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Magic Offline

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 Limited Information
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Lorwyn's **Magic Online** release is sadly still in the future so I've decided to take a look at a *Lorwyn Sealed Deck* which should be particularly relevant for the upcoming PTQ season. It was a bizarre experience for me, writing this. I had to crack actual packs open and then update it all manually. I've been very spoiled by the ease that **Magic Online** brings to the game.

In retrospect, I think this is a really fun pool. It doesn't bring with it the difficult choices that I hoped to bring to the table. There is no real clash between colours or tribes. But there are difficult deck building decisions to be made and for that, this brings a lot of spice. I am getting ahead of myself, though. Here is the pool we have to work with today:

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RULES

RULES

Lorwyn Sealed Deck Pool

Cardpool
75 cards

| | | |
|--|--|--|
| 1 Cenn's Heir 1 Crib Swap 1 Dawnfluke 1 Goldmeadow Harrier 1 Judge of Currents 1 Kithkin Greatheart 1 Neck Snap 1 Oaken Brawler 1 Soaring Hope 1 Wellgabber Apothecary 1 Wispmare <hr/> 11 white cards | 2 Black Poplar Shaman 1 Boggart Birth Rite 2 Dreamspoiler Witches 1 Liliana Vess 1 Mournwhelk 1 Nath's Buffoon 2 Nectar Faerie 1 Peppersmoke 1 Scarred Vinebreeder 1 Warren Pilferers <hr/> 13 black cards | 1 Battlewand Oak 2 Elvish Eulogist 1 Guardian of Cloverdell 1 Imperious Perfect 1 Jagged-Scar Archers 1 Lys Alana Huntmaster 1 Nath's Elite 2 Oakgnarl Warrior 1 Rootgrapple 2 Treefolk Harbinger <hr/> 13 green cards |
| 1 Aethersnipe 1 Aquitect's Will 1 Benthicore 1 Broken Ambitions 1 Captivating Glance 1 Faerie Harbinger 1 Fathom Trawl 1 Forced Fruition 1 Glimmerdust Nap 1 Paperfin Rascal 2 Pestermite 2 Ringskipper 1 Sentinels of Glen Elendra 1 Zephyr Net <hr/> 16 blue cards | 1 Consuming Bonfire 1 Faultgrinder 1 Giant's Ire 1 Goatnapper 2 Hurly-Burly 1 Ingot Chewer 1 Lash Out 2 Rebellion of the Flamekin 1 Soulbright Flamekin 1 Stinkdrinker Daredevil 1 Tarfire <hr/> 13 red cards | 1 Herbal Poultice 1 Runed Stalactite 1 Springleaf Drum <hr/> 3 colorless cards |
| 1 Secluded Glen 3 Shimmering Grotto 1 Vivid Meadow <hr/> 5 land cards | 1 Gaddock Teeg <hr/> 1 multicolor card | |

Initial Steps

Here are a few things worth noticing when you look at a *Lorwyn Sealed* pool (many relevant to any format). First off, it is worth looking at what colour fixers the pool has so you know how flexible you can be. If you have none then you know you will almost always be forced to play two colours with poor filler cards instead of splashing. If green (as it tends to) has a wealth of fixers, then multi-colour decks become worth looking at and when you look through each colour you will be noting which cards are inherently splashable.

The next biggest step is to try and see where you can maximise interaction. Some cards are made so that they are much more powerful if they are combined with others. This is especially the case with *Lowyn* and the tribes. When you scan over the whole of the pool, before you delve into the colours, it's a good idea to have at the back of your mind those cards which have the potential for greatness if the rest of the pool complies. The two things that stood out to me in this pool were the two *Dreamspoiler Witches* meaning I'll be on the look out for instants if black proves deep enough, and the three *Shimmering Grottos*. This pool really has the potential to splash cards.

As far as tribes go, this pool contains almost no synergy. Apart from the aforementioned *Dreamspoiler Witches* there is nothing. A few *Treefolk Harbingers* with nothing worth finding. The only theme that we can push is Faeries for the *Witches* and *Peppersmoke*.

Finally, in Sealed it is often correct to fight the kiddie-urge that swells up inside when you see your bombs, and beginners often make the mistake of using these as the highest priority of deck construction. The good news is that for now, we want to identify our bombs so we can think about whether or not we can include them as we peruse through the other colours. The only real bomb in this pool is *Liliana Vess*, with a nod in the direction of *Imperious Perfect*. Taking this all into account, let's take a look at the colours.



