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Learning to Juggle

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Almost all the decks I see in *Lorwyn* draft right now are normally colour-associated tribal decks. If you're Merfolk, you tend to be blue-white, Giants and you're white-red, Goblins and you're black-red, etc. Almost all the decks end up looking like carbon copies of each other once you've worked out which commons to value highly and which you need to succeed with each archetype. This seems pretty narrow, so what room do we have to play with when you're bored of decks that continually look the same, with a different rare or one less duplicate common? Well, I've been having some success with multicolour decks.

They all tend to be green-based, normally paired mainly with blue for the card advantage that its common Elementals bring. The deck's foundation is **Fertile Ground**, and as it tends to run several of these, not only are four-drops a premium, but the deck tends to be packed with as many expensive cards as possible to take advantage of the fact that the deck normally has around nineteen mana sources.

Most of the expensive commons are also Elementals, so the deck can also be red-based for **Smokebraider**. **Faultgrinder** and **Mournwhelk** can often be found splashed for maximum greed. These decks are full of crazy cards as you just roll with whatever wacky synergy comes your way, be it **Makeshift Mannequin** or **Zephyr Net**. When you have access to every card there is a lot of potential for weirdness.

These decks are not completely tribe-averse. Most tend to be Elf-based, mostly because it is an early **Elvish Harbinger** that often sends me into the archetype but also because Green tends to be the base colour, and you will tend to pick up plenty of **Lys Alana Huntmasters** and **Nath's Elites**. I also think that Elves are one of the most underrated and more powerful of the tribes, so it is a happy circumstance.

As you tend to pick every **Mulldrifter** and **Æthersnipe** that comes your way, you are often reasonably deep in blue and, as a result, will often find yourself to be Merfolk too. **Streambed Aquitects** and **Stonybrook Anglers**, along with the always awesome **Silvergill Douser**, help to constitute the deck's defence whilst all the heavy hitters struggle to come online.

Of course, the flexibility of going into multiple colours mean decks will seldom look alike and you're only restricted to what you play with what gets passed to you. Often when I have the option to draft this type of deck I get fed into a two-colour tribal archetype and I have to abandon it. *Lorwyn* dictates that people will become lodged within their tribes and the signals will open up such that there should always be a tribe/colour combination that your seat should be drafting. So don't be disappointed when you try to go five colours but the draft pulls you into Goblins.

Beyond the ever-essential reading of the draft signals, there are a few key tactics to take into account when you go down this path. The easiest of these is knowing when to pick the **Vivid** lands and other fixers like **Shimmering Grotto** (it should be noted that **Wandering Twig** lacks lustre in these decks as they are already playing so many mana sources that you will seldom ever play more than one of these). In essence, you snap these up whenever you have to choose between them and a mediocre card. Much like **Signets** and **bouncelands** in *Ravnica* block, but not as highly rated—when you choose between a **Vivid** land and something like **Leaf Gilder** or **Fistful of Force**, take the land.

As it is *Changeling Week*, it would be wrong to not mention them and luckily for me, they are central to how some of these decks work. Some decks are tribeless and consist just of bombs and rares that came your way. Others, though, are a mismatch of two tribes not commonly found together, like **Elves** and **Faeries**. These tribes have no overlap whatsoever (or very little), so it is up to the **Woodland** and **Amoeboid Changelings** to pick up the slack. They mean that you can still reach critical mass in both tribes and maybe provide enough juice to splash something like a **Fodder Launch**.

What happens even more often is that your deck will be a complete mess of strong tribal cards that get included purely because they are good enough by themselves. Often you'll play **Lys Alana Huntmasters** purely because you need a **Hill Giant**. When this is the case, the deck's changelings tie everything together and allow you to milk as much synergy as possible from what little the deck contains.

I'll get into how you end up drafting these multicolour decks in a minute, but once you're a few picks in it becomes crucial to correctly interpret the



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signals coming your way and to continually reassess your deck so you are able to chop and change at the appropriate time. I'm talking about the colour juggle. I've already mentioned that these decks tend to be base green or blue more often than not, but this is not a given. Whilst you're making your picks, you'll start to form an image of what your base colour should be and how deep each of your splashes should be. Occasionally, you will have to change late into the draft, either because of a bomb rare that a quick mental readjustment will let you include, or because either you misread a signal or the cards just aren't coming.

