

Miracle Loam Primer

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github.com/wenxuanjia/Miracle_Loam_Primer

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Miracle Loam is a novel strategy of the Legacy format of the game Magic: The Gathering. It can be superficially understood as a combination of two control archetypes: Miracle and Four-color Loam. The deck still has a control game plan and wins by card advantage or stack-locking, depending on opponent's strategy. It mainly relies on the synergies among 2-mana spells, for example, Counterbalance, Scroll Rack, and Life from the Loam, in addition to enablers like Brainstorm and Sylvan Library. The play experiences are interactive, non-repetitive, and full of mental games. But it takes a lot of brain energy and careful planning to successfully navigate while suffering from a slow winning condition. Overall, it's a fun and functional deck that contributes to the diversity of the Legacy metagame.

Sample deck list:



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1 Introduction

Magic: The Gathering (MTG) is the first trading card game invented by Dr. Richard Garfield in 1993. During its 30 years of history, it has printed over 20 billion cards to more than 20 million players around the world. The player in the game takes the role of a magician, who organizes limited resources such as life, mana, and cards to defeat the opponent by reducing his or her life to zero. To do this, the player uses limited mana resources to summon creatures, cast spells, and use them to deal damage to opponents. The trading card game is like a combination of poker and chess. Poker is more random and has hidden information, but players suffer from garbage time when their hands are not competitive. Chess requires the full attention of players all the time so no garbage time, but it lacks randomness and thus is less fun to play. MTG has the advantage of both while avoiding their cons. Therefore, it's the best game ever designed in my opinion.

Thanks to its rich history, MTG has over 25,000 unique cards in its card pool. The grand structure and complexity lead to over ten formats that have different pool sizes for different audiences and communities. Formats that include all cards ever printed are called eternal formats, and Legacy is one of them. Legacy is the favorite format of mine for its large card pool and infinite possibilities of creativity. It's the most intriguing way to enjoy MTG.

The name of this Legacy deck “Miracle Loam” is taken from the two mainstream control archetypes, Miracle and Four-color Loam. Before getting deeper into history, let's introduce the rough idea of these two control archetypes.

1.1 Miracle

Miracle has existed since the miracle mechanic was first introduced in the set “Avacyn Restored” in 2012. The miracle mechanic allows players to cast a very powerful spell at an extremely low cost, given that the spell is the first card drawn this turn. It creates such a breathtaking moment when the game could be completely overturned by a powerful miracle spell out of nowhere, just like a real miracle. It was the design of the miracle mechanic that initially got me into this game.

Although the traditional Miracle strategy barely takes up any percentage in the current metagame (due to the power inflation thanks to “Modern Horizons” sets), its deck design is still one-of-a-kind and forms the backbone of our deck “Miracle Loam”. There are many excellent primer articles on Miracle [1-3], so I will only introduce the basic ideas here. The deck is a full control deck with a draw-go playstyle. It is mostly made of counter spells that protect the stack and removal spells to get rid of resolved permanents passing through the stack. These fair exchanges of cards are usually one for one until the Miracle finds one of its engines to gain card advantage, for example, Counterbalance or Jace, the Mind Sculptor.

Once the Miracle resolves the engine and untaps, it has both mana and card advantage and will not lose easily. The opponent is technically not dead at the moment, but the winning balance will tilt towards Miracle player slowly turn-by-turn until the opponent is totally grinded out.

To ensure that we always have the right answers for opponent's threats, the Miracle deck contains a lot of cantrip spells to smooth out inconsistencies. These spells include Brainstorm, Ponder, and Sensei's Diving Tops. Coincidentally, these cantrips also have the ability to manipulate the top card of the library, which works fantastically with the miracle mechanic and Counterbalance. We can easily set up the miracle spells on top of the library without relying on the small probability of a "natural miracle". A brainstorm can bluff opponents thinking that we might set up the miracle. Lots of readings of body language happen in a game with Miracles.

Miracle players are often criticized for slow-playing. In a large tournament, the remaining overtime matches of each Swiss round always have Miracle players in it. Players piloting decks favoring against Miracle sometimes drew their first Swiss round on purpose, so that their later pairings were those who also drew their games, namely Miracle players. It's not the fault of the player because the idea of the deck is to be careful and patient. The priority is to not die and accumulate small advantages to eventually control the game. It is perhaps the most conservative and defensive strategy that ever existed.

1.2 Four-color Loam

Four-color Loam first appeared in 2013 at the SCG Open Series Atlanta by Jeff Hoogland [4]. It also belongs to the control archetype, but it's fundamentally different from Miracles. Some primer articles on Four-color Loam can be found here [5-6]. Note that they are fairly outdated because the deck is not powerful enough to take any spots in the current metagame. Much has changed since the printing of "Modern Horizons" sets.

Unlike Miracles that controls the game by countering heavily, Four-color Loam doesn't have any protection of the stack given that it's not a blue deck. Instead, it relies on the Chalice of the Void to forbid spells of a particular mana value once and for all. Legacy is a fast format thanks to numerous powerful 1-mana spells. Therefore, a common choice of charge counters on Chalice is 1. This protection is not defensive but rather preventive. Chalice on 1 can be extremely powerful against some decks that have more than a third of their spells being 1-mana, but it can also be completely useless against, for example, mirror decks. Chalice of the void also requires the deck itself to not have any 1-mana spells to prevent self-conflicting. You have to give up a lot to run four Chalices in the main deck.

