



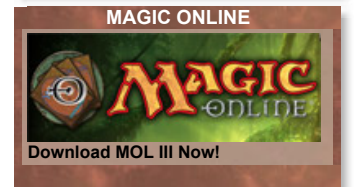
Hostile Intentions (Part 2 of 3)

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Building on a Budget
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Hello everyone, and welcome back to Building on a Budget! In [last week's column](#), I put out a deck challenge – build a Standard-legal deck costing 30 tickets or less on **Magic Online** using the following card pool:

Blue	Green	Red	Red (cont.)	Artifact
Æthersnipe (0.1)	Birds of Paradise (5)	Arc Blade (0.1)	Incendiary Command (0.5)	Coalition Relic (5)
Air Elemental (0.1)	Briarhorn (0.1)	Ashling the Pilgrim (0.5)	Incinerate (0.25)	Coat of Arms (2.5)
Brine Elemental (0.1)	Changeling Titan (0.25)	Beacon of Destruction (0.5)	Inner-Flame Acolyte (0.1)	Coldsteel Heart (2)
Cancel (0.25)	Civic Wayfinder (0.1)	Blaze (0.1)	Inner-Flame Igniter (0.1)	Deathrender (1)
Careful Consideration (0.25)	Cloudthresher (1)	Bogardan Firefiend (0.1)	Lash Out (0.25)	Gauntlet of Power (1)
Cloud Elemental (0.1)	Commune with Nature (0.1)	Bogardan Rager (0.1)	Lava Axe (0.1)	Howling Mine (2.5)
Delay (0.33)	Edge of Autumn (0.1)	Braid of Fire (0.5)	Lavacore Elemental (0.1)	Lotus Bloom (2.5)
Familiar's Ruse (0.25)	Fertile Ground (0.1)	Browbeat (2)	Lightning Elemental (0.1)	Loxodon Warhammer (2)
Fathom Trawl (0.5)	Force of Savagery (0.33)	Caterwauling Boggart (0.1)	Lightning Serpent (0.5)	Mind Stone (0.5)
Fog Elemental (0.1)	Gaea's Anthem (2)	Ceaseless Searblades (0.1)	Lightning Storm (0.1)	Mirari (1)
Foresee (0.1)	Gemhide Sliver (0.25)	Chandra Nalaar (3)	Molten Disaster (4)	Prismatic Lens (0.25)
Guile (2)	Groundbreaker (1.5)	Changeling Berserker (0.1)	Nova Chaser (1)	Springleaf Drum (0.1)
Looter <i>ii</i>-Kor (0.1)	Harmonize (1)	Char-Rumbler (0.1)	Orcish Cannonade (0.1)	Wanderer's Twig (0.1)
Merfolk Looter (0.1)	Hurricane (0.33)	Coal Stoker (0.1)	Pyromancer's Swath (0.33)	
Mistform Ultimus (0.25)	Joiner Adept (0.5)	Cone of Flame (0.1)	Reiterate (0.33)	
Mulldrifter (0.1)	Krosan Grip (0.25)	Conflagrate (0.1)	Rift Bolt (0.25)	Land
Ponder (0.1)	Llanowar Elves (0.5)	Demolish (0.1)	Rift Elemental (0.1)	Arena (0.33)
Psionic Blast (4)	Might of Old Krosa (0.25)	Disintegrate (0.33)	Rite of Flame (1)	Forest (FREE)
Rune Snag (1)	Naturalize (0.1)	Earth Elemental (0.1)	Shock (0.1)	Fungal Reaches (0.1)
Sage of Epityr (0.1)	Quirion Dryad (3)	Faultgrinder (0.1)	Skizzik Surger (0.1)	Ghitu Encampment (0.25)
Sage Owl (0.1)	Rampant Growth (0.1)	Fiery Temper (0.5)	Smokebraider (0.1)	Grove of the Burnwillows (4)
Shapesharer (0.33)	Recollect (0.1)	Fire-Belly Changeling (0.1)	Soulblast (0.33)	Highland Weald (1)
Spellweaver Volute (0.33)	Rites of Flourishing (0.5)	Flamecore Elemental (0.1)	Soulbright Flamekin (0.1)	Island (FREE)
Telling Time (0.25)	Scryb Ranger (0.25)	Flamekin Bladewhirl	Spark Elemental	Karplusan Forest (4)



