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Things Fall Apart

Quentin Martin
Limited Information
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I will, unfortunately, start this week's article with an apology. I had intended on bringing you three in-depth game walkthroughs from a draft I did recently. Unfortunately, my computer crashed whilst I was writing the article, losing all of my game history, and along with it, much of the game images I had painstakingly saved. Much like a long email that fails to send and is unrecoverable, so was the later half of this article. To make things even worse, [PT-San Diego](#) begins tomorrow morning, as I write this, and I do not have enough time to redraft for new games to work with or write a full draft walkthrough. To compensate, I will bring you a briefer than normal draft walkthrough of the draft in question (as I still have the draft history saved), showing all the picks but only commenting on a few of them, along with a look at one of the games I had already examined before the crash, combined with a summary of the other games. Again, my heartfelt apology.

Pack 1, Pick 1

Deathspore Thallid, Tolarian Sentinel, Benalish Cavalry, Orcish Cannonade, Errant Ephemeron, Strangling Soot, Children of Korlis, Sangrophage, Viashino Bladescout, Mystical Teachings, Barbed Shocker, Return to Dust, Riftwing Cloudskate, Swarmyard, Whispers of the Muse

Click [here](#).

This has been a pick that has often plagued me, especially as [Riftwing Cloudskate](#) has a soft spot in my heart. However, and I hate it when my walkthroughs include clear mistakes such as this, the correct pick is the [Errant Ephemeron](#), as it is simply a dragon.

Pick: [Riftwing Cloudskate](#)

Pack 1, Pick 2

Bonesplitter Sliver, Dark Withering, Viscerid Deepwalker, Ashcoat Bear, Amrou Seekers, Bewilder, Call to the Netherworld, Cyclopean Giant, Brass Gnat, Savage Thallid, Nightshade Assassin, Griffin Guide, Spell Burst, Mishra, Artificer Prodigy

Pick: [Griffin Guide](#)

Pack 1, Pick 3

Tendrils of Corruption, Think Twice, Penumbra Spider, Errant Doomsayers, Rift Bolt, Foriysian Interceptor, Basal Sliver, Drifter *il*-Dal, Subterranean Shambler, Mindlash Sliver, Might Sliver, Evil Eye of Urborg, Angel's Grace

Pick: [Rift Bolt](#)

Pack 1, Pick 4

Gemhide Sliver, Mindstab, Gaze of Justice, Coal Stoker, Thrill of the Hunt, Shadow Sliver, Bogardan Rager, Traitor's Clutch, D'Avenant Healer, Yavimaya Dryad, Firewake Sliver, Undying Rage

Click [here](#).

This is a tight pack with the option between [Gemhide Sliver](#) and [Coal Stoker](#). This was one of the new turbo drafts that [Magic Online](#) operates and I was hard pressed to make a decision. I went with the Sliver, possibly because the [Might Sliver](#) that I had passed earlier was still lingering on my mind, and partly because I thought that green would be open and the Sliver would ensure that I could splash the [Rift Bolt](#) and [Griffin Guide](#) should things not pan out. However, given the strength of a third-pick [Rift Bolt](#), I should have followed it up with the [Coal Stoker](#) and gone into one of my favourite colour combinations, red-blue. This was probably the most pivotal pick of the draft, because although I will end up with a lot of late pick-white cards, if I had, correctly, been red-blue, I feel the deck would've wound up more powerful.

Pick: [Gemhide Sliver](#)

Pack 1, Pick 5

Looter *il*-Kor, Gorgon Recluse, Fortify, Coal Stoker, Traitor's Clutch, Plunder, Eternity Snare, Molder, Venser's Sliver, Brine Elemental, Assembly-Worker

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Pick: Looter *il-Kor*

Pack 1, Pick 6

Cancel, Icatian Crier, Bonesplitter Sliver, Momentary Blink, Ancient Grudge, Greenseeker, Calciform Pools, Locket of Yesterdays, Coalition Victory, Swamp

Pick: Momentary Blink

Pack 1, Pick 7

Coral Trickster, Deathspore Thallid, Herd Gnarr, Glass Asp, Ground Rift, Eternity Snare, Tectonic Fiend, Return to Dust, Chronosavant

Pick: Coral Trickster

Pack 1, Pick 8

Cloudchaser Kestrel, Pentarch Ward, Foriysian Interceptor, Aetherflame Wall, Thallid Shell-Dweller, Haunting Hymn, Living End, Return to Dust

Pick: Cloudchaser Kestrel

Pack 1, Pick 9

Tolarian Sentinel, Children of Korlis, Sangrophage, Viashino Bladescout, Mystical Teachings, Barbed Shocker, Return to Dust