It requires mana acceleration to cast Chalice on 1 on the first turn. One way is to use 2-mana lands such as Ancient Tomb and City of Traitors. However, they severely limit the color choices and the total number of spells we can cast. They belong to decks that win by

resolving three or four spells such as Mono-red Prison. One way to achieve 2 mana on turn 1 is to use Mox Diamond, but it requires a lot of lands in the deck. Four-color Loam embraces the lands system for Mox Diamond and includes cards like Life from the Loam, Wasteland, and Knight of the Reliquary. Lots of land toolboxes can be incorporated into the Four-color Loam for the control elements.

As for the card-advantage engine, Four-color Loam uses 2-mana permanents such as Dark Confidant and Sylvan Library. Unlike Miracles that resolve its engine at a much later game when everything is stabilized, Four-color Loam has the capability to resolve their engine on turn 1 with Mox. Turn-1 Sylvan Library gives us 3 mana and 2 more cards on turn 2, getting ahead of opponents on both mana and cards at a very early stage of the game. It's very difficult for the opponent to fight back once we've established the advantage. Newer Loam decks also use 3 or 4 mana planeswalkers to set up early advantage, for example, Grist, the Hunger Tide or Minsc & Boo, Timeless Heroes.

The drawback of Four-color Loam is obvious. Its performance depends heavily on the metagame, aka how many 1-mana spells are used in the popular decks. Chalice is useless when opponents are not stuck with a hand full of one-drops. In addition, the deck is very weak against fast combo decks because it doesn't have Force of Wills. The fluctuations of the deck are wild. If we fail to get the lead at early turns, we can't rely too much on the topdecking because of large percentage of lands as week as zero cantrips. The playstyle of Four-color Loam resembles GWx Depths but it lacks a combo finish. Still, it's a fun control deck that wins much faster than Miracles when we are ahead.

1.3 History of Miracle Loam

As the name implies, Miracle Loam is inspired from Miracles and Four-color Loam. Although I haven't found the same design prior to mine, the history of the early shape can be traced back to 2016. War.MasteR. first added Mox Diamond and Life from the Loam to the Miracle shell and made 5-0 in the MTGO Legacy League [7]. The scroll rack was not used in the deck but three Jace, the Mind Sculptor were used to put cards back to the top of library. takuto8240 was another player devoted to Counterbalance and Scroll Rack in 2022 [8]. However, the addition of Scroll Rack was mostly for its combo with God-Eternal Kefnet and Time Warp. No Life from the Loam was ever used by takuto8240.

When Sensei's Diving Top was banned in 2017, Miracle players searched for lots of alternatives to replace the Top. Scroll Rack was tested but it was far worse than the Top from all angles of perspective. A successful example of Scroll Rack is the Parfait deck in Premodern format, which uses it to shuffle back extra lands from Land Tax. Is there a way to abuse Scroll Rack not only for the Counterbalance and miracle set-up, but also for a card-advantage engine? The answer is Life from the Loam. We will discuss these cards in depth in the next section.

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2 Deck Design

Miracle Loam is more than a simple mixing of Miracle and Four-color Loam. Actually, these decks have different game plans and can be easily self-conflicting if put together by brute force. These will be revealed as we introduce the deck components.

2.1 Mana base

There are 21 lands + 3 Mox Diamond in the main deck. This ratio is against the intuition of most players who use Mox Diamond, as they always claim that you need at least 28 lands to run Moxes in a 60 deck (to guarantee at least two lands in the opening hand, >95% probability). This is only true when we don't have cantrips to find the second land. With Brainstorm and Ponder, it is sometimes reasonable to keep a hand with a Mox and a one lander in certain scenarios. 24 zero-mana cards are already too much to expect a blind flip off Counterbalance with non-zero mana value.



3x Tropical Island

The color depths of Miracle Loam are blue > green > white >> fourth color. We absolutely need three Tropical Island instead of two, for the sake of Life from the Loam and Uro, Titan of Nature's Wrath. It's a very common situation when we have one Tropical Island and Loam in the graveyard (Wastelanded). If we dredge the Loam and accidentally mill the second Tropical, the third one is the only hope of getting any immediate green color. It's not possible to change one Tropical to a Forest, Yavimaya, Cradle of Growth, or Waterlogged Grove. The third Tropical also lets us play Loam and cast Uro in one turn to maximize land drops.



2x Tundra

Our main deck is not heavy on white as none of the single spell requires more than one white mana to cast. We put two Tundra in the main deck just in case one gets destroyed by opponent's Wasteland, etc. Three Tundra are a bit unnecessary and take up too much of the deck space.