The deck will tend to go in one of two directions. You might have a single base colour with three to four splashes, with one of the splashes possibly being a little deeper than the others. This will leave you with a mana base that looks something like 8-5-3-2 (if you've no fixers). Alternatively, and this is more common, you will have two main colours and a couple of splashes. This mana base will look something like 8-7-1-1 with a Grotto and say a Wandering Twig. However, you will be picking mana fixers, which means your manabase won't be this tight. The following table is a rough approximation of how many colour sources you need in a deck to facilitate splashing so many cards (cards like **Fertile Ground** count as a mana source for all the non-green colours):



Number of Splashed Cards	Number of Mana Sources Needed
1	2
2	3
3	4-5
4	5
5	6-7

As a rule of thumb, you want one and a half mana sources per splashed card. Six cards are not considered a splash but becomes a main colour and, as such, will require at least seven or eight mana sources.

Why are you drafting a multicolour deck in the first place? Several things will cause you to fall into this archetype. You might first-pick a heavy gold card like **Doran, the Siege Tower** which, to me, signals multicolour far more than **Treefolk**. Alternatively, you might pick up some fixers early like **Elvish Harbinger** or notice that a **Fertile Ground** and a **Shimmering Grotto** will almost certainly wheel from your early picks. What tends to happen the most is that your first few picks will all be very powerful, highly splashable cards like **Lash Out** and **Oblivion Ring**. You will have no real clue as to which colours your deck should settle down into and just continue to take the most powerful cards that come your way, picking up the fixers when you need to. It should be noted that you, for the start of the draft, don't worry too much about fixers. Only take fixers over mediocre cards, never over strong cards.



The last way you wind up with a multicolour deck is when you are either not being sent good signals as a result of the people upstream changing their colours or you misread the signals and notice too late. In the first case, all you are doing is remaining flexible and taking advantage of whatever signals you can and making sure that no matter what happens, you will have a playable deck at the end of it. In the latter case, where you've screwed up, a multicolour deck is a salvage job designed to clear up the mess you've created. When this happens, the priority on fixers goes up as you need to ensure that you've enough playables to make a deck.

One very important thing will often happen whilst you're trying to figure out what your main colours will be, and that is that you should no longer be drafting a multicolour deck! I've already mentioned this, but it is important to note that as glamorous as multicolour decks are, it is often correct to cut the quiriness and settle down into two colours when the signals suggest it. When this happens, you will probably have a Grotto or Vivid land and a couple of cards worth splashing, so playing with a splash is still perfectly acceptable.

Here is an example of a deck where I misread the signals and ended up halfway through the second pack with a wreck that needed some serious maintenance. I had started with a **Boggart Mob**, a **Tar Pitcher**, and a **Mad Auntie**, but had not picked up that Goblins had dried up. Green had been dribbling past throughout the draft, but I had always found a reason in the name of synergy to take an inferior goblin card. I realised something needed doing and managed to pick up a **Briarhorn** and a couple of **Fertile Grounds** late when there were no other cards for me. In the last pack, I cracked a **Cloudthresher** and just went with it. I was scrambling for enough playables, and the two **Fertile Grounds**, land, and **Elvish Harbinger** allowed me to play a close to three-colour deck. Somehow, this deck made it to the final, where it lost. It managed to win the first two on the back of the card advantage that the two **Hunter of Eyebrights** and the weak Goblin engine generated. I won two games purely on the back of a late **Faultgrinder**.

Example Lorwyn Multicolour Draft Deck 1

Main Deck

40 cards

- | | | |
|---------------------|-------------------------|----------------------|
| 7 Forest | 1 Boggart Mob | 1 Boggart Birth Rite |
| 1 Howltooth Hollow | 2 Bog-Strider Ash | 1 Eyeblight's Ending |
| 1 Mountain | 1 Briarhorn | 2 Fertile Ground |
| 1 Shimmering Grotto | 1 Cloudthresher | 1 Moonglove Extract |
| 6 Swamp | 1 Elvish Harbinger | 1 Runed Stalactite |
| 1 Vivid Crag | 1 Faultgrinder | |
| | 1 Glarewielder | 6 other spells |
| 17 lands | 2 Hornet Harasser | |
| | 2 Hunter of Eyeblights | |
| | 1 Mad Auntie | |
| | 1 Mudbutton Torchrunner | |
| | 1 Nath's Elite | |
| | 1 Squeaking Pie Sneak | |
| | 1 Tar Pitcher | |
| | 17 creatures | |