Pick: Tolarian Sentinel

Pack 1, Pick 10

Ashcoat Bear, Bewilder, Call to the Netherworld, Cyclopean Giant, Brass Gnat, Spell Burst

Pick: Spell Burst

Pack 1, Pick 11

Foriysian Interceptor, Basal Sliver, Drifter *il-Dal*, Mindlash Sliver, Evil Eye of Urborg

Pick: Basal Sliver

Pack 1, Pick 12

Gaze of Justice, Shadow Sliver, Traitor's Clutch, Firewake Sliver

Pick: Firewake Sliver

Pack 1, Pick 13

Traitor's Clutch, Plunder, Eternity Snare

Pick: Eternity Snare

Pack 1, Pick 14

Locket of Yesterdays, Swamp

Pick: Locket of Yesterdays

Pack 1, Pick 15

Glass Asp

Pick: Glass Asp

Pack 2, Pick 1

Erratic Mutation, Midnight Charm, Needlepeak Spider, Aquamorph Entity, Shade of Trokair, Uktabi Drake, Ghost Tactician, Firefright Mage, Simian Spirit Guide, Gossamer Phantasm, Bog Serpent, Rough // Tumble, Psychotrope Thallid, Gaea's Anthem, Imp's Mischief

Click [here](#).

The choice between **Rough // Tumble** and **Erratic Mutation** took a long time. After passing the two **Coal Stokers**, I figured it was unlikely that red would be too open from the left. Combined with this the fact that I have **Griffin Guide**, **Cloudchaser Kestrel** and **Momentary Blink** arguing for white, with only **Rift Bolt** cheering for the red corner. I went with the inferior **Erratic Mutation**, so as to hedge my bets as I felt I would end up with a solid white-blue deck no matter what, and if red did indeed flow, then I would not have completely lost a pick.

Pick: **Erratic Mutation**

Pack 2, Pick 2

Poultice Sliver, Spitting Sliver, Veiling Oddity, Blightspeaker, Aquamorph Entity, Evolution Charm, Pallid Mycoderm, Brain Gorgers, Melancholy, Piracy Charm, Circle of Affliction, Jodah's Avenger, Reckless Wurm, Fatal Frenzy

Pick: Jodah's Avenger

Pack 2, Pick 3

Synchronous Sliver, Needlepeak Spider, Mire Boa, Wistful Thinking, Dash Hopes, Reality Acid, Citanul Woodreaders, Pallid Mycoderm, Mana Tithe, Simian Spirit Guide, Aether Membrane, Ana Battlemage, Groundbreaker

Pick: Ana Battlemage

Pack 2, Pick 4

Battering Sliver, Reflex Sliver, Whitemane Lion, Saltfield Recluse, Brain Gorgers, Keldon Marauders, Ghost Tactician, Fa'adiyah Seer, Merfolk Thaumaturgist, Serra's Boon, Malach of the Dawn, Benalish Commander

Pick: Saltfield Recluse

Pack 2, Pick 5

Synchronous Sliver, Dawn Charm, Whitemane Lion, Dust Corona, Vitaspore Thallid, Dash Hopes, Primal Plasma, Seal of Primordium, Healing Leaves, Darkheart Sliver, Mycologist

Pick: Whitemane Lion

Pack 2, Pick 6

Aven Riftwatcher, Wistful Thinking, Keldon Marauders, Dash Hopes, Revered Dead, Healing Leaves, Brute Force, Rebuff the Wicked, Riptide Pilferer, Heroes Remembered

Pick: Aven Riftwatcher

Pack 2, Pick 7

Aven Riftwatcher, Cradle to Grave, Keldon Marauders, Dust Corona, Uktabi Drake, Merfolk Thaumaturgist, Healing Leaves, Frenetic Sliver, Fungal Behemoth

Pick: Aven Riftwatcher

Pack 2, Pick 8

Veiling Oddity, Vitaspore Thallid, Brain Gorgers, Fury Charm, Wistful Thinking, Essence Warden, Mana Tithe, Auramancer's Guise

Pick: Veiling Oddity

Pack 2, Pick 9

Midnight Charm, Uktabi Drake, Ghost Tactician, Firefight Mage, Simian Spirit Guide, Gossamer Phantasm, Bog Serpent

Pick: Gossamer Phantasm

Pack 2, Pick 10

Poultice Sliver, Veiling Oddity, Aquamorph Entity, Pallid Mycoderm, Brain Gorgers, Circle of Affliction

