



Overrunn' Elves

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Building on a Budget
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hello everyone, and welcome back to Building on a Budget. Just a couple of weeks until *Morningtide* is released online—and I know that you're as excited about that as I am! In the meanwhile, I was taking a look around my file of criminally underused cards to see which cards would be interesting to build a deck around. That's when I hit upon **Overrun**.

Once upon a time, long long ago, I evolved [the Fun with Fungus theme deck](#). One of the additions I made to the deck was **Coat of Arms**. **Coat of Arms** gave me a way to leverage large quantities of creatures of one type into huge amounts of damage.

Overrun and **Coat of Arms** are similar in many ways—both let your large hordes of creature turn into huge creatures that deal massive amount of damage in one turn. In today's online metagame, though, **Coat of Arms** can often be a liability.

For those not familiar with the term metagame, it is a fancy way of saying "the pool of decks that are currently being played a lot in your area." In this case, the area is all of **Magic Online**'s casual room. Everybody and their sister is playing some sort of tribal deck—and this means that **Coat of Arms**, which pumps *both* your creatures, and your opponent's creatures, can often be as much of a liability as it is a strength. **Overrun**, on the other hand, only makes your guys bigger.

In addition, trample is a huge way to get through enough damage to win. I played a lot of *Tempest* booster draft (in fact, I had my highest Pro Tour finish at Pro Tour–Mainz, which was *Tempest / Tempest / Tempest* booster draft), and green was universally considered the weakest color in straight-*Tempest* draft. White and black had a lot of efficient evasion creatures because of shadow, red had the best common in the set (**Rolling Thunder**) and a lot of burn spells, and blue had a ridiculous number of control cards, including **Counterspell** and **Capsize**. This left green as the clunky color that could neither control the game nor kill people quickly with weenies.

The one strength green had was, ironically, that green was usually avoided because it was so weak. This meant that at any given table, if only one or two people were concentrating on building a primarily green deck, they might end up with a really strong deck. If six people are drafting black, and only two people drafting green, the green (split two ways) is going to be stronger than the black (split six ways) even if black is a much stronger color than green.

What's all this have to do with Building on a Budget? Hold on, I'm getting to it! So green was generally the worst of the five colors in straight *Tempest* draft, but green had one card which everyone feared: **Overrun**. **Overrun** was considered one of the most unfair cards printed for Draft—and this was even more the case once *Odyssey* block came around, **Overrun** was reprinted, and green was probably the best color in that set for Limited play!

Even to this day, I know how to do **Overrun** math. $3(X) + Y - Z = \text{Dead}$, where X is the number of creatures you control, Y is the combined power of those creatures, and Z is the combined toughness of your opponent's creatures. I've played many a game where my opponent (or I) went from 20 life to 0 life in a single swing due to **Overrun**. Giving all your creatures trample is the key to making this work—otherwise, your opponent can just chump block and go their merry way.

So if I were to build a deck around **Overrun**, I'd need to keep two facts in mind:

1. The more creatures I have in play, the more extra damage I get to do with **Overrun** (which is a **Giant Growth** with trample for every creature I control).
2. The majority of my deck, if not the entirety of my deck, has to be green, since **Overrun** has a very strict color requirement (GGG)



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Thankfully, the Elves of Standard have many creature token generators. This meant that I could easily fuse the above two goals into one deck, and not hurt for the color requirements. This deck was going to be Standard using **Magic Online**, meaning that *Morningtide* is not yet legal. Here's the list I came up with for the deck (with ticket costs per card in parenthesis):

- 4 Boreal Druid (.2)
- 3 Gilt-Leaf Ambush
- 3 Immaculate Magistrate (.5)
- 4 Imperious Perfect (.5)
- 4 Llanowar Elves (.2)
- 3 Lys Alana Huntmaster
- 3 Scryb Ranger
- 4 Thelonite Hermit (.5)
- 1 Wren's Run Packmaster (.5)
- 3 Yavimaya Dryad
- 4 Harmonize (1.5)
- 4 Overrun (.3)
- 18 Forest
- 3 Pendelhaven (1.75)

Total Cost: Just about 20 tickets

I wanted to have early acceleration in order to drop my curve ahead of the one land / one turn schedule—if I could **Overrun** on turn five with five creatures in play, I'd have a minimum of 20 points of trample damage coming across on the board. **Boreal Druid** and **Llanowar Elves** were the two creatures I chose for this task. I combined them with **Scryb Ranger**, so say, if I had four lands and a **Llanowar Elves** on the board on turn four, I could both tap my Elf for mana and then attack with it for four.

