but one could sense that the final round would be a relief. As for me, I just wanted to make Top 8.

### Round 10(!) vs. Kellen Able

Game 1

I could honestly say that Kellen had a stronger deck than I did. At the same time, that doesn't mean everything when said stronger deck has an exploitable hole. That weakness wasn't too apparent



early on, with Kellen putting together an impressive army. His [Wormfang Drake](#) took a welcome [Utopia Vow](#), but [Torchling](#) looked awfully good against my stranded [Acceptable Losses](#). We did reach a bit of a standstill, although Kellen had snuck in a few points early with fliers. With the board relatively stabilized, I drew and began to play [Sprout Swarm](#), which led to quite a bit more Saprolings coming in quite quickly. [Sprout Swarm](#) is quite sick, I discovered that day. Yet despite the growing number of Saprolings on the board, Kellen didn't seem out of it. He had been holding cards and using [Descendant of Soramaro](#) to craft a tough grip. Interestingly, Kellen was playing barely anything, indicating a flood of lands or some burn. I began to suspect the latter when Kellen grew visibly excited after drawing and casting [Bubbling Beebles](#). The Beebles were unblockable due to [Utopia Vow](#), and I had the distinct feeling I didn't want to take more damage. With 13 Saprolings in play, in everyone came. I made the attack seem as lackadaisical as I could, trying to indicate that I couldn't care less about the fate of my little 1/1s. As hoped, Kellen nonchalantly blocked with all his creatures, taking about 8 damage. That damage was nice, but the block was the only reason for the attack. Post-combat, down came [Rough](#), and Kellen's forces were swept away, to some degree of shock. With a library locked in from Descendent use, Kellen had to pack it in.

Game 2

This game was more of the same for Kellen. A [Banshee's Blade](#) took on counters, after which [Sprout Swarm](#) and [Arrogant Wurm](#) came down. Kellen was almost in it with a race, but the littlest ninja bounced back a [Torchling](#), earning me serious time. Kellen couldn't deal with the rapidly growing [Arrogant Wurm](#) and extended the hand in tired concession. I shook it, both of us knowing full well that Kellen was probably well set up against any other deck in the room. Sometimes, that's the way these things go.

7-2-1

I ended in fourth place, a satisfying finish considering how out of practice I was. Alexis Janson was the next employee down at eighth place, a strong showing considering the talent in the room. She, like the other attendees, seemed to alternate between satisfaction and lethargy. Fourteen-hour events do tend to wear a body. I was dead tired, of course, but happy to finally satisfy that bothersome itch. I presume everyone else felt the same way, although by the end it was a mite difficult to ask.



I drove home, happy to have scratched that itch and with full plans to sleep until noon. I did exactly that, then received a call that asking if I wanted to come over and draft. Guess what happened then...