Pick: Aquamorph Entity

Pack 2, Pick 11

Wistful Thinking, Dash Hopes, Reality Acid, Mana Tithe, Simian Spirit Guide

Pick: Reality Acid

Pack 2, Pick 12

Ghost Tactician, Fa'adiyah Seer, Merfolk Thaumaturgist, Serra's Boon

Pick: Serra's Boon

Pack 2, Pick 13

Dust Corona, Vitaspore Thallid, Dash Hopes

Pick: Vitaspore Thallid



Pack 2, Pick 14

Dash Hopes, Revered Dead

Pick: Revered Dead

Pack 2, Pick 15

Dust Corona

Pick: Dust Corona

Pack 3, Pick 1

Sprout Swarm, Samite Censer-Bearer, Aven Augur, Ichor Slick, Bogardan Lancer, Frenzy Sliver, Mesmeric Sliver, Patrician's Scorn, Sarcomite Myr, Henchfiend of Ukor, Thornweald Archer, Arc Blade, Ravaging Riftwurm, Lost Auramancers, Molten Disaster

Pick: Lost Auramancers

Pack 3, Pick 2

Knight of Sursi, Grave Peril, Wrap in Vigor, Samite Censer-Bearer, Infiltrator *il-Kor*, Putrid Cyclops, Blind Phantasm, Lumithread Field, Grinning Ignus, Edge of Autumn, Delay, Skirk Ridge Exhumer, Sparkspitter, Heartwood Storyteller

Pick: Infiltrator *il-Kor*

Pack 3, Pick 3

Gathan Raiders, Quiet Disrepair, Saltskitter, Unblinking Bleb, Llanowar Augur, Riddle of Lightning, Grave Scrabblers, Lumithread Field, Mesmeric Sliver, Deepcavern Imp, Chronomantic Escape, Cloudseeder, Skirk Ridge Exhumer

Pick: Gathan Raiders

Pack 3, Pick 4

Rift Elemental, Llanowar Empath, Marshaling Cry, Unblinking Bleb, Lost Hours, Deepcavern Imp, Logic Knot, Vedalken Aethermage, Virulent Sliver, Cyclical Evolution, Sword of the Meek, Sliver Legion

Pick: Marshaling Cry

Pack 3, Pick 5

Venser's Diffusion, Oblivion Crown, Emberwilde Augur, Flowstone Embrace, Nessian Courser, Blade of the Sixth Pride, Sarcomite Myr, Homing Sliver, Llanowar Reborn, Utopia Mycon, Haze of Rage

Pick: Blade of the Sixth Pride

Pack 3, Pick 6

Lost Hours, Petrified Plating, Leaden Fists, Grave Scrabblers, Lymph Sliver, Homing Sliver, Shivan Sand-Mage, Cyclical Evolution, Sliversmith, Scout's Warning

Pick: Leaden Fists

Pack 3, Pick 7

Aven Augur, Cutthroat *il-Dal*, Gift of Granite, Quiet Disrepair, Blind Phantasm, Virulent Sliver, Dakmor Salvage, Dust of Moments, Pyromancer's Swath

Pick: Aven Augur

Pack 3, Pick 8

Wrap in Vigor, Leaden Fists, Gift of Granite, Augur of Skulls, Patrician's Scorn, Logic Knot, Mystic Speculation, New Benalia

Pick: Leaden Fists

Pack 3, Pick 9

Samite Censer-Bearer, Aven Augur, Bogardan Lancer, Frenzy Sliver, Mesmeric Sliver, Patrician's Scorn, Sarcomite Myr

Pick: Aven Augur

Pack 3, Pick 10



Grave Peril, Wrap in Vigor, Samite Censer-Bearer, Putrid Cyclops, Lumithread Field, Grinning Ignus

Pick: Lumithread Field

Pack 3, Pick 11

Quiet Disrepair, Saltskitter, Unblinking Bleb, Mesmeric Sliver, Chromantic Escape

Pick: Saltskitter

Pack 3, Pick 12

Unblinking Bleb, Lost Hours, Logic Knot, Virulent Sliver

Pick: Logic Knot

Pack 3, Pick 13

Oblivion Crown, Emberwilde Augur, Sarcomite Myr

Pick: Emberwilde Augur

Pack 3, Pick 14

Lost Hours, Cyclical Evolution

Pick: Cyclical Evolution

Pack 3, Pick 15

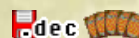
Virulent Sliver

Pick: Virulent Sliver



Time Spiral - Planar Chaos - Future Sight Draft Deck

Blue-White



Main Deck
40 cards

- | | |
|----------------------------|--------------------|
| 9 Island | 1 Griffin Guide |
| 8 Plains | 1 Marshaling Cry |
| 17 land | 1 Momentary Blink |
| 1 Aven Riftwatcher | 1 Serra's Boon |
| 1 Blade of the Sixth Pride | 1 Erratic Mutation |
| | 2 Leaden Fists |