I also wanted several ways to generate large quantities of token creatures, to cheat on the creature count. Remember—if I have **Overrun**, every creature I have is going to swing for a minimum of four damage, so it doesn't matter if they are 1/1 tokens or 4/4 tokens—quantity is definitely desired over quantity. **Imperious Perfect**, the ubiquitous elf generator and lord, was first on the list—he works well with my other mana creatures and other token generators, which are sure to be elves as well. I also wanted **Gilt-Leaf Ambush** (which could make two elves in one turn), **Lys Alana Huntmaster** (which benefits from every other elf cast), **Wren's Run Packmaster** (to generate wolves), and **Thelonite Hermit**.

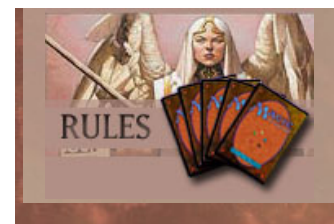
I really loved the Hermit in my Saproling deck, and I decided to use him again here. Although this deck isn't Fungus intensive by any means, **Thelonite Hermit** is a 1/1 that, effectively, puts four 2/2 creatures into play. So:

$$3X + Y - Z = \text{Dead}$$

$$3 \times (5 \text{ creatures}) + 9 \text{ (power)} - Z \text{ (toughness of my opponent's creatures)} = 24 \text{ (damage being dealt with just two cards).}$$

That's not a bad deal.

I also rounded out the deck with **Harmonize** (to fill my hand after dropping a lot of creatures), **Yavimaya Dryad** (to jump from one to three to five—**Llanowar Elves** to **Yavimaya Dryad** to five mana on the board), and **Immaculate Magistrate**—which theoretically would give my other Elves huge bodies for just the cost of tapping it.



Overrun Elf 1.0		
Main Deck		
61 cards		
18 Forest	4 Boreal Druid	3 Gilt-Leaf Ambush
3 Pendelhaven	3 Immaculate Magistrate	4 Harmonize
21 lands	4 Imperious Perfect	4 Overrun
	4 Llanowar Elves	11 other spells
	3 Lys Alana Huntmaster	
	3 Scryb Ranger	
	4 Thelonite Hermit	
	1 Wren's Run Packmaster	
	3 Yavimaya Dryad	
	29 creatures	

Game 1: spence72 (Red-Green Elementals)

He gets **Incandescent Soulstoke**, and makes **Nova Chaser** (as an 11/3 haste creature) and **Timbermare** (as a 6/6 haste creature) on consecutive turns, activating a **Treetop Village** after playing **Timbermare** on turn five to kill me

in two swings.

Record: 0-1

Game 2: vicious beastie (Mono-Black Control)

She gets **Tendrils of Corruption** on one of my Elves, but I get **Overrun** and knock her down to 7. She uses **Hypnotic Specter** to strip my hand, and then plays **Damnation**. At five lands, she plays **Korlash, Heir to Blackblade**, discards two Korlash to go up to nine **Swamps**, and then drops **Loxodon Warhammer** to hit me for 12. If you're going to turn the game around, there's not many better ways to do it than going from an empty board to a 12/9 regenerator with trample and lifelink in one turn.

Record: 0-2

About this time, I'm realizing that my deck really, really needs a way to kill a utility creature. I pretty much was taken apart by both **Incandescent Soulstoke** and **Hypnotic Specter**, and if I could have killed either one early, I might have stood a chance to win those two games.

