

Home > Games > Magic > Magicthegathering.com > Columns



Two New Blocks

Brian David-Marshall
The Week That Was
Friday, October 5, 2007



I always look forward to the release of new **Magic** set but never more so than when it is the first peek at a brand new block. There are new cards, mechanics, theories and decks but more than anything the release of a new set means I actually get to play some **Magic** and write about it, as opposed to watching from the sidelines. Playing **Magic** held additional meaning for me at this past weekend's *Lorwyn* Prerelease beyond being the first opportunity for players to get a look at the new cards. It marked my last chance to play **Magic** in the building Neutral Ground—the store I founded in 1995—has occupied since 1997.



After the Sunday Prerelease Neutral Ground closed its doors at 122 West 26th Street and did not reopen on Monday. Never fear though, they are merely taking two weeks off to finish the work on their snazzy new ground-floor location at 15 West 37th Street (I guess **Magic** wasn't the only thing getting a new block this fall). Neutral Ground originally opened on the ninth floor of a building around the corner from the 26th street location. We were not sure if a store built around having tons of space to play games would be successful and hedged our bets against the steep New York real estate prices by climbing nine stories above street level.

When New York's **Magic** community followed us upstairs (sometimes literally when the world's scariest elevator was not working), we knew that we had something special on our hands. Within a couple of years we moved to an even bigger space, which is where the store has remained even after changing ownership six years back. Neutral Ground will reopen in time for the *Lorwyn* Release Events taking place next weekend, finally in a store-front location with just as much play space—if not more—as the previous location.

I know from the virtual bag of mail that greets me after each Prerelease Primer that many of you find it difficult to travel to the large Prerelease tournaments. Release Events are the nutritional equivalent if you can manage to wait until the product goes on sale. Stores all over the world hold these events and there is almost certainly one within a reasonable distance from where you live. If you have not played with *Lorwyn* cards yet I urge you to head to your local in store tournament next weekend. Go [here](#) to find a complete list of stores holding Release Events.

GOT THE TRIBAL ITCH?

Did the Prerelease whet your *Lorwyn* appetite? Are boggarts, flamekin, and faeries haunting your dreams? Thankfully the [Release Events](#) are only a week away. Click on the links below to find a store near you running Release Events on October 12-14:

- [North America](#)
- [Europe](#)
- [Great Britain and Ireland](#)
- [Asia](#)

With some practical experience under my belt, I can even give you a look at two different card pools and talk a little bit about some essential tricks and tribes you will want to be on top of for those tournaments. Here is the Sealed Deck I built, along with the cards I did not play from my first tournament on the weekend.

PRODUCTS

MAGIC ONLINE

MESSAGE BOARDS

RULES

Sealed Deck #1		
Lorwyn Prerelease		
Main Deck	Sideboard	
40 cards		
7 Mountain	1 Blades of Velis Vel	1 Aethersnipe
1 Plains	1 Boggart Birth Rite	1 Aquitect's Will
1 Shimmering Grotto	1 Eyeblight's Ending	1 Blind-Spot Giant
7 Swamp	2 Lash Out	1 Boggart Shenanigans
1 Vivid Meadow	1 Neck Snap	1 Boggart Sprite-Chaser
17 lands	1 Oblivion Ring	1 Bog-Strider Ash
	2 Tarfire	1 Broken Ambitions
	1 Wanderer's Twig	1 Burrenton Forge-Tender
	1 Wild Ricochet	1 Cloudcrown Oak
1 Adder-Staff Boggart	11 other spells	1 Colfenor's Plans
1 Boggart Harbinger		1 Dawnflake
1 Boggart Loggers		1 Deeptread Merrow
1 Brion Stoutarm		1 Drowner of Secrets
1 Ghostly Changeling		1 Elvish Handservant
1 Glarewielder		1 Epic Proportions
2 Hornet Harasser		1 Eyes of the Wisent
1 Ingot Chewer		1 Faerie Trickery
1 Skeletal Changeling		1 Familiar's Ruse
1 Soulbright Flamekin		1 Faultgrinder
1 Spiderwig Boggart		1 Flamekin Brawler
12 creatures		1 Glimmerdust Nap
		1 Hearthcage Giant