1x Volcanic Island

This slot is for the fourth color in the deck. We won't need the fourth color in the main deck unless we attempt to cast Prismatic Ending to remove a 4-mana permanent (such as Karn, the Great Creator or Minsc & Boo, Timeless Heros). The fourth color in the current deck is red for sideboard Pyroblast and Minsc & Boo. We can also replace it with Underground Sea for sideboard cards like Orcish Bowmaster, etc. Or no fourth color at all, just use Island as one basic land. Since the deck has Mox Diamond, it's worth it and not difficult to run the fourth color.



9x fetch lands:

4x Polluted Delta + 4x Scalding Tarn + 1x Flooded Strand

Fetch lands are essential to enable a reliable mana base. They are more than just fetching dual lands like Tundra; they provide fuels for Life from the Loam and shuffling opportunities for Brainstorm and more importantly, Counterbalance. Since all of the dual lands are islands, we can use non-Bant fetches to maximally confuse opponents without losing generality. Thus, we chose 4x Polluted Delta, 4x Scalding Tarn, and 1x Flooded Strand. 9 fetches are required to provide enough lands for Loam and thin the deck for Counterbalance while not burning too much life in aggro matchups.



1x Mystic Sanctuary

The single Mystic Sanctuary is the reason why we run no basic land and all dual islands. It's a very risky mana base to Blood Moon, Back to Basics, and Choke, but we absolutely need the first three lands to be islands to reliably enable Mystic Sanctuary on turn 4. It can set up for the Counterbalance and sometimes put Terminus on top of library when it is dredged to graveyard. In the sideboard game, it can bring back Pyroblast and Force of Vigor. It also combos with Uro, Titan of Nature's Wrath at late game (will be discussed in detail when we introduce Uro).



4x Wasteland

Wasteland was originally designed as a part of Four-color Loam deck. We will keep them in our main deck because they literally define the Legacy format. They provide us with a way to interact with lands that conventional Miracle deck can't do. For now, we will only treat it as a way to destroy opponent's nonbasic lands and disrupt their mana base. More details about using them properly will be discussed in the metagame section.



1x Lonely Sandbar

This is my pet card. It feeds Mox Diamond and serves as a card advantage engine with Life from the Loam. Most importantly, it enables an epic way to trigger miracle mechanics of Terminus. The best moment of miracles always come with Lonely Sandbar, for example, when Life from the Loam dredges Terminus. We can Loam back Lonely Sandbar and a fetch land, which enable an instant board swipe with Mystic Sanctuary. You can replace it with basic Island, Urza's Saga, Boseiju, Who Endures, etc.



3x Mox Diamond

Mox Diamond is also part of the Four-color Loam deck. However, we only run 3 of them because we only have 21 lands instead of 28. Mox raises the “upper bound” of the opening hand when combined with Life from the Loam, Sylvan Library, and sometimes even Counterbalance. We definitely need them to accelerate and not be clunky because we have ten 2-mana cards. However, they are extremely bad top deck cards. Four Moxes are too much for this deck.

2.2 Core Interactions

The core of Miracle Loam lies in 2-mana spells, aka Sylvan Library, Counterbalance, Scroll Rack, and Life from the Loam. I'll briefly introduce them and their role on the deck.



2x Sylvan Library

Sylvan Library is one of our card-advantage engines that also allows us to manipulate the top card of our library (for Terminus, Counterbalance, etc). Turn 1 Library with Mox is a very powerful play that gets us ahead of mana and cards. It's a powerful card against combo and control decks, but very bad against aggro decks. You never want to spend 2 mana and pay 4 life to cycle a card. Three Library would be a bit too many since their effects don't stack as neatly as, for example, Sphere of Resistance or Hardened Scales.



2x Counterbalance

Counterbalance protects the stack as a permanent. It requires us to guess opponent's next spell or control the mana value of the top cards of the library. It's also a pseudo card-advantage engine when we set it up with Scroll Rack or Sylvan Library. Similar to Sylvan Library, multiple counterbalances don't stack very well if we can't keep shuffling libraries at instant speeds. Two of them are enough.



2x Scroll Rack

Scroll Rack allows us to control the top cards of the library. When combined with counterbalance, they can soft-lock the opponent out of the game unless our hand is empty. It also combos with Life from the Loam as a very powerful card-advantage engine. In addition, Scroll Rack can put Terminus on top of the library to enable miracle mechanics. It's certainly not as good as Sensei's Divining Top, but Top can't combo with Life from the Loam. We put 2 in the main deck, since 1 Scroll Rack is often too few and requires tutor to find.



4x Life from the Loam

Life from the Loam represents the “Loam” part of the namesake of our deck. It has synergies with literally every card in our deck. The most unique combo is with Scroll Rack. With three other lands, these two-card combo allows for 3 mana drawing 3 new cards every turn. We can Loam back three lands every turn and replace them back on top of library with three new cards using Scroll Rack. Then next turn we can dredge them again with Loam. The process seems cluncky as we trade mana for cards, but free spells like Force of Will and Endurance help us gain back tempo.

The interaction between Life from the Loam and Sylvan Library requires a few lines of discussion. The official ruling regarding this question is quoted here:

“If you choose to draw two cards, then replace one or more of those draws with some other effect, the rest of Sylvan Library’s ability still happens. If you’ve actually drawn only one card that turn, you must choose that card and either pay 4 life or put it on top of your library. If you haven’t actually drawn any cards that turn, the rest of the ability has no effect.”

