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Classically Red

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Building on a Budget
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hello everyone, and welcome to a new year for Building on a Budget! For those just reading this column for the first time, Building on a Budget is a column dedicated to building decks that cost 30 tickets or less using **Magic Online**. I'm Ben Bleiweiss, and you can find my bio and blurb at the bottom of the page. My user ID on **Magic Online** is BuildingonaBudget, so look me up some time if you want to help playtest for this column!

This is my third calendar year working on Building on a Budget! It seems like only yesterday that I first started working on Building on a Budget, so I guess that's a good sign—time flies when you're having fun!

Speaking of fun, I had a blast playing around with the Classic format on **Magic Online** this past week. For those tuned in at the end of last year, I ran a poll asking you, the reader, which format you'd most like to see me play at the beginning of this year. That poll was too close to call, so I held a runoff between the two top picks. Here are the results of that runoff:

Which format would you like to see Ben explore on a budget?		
Classic, where most cards are legal.	2692	40.5%
Highlander, where there can only be one!	2276	34.3%
Classic Highlander – I like them both!	1672	25.2%
Total	6640	100.0%

The biggest problem I had when approaching Classic was an immense pool of cards. Every card on **Magic Online** is legal for Online play, with the three exceptions of Gleemox (banned), **Flash** (restricted) and **Vampiric Tutor** (restricted). This left every base set from *Seventh* through *Tenth*, *Mirage*, *Visions*, *Weatherlight*, *Masters Edition*, and all expansion sets from *Onslaught* through *Lorwyn* as places to draw from (plus a few promo cards like *Sliver Queen*, *Morphling*, and others). Let me tell you—it is daunting to start from scratch when building a deck with that many cards to choose from!

In the end, I took a look at which cards tickled my fancy in the common and uncommon slots from each color. Red in particular stuck out in my mind, in one of two forms—either as a Goblin deck or as a straight burn deck. There are a lot of amazing common burn spells available right now (*Incinerate*, *Lightning Bolt*, *Fireblast*, *Rift Bolt*) which made red burn a very attractive, appealing, cheap choice. By the same token, the Goblin engine is almost exclusively made up of commons and uncommons (*Goblin Warchief*, *Goblin Ringleader*, *Skirk Prospector*, *Goblin Matron*), making a budget version of a Goblin deck (no Piledrivers, no fetch lands) a possibility.

What pushed my choice over the edge was the inclusion of **Skullclamp**. Now, I don't know who among you played when **Skullclamp** was legal in Standard, but the card is three degrees of broken. Each time you play a one-toughness creature, you're looking at another card. Put it on a two toughness creature, and draw extra cards when it dies/is blocked. Play two **Skullclamps** on a two-toughness creature, and draw four cards. **Skullclamp** is banned in every paper format except Vintage, and for good reason—it is one of the most potent card-drawing cards ever printed in **Magic**.



Well, it's legal in Classic and I found them all over the place at four-for-a-ticket. If **Skullclamp** is legal in Online Classic, I sure as heck was going to find a way to work it into every deck I built on a Budget.

Here is a list of the cards that caught my eye when I was perusing all available Red, Artifact and Land cards for Online classic. I didn't include high-priced lands (I knew they would throw me off a budget), but I included cards that were too expensive to use otherwise (such as *Goblin Piledriver*) as a point of reference.

<i>Æther Vial</i> : .75	<i>Goblin Piledriver</i> : 6.5	<i>Rift Bolt</i> : .25
<i>Ball Lightning</i> : 5	<i>Goblin Recruiter</i> : 1.5	<i>Scorched Rusalka</i> : .1
<i>Barbarian Ring</i> : 2.5	<i>Goblin Ringleader</i> : 4	<i>Seal of Fire</i> : .1

