

Home > Games > Magic > Magicthegathering.com > Columns



Into the Pool

Quentin Martin
Limited Information
Tuesday, July 10, 2007



Sealed Deck Week has made me realise how little I play Sealed nowadays. In the past, I would travel the country for a PTQ season, opening a Sealed Deck every weekend, relishing the Prerelease of each new set and the general thrill of cracking open a Sealed pool to see what goodies you've opened and how you are going to craft the pool into a winning deck. Now the only time I get to play Sealed is Day 1 of a Grand Prix, which isn't nearly as often as I'd like to, because I really enjoy Sealed.



I hear complaints that Sealed is really random, and it is true that it is probably the most random sanctioned format. Yet the only time its true randomness is felt is when you play a Swiss tournament with no cut to Top 8. This is because I feel that with enough skill every Sealed pool is capable of posting the X-2 or X-1-1 record (I've probably played somewhere between one and two hundred Sealed decks and looked at many more pools, and I think I've only ever seen maybe, just maybe, five unplayable pools).

In honour of the release of *Tenth Edition*, I'll take a look at a *Ninth Edition* league online. Unlike Block Sealed Deck, *Ninth Edition* has no themes running through it which means that building a Sealed deck is easier than normal because you do not have to assess a most of the cards' value based on how it interacts with other cards in the pool. Building a base set Sealed pool involves almost every element of **Magic** strategy that I have imparted in past articles, from quotas to card evaluation, and should set you all in good stead for [Magic Game Day](#). Here's the pool we opened:

PRODUCTS

MAGIC ONLINE

MESSAGE BOARDS

Magic General Forum
magicthegathering.com Forum

RULES



Sealed Pool

Main Deck
75 cards

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3 Forest 2 Island 1 Shivan Reef 1 Urza's Power Plant 7 lands 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Air Elemental 1 Anarchist 1 Aven Cloudchaser 1 Aven Fisher 1 Aven Flock 1 Aven Windreader 1 Azure Drake 1 Bog Imp 1 Craw Wurm 1 Dancing Scimitar 1 Elvish Warrior 1 Flowstone Shambler 1 Foot Soldiers 1 Fugitive Wizard 1 Giant Spider 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Annex 1 Blood Moon 1 Coercion 1 Dehydration 1 Firebreathing 1 Holy Day 1 Holy Strength 1 Mind Rot 1 Natural Affinity 1 Natural Spring 1 Phurexian Arena 1 Raise Dead 1 Rampant Growth 1 Reflexes 1 Sea's Claim
--	---	--



This is more like it. Out of the seven playable creatures, six of them fly and the other is a great defender whilst the aerial assault attacks. **Sift** is one of the few cards in the pool that provides card advantage, and it does a great job at that. **Dehydration** is an awkward **Assassinate**, but will almost certainly be played because it deals with a lot of the larger creatures out there that blue often has difficulty with. **Time Ebb** is a phenomenal tempo card that also deals efficiently with any annoying creature enchantments, and will set the opponent back a long way for such a cheap cost. If we were to splash blue off the **Shivan Reef**, **Sift** and the inverse **Repulse** would likely be the only two cards we would consider.

The attraction of blue is the large amount of flyers, **Sift**, **Time Ebb** and the monster **Air Elemental**. Unless the other three colours are all very powerful, we will playing blue, which when combined with the two artifacts brings us to twelve playables.

Black



Most of our black cards are playable, which is always nice; unfortunately there are only eight of them. The **Bog Imp** might scrape the cut if we're desperate, but I will not stoop that low just yet. There's a reasonable amount of quality here: evasion in the form of **Razorooth Rats**, hard-to-block creatures **Nantuko Husk** and **Looming Shade** and card advantage in **Phyrexian Arena**, **Mind Rot**, **Gravedigger** and **Phyrexian Gargantua**. **Coercion** is a reasonable card in this format where a lot of games are dictated by a bomb going the distance as there are fewer answers than threats.

The problem though is that, if combined with blue as it currently might be, there will be too few playables. We would also have a slight curve problem as we would be without two-drops. Let's see if the other colours have something to offer.

Red



After we've sifted away all the unplayables, there really isn't anything of substance left. I would seldom ever play any of the non-*Anarchist* creatures unless I was desperately scrabbling to find cards to fill out my deck. As such we are left with the potential to splash it, but none of the three remaining cards are too exciting. There are few enough sorceries in our pool, none of them are really worth getting back and the only one we have in blue (taking the *Shivan Reef* into account) is *Time Ebb*, making for an eight-mana *Vedalken Dismisser*. *Threaten* is a card I've never really been a fan of and even less so in *Ninth Edition Sealed* where there is little tempo. This leaves us with *Shock*, which is a very unexciting splash, so we will put the red to one side for now.