2 Herbal Poultice	
1 Judge of Currents	
1 Kinsbaile Balloonist	
1 Kinsbaile Skirmisher	
2 Kithkin Greatheart	
1 Leaf Gilder	
1 Merrow Reejerey	
1 Nath's Buffoon	
2 Oakgnarl Warrior	
1 Pestermite	
2 Pollen Lullaby	
1 Rootgrapple	
1 Scattering Stroke	
2 Seedguide Ash	
1 Soaring Hope	
1 Spellstutter Sprite	
1 Spring Cleaning	
1 Sylvan Echoes	
1 Thieving Sprite	
1 Tideshaper Mystic	
1 Wellgabber Apothecary	
1 Whirlpool Whelm	
49 sideboard cards	

Two things were clear to me when I looked at this pool. The first was that with two **Tarfire** and two **Lash Out** and **Brion Stoutarm**—the violent half-brother of the **Loxodon Hierarch**—I would be playing red and at least splashing white. The other was that I had no idea as to how to correctly build this deck. White did not look strong enough to complement the red removal. Had I pulled a card pool with the more aggressive Kithkin cards, they would have given me a perfect excuse to try to stay within two colors.

It was one of the first options I considered since white offered additional removal with **Neck Snap** and **Oblivion Ring** but I did not like the deck when I laid it out. I was relying on two **Kithkin Greathearts** as my early game without many cheap giants or changelings to turn them on and no Kithkin tribal cards. I did have enough mana fixing—the **Twig**, the **Grotto**, and the **Vivid Meadow**—that it allowed me to splash the white cards I wanted to play without having to play the ones that I did not.



Red and white were sorted out but I remained torn about whether to play green or black as my second color—and I am still conflicted as to what the right answer is. I ended up playing the black because of the **Tarfire** engine it gave me (granted, it was only a two-cylinder model but I am a sucker for the synergy). The **Boggart Harbinger** allowed me to find a **Tarfire** while the **Boggart Birth Rite** could act as a third copy by returning the goblin instant from the graveyard. There were also the **Hornet Harassers** that played well with the Stoutarm and **Eyeblight's Ending** playing the role of **Terror**.

In hindsight I could have easily played green with little trade off. I thought there were only seven green cards that I wanted to have maindeck—2 **Seedguide Ash**, **Cloudcrown Oak**, **Rootgrapple**, **Bog-Strider Ash**, **Leaf Gilder**, and the bombtastic **Epic Proportions**—but I would have easily added **Spring Cleaning** to the list as I think I will always run enchantment removal in this format if for nothing else than **Oblivion Ring**. One **Oakgnarl Warrior** would have rounded out that color and would have provided a nice suite of beef for Brion to show off his throwing arm with. **Leaf Gilder** would have offset some of the higher casting costs, as would flinging a **Seedguide Ash**.

The big downside to the swap was giving up **Eyeblight's Ending** for a spell that cannot kill a creature in **Rootgrapple**, but with the **Vivid** land and **Twig** I may have been able to splash the fourth color or bring it in for games two and three if needed. There was no denying that I ended up playing with a substandard suite of creatures in black and although I was able to kill almost everything my round-one opponent threw at me when we settled in to play off the top of our decks...everything in his deck towered over the creatures on top of my library. Of course making **Vigor** on turn five in two of the three games did not hurt matters at all for him.

In the second round my deck performed perfectly, but with lethal damage on the stack in Game 2, I conceded to my opponent so I could drop and play in the Two-Headed Giant event with Scott McCord.