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RULES

Blistering Firecat: 3	Goblin Sharpshooter: 3	Shock: .1
Chandra Nalaar: 1.5	Goblin Warchief: 1	Shrapnel Blast: .25
Char: 1.25	Gorilla Shaman: 2.5	Skirk Prospector: .1
Cosmic Larva: .33	Great Furnace: .1	Skullclamp: .25
Darksteel Citadel: .1	Incinerate: .33	Slith Firewalker: .25
Dwarven Blastminer: .25	Lava Dart: .1	Solemn Simulacrum: 5
Fiery Temper: .33	Lightning Bolt: .75	Squee, Goblin Nabob: 1.5
Fireblast: 1	Magma Jet: .5	Stingscourger: .1
Firebolt: .25	Martyr of Ashes: .1	Molten Rain: .1
Flames of the Blood Hand: .25	Mishra's Factory: .75	Sudden Shock: .25
Flametongue Kavu: 4	Mogg Fanatic: 2	Tarfire: .25
Forgotten Cave: .1	Mogg War Marshal: .1	Sulfuric Vortex: 1.25
Gempalm Incinerator: .1	Mudbottom Torchrunner: .1	Umezawa's Jitte: 5
Goblin Charbelcher: .5	Phyrexian War Beast: .1	Volcanic Hammer: .1
Goblin Grenade: .33	Pyrite Spellbomb: .1	Ydwen Efreet: .33
Goblin King: .75	Raging Goblin: .1	Zo-Zu the Punisher: .33
Goblin Matron: 1	Reckless Charge: .1	

Goblins are generally a strong deck. Here's an Extended-legal version of Dirty Kitty, a Goblin deck revolving around the pieces of the Goblin puzzle, with a touch of **Fecundity** for card drawing.

Billy Moreno's Dirty Kitty

Extended-legal at 2006 Magic World Championship

Main Deck 60 cards		Sideboard
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Blood Crypt 4 Bloodstained Mire 6 Mountain 4 Stomping Ground 4 Wooded Foothills <hr/> 19 lands	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2 Brightstone Ritual 4 Empty the Warrens 4 Fecundity 1 Grapeshot 4 Rite of Flame 4 Seething Song <hr/> 19 other spells	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2 Ancient Grudge 4 Cabal Therapy 4 Clickslither 1 Goblin King 2 Krosan Grip 2 Pyroclasm <hr/> 15 sideboard cards
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 4 Goblin Matron 4 Goblin Piledriver 1 Goblin Sharpshooter 1 Goblin Sledder 4 Goblin Warchief 4 Mogg War Marshal 4 Skirk Prospector <hr/> 22 creatures		

In order to make this deck budget, the green had to go entirely—there's just no cheap way to get green and red reliably and still fit in the budget of the key cards (the Goblins) in this deck. Also, **Goblin Piledriver** just isn't affordable. While several other key Goblins (Warchief, Matron) are available cheaply right now thanks to the [Elves vs. Goblins duel deck](#), a set of Piledrivers alone would take up most of the cost of the deck.

There is another deck that was banned out of existence in other formats—the **Goblin Recruiter / Goblin Charbelcher** deck. With this combination, you can put all of the Goblins in your deck on top of your library, and then activate your Charbelcher to deal that much damage (or double that much if you get a **Mountain**) to your opponent. I found Charbelchers available for half a ticket each.

This gave my deck multiple degenerate combos—**Skirk Prospector** plus **Mogg War Marshal** (three extra mana), **Skullclamp** plus most of my Goblins (reusable card drawing), **Goblin Warchief** (to reduce the cost of other Goblins and give them haste), a singleton tutable **Goblin King** (more damage, **Mountainwalk**) and Sharpshooter, plus the Recruiter/Charbelcher kill. This was a much more competitive deck than I'm used to playing in the casual room, but there weren't enough people playtesting Classic in the serious rooms to test there. There were plenty of other players playing Classic in the casual room, and so I tested my Goblin deck there.