Sylvan Library triggers at the draw phase that asks us to draw two extra cards. We can replace any of the draw with dredge effect from Loam, and the Loam does NOT count as cards drawn this turn. Sylvan Library only checks cards drawn this turn to charge life points, which don’t include dredging. For example, if we choose to dredge two draws out of three draws from Sylvan Library, we only “draw” one card and can keep it for 4 life. If we dredge three Loam using Sylvan Library, we don’t draw any cards and keep three Loam for free, which could benefit us in certain cases.

The interaction seems to be very complicated if opponents have draw-limiting effects such as Narset, Parter of Veils. Without Sylvan Library, we can dredge Loam in our draw phase and still draw one card from ponder in our main phase. However, we can’t draw nor dredge Loam with Sylvan Library even if we dredge in our draw phase, since the Library asks us if we want to draw TWO cards simultaneously. We can draw one if we dredge first, but can’t draw TWO at the same time with Narset on the battlefield. We should always choose NOT to draw anything in response to Library trigger.

The interaction between Life from the Loam and miracle mechanics is also interesting. The dredge is a replace effect of the draw, so we never draw any cards in the turn if we keep dredging. We can ponder in main phase and trigger miracle if we draw Terminus with ponder. If we know the top card is Terminus, we can cast Uro, Titan of Nature’s Wrath and stack the sacrifice trigger first before drawing and triggering the board swipe. This detail should be kept in mind to avoid Uro being wiped out by Terminus.

With Scroll Rack, Life from the Loam can easily loop through the whole library. It's a very common case when we need to pay attention to amounts of cards in the library to not deck ourselves. Dredge mechanics can't help us because it doesn't work if we have less than 3 cards in the library. Scroll Rack can still be used unlike dredge. The right thing to do is to activate Scroll Rack in the upkeep phase and put cards back before drawing the empty library.

Scroll Rack with fetch lands can be tricky. Sometimes we might have no land in the deck to fetch for. We can activate Scroll Rack to put Mystic Sanctuary back to the library for the fetch land. In another situation, we should be careful that Scroll Rack might put the land we want to fetch to our hand, for example, using Scroll Rack to put Terminus on top of library on upkeep with a fetch land. If the Scroll Rack puts remaining Tundras from library to hand, we mana-screw ourselves with no fetchable white mana.



4x Uro, Titan of Nature's Wrath

Uro is our best card for the win condition. We have methods to gain mana/card advantage and protect ourselves with cards above, but we still need to win the game. Uro works very well with our Miracle Loam strategy. It gains life for Sylvan Library and helps our match-ups against aggro decks. Life from the Loam finds Uro by dredging it from the deck and fills our graveyard for it to escape. It can be pitched to Force of Will, Endurance. It's 3-mana cost also works great with Counterbalance because we don't have enough 3-mana spells in the deck.

We have a pseudo-infinite flashback spells at late game with Uro, Life from the Loam, Wasteland, and any spell. The effect is similar to Snapcaster Mage's ability that allows us to cast sorcery and instant spells from graveyard. To do this, we first fetch Mystic Sanctuary to put our desired spells on top of library. In the next turn, we can float a blue mana with Sanctuary and destroy it with our own Wasteland. Then we use the blue mana and one green to cast Loam and get back Wasteland and Sanctuary. We play Sanctuary to put used spells on top again and attack with Uro, whose trigger ability draws the spell and allows us to play Wasteland. In our next turn, we can dredge Loam in our draw step and the pseudo-infinite loop is done. It's very difficult for our opponent to win if we have Force of Will every turn. It's similar to the Cryptic Command loop in Modern format that leads to the banning of Mystic Sanctuary in Modern.

2.3 Control Spells

The Miracle Loam is still a slow control deck that needs to survive before doing any fun stuff we discussed above. This part of the deck is mostly inherited from Miracle deck. Some of the spells are very metagame-dependent.



4x Force of Will

There's no question that we need the whole set of Force of Will in the main deck. It saves our life again fast combo decks. We need it more than the traditional Miracle deck because we have ways to gain a lot of card advantages in the short term. Force of Will requires at least 20 blue cards in the main deck to pitch. We are currently running 20 blue spells:

8x Cantrips + 4x Force of Will + 4x Uro + 2x Counterbalance + 2x Teferi, Time Raveler



8x Cantrip spells:

4x Ponder + 4x Brainstorm

We need at least 20 blue spells to pitch to Force of Will. The pitched spell is not only a card disadvantage but also an opportunity cost. It's better to pitch a cheap blue card instead of an Uro, Titan of Nature's Wrath. In Legacy format, we have very powerful blue spells to filter out library and smooth out inconsistencies, which we call "cantrips". The best of them are Ponders and Brainstorms, so we run full set of each.

Ponder takes 1 mana that allows us to see a maximum of four cards on the top of library. It allows us to keep a 1-lander hand in certain matchups. It reduces the variance of opening hand and helps us set up Counterbalance and Terminus.