Brian's Deck		
Player B, Lorwyn Prerelease Two-Headed Giant		
Main Deck 40 cards		
9 Forest	1 Battlewand Oak	1 Epic Proportions
8 Swamp	2 Bog-Strider Ash	1 Eyeblight's Ending
17 lands	1 Cloudcrown Oak	1 Fertile Ground
	2 Elvish Branchbender	1 Incremental Growth

1 Guardian of Cloverdell
 1 Imperious Perfect
 1 Moonglove Winnower
 2 Mournwheik
 1 Skeletal Changeling
 1 Thorntooth Witch
 1 Woodland Changeling

14 creatures

1 Lace with Moonglove
 2 Lignify
 1 Nameless Inversion
 1 Weed Strangle

9 other spells

Scott's Deck

Player A, Lorwyn Prerelease Two-Headed Giant



Main Deck 40 cards

6 Island
 1 Mountain
 9 Plains
 1 Vivid Creek

17 lands

1 Aethersnipe
 1 Amoeboid Changeling
 1 Avian Changeling
 1 Faerie Harbinger
 1 Harpoon Sniper
 1 Kithkin Healer
 1 Knight of Meadowgrain
 1 Mulldrifter
 2 Plover Knights
 1 Silvergill Douser
 1 Veteran of the Depths
 1 Wellgabber Apothecary

13 creatures

1 Familiar's Ruse
 1 Jace Beleren
 1 Militia's Pride
 1 Moonglove Extract
 2 Ponder
 1 Surge of Thoughtweft
 2 Tarfire
 1 Wanderer's Twig

10 other spells

Cards We Didn't Use



Cardpool 58 cards

1 Cenn's Heir
 1 Kinsbaile Skirmisher
 2 Kithkin Greatheart
 1 Lairwatch Giant
 1 Oaken Brawler
 1 Pollen Lullaby
 2 Shields of Velis Vel
 2 Springjack Knight
 1 Triclopean Sight

12 white cards

1 Aquitect's Will
 1 Merrow Commerce
 1 Paperfin Rascal
 1 Ringskipper
 1 Stonybrook Angler
 1 Wanderwine Prophets

6 blue cards

1 Vivid Grove

1 land card

1 Dreamspoiler Witches
 1 Facevaulter
 1 Faerie Tauntings
 1 Fodder Launch
 2 Footbottom Feast
 1 Knucklebone Witch
 1 Nath's Buffoon
 2 Nectar Faerie
 1 Prowess of the Fair
 1 Quill-Slinger Boggart
 1 Scarred Vinebreeder
 1 Spiderwig Boggart

14 black cards

1 Axegrinder Giant
 1 Blades of Velis Vel
 1 Boggart Forager
 1 Boggart Sprite-Chaser
 1 Fire-Belly Changeling
 1 Flamekin Brawler
 1 Giant Harbinger
 1 Goatnapper
 1 Hurly-Burly
 1 Incandescent Soulstoke
 1 Inner-Flame Igniter
 1 Lowland Oaf
 1 Needle Drop
 1 Nova Chaser
 1 Smokebraider

15 red cards

0 multicolor cards

2 Heal the Scars
 1 Hunt Down
 2 Lammastide Weave
 2 Warren-Scourge Elf

7 green cards

1 Herbal Poultice
 1 Runed Stalactite
 1 Springleaf Drum

3 colorless cards

Once again we see the flexibility of the mana in *Lowryn* Sealed. Scott was easily able to splash the two **Tarfires** with a Twig and a Vivid land to smooth things out. Scott is a known blue mage and there was no way I could keep him from playing the blue deck which came complete with two **Ponder**, which allowed him to play seventeen lands as opposed to his traditional adherence to eighteen.

I was pretty upset when we opened our pool and did not find **Drowner of Secrets**. Milling—a.k.a. depleting a player's deck of cards—has to be the baseline best strategy in Two-Headed Giant coming out of the gates. We did have the Planeswalker **Jace Beleren** which would have complemented that plan nicely—and can actually be a decking-driven win condition in Limited all on its own—but we just did not have the key uncommon to turn all our merfolk into finned millstones.