Game 3: tonytanner (White Weenie)

He gets **Soltari Priest**, **Soltari Priest**, **Serra Avenger**, **Serra Avenger**, and **Knight of the Holy Nimbus**. I get **Llanowar Elves**, **Yavimaya Dryad**, **Lys Alana Huntmaster**, **Gilt-Leaf Ambush**, and double **Scryb Ranger**. The Rangers untap **Llanowar Elves** twice, and I play **Overrun** and **Imperious Perfect** to do 26 points of trample damage the turn before I'm going to die, killing him from 17.

Record: 1-2

Game 4: varsity171 (Trefolk Elves)

He gets an early **Treefolk Harbinger**, and follows it with **Woodland Changeling**, **Essence Warden**, and **Jagged-Scar Archers** in following turns. I get a first-turn **Boreal Druid**, second-turn **Imperious Perfect**, third-turn face-down **Thelonite Hermit** and make a 2/2 Elf Warrior, fourth turn unmorph, fifth turn **Overrun** for 40 trample damage.

Record: 2-2

Game 5: enigma307 (Mono-Green Dryads)

He gets **Dryad Arbor** and puts **Blanchwood Armor** on it, and then gets another **Dryad Arbor** with **Yavimaya Dryad**. I get **Llanowar Elves** and **Scryb Ranger**, swing in for a few, drop double **Yavimaya Dryad**, and then play **Overrun** for the win.

Record: 3-2

The good news is that **Overrun** is fannnnntastic, and I'm able to turn games around in a single turn from a certain loss into a crushing win. The bad news is that I reallllly could use a way to kill smaller creatures, and green is pretty short on creature removal spells, no?

I take a look through green and artifact spells, and I eventually start taking a look at **Moonglove Extract**. Now I know what you're thinking —"**Moonglove Extract**, Ben? Are you serious? It's a three-mana **Seal of Fire**—it's horrible!"

Well, it's not the best compared to **Seal of Fire**, I'll give you that. It's not horrible, though, if you're on a budget and you're playing green. Back in the day, White and Black Weenie decks used to run a card from **Fallen Empires** called **Aeolipile** (look it up!). It was a two-mana artifact that cost one mana to use, and it sacrificed to deal 2 damage to target creature or player—in short, a rare version of **Moonglove Extract** that switched one mana of mana cost for one mana of activation cost.

I had two choices when decided if I wanted **Moonglove Extract** in my deck—did I want to keep the deck mono-green, or did I want to splash a color? In the end, I would rather give up a little *efficiency* to gain a lot of *consistency*. With the amount of green cost for my cards, I wanted to make sure I got all the green mana I needed every game, without the possibility of color screwing myself. What I needed was an early-game way to kill a creature, and **Moonglove Extract** was just that card—it costs two mana more than **Seal of Fire**, but it is colorless, usable in my mono-green deck, and fills my need just fine. Why would I disrupt the entire mana base of my deck just to splash four copies of one card (**Incinerate**? **Shock**?) that, in the context of what I needed, was only marginally better than **Moonglove Extract**?



Overrun Elf 2.0		
Main Deck 60 cards		
18 Forest	4 Boreal Druid	2 Gilt-Leaf Ambush
3 Pendelhaven	4 Imperious Perfect	4 Harmonize
21 lands	4 Llanowar Elves	4 Moonglove Extract
	3 Lys Alana Huntmaster	4 Overrun

3 Scryb Ranger
4 Thelonite Hermit
3 Yavimaya Dryad

14 other spells

25 creatures

Out: Wren's Run Packmaster, 3 Immaculate Magistrate, 1 Gilt-Leaf Ambush
In: 4 Moonglove Extract

Game 6: icabod99 (Black-Blue Discard)

I get a slow start with Yavimaya Dryad, followed by Llanowar Elves and Scryb Ranger. He plays Thieving Sprite, trades it with the Dryad, and proceeds to evoke Mournwhelk, Makeshift Mannequin on his Mournwhelk (which I kill by targeting with Scryb Ranger), evoke a second Mournwhelk, Nameless Inversion an Imperious Perfect, and Profane Command a Perfect, bringing back his Thieving Sprite.