Brainstorm is a much better Scroll Rack. Drawing three cards and putting two on top is insane for only one blue mana. It is even an instant spell that sets up Counterbalance at instant speed to ensure a hard counter. We can also put extra lands from Life from the Loam or useless cards back to the top of library and shuffle/dredge them away. It's one of the most iconic cards ever designed.

Brainstorm has a “spooky” interaction with Sylvan Library that literally breaks the fundamental rule of Magic. Per the official ruling:

“Any cards drawn prior to Sylvan Library’s ability resolving, including in your upkeep or in response to Sylvan Library’s triggered ability, can be chosen to be put back using this effect. Sylvan Library’s controller is responsible for keeping these cards distinguishable in hand, such as by keeping them separate from cards that began the turn in hand.”

If we cast brainstorm before or in response to Sylvan Library’s trigger, we can technically shuffle our hand after resolving brainstorm and before the trigger resolves. If we crack a fetch land at this instant to shuffle our library, our Library trigger is now upgraded into a Brainstorm effect, since all cards in our hand are indistinguishable and could possibly be the cards drawn from Brainstorm previously. There are other tricks to abuse this “identical particles” property. It is confusing and controversial, so please always ask the judge if cards in the hand are considered distinguishable or indistinguishable in this situation. My opinion is that they should be indistinguishable, as they always are. It’s awkward to change the rule for this specific problem.



2x Terminus

The other half of our namesake. It’s the most powerful board swipe effect and can be cast with only one white mana. It doesn’t care if the creature has indestructible, hexproof, protection of everything, etc. Working out a miracle right before dying is the most thrilling experience in this game. We run 2 Terminus so we don’t need a tutor for it like Personal Tutor. It’s also possible to dredge it from the library and surprise opponents with Mystic Sanctuary. Terminus is the most powerful miracle card ever printed and the reason why we have the deck.



4x Swords to Plowshares

Best removal spells in Legacy format. One mana that exiles literally all creatures at instant speed is insane. The current Legacy is full of problematic creatures, so we definitely need the full set of them.



2x Teferi, Time Reveler

One of the best 3-mana planeswalker that deals with wide variety of permanents. It has nice synergy with Ponder when we have Counterbalance or cast Life from the Loam at the end of opponent's turn. They are not the core part of the main deck but can be lifesaving sometimes.



1x Prismatic Ending

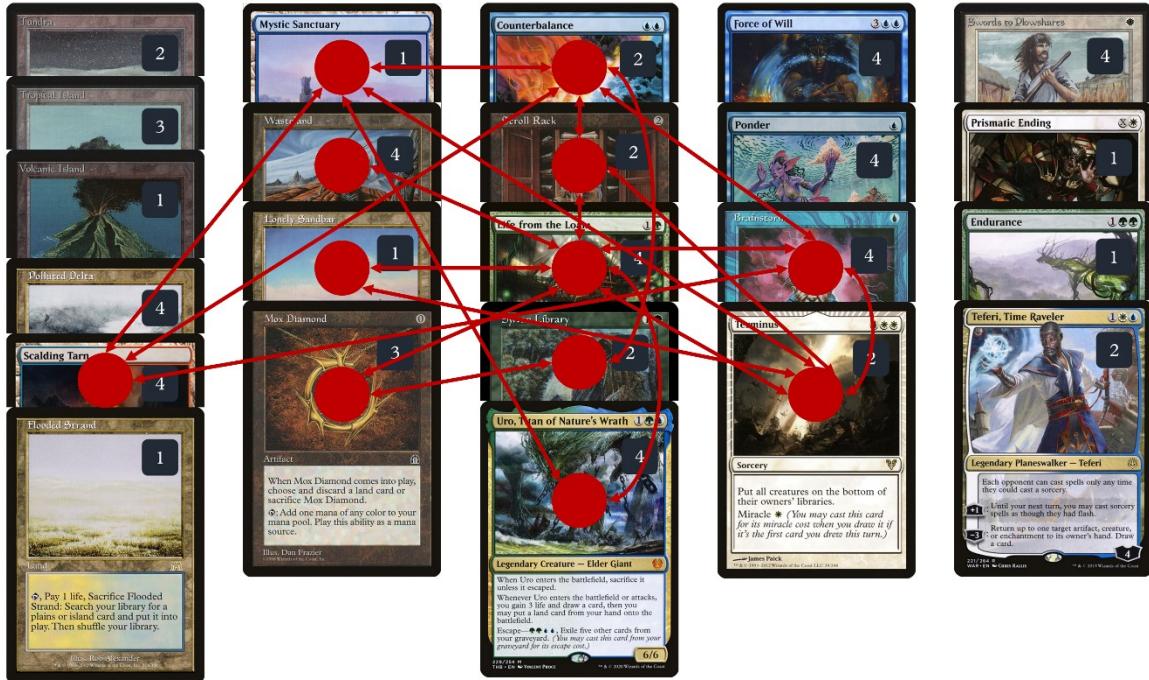
A universal solution to all problematic permanents. We need at least one in the deck to give us hope of dealing with unexpected situations. We can easily rebuy it with Mystic Sanctuary. The ratio of Swords to Plowshares to this card can be tuned to fit the metagames.