		(0.5)	(0.25)	
Think Twice (0.1)	Seal of Primordium (0.1)	Flamekin Brawler (0.1)	Sparkspitter (0.25)	Keldon Megaliths (0.25)
Tidings (0.25)	Search for Tomorrow (0.1)	Flamekin Harbinger (0.25)	Storm Entity (0.1)	Mountain (FREE)
Time Stretch (0.5)	Seedborn Muse (1)	Flamekin Spitfire (0.1)	Subterranean Shambler (0.1)	Shimmering Grotto (0.1)
Twincast (2)	Spectral Force (1)	Furnace of Rath (0.5)	Sudden Impact (0.25)	Shivan Reef (5)
Vesuvan Shapeshifter (3)	Squall Line (0.33)	Ghostfire (0.1)	Sudden Shock (0.5)	Spinerock Knoll (0.33)
Wipe Away (0.25)	Sylvan Scrying (0.25)	Giant's Ire (0.1)	Sulfur Elemental (0.5)	Terramorphic Expanse (0.25)
	Timbermare (0.5)	Glarewielder (0.1)	Sulfurous Blast (0.25)	Vivid Crag (0.25)
	Upwelling (0.33)	Goblin Lore (0.25)	Surging Flame (0.1)	Vivid Creek (0.25)
	Verdant Force (1)	Grapeshot (0.1)	Tarfire (0.1)	Vivid Grove (0.25)
	Vigor (1)	Greater Stone Spirit (0.1)	Tectonic Fiend (0.1)	
	Wild Pair (0.5)	Grinning Ignus (0.1)	Thick-Skinned Goblin (0.1)	
	Woodland Changeling (0.1)	Guerrilla Tactics (0.25)	Thunderblade Charge (0.33)	Gold / Split
		Hostility (Duh!) (1)	Tribal Flames (0.5)	Assault // Battery (0.33)
		Ignite Memories (0.25)	Wheel of Fate (0.5)	Radha, Heir to Keld (0.5)
		Incandescent Soulstoke (1.5)	Wild Ricochet (0.5)	

Hundreds of submissions later, you responded in force! This week's column highlights some of the decks proposed in the forums. The grand prize winner (AKA – the deck to be evolved) will be revealed at the bottom of this column.

Before we get to that – originally this week's column was going to focus on one of four **Magic Online**-centric formats. However, when I got the poll results, only seven votes out of several thousand separated first and second place! Here are the results:

While Ben is waiting for to see the Hostility decks posted to the forums, which format would you most like to see him play?		
Prismatic! I love large decks and I cannot lie!	940	19.4%
Vanguard! Let's change the rules all over again!	935	19.3%
Singleton! There can be only one!	1482	30.6%
Classic! Let's put those Masters Edition cards to use!	1484	30.7%
Total	4841	100.0%

Wow, Classic and Singleton finished neck and neck! Because there was so little variance here, I'm going to have a revote with just three options:

Which format would you like to see Ben explore on a budget?

Classic, where most cards are legal.
 Highlander, where there can only be one!
 Classic Highlander – I like them both!

The winning choice from this poll will be featured in a future column!

Back to the **Hostility** deck challenge. When I did the **Dredge** deck challenge some months ago, I intentionally restricted the card pool to a certain degree. This was to encourage creativity, not to stifle it! Mark Rosewater has oft-stated that having to work within a set of rules makes him have to work harder (and often better) in order to find solutions within a finite set. The same goes for this challenge – I've cut out two colors entirely (no **Shriekmaw**, no **white!**), only given budget options (**Garruk!**) and tried to make the card pool fit within an Elemental/direct damage theme.

This is not to say that all cards available are Elementals or burn. Within the cards available for the **Hostility** deck were potent card-drawing engines (**Rites of Flourishing**, **Howling Mine**, **Wheel of Fate**), the "Pickles" engine

(Vesuvan Shapeshifter, Brine Elemental), Scryb and Force (Spectral Force and Scryb Ranger), tons of color-fixing, mana-acceleration, and elements for a control, aggro or combo deck!

There were tons of great decklists. It was difficult to choose any given one to represent an archetype (especially since some decks were similar), but in the end here are the featured deck lists that came out of the Hostility deckbuilding challenge. Before I get in depth with each individual deck, let me address a couple of deckbuilding problems I found showing up across the board.

Problem #1: Too much Smokebraider

Smokebraider is an invaluable part of any heavily-Elemental build. It is a double Birds of Paradise, at common, for that tribe. I would definitely consider Smokebraider (and push for him, in fact) if you are playing an elementalful deck – especially if you are multiple colors. However, many people had decks that went as follows:

Burn spells
Mountains
4 Smokebraider
4 Flamekin Harbinger
4 Hostility

If you don't have a bevy of Elemental spells to use with Smokebraider, he's too often a 1/1 doof for two mana. You can easily cast Flamekin Harbinger if you can cast Smokebraider (a single red mana), leaving just four cards in your deck that can take advantage of Smokebraider – Hostility itself. Having four cards in your deck to accelerate another four cards is not great deckbuilding. Chances are not good of getting both a Smokebraider and a Hostility in the same game (without help from the Harbinger, which probably will just get Hostility in this case, and not Smokebraider). In fact, Rite of Flame or Grinning Ignus would probably be better for this kind of build, because they can at least power out your 28ish non-Elemental burn spells.