To stay in this game, I basically hit him for 2 a turn with Scryb Ranger and Llanowar Elves, use Harmonize to keep my hand full, and start getting past his Thieving Sprite with Pendelhaven, once it comes back via Profane Command. Early on I draw an Overrun, and the plan is to make sure I don't discard the Overrun no matter what—this means untapping my Llanowar Elves with Scryb Ranger during icabod99's turn, just to get an extra Forest into my hand to discard! After over a dozen turns, I finally get within Overrun range, and break through past a newly played Mulldrifter.

Record: 4-2

Game 7: kokeryou (Mono-Green Haste)

He drops Mire Boa and brings double Primal Formage on the consecutive turns afterwards. I get Llanowar Elves and double Boreal Druid and use them to get out a quick unmorphed Thelonite Hermit. Kokeryou puts Uktabi Drake onto the board, Giant Growths it, and hits me for 11. On my counterattack, kokeryou blocks my tokens with one of his Primal Formages, and then I drop and use Moonglove Extract to kill the other. I get knocked down to 3 before I finally overwhelm kokeryou with sheer numbers thanks to a Lys Alana Huntmaster and an Imperious Perfect.

Record: 5-2

Game 8: Frank Dead (Green-White Kithkin)

Frank gets a first-turn Goldmeadow Stalwart revealing Knight of Meadowgrain, but he never draws a second white mana the entire game. Instead, he gets Gaddock Teeg (which shuts down my Overrun), Kithkin Mourncaller, Goldmeadow Harrier, and Oblivion Ring (taking out my Lys Alana Huntmaster). I get Pendelhaven, Gilt-Leaf Ambush, Llanowar Elves and Scryb Ranger, and just start pushing through damage each turn thanks to Pendelhaven. Eventually, he gets Loxodon Warhammer, but I get (and unmorph) Thelonite Hermit, allowing me to outrace his equipped Teeg.

Record: 6-2

Game 9: CryDoc (Black-White-Green Dragons)

His only play of the game is Search for Tomorrow, and so the game ends on turn five with Thelonite Hermit (unmorphed), four Saprolings, Yavimaya Dryad and Boreal Druid attacking, and Moonglove Extract taking him from 2 to 0 after the attack. After the game, CryDoc tells me that he's playing Dragons—otherwise, all I saw was two Forests, a Plains and a Swamp.

Record: 7-2

Game 10: nagi100 (Red-Green Snow)

I get a Yavimaya Dryad and a Scryb Ranger, and start hitting him for three a turn. He gets Brooding Saurian, double Phyrexian Ironfoot, and Karplusan Strider, but is held back by my unmorphed Thelonite Hermit and a Lys Alana Huntmaster. Bad news for me though—a main-phase Sulfurous Blast takes out my entire team, and leaves me open to get killed in one swing. Frown town!

Record: 7-3

Overrun was definitely the key card for this deck, and man-oh-man was it as good in Constructed as I remembered it being in Limited. If you like making your underdog men into the big bullies on the block, definitely pick up this deck and give it a whirl.

This leads me to the Intruder Alarm deck, which also features Elves, but for a much different purpose than attacking for 20! If you recall, I was periodically going to revisit my Extended budget Intruder Alarm / Sprout Swarm deck to play it in the competitive room of Magic Online. After the last time the deck showed up, I made the following changes:



Main Deck 60 cards		Sideboard
4 Dryad Arbor	4 Intruder Alarm	3 Blasting Station
12 Forest	4 Remand	4 Compost
8 Island	4 Sprout Swarm	4 Krosan Grip
24 lands	3 Utopia Sprawl	4 Tormod's Crypt
	15 other spells	15 sideboard cards
3 Boreal Druid		
4 Essence Warden		
4 Imperious Perfect		
4 Llanowar Elves		
3 Merfolk Looter		
3 Thought Courier		
21 creatures		