Goblins Classic

Classic Legal

Main Deck
60 cards

4 Forgotten Cave	4 Gempalm Incinerator	4 Goblin Charbelcher
4 Mishra's Factory	1 Goblin King	4 Lightning Bolt
16 Mountain	3 Goblin Matron	4 Skullclamp
24 lands	3 Goblin Recruiter	
	1 Goblin Sharpshooter	12 other spells
	4 Goblin Warchief	
	4 Mogg War Marshal	
	4 Skirk Prospector	
	24 creatures	

Cost: 26.85

Game 1: adeg (Genesis Chamber / Death Match / Norin the Wary / Pandemonium)

We go back and forth trading creatures, but eventually I kill Norin #1 with **Death Match** and Norin #2 with **Gempalm Incinerator**. My **Mogg War Marshals** make **Death Match** work in my favor, and **Skullclamp** lets me keep the guys coming and coming and coming. Eventually I overwhelm him, but not before he casts a (to-be-sacrificed) **Phyrexian Dreadnaught** to try to stay alive.

Record: 1-0

Game 2: Corrian_Orrak (Black-Green Control)

He gets **Skeletal Changeling**, and then blows up my team with **Endemic Plague**. I get down **Goblin Charbelcher**, and use **Charbelcher** plus **Lightning Bolt** to kill consecutive **Stronghold Overseers**. He drops **Phyrexian Totem**, and swings with it the next two turns. The first turn I'm tapped out from killing an Overseer. The next turn, I deal 8 to the head of the Totem, dropping **Corrain_Orrak** to a single permanent. I then draw **Goblin Recruiter**, get my combo off, and deal 34 to his head.

Record: 2-0



Game 3: cookiemnstr (Mono-Red Burn)

He gets an early **Spark Elemental**, **Shock** and **Goblin Grenade** to bring me to 10, with a **Wheel of Fate** suspended on turn 2. I get **Skirk Prospector**, **Goblin Warchief**, **Skullclamp** and **Mogg War Marshal**, draw a lot of cards and drop a lot of goblins, get **Recruiter** for **Sharpshooter**, all the rest of the **War Marshals** and **Goblin King**, and try to swing for the win. He kills my **Goblin King**, and then drops **Seismic Assault** the following turn, allowing him to stay alive through my next attack. This leaves him at 1 life when **Wheel of Fate** goes off. He draws eight (seven plus his regular draw), drops a one-drop **Goblin**, and tries to play **Goblin Grenade**. I respond by sacrificing a **Warchief** to play **Lightning Bolt** targeting him (just drawn off of the **Wheel of Fate**). He is able to knock me down to 4 with **Seismic Assault**, but my **Bolt** resolves before his **Grenade**, winning me the game.

Record: 3-0

Game 4: Bolo69 (Hondens)

I get **Skirk Prospector**, **Mishra's Factory** and **Mogg War Marshal**, and use the **War Marshal** mana during my upkeep from a sacrifice to power up **Mishra's Factory**. **Goblin Matron** fetches up **Goblin Warchief**, and I drop **Skullclamp** to draw multiple cards. He is quickly overwhelmed, having only dropped a **Honden of Night's Reach**.

Record: 4-0

Game 5: Thenoeght (Mono-Black Control)

Turn One: **Skirk Prospector**

Turn Two: **Skullclamp**

Turn Three: **Goblin Warchief**

Turn Four: **Goblin Recruiter**, for four **Mogg War Marshals**, one **Goblin King**, and one **Goblin Sharpshooter**.

Sacrifice **Recruiter** to draw two cards. Play two **War Marshals**. Sacrifice them both for **Skullclamp** to pay for **Skullclamp** on another token. Sacrifice two tokens to cast two **War Marshals**. Sacrifice both **War Marshals** and a token to add **Skullclamp**, Clamp another token, and drop **Goblin King**. Swing to knock him down to 1. Sacrifice two tokens to play **Goblin Sharpshooter** and win.