Problem #2: Not enough mana fixing

Given the card pool involved, it is definitely possible to go two or three colors. In fact, you could probably fit Hostility, Vigor, and Careful Consideration in the same deck if you really wanted to push the green mana-fixing available. However, it won't do to just throw in a bunch of Forests and Mountains into a deck, have no push towards mana fixing, and then hope to play both Hostility and Vigor. One costs 222, and the other 222. On a natural draw (no mana-fixing), it is difficult to assure having either 222 or 222 on turn six without help. Possible, but not probable.



In addition, you have several red and green (and sometimes blue) spells that show up with a double-mana cost, but again with no mana-fixing for support. How easy is it to reliably have access to 22, 22, or 22 on turn two with this pool? Hard – turn three is easier (Smokebraider, Prismatic Lens, Rampant Growth, Search for Tomorrow). Without these sorts of cards, unless you've gotten a heavily concentration of dual lands (alas, I miss you already Ravnica-block bouncelands), you're just grasping at luck and not a solid mana (or built) base. Remember – Terramorphic Expanse locks you into one color. That's fine for fixing one color – but not the other (one or two).

Without further ado, here are the decks from the challenge that I'd like to discuss! Listed will be the decks, the comments from each deck's creator, and then my thoughts. I hope you enjoy these as much as I did – I appreciate the time that each and every one of you took to take this challenge, and I read every post on the thread up until the deadline for this article.

Deck #1: Hostility Burn Control (Guardian Phoenix, 18.3 Tickets)

Guardian Phoenix's Hostility Burn Control		
Main Deck 60 cards		
24 Mountain	4 Hostility	4 Beacon of Destruction
24 lands	4 creatures	4 Disintegrate
		4 Gauntlet of Power
		4 Incendiary Command
		4 Incinerate
		4 Lash Out

4 Mind Stone
4 Sulfurous Blast

32 other spells

Guardian Phoenix Says: "The ideal play for this deck is *Mind Stone* to accelerate into a turn 4 *Gauntlet of Power*. Add a fifth *Mountain* turn 5, you've got 11 mana, which enough for *Hostility* and any one of the last 3 burn spells listed. The important aspect with those is that they'll hit for at least 4, which turns into 4 4/2's (*Gauntlet*, remember), plus the 7/7 *Hostility*, and you win from nowhere with 23 points of damage. (Just remember to not *Pyroclasm* with the Command, that will kill your newly created guys.)

Use the *Lash Out*, *Sulfurous Blast*, and *Incendiary Command* to stay alive early, possibly asking the Command to give you a new hand to go looking for your pieces. Also don't be afraid to sac the *Mind Stone* to keep digging.

If you're having problems finding *Hostility*, *Gauntlet of Power* will power *Disintegrate* to the dome quite nicely as well."

Ben Says: I intentionally did not include mass-removal spells that only hit creatures (*Pyroclasm*), but this deck includes the ones that hit either/both creatures and players (*Sulfurous Blast*, *Incendiary Command*). One of the problems with playing a deck with *Hostility* as the main/only win condition is that you often have to use your burn on opposing creatures to stay alive – and if they play something too large to easily burn (*Spectral Force*?) you're just out of luck. In this build, the *Sulfurous Blasts* and Commands can take out weenies and the acceleration into *Gauntlet of Power* lets you race against other decks – plus, the *Gauntlet* makes your hasted Elemental tokens that much larger. I'd probably have found a way to include *Molten Disaster* in this build (especially with the ticket wiggle room), but Guardian Phoenix's deck is a solid effort for the archetype as-is.

Deck #2: Suspend Antics (SparkElemental FTW, 25.5 tickets)

SparkELemental FTW's Suspend Antics		
Main Deck 60 cards		
5 Island	4 Hostility	4 Arc Blade
15 Mountain	4 Mulldrifter	4 Lotus Bloom
4 Vivid Crag	4 Rift Elemental	3 Reiterate
24 lands	4 Smokebraider	4 Rift Bolt
	16 creatures	3 Twincast
		2 Wheel of Fate
		20 other spells

SparkElemental FTW says: "Lots of suspend with no storm? No problem! Time it right to get a suspend spell (like *Arc Blade*) and a copy spell (*Twincast* or *Reiterate*) to match up with *Hostility* and *Rift Elemental*. It might be best to just Evoke *Mulldrifters* early to draw into more cards. This is a bit rough but that makes it all the better to evolve!"

Ben Says: This is one of those decks that is slightly light on *Smokebraider* uses, but I like the idea of using *Smokebraider* to power up *Rift Elemental* early in the game. This deck has a lot of reusable burn (thanks to *Reiterate* and *Arc Blade*). Along that theme, I'd loved to have seen *Thunderblade Charge* make an appearance. I'm not sure how much blue this deck needs (is it worth it to play *Twincast* when you could get a fourth *Reiterate*?), so those tickets might be spent towards powering up some of the other cards.