White

Crib Swap
Goldmeadow Harrier
Neck Snap
Oaken Brawler
Wispmare

These are the only cards that do anything, and *Wispmare* and *Oaken Brawler* are already scraping the barrel. This leaves us with *Goldmeadow Harrier* and the two removal spells. The Harrier isn't the best splash card, but I've seen worse. In our pool, it will almost certainly be activated each turn off of a Grotto, so it is unlikely to make the final cut unless we are splashing just white. It should be noted that much like the superior *Nameless Inversion*, *Crib Swap* is a changeling card and can be fetched by all the Harbingers. It's likely that we'll end up splashing the removal spells unless any of the colours wind up being particularly deep.

Blue

Æthersnipe
Benthicore
Broken Ambitions
Faerie Harbinger
Fathom Trawl
Forced Fruition
Glimmerdust Nap
Paperfin Rascal
2 Pestermite
Sentinels of Glen Elendra

It is incredibly likely that we will end up playing blue. We have a couple of Elemental fatties, some nifty flash evasion creatures, a counter, a poor man's *Leaden Fists* in the form of *Glimmerdust Nap*, and some rares. It is worth noting that *Fathom Trawl* is incredibly powerful. If this wasn't obvious enough already, the ability to draw three spells is phenomenal. *Forced Fruition* is a very interesting card. I've seen it played a couple of times and it tends to win games. It often has to be backed up by counterspells, but it can be enough without. I've seen it backfire against white decks running *Oblivion Ring*, but that's about it. It is perfect in a deck that can slow the game down (read: Merfolk) and need a way to win in the late game. It will probably make our deck if we can meet these conditions.

Black

2 *Dreamspoiler Witches*
Liliana Vess
Mournwhelk
Peppersmoke
Warren Pilferers

Black makes it to exactly seven playables, but they are probably enough to begin to complement the blue. The Faerie theme becomes very strong as we can tutor up the *Peppersmoke* or a Witch with Harbinger and the two colours already have six instants for the *Witches* (seven if we are to splash the white). It also means we get to play with our bomb—*Liliana Vess*. Add two card advantage spells into the mix—*Mournwhelk* and *Warren Pilferers*—and we are on our way to a deck.

Red

Consuming Bonfire
Faultgrinder



Goatnapper
2 Hurly-Burly
Ingot Chewer
Lash Out
Soulbright Flamekin
Tarfire

Red has several playable cards, but nothing of any substance. There's no real need to play **Ingot Chewer** or **Fault Grinder** in a deck that is already looking to be slow and expensive. When we look at the colour by itself, we can see that there is no real curve nor creatures worth having and the only real reason for wanting lots of red is so we can play **Consuming Bonfire**. Much like white, there just aren't enough playables, so **Lash Out** and **Tarfire** will be added to the splashable pile, bringing the number of Witch-triggering instants to nine.

Green

Battlewand Oak
Imperious Perfect
Jagged-Scar Archers
Lys Alana Huntmaster
Nath's Elite
2 Oakgnarl Warrior
Rootgrapple
2 Treefolk Harbinger

Green almost gets off the ground in providing what the pool needs in the form of some early and solid creatures that can let the pool's massive amount of card advantage do its thing. However, there just isn't enough quality. Sure, we have the Perfect and its three Elven friends, but after that we just have some clunky Treefolk in a pool with plenty of late game. Similar things can be said about splashing the Perfect as were said about **Goldmeadow Harrier** as it will use a Grotto each turn to make an Elf. However, his ability is much more powerful than the Kithkin's, and **Imperious Perfect** might manage to make its way onto the team.

Miscellaneous

Runed Stalactite
Secluded Glen
3 Shimmering Grotto
Vivid Meadow

Gaddock Teeg wasn't made to be a Limited card, although he is fine. However, we will not be playing either of his colours so he can stay on the bench. The Stalactite might make our men large enough to actually block something so we do not get overrun, but the pool has very little to abuse any creature-type based bonuses. We will be playing all of the land. We have eight Faerie cards for the **Secluded Glen**, but we would play it as a fixer even if we had none. The deck is shaping up to be a blue-black-based five-colour monstrosity in order to cram enough playables into one deck, so **Vivid Meadow** also gets a nod to help smooth the way.

Final Tuning

With all the cards that looked like they would make the final cut assorted and laid out in front of me, a couple of final changes occurred. Both changes occurred because I was worried that the deck will get overrun early and not be allowed to make it to the late game where its machine-gunning Witches and powerful expensive cards can kick in. **Pestermite** is certainly the best card in this deck as it will hopefully trade for an early creature and either Fog an attack or tap a crucial land in the development stage.

