



Tight Sight Wrap-Up / Wily Arcanis

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Building on a Budget
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hello everyone and welcome back to Building on a Budget!

Last week's [Tight Sight deck](#) was doing great in the casual room, but it wasn't very interactive (or fun to play against), and it seemed overmatched against decks that weren't as geared towards stopping a combo deck in a game-one only situation. Many tournament decks would have ways to hose Tight Sight (such as [Tormod's Crypt](#), or [Leyline of the Void](#)), so it only seemed fair to take Tight Sight into the tournament practice room and build a sideboard. Here were the cards (with ticket prices) I decided to go with:

Sideboard:

3 [Research // Development](#) (.5) – A couple of readers pointed out that this would be a way to get cards back that were removed from the game—either by flashback ([Deep Analysis](#), [Krosan Reclamation](#)) or through my opponent's machinations ([Tormod's Crypt](#), [Leyline of the Void](#), [Withered Wretch](#)).

3 [Krosan Grip](#) (.25) – This deck really needs the graveyard as a resource, and [Krosan Grip](#) gives me a way to get rid of the two most commonly-played Extended graveyard hosers—the aforementioned [Crypt](#) and [Leyline](#).

1 [Krosan Reclamation](#) – Some games, I just need to make sure that I don't mill both of my Reclamations and fizzle. This is a one-of in the board so I can go three-of in the main deck against, say, heavy permission decks.

4 [Counterbalance](#) (1) – A great card with [Sensei's Divining Top](#), and a way to slow down early rush and combo decks. My deck has a lot of one, two and three-drop spells ([Careful Study](#), [Top](#), [Mental Note](#), [Sakura-Tribe Elder](#), [Krosan Reclamation](#), [Early Harvest](#), [Far Wanderings](#), [Counterbalance](#) (once it is sided in)), so I can stop a lot of early cards with a timely [Counterbalance](#).

4 [Xantid Swarm](#) (.75) – Strictly anti-permission. Self-explanatory—I'm not using these dudes to beat down!



Tight Sight with Sideboard, version 1		
Main Deck		Sideboard
60 cards		
9 Forest	1 Brain Freeze	4 Counterbalance
12 Island	4 Careful Study	3 Krosan Grip
	3 Deep Analysis	1 Krosan Reclamation
21 lands	4 Early Harvest	3 Research // Development
	4 Far Wanderings	4 Xantid Swarm
2 Golgari Grave-Troll	4 Future Sight	
3 Sakura-Tribe Elder	2 Krosan Reclamation	15 sideboard cards
	1 Life from the Loam	
5 creatures	4 Mental Note	
	3 Moment's Peace	
	4 Sensei's Divining Top	
	34 other spells	

To make a long story short, I get my butt handed to me three ways to Sunday. My first match is against julienb, who is playing Goblins. In the first game, I get my library down to five cards (two [Early Harvests](#), a [Reclamation](#), and two other cards), and fizzle out by having the top three cards be the non-Harvest cards when I only had three mana left. In Game 2, I get an early [Top](#) and [Counterbalance](#) combo, and he goes to my dome with [Char](#), [Char](#) and [Flames of the Blood Hand](#). Even though I use [Krosan Reclamation](#) to shuffle up my deck, I can't get a three-drop spell to the top of my library.

In the second match, I face beaneater21, who is piloting a black-green-white aggro deck featuring [Tarmogoyf](#). In the first game, I get stuck at three lands, and he beats me down with [Tarmogoyf](#) and [Vindicate](#). In Game 2, he

lands a **Dark Confidant**, puts an **Armadillo Cloak** on it, and then drops double **Tarmogoyf**. That, my friends, was the end of me.

After these ignoble defeats, I decided to change the deck up a little. **Counterbalance** was the only thing working well so far (at least in theory), so I moved them to the main deck. Most of the threats in Extended that you want to stop are two-drop spells (**Tarmogoyf**, **Dark Confidant**, **Arcbound Ravager**), so the one-drop **Spell Snare** seems like a great new sideboard choice.

To make room for these cards, I took out a Life from the Loam (never really got much use out of it versus **Golgari Grave-Troll**), two of the three **Deep Analysis** (dying too quickly to play them), and a **Moment's Peace**.

Tight Sight with Sideboard, version 2		
Main Deck		Sideboard
60 cards		
9 Forest	1 Brain Freeze	3 Krosan Grip
12 Island	4 Careful Study	1 Krosan Reclamation
<hr/>		
21 lands	4 Counterbalance	3 Research // Development
	1 Deep Analysis	4 Spell Snare
	4 Early Harvest	4 Xantid Swarm
<hr/>		
2 Golgari Grave-Troll	4 Far Wanderings	
3 Sakura-Tribe Elder	4 Future Sight	15 sideboard cards
<hr/>		
5 creatures	2 Krosan Reclamation	
	4 Mental Note	
	2 Moment's Peace	
	4 Sensei's Divining Top	
<hr/>		
	34 other spells	

Long story short, I lose the next match against Seizemancer, who is playing an **Enduring Ideal** combo deck. He uses **Pentad Prism** to play an early **Enduring Ideal**, and then he fetches **Dovescape** (so I can't play noncreature spells), **Solitary Confinement** (so I can't target him or deal damage to him with Bird tokens), and then **Form of the Dragon** (to give him a four-turn clock). He then uses **Mikokoro**, **Center of the Sea** to draw cards each turn so he can keep his Confinement going indefinitely. I lose to this sequence of events two games in a row.