Deck #3: R/G Elemental Beatdown (EnigmaticMTG, 27.5 Tickets)

EnigmaticMTG's Red-Green Elemental Beatdown		
Main Deck 60 cards		
7 Forest	4 Groundbreaker	4 Incinerate
2 Grove of the Burnwillows	4 Hostility	4 Rampant Growth
11 Mountain	4 Incandescent Soulstoke	4 Rift Bolt
2 Terramorphic Expanse	4 Smokebraider	2 Shock
22 lands	4 Spark Elemental	14 other spells
	4 Timbermare	
	24 creatures	

EnigmaticMTG says: " Basically you get out the *Hostility* ASAP, and burn sure. But the back up plan includes the useage of *Groundbreaker* and *Timbermare*.....*Timbermare* makes the cut simply because *Incandescent Soulstoke* can bring it out EoT against an aggro deck and you have a free attack phase. Imagine this, *Incandescent* in play, EoT (opponent's turn) you bring out *Timbermare* and tap them out. Your turn you

Incandescent out a *Hostility* using mana from a *Smokebraider*. Use you're hopefully at least 3 mana available and burn your opponent for we'll say 4. You just got 4 4/2's with Haste, a 7/7th Haste.....and your opponent can't block.....can you say DEAD! Good game!"

Ben Says: If given a choice between *Karplusan Forest* and *Grove of the Burnwillows* for an aggressive R/G deck that doesn't sport *Kavu Predaor* I'd almost always choose *Karplusan Forest* – giving your opponent free life when you're looking to burn them to zero just isn't great. This deck does highlight the red/green haste elemental beatdown suite, but I think that this is a deck that definitely would want both *Nova Chaser* and *Flamekin Harbinger* – one to beat down for a ton, and the other to search out the key elemental creatures at the right time.

Deck #4: Volute Burn (Thorgan, 12.89 tickets)

Thorgan's Hostile Volute		
Main Deck 60 cards		
1 <i>Ghitu Encampment</i>	2 <i>Hostility</i>	2 <i>Arc Blade</i>
9 <i>Island</i>	4 <i>Looter il-Kor</i>	4 <i>Careful Consideration</i>
9 <i>Mountain</i>	2 <i>Sparkspitter</i>	1 <i>Conflagrate</i>
4 <i>Terramorphic Expanse</i>		4 <i>Fiery Temper</i>
23 lands	8 creatures	3 <i>Incinerate</i>
		4 <i>Mind Stone</i>
		2 <i>Rift Bolt</i>
		2 <i>Spellweaver Volute</i>
		3 <i>Sulfurous Blast</i>
		2 <i>Think Twice</i>
		2 <i>Thunderblade Charge</i>
		29 other spells

Thorgan says: " Massive amounts of card draw - *Careful Consideration*, *Think Twice* and *Looter il-Kor* - thin out your deck and draw you towards other spells while dumping excess lands, *Fiery Tempers*, *Thunderblade Charges*, more *Think Twice*, or even *Hostilities* into the grave (yes, I actually take advantage of *Hostility*'s 3rd line of text, although I'd prefer a more productive discard. At least I don't get decked!).

Sparkspitter and *Looter il-Kor* work great with *Thunderblade Charge*, which - along with *Arc Blade* - is a recurring sorcery to trigger *Spellweaver volute* (YAY!!!) and get more use out of all your instants (like *Careful Consideration* and *Sulfurous Blast*, which by the way won't kill your *Sparkspitters* if you're careful).

When *Hostility* comes out, it makes an otherwise functional deck into an explosive one with 1/4 of the deck ready to aid his token generation.

Mind Stone is in there as necessary acceleration then additional card draw (if there wasn't enough already).

Again, I'll probably repost the deck if I tweak it enough, but just to get some more creativity in this discussion here's the basis. Amen Enigmatic! Amen."

Ben says: If this is a Volute Deck, why aren't there more *Spellweaver Volutes*? Even with all the card drawing, I want more than a (more or less) one-in-thirty chance of seeing one in any given game. I definitely like the concept of this deck, and it has a lot of synergy: *Sparkspitter* to put cards into the graveyard, *Looter-il-Kor* to do the same, and a bunch of flashback and returnable cards (*Think Twice*, *Thunderblade Charge*, *Conflagrate*) to use from the grave. However, I'm not sure there are enough creatures to take advantage of *Thunderblade Charge*. It's a good, solid concept, but it would need work to be a polished juggernaut!