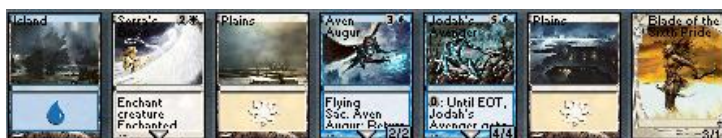
Sideboard

- 1 Ana Battlemage
- 1 Aven Riftwatcher
- 1 Basal Sliver
- 1 Cyclical Evolution
- 1 Dust Corona
- 1 Emberwilde Augur
- 1 Eternity Snare

1 Cloudchaser Kestrel	7 other spells	1 Firewake Sliver
1 Lost Auramancers		1 Gemhide Sliver
1 Saltfield Recluse		1 Glass Asp
1 Whitemane Lion		1 Gossamer Phantasm
1 Aquamorph Entity		1 Locket of Yesterdays
2 Aven Augur		1 Logic Knot
1 Coral Trickster		1 Lumithread Field
1 Infiltrator il-Kor		1 Reality Acid
1 Jodah's Avenger		1 Revered Dead
1 Looter il-Kor		1 Rift Bolt
1 Riftwing Cloudskate		1 Saltskitter
1 Veiling Oddity		1 Spell Burst
1 Gathan Raiders		1 Tolarian Sentinel
		1 Virulent Sliver
		1 Vitaspore Thallid
16 creatures		22 sideboard cards

Apart from the fact that I wound up white-blue rather than blue-red and my first pick mistake, the draft worked out fine. The deck is not particularly special, although it does have a great mana curve. There is little in the way of card advantage and it is equally light on removal. **Serra's Boon** is a card that I often see automatically placed in people's sideboards; it is perfectly playable in white-blue and white-green, when the deck lacks removal and will have trouble dealing with cards like **Prodigal Pyromancer** and **Infiltrator il-Kor**. The deck has quite a few small evasion creatures and a couple of great finishers in the form of **Veiling Oddity**, **Griffin Guide** and **Jodah's Avenger**, so I expect to be racing in most games, hoping to turn the tide in my favour with my cheap tricks, whilst starting out, more often than not, ahead due to my aggressive curve.

The first game in the quarterfinals was very unexciting. I curved out perfectly with **Looter il-Kor**, **Gathan Raiders**, **Aven Augur**, and **Infiltrator il-Kor** and topped of with a **Griffin Guide**, whilst he lost a creature to the Raiders on turn four and never made it into the game. His deck is green-black with a potential Sliver package, having shown **Reflex** and **Might Sliver** (the only other card he played was a **Corpulent Corpse**). We join the draft for the second game. We're on the draw and our opening hand gives us the first decision:



Nothing phenomenal here, but we have three land, both colours, and early drop and enough gas to last out most games—an easy keep. Our opponent drops a **Deathspore Thallid** on his second turn and we lead with the **Blade of the Sixth Pride**. He neglects to attack on his next turn, dropping a third **Swamp** a **Prismatic Lens**. Here's what the board looks like on our third turn:



The Rebel definitely wants to attack, because there's little point in sitting around and letting the Thallid become active. This leaves us with two options: we can attack, and if he blocks use the **Momentary Blink** (as the Rebel is still a good threat at this point, we have nothing else to do with our mana this turn, and it will keep us ahead on tempo), if he doesn't block then we can waste the Thallid after combat with the Boon, or we can kill it before we attack. This is a perfect opportunity to use the Boon as it isn't the strongest card around and fulfils exactly what we need to do this turn; it also means we get to keep the better Blink for another time, perhaps to save the far superior **Jodah's Avenger** later on. So we Boon the Thallid and attack him down to 17.

He makes a fourth **Swamp**, signalling that he is indeed colour-screwed (or at least hampered by the mana the Lens needs to filter colours), and plays a **Shimian Specter**. We draw another land, attack with the Blade dropping him to 14, make a land and make our only play of the **Aven Augur**.

He makes a rookie mistake of little consequence in his next turn. He suspends a **Giant Dustwasp** off the **Prismatic Lens** and plays a **Frenzy Sliver**, before attacking with the Specter. We were in a tight spot and had to block the Spectre anyway for fear of losing the Avenger in our hand, but now he has tapped himself out pre-combat, so we can safely block and trade.