1x Endurance

We don't want to rely on Uro, Titan of Nature's Wrath as the only win condition of the main deck, so we have a single Endurance. As a slow control deck, it's necessary to have at least one card in the main deck to deal with graveyard. So here we are with a singleton Endurance in the main deck.

The interactions of Miracle Loam can be summarized in this picture. Each connection represents a synergy between the cards.



Hereby concludes our design of the main deck. The four cards at the end are flexible in some sense. The rest is tuned / optimized and shouldn't change unless there's a strictly better upgrade that shows up in the future.

2.4 Sideboard

Magic: The Gathering is a game of Best Of Three (BO3). A tournament is organized as a certain number of Swiss rounds, depending on the number of players attended. The winner of each Swiss round is a BO3, where players will use the same main deck for the first game and re-adjust the deck in the second or third game with a 15-card sideboard. For example, we can board in/out cards that are specifically good/bad to this opponent. So the sideboard games are more deciding than the mainboard game. Unlike the main deck, the sideboard is subject to changes at all times given the metagame. Nonetheless, the structure of the sideboard is rather fixed.

There are two thoughts for sideboard game plan. The first one is to keep sticking to the strategy of the main deck despite extra graveyard hates from opponents. The second one is to abandon the Miracle Loam strategy and change the game plan to a traditional control strategy. We will introduce and follow the second game plan here.



1x Carpet of Flowers

Blue is undoubtedly the most powerful color in Legacy, so it deserves a special position in the sideboard. Carpet of Flowers is a very powerful mana acceleration if opponent's play islands to cast blue spells. It fixes our unstable mana base full of nonbasic lands. As a control deck, this card produces huge mana advantage just by itself so we only have to worry about card advantage.



2x Pyroblast

Same reason as Carpet of Flowers. Pyroblast is needed to deal with blue decks and blue spells. Just read the card and you'll see how much the Pyroblast hates blue.



1x Counterbalance

As introduced previously, Counterbalance is a great card against combo and control decks. It's a very annoying card that opponent has to remove before it counters too many of his or her spells. However, it's a card disadvantage if it fails to counter anything. It also doesn't solve problems that are already resolved and on the battlefield. So it's bad when on draw and terrible against Aggro decks.



1x Sylvan Library

Similar to Counterbalance, it's great against combo and control decks where life total is not relevant. However, it's extremely bad against Aggro decks that are trying to threaten life total.



1x Torpor Orb

Our deck has Mox Diamond that allows us to cast Torpor Orb on turn 1. Current metagame is creature-heavy, and most of creatures have enter-the-battlefield trigger ability. It also stops certain combo completely such as Thassa's Oracle. In addition, it allows us to use Uro without worrying about graveyard hates.



1x Containment Priest

A very powerful permanent against certain combo decks. Turn 1 Containment Priest is possible with Mox Diamond. It also shuts down random stuff such as Aether Vial, Green Sun's Zenith, etc.



2x Endurance

A multi-functional card that acts as a graveyard hate for combo decks and a tricky blocker for Aggro decks (especially Delver).



2x Force of Vigor

Best green card to answer problematic enchantments and artifacts. It can also be recycled with Mystic Sanctuary. The second Force of Vigor wins certain games instantly.



2x Minsc & Boo, Timeless Heroes

This card is an engine by itself and snowballs very quickly. It's specifically against control decks, which would board in heavy graveyard hates against us. We could fight against their hates, but the better way is to pursue alternative routes like beating them with hamsters.



2x Triumph of Saint Katherine

This is the new card with miracle mechanics. A 5/5 lifelinker will make us unbeatable against Aggro decks. As a Miracle Loam deck, we have lots of methods to set up a miracle, so they fit us very well.

This concludes our 15-card sideboard. Again, this is just an example of sideboard. We should adapt it to the metagame we play at. Other candidates for mainboard and sideboard are shown in the next section.

2.5 Other Candidates

Here are the lists of other cards that can potentially deserve a position in main board or sideboard.



Personal tutor can help us search Terminus and Life from the Loam. It's also a 1-mana card for Counterbalance and a blue card for Force of Will. We can replace the second Terminus with Personal Tutor, but we lost the probability of cantripping into or dredging Terminus naturally. Personal Tutor loses card advantage, which is not acceptable in Legacy if the tutored card doesn't directly win the game. It's too narrow for Miracle Loam and fits Doomsday better.

2.6 Drawbacks & Dreams

Miracle Loam is a fun & functional deck to play. However, it also has its drawbacks that were discussed in the Abstract of this article. We will first discuss its flaws on the design level.

Mox Diamond and Counterbalance are intrinsically self-conflicting. Mox requires a lot of lands in the deck to have more than two lands in the opening hand. Counterbalance usually wants to flip a non-zero mana value card to counter spells. There is no way to work around so we pick a middle ground (3 Mox, 21 lands) between Four-color Loam (4 Mox, 28 lands) and Miracles (0 Mox, 20 lands).