The next deck began from a weak opening pack which present Doran, the Siege Tower and little else. Normally, I am happy to resign Doran to the bench if Green does not become available, but I managed to follow him up with back to back Incremental Growths and went from there. This deck had the potential to play a lot more splash cards, there was even a Shimmering Grotto in the sideboard I chose not to play. However, nothing of any quality came my way so I had to settle for green-black splashing white and red. Notice how many powerful cards the deck contains. It might be light on synergy with a weak curve, but there is a lot of power. It's not that great a deck, but it made it to the final thanks to its raw power, it probably would have lost there but I was tight on time and chose not to play it.

Example Lorwyn Multicolour Draft Deck 2

Main Deck
40 cards

- | | | |
|----------------|--------------------------|----------------------|
| 8 Forest | 1 Cairn Wanderer | 1 Epic Proportions |
| 7 Swamp | 1 Doran, the Siege Tower | 1 Eyeblight's Ending |
| 1 Vivid Grove | 1 Elvish Branchbender | 1 Fertile Ground |
| 1 Vivid Meadow | 1 Elvish Harbinger | 1 Fistful of Force |
| | 1 Imperious Perfect | 1 Gilt-Leaf Ambush |
| 17 lands | 1 Leaf Gilder | 2 Incremental Growth |
| | 1 Lys Alana Huntmaster | 1 Lash Out |
| | 1 Lys Alana Scarblade | 1 Liliana Vess |
| | 1 Masked Admirers | 1 Springleaf Drum |
| | 2 Warren Pilferers | 1 Wanderer's Twig |
| | 1 Woodland Changeling | |
| | 12 creatures | 11 other spells |

Here is a typical example of the deck I've been talking about. It's a base elf deck with what would be a light Blue splash if it weren't for the Cryptic Command. Because of the Fertile Grounds and the Elvish Harbinger, this deck splashes Lash Out, Oblivion Ring and Warren Pilferers with no difficulty at all. It has an amazing manabase, the potential to explode thanks to the acceleration, plenty of bombs including three Aethersnipes to seal the game and the elven theme to rely on in the meanwhile.



Example Lorwyn Multicolour Draft Deck 3

Main Deck
40 cards

9 Forest	3 Aethersnipe	1 Cryptic Command
7 Island	1 Cloudbrown Oak	3 Fertile Ground
16 lands	1 Elvish Harbinger	1 Fistful of Force
	1 Imperious Perfect	1 Gilt-Leaf Ambush
	2 Jagged-Scar Archers	1 Incremental Growth
	2 Lys Alana Huntmaster	1 Lash Out
	1 Sentinels of Glen Elendra	1 Oblivion Ring
	1 Warren Pilferers	1 Wings of Velis Vel
	2 Woodland Changeling	10 other spells
	14 creatures	

The main thing this deck lacks are **Mulldrifters**. It's hard not to rave too much about this card, but he finds his place here possibly more so than anywhere else. Often, as is always the case with multicolour decks, you will be colour-screwed, and in this case the **Mulldrifter** will dig you into the coloured mana needed to cast the cards that were previously trapped in your hand. However, the most important thing the **Mulldrifter** does is draw you cards (duh!). The reason this is so important is you will often have a lot of mana thanks to the **Fertile Grounds** you play, so not only will you reach five mana early, but you'll also have plenty of mana and often not have too much stuff to do with it. That's where everyone's favourite Elemental comes into play.

In summation, most multicolour decks are not really that extreme. They simply splash a little bit here and a little bit there. Take the **Vivid lands** and **Fertile Grounds** high (well, not too high, just above the average) and you will be able to play any card you like that has a single coloured mana in its cost. Fill your deck with quirky uncommons, powerful rares, removal, and Elementals and you will be on the right path. Don't despair if you are forced into a colour combination or a tribe when you thought you could be multicolour and don't be afraid to draft two off-kilter tribes and plug the holes by picking changelings highly. In the end, just have fun.

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Where are you, buddy?

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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