We draw yet another **Plains**. It is very likely that if we attack with the Blade, he will block with the Sliver, because he is behind on life and in no position to trade two for three damage, even assuming we have no drop this turn. We attack with the Blade, and as expected he blocks, we use the Blink to keep it around because we still want to preserve our tempo and also because we have no better play this turn.

He finally draws a **Forest**, a reason for concern, but the best he can do is drop a **Reflex Sliver**. This leaves him with only one card in his hand, almost certainly worse than the already mediocre Sliver, so we feel comfortable with our board position. He is then faced with the decision to hold back and block our Blade next turn, when we have enough mana to flashback the Blink, or attack now and how we are inclined to trade. The attacking play is weak as we are still on 20 life and will happily race for now. One other factor is that saving the Blade with the Blink a second time is almost a waste. It is in his interests to make us use the Blink next turn during combat, so that he gets one step closer to his Dustwasp coming into play and any creature he draws can, at least, trade with the Blade if we choose to save it (which we won't as we want to get the Avenger into play and then give him only a turn window to draw an answer, if he currently isn't holding one, before the Blink comes back online). However, our opponent decides to attack and we let it through.



We draw a **Griffin Guide**. We could cast it, putting him on a three turn clock but the Avenger does the same and is both more mana efficient and presents a more diverse threat. Also, next turn we will have seven mana and be able to cast both the Guide and flashback the Blink. We attack for three and cast the Avenger. In his turn, the Dustwasp looms closer, but we are rather more concerned by the **Enslave** that he tries to slap on our Avenger. Catching us tapped puts us in a very awkward position, is there anything we can do?



Handily for us, the **Jodah's Avenger** has the ability to commit suicide whenever he wants to, so we activate his ability giving him double strike four times and he dies, fizzling the **Enslave**. Afterwards, our opponent decides that it is the sensible play to force the **Blink** by holding the **Reflex Sliver** back on defence. This plays perfectly into the **Griffin Guide** we enchant the **Blade** with, which brings him to a perilous 6. Having drawn an **Island**, and now very light on gas, we ship the turn.

Our opponent draws and scoops. This play is a mistake, and I see players make it time and time again—the early concession. Our **Blade** will attack him to one next turn, but then his **Dustwasp** will come into play and trade with it. We can't efficiently use the **Blink** to save it, because we want the **Griffin** token. He has two draws to find a solution to the **Griffin**, and yet decides that his game is done here. We could easily have drawn two land in a row, whilst he could've peeled the answer he needed (remember, due to the new rules, we cannot use the **Blink** to save the **Griffin** token), and maybe even a threat to increase the pressure, and we would be the ones on the losing side. It wasn't the most exciting game, with our only interesting play being to self-destruct the **Jodah's Avenger**.

Here my computer crashes, losing my game history and, with it, any hope of bring you the in-depth game analysis I was hoping for. Instead is a summary of the incredibly interesting games of the rest of the draft.

The semifinals had a lot more to offer. I won two tight games. The first I thought would be impossible to win, with my opponent's opening plays being to suspend an **Errant Ephemeron** on turn two, and then another the next turn, and then **Nightshade Assassin** to kill one of my guys, and then a suspended **Aeon Chronicler** for one. I came out racing with a suspended **Veiling Oddity** followed by a morphed **Gathan Raiders**, backed up by a **Lost Auramancers**. I had a **Momentary Blink** to save my man from the **Assassin** and swung in for a lot of damage when the **Oddity** finally resolved. A **Jodah's Avenger** put him in a very tight spot, and I attacked for lethal the following turn when my **Auramancer** died, bringing forth the **Griffin Guide** allowing my **Oddity** to attack for the kill.



The second game he had exactly the same draw—suspending two **Ephemeron**s and the **Aeon Chronicler** on turn five. He had an **Aquamorph Entity** for his turn four play. I also had the same start, with an **Oddity**, **Gathan Raiders** and **Auramancer**. I stalled on four land, morphing a **Coral Trickster** and casting a **Marshaling Cry** the turn the **Oddity** came into play, leaving him on one life, and dropped a **Looter il-Kor** to which he conceded. I thought I would lose both games easily, but the **Oddity** combined with a great curve and a well timed trick turned both situations into wins.

The final was anti-climatic. I stalled on three lands in both games and ran into **Lightning Axe** plus **Reckless Wurm** in the first game and the **Axe** and a **Brain Gorgers** in the second. In both games, when I was about to stabilise, he dropped **Kaervek the Merciless** and locked me out of the game.

Hopefully the Pro Tour, and the Invitational vote, will bring me better success.

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.*



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