Reader Gananath summed up the problems he found with Tight Sight in the forums of last week's article:

"So after FURTHER testing, in the tournament room, not the casual room, this deck gets slaughtered pretty consistently. It just does not hold a candle to some of the decks I played. One in particular was a **Bridge from Below** deck that went off on turn three like bull in a china shop -- it looked like it broke every card, mechanic, and opponent's face within range.

Another deck I played was a kind-of-mirror. It was the alternative build, that focuses on 1cc artifacts, sensei's divining top, and locket of yesterdays. This was a far superior build. It used card drawing and the enchantment that fetches 1cc artifacts [**Artificer's Intuition**] to get the combo out and then used brain freeze as a kill. I sided in 3 **Krosan Grips**, one of which managed to stop her going off on turn three (taking out a locket after placing a top on the top of the library). I did not manage to go off on my turn (in spite of a valiant attempt). She went off on turn four.

I suppose this is a bright spot: this mono-blue build seemed more consistent, faster, and more resilient. All told, this might be the better way to go. The only thing that probably costs any meaningful amount of tix is the fetch enchantment. Her build also seemed to have quite a few dead artifacts that might allow for making it more than mono-blue and more robust.

Another deck had multiple main deck expiates that hosed me. The **Research // Development** were not the robust solution one might hope for."

In short, Tight Sight isn't fast enough of a combo deck to hang with the big boys in tournament play. Several other combo decks in the format have a reliable turn-four kill (**Mind's Desire** decks, **Locket of Yesterdays** / **Artificer's Intuition** decks, **Goblin** combo decks), and so a deck that doesn't combo off until turn six to seven has virtually no chance of winning. If there are cards in the future that make Tight Sight into more of a contender, I will definitely bring them up in a later column. Until then, let's file Tight Sight into the category of "neat idea, but too annoying for casual play, and not annoying enough for tournament play."

Wily Arcanis

Last week, I asked for your opinions about which **Tenth Edition** Theme Deck I should evolve, and how I should evolve it. You voted, and there were two clear winners! Let's see the results, Kelly.

Which **Tenth Edition** theme deck do you want to



see Ben evolve?		
Blue - Arcanis's Guile	2467	29.7%
Red - Kamahl's Temper	1722	20.7%
Black - Evincar's Tyranny	1577	19.0%
White - Cho Manno's Resolve	1326	16.0%
Green - Molimo's Might	1210	14.6%
Total	8302	100.0%

Tenth Edition theme decks only have 40 cards. We're going to be testing a Standard-legal 60-card deck. How should Ben start this evolution?		
Start with one Theme Deck and immediately add 20 cards of my choice.	3648	46.9%
Immediately open copies of the most popular and second most popular theme decks and make a two-color deck.	2555	32.9%
Immediately open two copies of the same theme deck and build a mono-colored deck from the 80 cards available.	1569	20.2%
Total	7772	100.0%

So, as voted upon, I'm going to open two copies of Molimo's Might and immediately build a monocolored deck from the 80 cards available!

...

Just kidding! I wouldn't ever do that to you, would I?

...

Right then! On to the theme deck.

Arcanis's Guile		
Main Deck 40 cards		
17 Island	1 Air Elemental	1 Boomerang
17 lands	1 Arcanis the Omnipotent	2 Cancel
	1 Aven Fisher	2 Counsel of the Soratami
	2 Cloud Elemental	1 Kraken's Eye
	1 Denizen of the Deep	2 Remove Soul
	1 Phantom Warrior	1 Rod of Ruin
	2 Sage Owl	1 Telling Time
	1 Thieving Magpie	1 Tidings
10 creatures		2 Unsummon
		13 other spells

Wizards of the Coast described the Arcanis (mono-blue) theme deck as follows:

Manipulate, deceive, humiliate, win. Frustrate your enemies by undoing all their hard work while you tear through your library for whatever spell you need. Then deliver the deathblow at your leisure with a little help from the archmage Arcanis the Omnipotent.

Manipulate: Well, Sage Owl and Telling Time both manipulate your deck, allowing you to set up the cards you're going to draw. I guess that you could throw card drawing under that category too—so Tidings, Counsel of the Soratami, Arcanis the Omnipotent, and Thieving Magpie also fit the bill.

Deceive: You think you're going to cast that spell? Uh-uh! Here comes a Cancel! Play a creature? It's Remove Soul time! You didn't really think I was going to let you cast that, did you? You fool!

Humiliate: I would be pretty humiliated if I died to Rod of Ruin. Other than that, points off for whoever used "humiliate" as a verb for this deck. Blue doesn't humiliate—blue controls! Blue doesn't need petty emotions, they just get in the way of research.