Deck #5: Counterburn! (randommaster, 17.1 Tickets)

randommaster's Counterburn		
Main Deck 60 cards		
8 <i>Island</i>	3 <i>Aethersnipe</i>	4 <i>Delay</i>
12 <i>Mountain</i>	4 <i>Flamekin Harbinger</i>	2 <i>Disintegrate</i>
2 <i>Terramorphic Expanse</i>	2 <i>Hostility</i>	4 <i>Incinerate</i>
22 lands	3 <i>Incandescent Soulstoke</i>	4 <i>Rift Bolt</i>
	4 <i>Mulldrifter</i>	4 <i>Rune Snag</i>
	4 <i>Smokebraider</i>	18 other spells
	20 creatures	

Randommaster says: " The strategy for this deck is to play *Flamekin Harbringer* or *Smokebraider* in the early turns and then lead into bigger creatures. The creatures are supported by burn and counterspells. When you drop *Hostility*, either through *smokebraider* or *EoT Soulstoke* activation, you can then direct your burn directly at the

opponent for lots of hasty elementals. The **Mulldriftr**s can evade most defenders and can quickly lower a player into burn range. There are only two **Hostility**'s in the deck because of the four Harbringers and **Mulldriftr**s that will help you dig through your deck.

The Harbringers and **Smokebraider**s form the early acceleration. With eight in the deck you are statistically guaranteed at least one in your opening hand. These two will help you find and accelerate to your mid and late game creatures. Smoke braider lets you play whatever is in your hand while the Harbringer gives you what you need.

The **Aethersnipe** and **Mulldriftr** are there to provide support and aggro. with **Smokebraider** out these come down really quickly. You can also evoke them if you need to after finding them with the Harbringers. The **Mulldriftr**s dig into your deck for more cards as well as provide an air force. The **Aethersnipes** take care of anything that got through your permission or removal, plus he's no slouch at attacking.

The **Soulstokes** are there to boost the rest of your creatures as well as take advantage of their CiP abilities. You can even put a **Hostility** down at EoT in order to have mana open to **Desintegrate** them at full strength. There are only three because I had to cut one card and I would rather have more **Mulldriftr**s.

I only have six burn spells because of space issues and I wanted to have eight counterspells. All the non-creature spells only have a single colored mana in their cost to help make sure that you can play them as soon as possible. The counterspells are supposed to just make sure that your crucial creatures stay alive and the burn spells were selected because they can hit a creature or player for three.

The **Disintegrates** are there as finishers alongside **Hostility**. If you don't have **Hostility**, it functions normally, but with **Hostility** on the board it creates an army of attackers.

I decided not to put in **Shivan reef** to keep the cost down, but three can be added and the deck will still be under budget. Other cards that could be considered are **Changeling Berserker** or **Nova Chaser** to reuse CiP effects, but both are easy to kill and are hard to connect with. **Ashling the pilgrim** could also be added for an early aggressive creature even if it does stunt your development for a few turns. **Shock**, **Tarfire**, and **Lash Out** can all be added and **Molten Disaster** can be used if you want uncounterable tokens, but it will usually wipe most of your board. The counters can be taken out in favor of more burn, but there are not many more quality burn spells on the list.

The deck has a good plan for a mid to late game aggro strategy, especially if you can keep a **Smokebraider** out. Meanwhile, you have tutoring, card drawing, board control, counterspells, a decent curve, and some cool tricks to be pulled with the **Soulstoke**. I designed the deck to be able to take advantage of **Hostility**, but it is not dependant on getting it out."

Ben says: I think this deck is slightly short on mana – only 20 lands that stick around (**Terramorphic Expanse** turns into a basic land once used) does not equal a deck with multiple 5 and 6 drop creatures, X-spells, and the need to both counter spells and play threats in the same turn. Plus, you have 13 tickets to work with still – why not spring for a couple of **Shivan Reefs**? The concept is solid, but why not play more one-ofs (elemental-wise) if you're going to play quad-Harbringers? Have a single **Ashling** to wipe out weenie hordes! Play that one **Nova Chaser** to swing for ten when the time is right! Go nuts – you have a toolbox available; use it to have answers to everything.

Deck #6: Wild Pair (Buttered Toad, 16.96 tickets)

Buttered Toad's Wild Pair		
Main Deck 60 cards		
5 Forest	4 Flamekin Harbinger	3 Beacon of Destruction
14 Mountain	4 Hostility	2 Hurricane
4 Terramorphic Expanse	2 Nova Chaser	4 Incinerate
23 lands	4 Smokebraider	4 Prismatic Lens
	2 Vigor	4 Shock
	16 creatures	4 Wild Pair
		21 other spells

Buttered Toad says: " 3/1s sure are fragile... That's why **Vigor** comes in to give **Hostility** and pals a big hug!

But how can you get that **Wild Pair** into play at the same time? (Hint: It's **Wild Pair**!) **Nova Chaser** rounds out the bunch because he loves **Vigor** too!