Record: 5-0

Goblins Classic 2			
Classic Legal			
Main Deck 60 cards			
4 Forgotten Cave	3 Gempalm Incinerator	3 Goblin Charbelcher	
4 Mishra's Factory	3 Goblin King	4 Lightning Bolt	
16 Mountain	3 Goblin Matron	4 Skullclamp	

24 lands	3 Goblin Recruiter	11 other spells
	1 Goblin Sharpshooter	
	4 Goblin Warchief	
	4 Mogg War Marshal	
	4 Skirk Prospector	
	25 creatures	

An early **Goblin King** has helped me speed up my kill considerably, since I can pump out a ton of tokens by recruiting up **Mogg War Marshal** and sacrificing to get a chain going with **Skirk Prospector**. I decide to add in more **Goblin Kings**, and take out an **Incinerator** and a **Charbelcher** in their place.

Out: 1 **Gempalm Incinerator**, 1 **Goblin Charbelcher**
In: 2 **Goblin King**

Game 6: POS26 (Black-Blue Faeries)

I get **Skirk Prospector**, **Goblin King**, **Goblin Matron**, and double **Mogg War Marshal**. He has a lot of 1/1 Faeries, plus an **Oona's Prowler**. I make my guys 2/2, and start swinging, making his **Prowler** a 1/1 when he blocks. He quickly succumbs to a horde of 2/2 Goblins.

Record: 6-0

The next three games consisted of a match in the tournament practice room.

Game 7: Game 1 vs. Quel (Pox)

He suspends **Nihilith**, drops **Urborg**, **Tomb of Yawgmoth**, and plays **Pox**. He then drops double **Mishra's Factory**, hits me a couple of times with **Nihilith**, and plays another **Pox** while I'm at 1.

Match Record: 0-1
Record: 6-1

Game 8: Game 2 vs. Quel (Pox)

He gets another early **Nihilith**, but this time I am able to race him with multiple **Mishra's Factorys** on the board. He gets **Pox**, and we trade life, with me down to 1 and him to 3, though my double **Factory** takes down his **Nihilith** on defense. Eventually he gets **Engineered Plague** on Goblins, but I kill him with a **Skullclamp** on my **Mishra's Factory**.

Match Record: 1-1
Record: 7-1

Game 9: Game 3 vs. Quel (Pox)

He plays an early **Engineered Plague**, but accidentally sets it to Birds. I offer to not play any of my one-toughness creatures, but he says it's okay. I then drop **Goblin King**, **Skullclamp**, a whole lot of **Mogg War Marshals**, **Skirk Prospector**, **Goblin Matron**, and another **Goblin King**, and start swinging in with a host of guys. I even get to **Gempalm Incinerator** a **Nihilith**!

Match Record: 2-1
Record: 8-1



Game 8: Rippenflesh (Black-Red Goblins)

He kills an early **Warchief** with a **Lightning Bolt**, and **Skirk Prospector** with a **Hornet Harrasser** plus **Goblin Grenade**. I get down a **Matron**, get another **Warchief**, drop a **Skullclamp** and a **Prospector**, and set up to kill with **Goblin Recruiter**. Unfortunately, I drop a **Goblin Sharpshooter**, and instead of killing his **Knucklebone Witch** plus **Siege-Gang Commander**, I accidentally have the **Sharpshooter** target itself (darn misclick!). This makes me go for plan B: drop seven Goblins to the board (a **Prospector**, a **Warchief**, four tokens from **Mogg War Marshal**, and a **Goblin King**), swing for 13, and then sacrifice everything to hit him with **Goblin Charbelcher**. I turn up a **Mountain** at the end of my remaining Goblins, so I would have dealt over 20 damage anyhow.

Record: 9-1

Game 9: grayghost (Elves / Treefolk)

I get a slow start, but it's buoyed by a **Gemplam Incinerator** and **Goblin Matron**. This lets me set up with **Goblin Sharpshooter** (always good against Elves) plus a **Goblin King** and a **Warchief**. My guys push through on sheer damage this game.