The need to up the deck's early defence meant that **Forced Fruition** had to be cut as it was simply too greedy and I think it would be unlikely if we won any games because of it. I also cut the **Runed Stalactite** as three mana to give all creatures types to a guy that will probably die after combat is a little too much in my book. I replaced it with the **Goldmeadow Harrier** as there is little we have to do in the early game and four sources to play him off and I wanted another way to ensure that we could survive. Even if it is unlikely to come online early, it can, and, if not, then it is still going to be a strong card. **Oaken Brawler** and one of the **Black Poplar Shamans** almost made it just to provide some big butts, but the Treefolk was cut as he would cost five mana and the Shaman is just a bad card; more on the Shaman when I talk about sideboarding options.

It should be noted that this deck will mulligan a lot. Not just because it plays all five colours, as the Grottos mean it is more a two-colour deck with six cards splashed off four land. Having just typed that last sentence, to make the point that the splash is not as greedy as it looks as all the additional colours are essentially the same, I still realise that we have too many splash cards off too few land. This means that I will switch the Harrier back out for the Stalactite; and then in another fit of indecision, for one of the Poplars. I think the Poplar, weak though it is, offers the deck more of what it needs than the normally superior equipment.



This deck will also find itself taking mulligans because the opening hand does not contain a three-drop or a spell to affect the early game (like **Broken Ambitions** or **Peppersmoke**) and will probably not make it out of the starting blocks. The deck will also keep sub-par hands purely because they do contain three-drops. It is important to note how strong an effect on the subjective power level of cards the deck's fragility has had.

This deck would have gone right up till the end of the deck building time. I had to spend a little time examining the weak curves of both red and green before dismissing them completely. They, along with white, were put to one side very early as they were not powerful enough, but then when I realised the deck was so fragile I re-examined them to see if they could shore up the defence. They could not and were once again relegated to the side.

It should be noted in the photo of the final deck that I've curved almost every splashed card as costing one more because they will all be cast off of a Grotto. The **Mournwhelk** and **Æthersnipe** are also treated as spells because the deck will probably need them early if the other three drops have not been drawn. Taking photos is not quite as easy as printing the screen from **Magic Online**, so apologies for the quality:



| Final Deck | | |
|---------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------|
| Lorwyn Sealed Deck | | |
| Main Deck | | |
| 40 cards | | |
| 7 Island | 1 Aethersnipe | 1 Broken Ambitions |
| 1 Secluded Glen | 1 Benthicore | 1 Crib Swap |
| 3 Shimmering Grotto | 1 Black Poplar Shaman | 1 Fathom Trawl |
| 6 Swamp | 2 Dreamspoiler Witches | 1 Glimmerdust Nap |
| 1 Vivid Meadow | 1 Faerie Harbinger | 1 Lash Out |
| 18 lands | 1 Imperious Perfect | 1 Liliana Vess |
| | 1 Mournwhelk | 1 Neck Snap |
| | 1 Paperfin Rascal | 1 Peppersmoke |
| | 2 Pestermite | 1 Tarfire |
| | 1 Sentinels of Glen Elendra | 9 other spells |
| | 1 Warren Pilferers | |
| | 13 creatures | |

Sideboarding options

This deck has more options than usual to face when sideboarding. First off, it can play virtually any card in the pool if it likes and this gives us some choices to make. The **Hurly-Burlys** can come in against decks that they are effective against. The other Poplar will come in a lot against decks with lots of two-drops, as will the one in the main be boarded out against decks without them. The **Forced Fruition** will come in if a match-up is very slow (although you will almost certainly be ahead in these types of game). **Nath's Buffoon** will also come in where necessary and the **Goldmeadow Harrier** might finally get to make an appearance if they have too many large bombs.

Despite its defects, I really like this deck. It has two of the key elements I want to have in a deck: card advantage (duh!) and trickiness. This is a deck where you are simultaneously given the opportunity to outplay your opponent and to make more mistakes. The deck has seven removal spells, three more pseudo ones, and around nine or ten cards that either provide or promise card advantage. To boot, it has a clever mana base and is an imaginative

build from a desperate Sealed pool—not that there were too many alternative decks, but the final tuning was difficult.

What do you guys think? Would you have taken an alternative route? Cut the splash down a little and bulked one of the colours with filler? Would you have played some of the bad two-cost Faeries to make up the numbers? Do you agree with the Perfect or would you have played the second Poplar over it? (This last one is very close). Should the **Runed Stalactite** have made the main deck, and would you have gotten greedy with **Forced Fruition**?

Take it to the forums,

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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