I chose **Beacon of Destruction** for my big burn over the obvious choices for one big reason: sometimes you just need more damage !"

Ben says: I'm glad that other people noticed that in addition to **Vigor/Hostility**, there was another 12-combined-power/toughness creature – **Nova Chaser**! Now this deck definitely needs more lands, and is a deck where **Smokebraider** isn't necessarily the best (only 8 spells aside from **Smokebraider** and Harbinger are Elementals), but this would be easily fixed by turning the **Smokebraiders** straight into lands (to bring this deck up to 23). I'd also like to see more damage-everything effects in a deck with **Vigor** (**Molten Disaster**, **Sulfurous Blast**).

Deck #7: Scryb and Force (King Speen, 29.9 Tickets)

King Speen's eleMental		
Main Deck 60 cards		
10 Forest	2 Birds of Paradise	2 Blaze
3 Fungal Reaches	2 Gemhide Sliver	4 Harmonize
10 Mountain	4 Hostility	4 Incinerate
23 lands	3 Lightning Serpent	10 other spells
	4 Scryb Ranger	
	4 Smokebraider	
	4 Spectral Force	
	4 Timbermare	
	27 creatures	

King Speen says: "This version goes more down the elemental route using smokebraiders to power out elemental fat including supercharged lightning serpents. I had some spare tickets so 2 gemhides got upgraded to BoPs."

Ben says: This deck is capable of pumping out some seriously insane mana early in the game. Turn two **Smokebraider** followed by turn three **Scryb Ranger** is five mana on turn three, including casting the Ranger (Tap **Smokebraider**, tap two lands, cast **Scryb Ranger**, return a land and untap the Braider, Tap **Smokebraider**, replay the land, tap it, drop a 5-drop elemental). This deck looks like it has enough mana, threats, and card-drawing to be a real (no pun intended) force. It's a little light on the **Hostility** theme, but it does take full advantage of using **Hostility** as a 6/6 hasted beatstick backed with a little bit of burn.

Deck #8: Hostility-a-tog (thickasabrick, 28.63 tickets)

thickasabrick's Hostility-a-Tog		
Main Deck 59 cards		
7 Forest	3 Flamekin Harbinger	2 Browbeat
13 Mountain	3 Hostility	4 Disintegrate
4 Terramorphic Expanse	4 Quirion Dryad	4 Fertile Ground
24 lands	3 Radha, Heir to Keld	2 Harmonize
	2 Vigor	4 Incinerate
	15 creatures	4 Tarfire
		20 other spells

Thickasabrick says: " Looking at the list of available cards I saw an old favorite of mine that no one else has build around: **Quirion Dryad**. I've played "Gro" decks in basically every format, and this was a chance to try out a new version.

Basically the idea of this deck is to drop an early **Dryad** and pump her up with all the burn in the deck to put significant early-game pressure on the opponent. Then accelerate into **Hostility** to finish the opponent off.

The mana acceleration in the deck provides a late game threat in a few ways. The main way is the Incarnation plan: **Hostility** lets you bring a whole bunch of threats into play and **Vigor** protects them - while buffing your **Dryads** along the way. You can also use the card draw to grab a grip of burn to finish off the opponent or cast one big **Disintegrate**. All of these options have synergy with **Hostility** and the **Quirion Dryad**.

Flamekin Harbinger is in the list to be early chump blockers and also to grab **Hostility** or **Vigor** when you need them - and as an added benefit (like almost everything else in the deck) they pump your **Dryads**. **Browbeat** and **Harmonize** ensure that you always have enough threats to keep the pressure on ."

Ben says: One of the problems with a pure burn deck is that, as mentioned earlier, when you have to start using burn to kill your opponent's creatures, you have nothing left to kill the opponent with. **Quirion Dryad** lets you turn those burn spells into +1/+1 counters, leaving you with a really large finisher. I don't know how **Flamekin Harbinger** fits into this deck (should it be more burn?), but the concept of **Quirion Dryad** + red burn spells is a good starting point for a deck.

Deck #9: Storm (ed_ification, 29.66 tickets)

ed_ification's Storm		
Main Deck 60 cards		
21 Mountain	4 Flamekin Harbinger	4 Arc Blade
	4 Grinning Ignus	2 Beacon of Destruction

21 lands	3 Hostility	4 Browbeat
	4 Smokebraider	4 Ignite Memories
		4 Lotus Bloom
15 creatures		4 Rite of Flame
		2 Thunderblade Charge
		24 other spells

Edification says: "How it performs: With a nuts draw, the deck can manage a turn 1 *Ignite Memories* kill (Mountain, 3 *Rite of Flame*, *Smokebraider*, *Ignite*), which got me pretty excited since I rarely design decks to do so (I play mostly casual).