Some cards printed in the future that we can dream of:

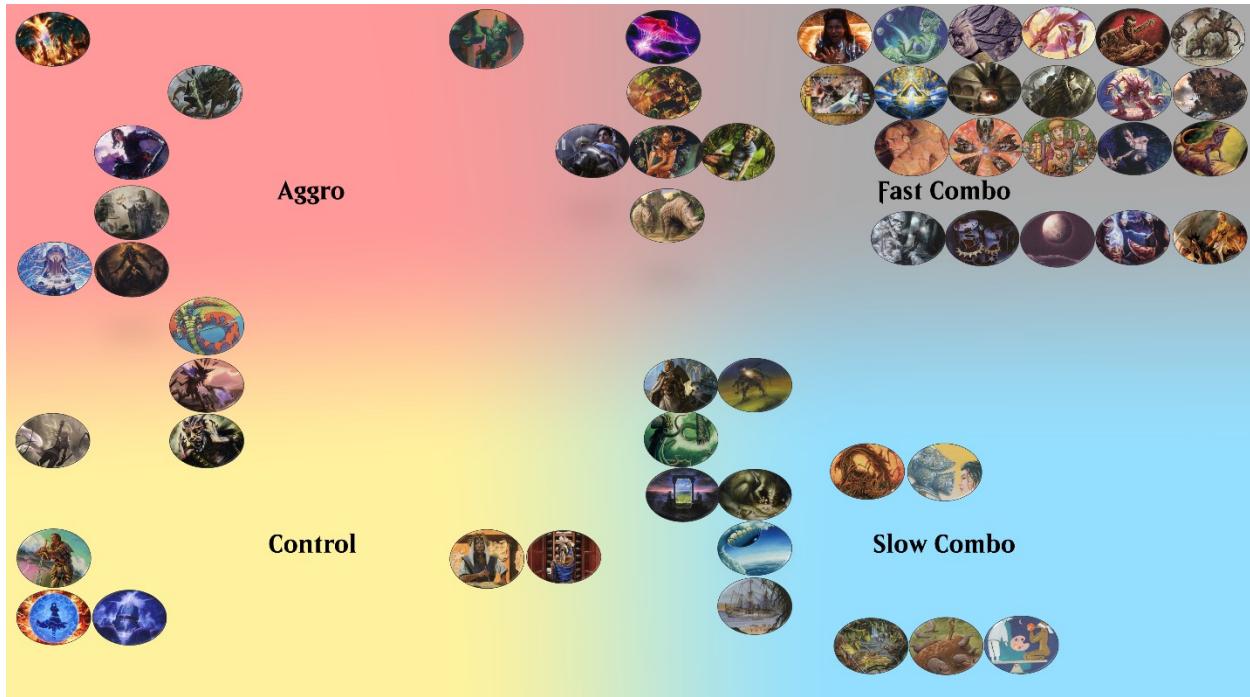
- A blue Dryad Arbor that can feed both Mox Diamond and Force of Will.
- A split card that is both a land and a low mana value spell. So it can be discarded for Mox Diamond and meaningful when Counterbalance flips it. If the spell is blue, it's even strictly better than the blue Dryad Arbor.
- A blue Scroll Rack that can be pitched to Force of Will if we don't have its combo pieces like Life from the Loam or Counterbalance.
- More Brainstorms, for example, a sorcery version of Brainstorm.

3 Metagame Analysis

The whole metagame can be simplified into four categories – aggro, fast combo, slow combo, and control. This categorization is slightly different from popular opinions, yet all the various classifications have limitations to represent such a diverse and complicated metagame. There are over 100 playable decks in Legacy. Each one is like a unique star in a high-dimensional Magic-verse.

- Aggro: decks that try to win the game as fast as possible by attacking opponents and reducing their life to 0. For example, Delver.
- Fast combo: decks that try to assemble a powerful combo game plan and create a huge advantage or winning the game. However, each combo component card is completely useless if not assembled. For example, Reanimator.
- Slow combo: decks that have other winning conditions in addition to combo-ing off. Each component card is less dead if the combo is not fully assembled. For example, Food chain.
- Control: decks that win the game by negating opponent’s game plan and grind them out by mana and card advantages. For example, Miracles.