Win: Winning is something blue does a lot of. Judging from the precon, the path to victory is paved on the good ol' fashioned concepts of card advantage (through card drawing), bounce, evasion (flying) creatures, and counter-magic. While there isn't anything revolutionary here, the deck has a surprisingly supple curve starting at two and heading to six.

I can immediately say that on the first revision, Rod of Ruin and Denizen of the Deep are almost certainly going to be casualties of the deck. Denizen is best used in a deck that has a lot of comes-into-play effect

creatures, and this deck has a whole two of those (both **Sage Owl**). Also, it costs eight mana, which isn't exactly skin and bones. **Rod of Ruin**... well, meet **Prodigal Sorcerer**, except one mana more to play and three mana more to activate.

In keeping with the theme of the deck (it is a theme deck, right?), we're going to start the deck out at sixty cards, using only *Tenth Edition* cards. When we start tinkering with the deck next week, we're going to use a different method of playtesting. Instead of throwing in the entire card pool of Standard at once, we're going to play five games, see what changes the deck needs, and visit each of *Ravnica*, *Guildpact*, *Dissension*, *Coldsnap*, *Time Spiral*, *Planar Chaos*, *Future Sight*, and *Tenth Edition* to see what each set could add to the deck to improve it. Through this method, we will not build the absolute most optimal blue control (or beatdown) deck possible on the first go around, but we will get a feel for the deck's strengths and weaknesses and then see what is available to help the deck to become a better pile of 60 cards overall!

In order to do this, we need to add twenty cards to the deck. First of all, this deck is named after Arcanis. One copy of **Arcanis the Omnipotent** isn't going to do—we need a full four to compliment this deck. If there is only one in the deck, we have roughly a one in sixty chance of seeing the card in any given draw. With four in the deck, this drops to one in fifteen. This isn't exact math (since after you draw your first card, there are 59 cards left in your deck, and so on and so forth), but it's a good rule of thumb. Even though Arcanis is Legendary (which means we can only have one in play at any given time), if we never draw him, he won't do us any good.



In: 3 **Arcanis the Omnipotent**

Right now, the deck has 17 **Islands**. This is fine for a 40-card deck, but we're going to want around 24 lands for a full sixty card deck. Luckily, *Tenth Edition* has some great choices for mono-colored decks. In this case, a playset of **Faerie Conclave** and a quadrille of **Quicksand** seems like a great addition to the deck. The former gives us both blue mana to cast our spells and a 2/1 flying creature to attack with. Blue is notoriously bad at having true removal spells, so **Quicksand** gives us a land that can also stop early attacking creatures.

In: 4 **Quicksand**, 4 **Faerie Conclave**

For the final nine cards, I want to have more aggression in the deck. There are only 17 creatures right now that can attack, and most of them are small. Since blue is the color of trickery and messing with your opponent, let's start off by adding four copies of **Persuasion** to the deck. **Persuasion** serves the dual purpose of both stealing your opponent's creature (setting them down a creature) and giving you a creature. Your opponent's best creature in play becomes yours, which seems like a fine trade for a five-mana enchantment.

In: 4 **Persuasion**

In addition, we're in the experimental stage. Let's throw in five different cards that could potentially be good for this deck, just to see how they work out. **Mahamoti Djinn** is the Iconic Blue Flyer™, and seems just fine as a six-mana finisher. **Scalpelexis** has the potential to deck an opponent in just a couple of hits and it has a huge toughness to stall the air with, if need be. **Ambassador Laquatus** serves the same purpose, except he can just sit back and mill three (or more) cards per turn. **Clone** lets you have a second copy of any creature (yours or theirs) or allows you to kill a legendary creature (by copying it). Last, **Citanul Flute** lets you go straight for your creatures, so you will be able to draw at least one a turn by the time you hit that five-mana mark.

In: 1 **Mahamoti Djinn**, 1 **Scalpelexis**, 1 **Ambassador Laquatus**, 1 **Clone**, 1 **Citanul Flute**

Arcanis's Guile, Expanded to 60 Cards		
Main Deck 60 cards		
4 Faerie Conclave	1 Air Elemental	1 Boomerang
17 Island	1 Ambassador Laquatus	2 Cancel
4 Quicksand	4 Arcanis the Omnipotent	1 Citanul Flute
25 lands	1 Aven Fisher	2 Counsel of the Soratami
	1 Clone	1 Kraken's Eye
	2 Cloud Elemental	4 Persuasion
	1 Denizen of the Deep	2 Remove Soul
	1 Mahamoti Djinn	1 Rod of Ruin
	1 Phantom Warrior	1 Telling Time
	2 Sage Owl	1 Tidings
	1 Scalpelexis	2 Unsummon
	1 Thieving Magpie	
	17 creatures	18 other spells

This should give us a great baseline to start testing with for next week—a little bit of everything, and the methodology (one set at a time) to see what is or isn't working, and why. We should be able to get a very good blue deck out of this, in the true precon spirit of evolution (trying out a lot of different cards, a little at a time).

See you all next week when we delve straight into playtesting and tinkering for our 60-card build of Arcanis's Guile!

*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.*



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