Now, as for burn and *Hostility*, I wanted a lot of re-usable burn, since burn tends to run out of gas if it has to go long. *Thunderblade Charge*, *Arc Blade*, and *Beacon* can all be cast more than once, barring counters, possibly to finish off a dude on your opponent's side, or to add more men to your side.

Browbeat is in simply because it's either draw 3 cards (which could all be kill cards, as far as the opponent knows), or it's 5 3/1 Haste guys which proceed to beat face. Neither choice is good for the opponent.

There's a lot of fast mana in here, in order to power *Hostility* out as soon as possible."

Ben says: If you're going with the storm route, you might want to consider *Pyromancer's Swath* – it lets you get extra use out of all of your burn spells. Again, I don't quite know about the elemental base on this deck (Braider + Harbinger as eight of the 15 elementals), but I like being able to turn *Ignite Memories* for five damage into lethal damage with *Hostility* in play (6 from *Hostility*, 15 from hasted 3/1 creatures). Plus, isn't this a perfect deck to use Storm Elemental in?

Deck #10: Elemental Beatdown (jerubbaal07, 23.6 tickets)

jerubbaal07's Elemental Beatdown		
Main Deck 60 cards		
20 Mountain	4 Flamekin Bladewhirl	4 Incinerate
20 lands	4 Flamekin Harbinger	4 Lotus Bloom
	4 Hostility	4 Shock
	4 Inner-Flame Acolyte	4 Tarfire
	4 Nova Chaser	16 other spells
	4 Smokebraider	
	24 creatures	

Jerubbaal07 says: "Hurrah for 4-ofs. The deck attempts to go big turn 4 when the bloom comes off, allowing you to both play hostility and burn spells in the same turn. Otherwise, the deck has plenty of early game and good beats. Try doing something like turn 3 *Nova Chaser* off *Smokebraider*, then evoke the Acolyte. Good times. The Harbinger is obscene with the chaser, you can basically play all the Chasers in your deck, if your opponent keeps answering him. I'd ideally like to be packing more burn, but none of it is efficient enough to cast on the same turn as *Hostility*. If *Hostility* sticks around for more than a turn, you're winning anyway. The only exciting tech which I really like is the Bloom, which accounts for most of the deck's tickets. I think it really makes the deck more explosive without sacrificing the early game."

Ben says: This one is just pure beatdown from turn one onwards. I'd probably like to see *Incandescent Soulstroke* as a *Glorious Anthem* for your creatures, and maybe a few one-ofs to go with the quadruple Harbingers. Otherwise, it's a pretty solid effort where you're just trying to turn your guys sideways and dome your opponent as fast as you can.

Deck #11: X-Burn (Blacker Lotus, 26.77 tickets)

blacker_lotus's X-Burn		
Main Deck 60 cards		
8 Forest	3 Hostility	4 Blaze
2 Karplusan Forest	4 Seedborn Muse	4 Fertile Ground
11 Mountain		4 Gauntlet of Might
2 Terramorphic Expanse	7 creatures	3 Harmonize
23 lands		4 Incinerate
		3 Rift Bolt
		4 Search for Tomorrow
		4 Upwelling
		30 other spells

Blacker Lotus says: " The deck abuses the interaction between Seedborn muse + Upwelling, using Gauntlet of Power to power up the mana and make a big blaze. actually, it doesn't need to be a so big blaze, because hostility will make all the damage into creatures.

It also mana ramps the "combo" with search for tomorrow and fertile ground. the deck also uses harmonize to draw you a brand new hand, and uses the 15 burn spells (including the 4 blazes) to clean the path to your little elementals."

Ben says: This is the type of deck that can go from being wrecked to winning the game in a single turn. Gauntlet of Might, Upwelling and Seedborn Muse make for a really compelling combination, considering you can quickly go from zero to twenty mana in the course of one turn. I'd probably want a little more Forest action in the deck (the search and acceleration spells are all green) and a couple of board sweepers to firm up the early game (Molten Disaster, which could be added in easily if you drop the Karplusan Forests).

Deck #12: Pickles Lock (Spongy Pengwin, 29.6 Tickets)

Spongy_Pengwin's Pickles Lock		
Main Deck 60 cards		
10 Island	1 Aethersnipe	2 Familiar's Ruse
10 Mountain	1 Ashling the Pilgrim	4 Incinerate
4 Terramorphic Expanse	2 Brine Elemental	4 Rune Snag
24 lands	4 Flamekin Harbinger	10 other spells
	1 Hostility	
	4 Incandescent Soulstoke	
	4 Mulldrifter	
	1 Nova Chaser	
	4 Smokebraider	
	4 Vesuvan Shapeshifter	
	26 creatures	