Out: 2 Forest, 4 Forbidden Orchard, 4 Wren's Run Vanquisher

In: 3 Thought Courier, 4 Dryad Arbor, 3 Island

I was tired of getting my face beaten in by my own **Forbidden Orchard** tokens, so that was straight out. Someone suggested in the forums that the reason my **Merfolk Looters** died so often was because of how good they were, so I decided to add three more of the same, in the form of **Thought Courier**. **Dryad Arbors** came straight in for **Forbidden Orchard**—they function as a creature that can untap with **Intruder Alarm** in play, and can combo with **Imperious Perfect** to make infinite Elves. I also yanked the **Vanquishers**, and in their place added **Islands**, to smooth out the mana base now that **Orchards** were out and more blue cards were in.

Match 1: Dace_tnl (Mind's Desire Storm)

Game 1: I get down **Dryad Arbor** and **Essence Warden** and lose both of them to a **Pyroclasm**, courtesy of **Burning Wish**. I drop **Intruder Alarm** and **Imperious Perfect**, and **Dace_tnl** tries to combo off, playing **Mind's Desire** for four. His four cards are two Invasion sac lands, a **Chromatic Sphere**, and another **Burning Wish**. He gets **Hull Breach** with the other **Wish** and kills my **Intruder Alarm**, but I have a second **Intruder Alarm** and draw a concession when I show **Sprout Swarm**.

Game 2: I draw three **Remands** thanks to an active **Merfolk Looter**, allowing me to stymie him for long enough to go infinite with **Intruder Alarm** and **Sprout Swarm**.

Record: 1-0

Match 2: Kapitan Dymano (Mono-Red Gargadon)

Game 1: I get run over by **Gathan Raiders**, **Ghitu Encampment**, and **Keldon Marauders**.

Game 2: I get three **Dryad Arbors** killed early, but a pair of **Essence Wardens** gets me close to 30 life before he plays **Pyroclasm**. We then go back and forth for a long time—he keeps killing my **Merfolk Looters** / **Thought Couriers**, and I get **Sprout Swarm** with fourteen mana to keep from getting hit by his Gargadon and Raiders (which are 5/5). Eventually, he gets down double Gargadon, Raiders, and a **Ghitu Encampment**, and I can't get enough blockers to stop from being killed.

Record: 1-1

Match 3: traumkrieger (Mind's Desire Combo)

Game 1: I have the absolute perfect draw: turn one **Llanowar Elves**, into turn two **Utopia Sprawl** plus **Imperious Perfect**, with an **Intruder Alarm** in hand. He goes first, and he puts down an **Invasion** sac land turn one, plays another on turn two along with a **Simian Spirit Guide** and a **Burning Wish** for **Channel the Suns**, and then kills me on turn three with **Mind's Desire**.

Frown town again!

Game 2: He triple mulligans and still beats me, as I have a slow draw this hand.

Record: 1-2

Notes:

Dryad Arbor dies...a lot! I hated being effectively hit by **Stone Rain** every time someone killed **Dryad Arbor**, so I think that it needs to go—but what to replace it with? **Utopia Sprawl** on **Dryad Arbor** is cool once you start get **Intruder Alarm** out, though.

Merfolk Looter / **Thought Courier** is great! It allowed me to dig for the cards I needed when I needed them, and they were definitely a strong addition to the deck. In fact, it's been suggested that the Elves leave the deck in favor of **Merfolk** once **Morningtide** is legal. While I don't think the Elves would go entirely, a combination of **Stonybrook Schoolmaster** and **Drowner of Secrets** would also go infinite with **Intruder Alarm**.

I don't really have any sideboard against **Mind's Desire**, or an aggro deck! In all three matches I played, my sideboard was completely useless. I need to find cards that can help me disrupt **Mind's Desire** decks—they are going to be played all over the place now that the deck finished extremely well at [Grand Prix–Vancouver](#).

See you all next week!

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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