Record: 10-1

Game 10: CragLaR (Black-White-Green-Blue Control)

He gets off a **Cruel Edict**, but I get double **Prospector**, **Goblin Warchief**, **Goblin Matron** and **Goblin King**, and proceed to swing with **Prospector**, **Warchief**, **Matron**, and **King** for two straight attacks, which is enough damage (with the preceding haste) to win.

Record: 11-1

With the 11-1 record under my belt with Goblins, I decide to switch to a classic burn deck. I still want to us **Skullclamp**, but I add in several creatures that aren't necessarily from the Goblin deck—**Mudbutton Torchrunner** (**Lightning Bolt** plus draw two cards), **Slith Firewalker** (the guy just keeps getting bigger), and **Scorched Rusalka** (to get through that last few damage). I make my burn suite an impressive package of **Rift Bolt**, **Lightning Bolt**, **Fireblast**, **Char**, and **Incinerate**.

I have enough burn to take down a forest full of wet trees. Let's see what kind of kindling I found!

Classic Pure Burn		
Classic Legal		
Main Deck 60 cards		
4 Forgotten Cave	4 Mudbutton Torchrunner	4 Char
4 Mishra's Factory	4 Scorched Rusalka	4 Fireblast
16 Mountain	4 Slith Firewalker	4 Incinerate
24 lands	12 creatures	4 Lightning Bolt
		4 Rift Bolt
		4 Skullclamp
		24 other spells

Cost: 20.52

Game 1: jdderda (Mono-Black Discard)

I draw eleven **Mountains**, and end up dying to **Liliana Vess** and **The Rack**, having never drawn enough burn to kill Liliana before she got up in counters. I do get double **Skullclamp**, but no creatures to go with it.

Record: 0-1

Game 2: cadaverous knight (Muse Vessel)

Very similar to my old **Muse Vessel** deck, but I burn him out the turn before he takes away my entire hand, and strips all of my lands but two. He ends up with double **Char**, **Slith Firewalker**, **Skullclamp**, and **Mudbutton Torchrunner** under his **Muse Vessel** before I take him down to zero.

Record: 1-1

Game 3: Knights84 (Mono-Red Burn / LD)

He gets **Slith Firewalker** and casts **Molten Rain** on my **Mishra's Factory**. I **Incinerate** his Firewalker, and he casts **Stone Rain**. He then plays **Vulshok Sorcerer**, and I drop **Mudbutton Torchrunner**. He drops another Sorcerer, shoots me, and I drop another Torchrunner. He accidentally shoots his own Sorcerer and concedes, but we look at our hands and determine that I was going to win the game (I had double **Fireblast**, double **Rift Bolt** and **Lightning Bolt** to his **Shock**, Sorcerer, Firewalker, **Shock**, meaning I could throw 17 damage at him (plus the Torchrunners, either attacking or being killed for 3 damage) before he could even get close to throwing 14 more damage at my head.

Record: 2-1

Game 4: TJLAPEYROUSE (Griffins)

I get stuck on one mana, with double **Scorched Rusalka** and a **Skullclamp**. It takes until my second Rusalka until I draw a second mana. However, I recover quickly from there thanks to a ton of burn in my hand, and I end up with double **Slith Firewalker** finishing the game at 4/4s with **Char**, **Lightning Bolt**, and **Fireblast** to provide the last damage.

Record: 3-1

Game 5: dark_cowboy30 (Black-Green Elves)

I kill a **Wellwisher** with a **Mudbutton Torchrunner** and a **Skullclamp**, and get a **Slith Firewalker** up to 3/3. I then aim **Lightning Bolt** at dark_cowboys30's head, get triple **Skullclamp** on my Firewalker, and finish the game by untapping, unsuspending a **Rift Bolt**, throwing double **Incinerate** at the dome, and then sacking four **Mountains** to double **Fireblast** (17 points of direct damage)

Record: 4-1

The Rusalkas aren't that great, since A) I want to sacrifice my creatures to **Skullclamp** when possible, and B) I don't have a lot of creatures. I decide to run **Martyr of Ashes** in their stead, as a way to sweep the board of early creatures, and to have a creature with more general utility for this deck.