Spongy_Pengwin says: " This deck works by killing with either Hostility / Incinerate the Brine Elemental / Vesuvan Shapeshifter combo (edit: I'm surprised I haven't seen anyone use the Pickles lock yet). Even though this is mainly a control deck, each kill can come out as early as turn four with the help of Flamekin Harbinger, Smokebraider, and/or Incandescent Soulstoke. Flamekin Harbinger can also fetch a singleton copy of Ashling for board sweeping (of, say, unblockable creatures), Nova Chaser against decks with no spot removal (it's just nuts with the harbinger to champion), or Aethersnipe for permanent removal. Mulldrifters give you four copies of card drawing while Rune Snag and Familiar's Ruse stall for time. Familiar's Ruse as well as Vesuvan Shapeshifter are great with CIP creatures. They let you do any number of things including drawing extra cards, returning and countering extra permanents, or simply pumping your elementals further with the Soulstoke. The deck has a variety of synergies among CIP effects, elementals, and tutors, and these make it very versatile."

Ben says: I threw in the Brine Elemental/Vesuvan Shapeshifter lock for two reasons – one Brine Elemental is an Elemental and fits the Elemental theme of the deck, and two, I wanted to see if anyone could do some interesting things with Vesuvan Shapeshifter. Copying Soulstroke, Flamekin Harbinger, Mulldrifter and Aethersnipe all fit into that category. Unfortunately, this deck has very little focus on Hostility (one copy, only four burn spells), and it would probably be better served without the Hostility at all! Otherwise though, it's a really solid-looking deck that can be built from the pool.

Deck #13: Braid of Fire Upkeep (Rallius, 29.81 tickets)

Rallius's Braid of Fire		
Main Deck 60 cards		
3 Forest	4 Ashling the Pilgrim	4 Beacon of Destruction
4 Fungal Reaches	3 Hostility	4 Braid of Fire
4 Ghitu Encampment	7 creatures	4 Incinerate
9 Mountain		4 Lash Out
3 Terramorphic Expanse		3 Molten Disaster
23 lands		4 Rites of Flourishing
		2 Squall Line
		2 Sudden Impact
		3 Sudden Shock
		30 other spells

Rallius says: " This deck attempts to gain an advantage by having an arsenal of instant speed spells at the player's disposal that can be utilized at a minimal tempo cost via 4 braids of fire. What, you say that braid of fire

has just as good of a chance to kill its owner as it does enable that individual to do something effective? Well, there are several mana sink outlets to avoid burn. Ghitu encampment can be repeatedly activated to become a creature many times over. You can grab 0 mana from fungal reaches as many times as your heart desires. Lastly, it can be used to pump ashling, as he can quickly get out of control gaining 2 +1/+1 counters both on your turn and your opponent's. Ashling can also be a solid defender and strong finisher after you've expended all of your direct damage. **Hostility** will shine in combination with any of your 22 spells that can potentially deal dome damage. If using all of that potential mana still has anyone concerned, then you can rely on drawing beacons with some amount of consistency as they reshuffle after use and you're drawing two cards a turn with rites of flourishing. **Squall** line can be an effective finisher with your upkeep mana, and several split second spells lend the deck some versatility against control. Rites of flourishing, along with braid of fire, are perhaps the most important cards for this deck's success. I originally began deck design using howling mines, but decided to omit them as a result of not being able to resolve a personal conflict of spending a third of my available fiscal resources on a playset of howling mines (2.5 each). It doesn't hurt that it enables useful, split-second molten disasters and plays involving hostility that much quicker as a virtue of dropping lands at an increased pace. I found lash out to be a solid contributor as approx. 38% you're also dealing dome damage that will trigger hostility."

Ben says: This deck had some of the best uses for **Braid of Fire**, which is a very potent spell in the right deck. Many decks that get **Hostility** out might not be able to follow him up with much, but this deck can drop **Hostility**, potentially pump out a few dozen tokens, and then swing for lethal.

Also, one of the problems with burn decks is that, again, you run out of burn before your opponent runs out of creatures. However, burn spells tend, as a whole, to be more efficient (in mana) than the creatures they are killing. **Rites of Flourishing** lets you keep drawing more and more burn to outpace the opponent. I'd love to find a way to get **Howling Mine** into this deck, maybe by losing the **Molten Disasters**. As Jareth pointed out later in the thread, **Upwelling** also works wonders with **Braid of Fire**, since you can carry the mana over past your main phase.

In the end, Rallius's deck is the one I decided to go with for the evolution. It has a lot of neat combos, room to grow with other cards in the list, and looks like it can be a real winner given the power inherent in the mana it can pump out. I'll definitely be looking for inspiration from other decks in the thread as well to evolve this one, and borrowing perhaps from Blacker Lotus's deck as well.

Thank you again to everyone who participated in this challenge! It was a blast to do, and there was a ton of creativity present in the thread for the deck challenge article. I wish I could go over everyone's decks, but I only have finite space here, so until next week, keep on working to innovate on a budget!

- Ben

*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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