Green



The four main elements one looks for in Limited are removal, evasion, card advantage, and fatties. The whole pool is light on removal, card advantage is light if we veer away from black, luckily blue is packed full of evasion, and green, as per usual, is rammed full of boombooms. It has no fewer than five large guys that help bulk out the fattie quota. We have two pieces of great acceleration which will help us get to our fatties faster, and the *Rampant Growth* will help us splash a third colour should we need it. A side note on the underrated *Llanowar Behemoth*—this guy is ridiculous! He is almost completely unstoppable, he's a 5/5 minimum the turn you make him and from then on he gets bigger and bigger at will. He certainly falls into the bomb category.

The curve is spread thin, but it should complement the blue, which is where I think this pool is going. Partly because they are the colours with the most power, but mainly because they are the only two colours that have enough depth to not splash or run underpowered filler. The biggest problem with this combination is that it lacks removal, but so does virtually any combination in our pool. There are two builds worth looking at: straight blue-green and a version splashing for *Threaten* and *Shock*. *Master Healer* is a possible splash option, but he's not the best splashed card in the world (as you want your splash to do something the turn you rip the coloured mana to cast it) and red is an easier splash thanks to *Shivan Reef*, whilst also providing the deck with some much needed, if not too powerful, removal.

If we choose not to play green, then we will be forced to run a UBr deck which will look something like this but with one more card cut:



Looking at this in more detail, I would probably cut the **Anarchist** and run eight **Swamps**, seven **Islands**, two mountains and the **Shivan Reef** for the mana base. This deck lacks any early game, which isn't so important in *Ninth*, but it is still not too wise to fall too far behind too early. Playing three colours is never the best plan in the world, and here our third colour is far from strong. We are also running **Phyrexian Arena** and **Looming Shade** off only eight black sources, which is not good. The curve is also a little light at the top end. I find that lots of *Ninth* Sealed games last for a very long time, allowing you to get maximum use out of expensive fatties, meaning that you can increase the heavy quota to more than what you might normally play.

Though this deck has several faults, it is still eminently playable, but now let us see what green has to offer instead of black when it's paired with a red splash:



I like deck much better than the previous one. For a start, we now have a couple of things we can do on turn two, and this deck has the feeling that it will just keep dropping huge or evasion creatures until the cows come home. Both pieces of acceleration fit right at home here, helping us get to our big guys faster, and the **Time Ebb** seems like it will have more of an impact taking out a crucial blocker at the right time.

I'm just not sure the red does enough here. I'm playing the red spells over **Elvish Warrior** and **Scaled Wurm**, both of which are fine in their own right. **Shock** is always fine and will help us deal with what are normally trouble cards for blue-green like **Anaba Shaman**, but I also have a feeling that even though without it the deck would have nothing to do about the Shaman, I somehow feel like this deck can just ignore it. Apart from the **Wood Elves**, nothing dies to the pinger and everything is either too big to care or flies and won't be blocked anyway.

I feel that **Threaten** adds even less here. Sure, much like **Time Ebb**, it will provide a huge tempo shift, but it will not deal with the problem. The Ebb, in contrast, forces them to spend their next turn recommitting their guy to the board, whilst taking away one of their draws. Also, in most games of *Ninth*, the ground tends to bog up really quickly, which is why **Grizzly Bears** are bad, and the **Threaten** will not have too big an impact here because they will often have random dorks lying around to chump block. If we take a flyer, they tend not to be the most devastating target even though our flyers will be able to get through, they tend not to have the most power, and it probably won't be a big enough life swing. As you may have guessed, I really do not like the card.



Instead of splashing, we gain more consistent mana (although it was never that bad to start with) and another fattie. The **Elvish Warrior** may not be very good, but he will help to

1 Raise Dead
1 Razortooth Rats
1 Reflexes
1 Sea's Claim
1 Shivan Reef
1 Shock
1 Stone Rain
1 Summer Bloom
1 Tempest of Light
1 Threaten
1 Unholy Strength
1 Urza's Power Plant
1 Veteran Cavalier
1 Warrior's Honor

48 sideboard cards

Best of luck,

Q

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



[Discuss](#) on the message boards



[Respond](#) via email



[Quentin Martin](#) archive

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

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