We decided to approach our decks from a beatdown perspective with each of us having a lot of aggressive early creatures, some combat tricks, and as much removal as we could pack into the two decks. Scott's beatdown was largely Kithkin while mine was of the Elven variety with Treefolk providing cover fire.

Scott and I had a hard time agreeing on whether or not to play the two copies of **Lignify** but I was adamant about including it in our decks due the synergy it had with **Thorntooth Witch**. With the Witch in play each **Lignify** was capable of nullifying two creatures since it is a tribal enchantment for Treefolk. Scott had some valid concern about giving our opponents an 0/4 blocker when we were attacking with small men but we had enough flying and landwalk that we were finally able to agree on playing both copies.



One card that I wish I had played was **Footbottom Feast**, which would have allowed me to not only get back key swampwalkers but to get multiple uses out of my **Mournwhelks** which were in the deck strictly as **Unnerves**. One of the last cards to go into Scott's deck was the **Silvergill Douser** and it turned out to be his MVP, allowing us to control the red zone whenever he was in play.

The tournament was only three rounds long and we swept through our first two rounds before drawing with Asher Hecht's team in the finals. Asher is part of our local draft community and with the draw both teams ended up winning 12 packs of the new set. With our prize packs in our grubby mitts it was time to draft. I don't have any of my draft decks still intact to present to you but I will discuss some of the picks that I have developed card crushes on in the early going—shockingly they are all red/blue.

Smokebraider: This is my **Gemhide Sliver** for this block. I have already first-picked this guy—in second and third packs—on multiple occasions after snapping up **Aethersnipes**, **Mulldriftr**s, and late pick **Faultgrinder**s. I have drafted blue/red Elementals more than other color/tribe combinations so far and I am really happy with it. **Smokebraider** allows your turn-three **Mulldrifter** to stick around, powers out fourth-turn **Aethersnipes**, and eats a land enchanted with **Fertile Ground** on turn five with the **Faultgrinder**. If you remember how good the **Vedalken Engineer** was in *Mirrodin* block draft, you begin to get a picture of the nuttiness this guy is capable of in *Lowryn* Limited.



Familiar's Ruse: Quentin Martin [compared](#) **Aethersnipe** to **Vedalken Dismissal** in his column this week and I agree with that assessment. If the 'snipe is the **Dismissal**, then **Familiar's Ruse** is the **Peel from Reality**. You just have to accept that you will rarely use this card on turn two. When you use it mid- to late-game to return a **Mulldrifter** ... or better yet a ground stall-breaking **Glarewielder** ... you will see what I mean.

Heat Shimmer: I have had at least one copy of this card in every draft I have done so far and was surprised to finally learn that it is actually a rare. I just assumed it was an uncommon from the frequency with which I have had it. Not that I am complaining mind you, this card does everything from killing legends to completely throwing off combat math with a hasty **Shriekmaw** token. This card probably won't come up for you as often as it has for me over the past few days, but when you have a chance to play with it you should take advantage.

Inner-Flame Acolyte: As you can see from some of the Elemental creatures mentioned in the **Smokebraider** section, the elemental deck can have some pricy guys that won't see play early if you don't have the smoker. The Acolyte is basically a 4/2 haste for three mana that sometimes gives a bonus to a well-positioned evasion creature instead. When you are keeping an eye on your mana curve, keep the other one peeled for this efficient little beater.

Firestarter: Fix This Deck!

How would you have built my first Sealed Deck card pool? Would you have opted for the green over the more synergistic black cards? Would you have tried to go red-white or something else entirely? Head to the forums and share your take on this deck. Feel free to share your experiences, card pools, and draft strategies from this past weekend as well!

Brian David-Marshall has been involved in Magic since 1994 when he was violently shaken by someone searching for the game. He has organized tournaments, run a store, and is currently the Pro Tour Historian. His

latest venture is Top8Magic.com, the publishing house that is releasing Michael J. Flores: Deckade.



[Discuss](#) on the message boards



[Respond](#) via email



[Brian David-Marshall](#) 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](#)