I've also ended up with **Char** in my hand to end several games—at three mana, it is (surprisingly enough) very unwieldy for this deck. Most of the rest of my burn costs one or zero (**Fireblast**), and I've had more than enough of it. What I'm light on are creatures, especially with **Skullclamp** in my deck. I take out the **Chars** (making the deck completely rare-free) and put in **Dwarven Blastminers**—people love their nonbasic lands, and the Blastminer also gives me an out in case my opponent drops some sort of **Story Circle** or **Circle of Protection: Red**.

Out: 4 Scorched Rusalka, 4 Char

In: 4 Dwarven Blastminer, 4 Martyr of Ashes

Classic Pure Burn 2		
Classic Legal		
Main Deck 60 cards		
4 Forgotten Cave	4 Dwarven Blastminer	4 Fireblast
4 Mishra's Factory	4 Martyr of Ashes	4 Incinerate
16 Mountain	4 Mudbutton Torchranner	4 Lightning Bolt
24 lands	4 Slith Firewalker	4 Rift Bolt
	16 creatures	4 Skullclamp
		20 other spells

Game 6: Simaton (Mono-Green Aggro)

He gets an early **Skullclamp**, and this leads him to get double **Uktabi Drake** with card-drawing aftereffects. I get stuck on a **Mountain** and triple **Mishra's Factory**, which makes me die to **Groundbreaker** when it has triple **Might of Old Krosa** on it, and I can only use **Lightning Bolt** on it once.

Record: 4-2

Game 7: Nick_Braford (Mono-Green Elves)

I burn out all his blockers, and start swinging with **Mudbutton Torchranner**, **Slith Firewalker**, and double **Mishra's Factory**. Burn finishes the job that my creatures started.

Record: 5-2

Game 8: Maevwen (Blue-White Control)

I burn away his **Sunscape** and **Stormscape Familiars** with **Mudbutton Torchranners** plus **Skullclamp**, but he's left with a **Drift of Phantasms**. I get **Slith Firewalker** and a **Morph** onto the board, and swing. He drops a bounceland, and I flip up my morph (which is **Dwarven Blastminer**), kill his land, and draw a concession. I have a full grip to his nearly empty hand.

Record: 6-2

Game 9: ncurry (Black-Red Discard / LD)

I get hit by **Hymn to Tourach**, making me lose **Incinerate** and **Lightning Bolt**. I do get a first-turn **Skullclamp**, which I use to clamp up first **Martyr of Ashes**, and then a morphed **Dwarven Blastminer**. He is joined by double **Slith Firewalker** and a **Mishra's Factory**, and I burn out his blocker (**Black Knight**) to let my creatures do all the damage.

Record: 7-2

Game 10: LaFFaL (Goblin Burn)

A deck similar to mine. **Martyr of Ashes** stops his first couple of creatures, but I get burned down to 11, and he's got three cards in hand. I get down **Slith Firewalker**, swing him up to 2/2, and then double **Skullclamp** him. This lets me have a following turn that includes double suspended **Rift Bolt** resolving (6 damage), double **Lightning Bolt** (12 damage), double **Incinerate** (18 damage), and double **Fireblast** (26 damage). Considering I already had him down below 18, this was a bit of overkill—but heck, I'm entitled to a little extra burn now and then, amigos!

Record: 8-2

I had a lot of fun playing Classic with these two decks—even though both are red, they function very differently. There's a fun thrill of getting across 20 points of attacking damage on turn four or five with Goblins, just as there is a perverse pleasure taken in dealing 20 points of burn in a single turn. For those who hate playing with rares at all, definitely try out the pure red burn deck—it was very fun to play, it proved competitive, and it had no rares. If you like Goblins, take advantage of two of the most broken cards in **Magic Online** (**Skullclamp** and **Goblin Recruiter**) while they are cheap and allowed, and win yourself a few games!



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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