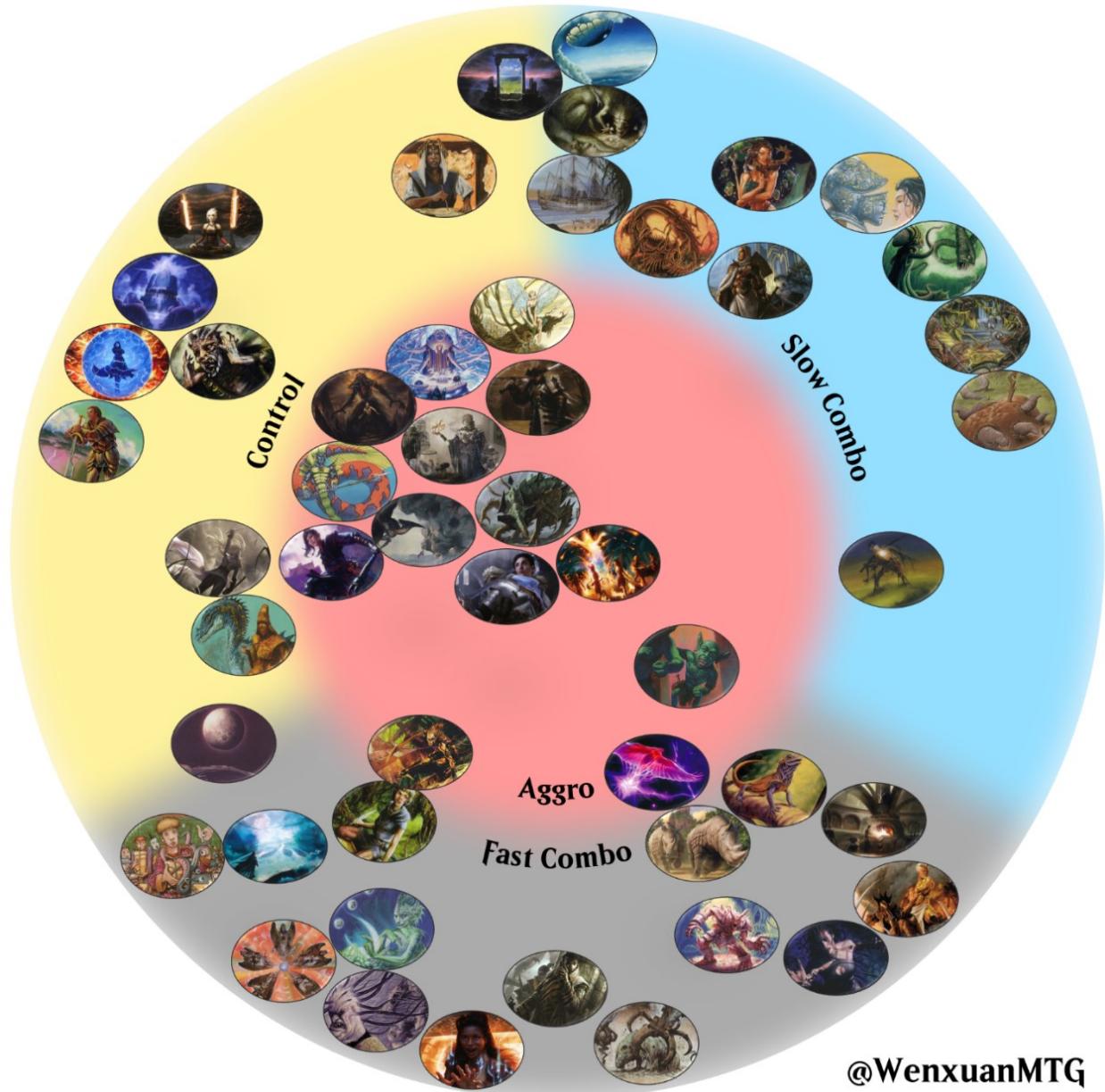
Here shows the distribution of popular decks in the four-dimensional spectrum.



They roughly form a rock-paper-scissor relation in the clockwise direction. For example, Delver is favored against Reanimator because it has a fast clock with tons of interaction spells. Reanimator is favored against Aluren because Aluren combos slower and could draw

dead combo pieces that are not interactive. Aluren is favored against Jeskai Control because it's difficult for control deck to defend both midrange and combo plans of Slow Combo decks. Jeskai Control is favored against Delver because it has lots of removals and planeswalkers that gain values slowly to grind Delver out. Note that this is a very simplified understanding of the metagame. Each particular game needs specific analysis on the decks from both sides.

A different view of the top 50 decks in the metagame:



@WenxuanMTG

In this circular diagram, each metagame type has more adjacent borders with three other types. Decks that share multiple identities are put on the boundaries. The current metagame is dominated by decks with a fast winning condition (Aggro and Combo decks). Conventional control decks like Miracles are very difficult to survive in the current metagame.

I'll delve into these four archetypes separately in the following sections. I'll provide sideboard guided and tips for each deck.

3.1 Aggro

Aggro strategy is probably closest to what Richard Garfield initially intended. The whole deck usually has fewer lands, and the end of the mana curve is less or equal to 3. Opponents using Aggro decks try to win the game as soon as possible by dumping all of their threats on the battlefield. The spells are very cheap and less powerful than expensive spells, so they have to win quickly before we unlock the four or five mana on our fourth or fifth turn.

To win against Aggro opponents, we need to be very careful on our life resources. We typically rely on Uro, Titan of Nature's Wrath instead of our Miracle Loam core interaction. Sylvan Library is the worst card in our deck, along with Scroll Rack. Mox Diamond is very helpful accelerating us to four mana. The card advantage usually doesn't matter too much. Our goal is to stabilize the game before finding Uro. We are generally even or favor against Aggro archetype.

General tips:

- Never keep a 7-card opening hand with Terminus (and no Brainstorm, Scroll Rack), even when on draw.
- Get white mana available as soon as possible. The next draw could possibly be a miracle card.



8-Cast

On play:

- Out: -2 Counterbalance, -2 Scroll Rack, -2 Life from the Loam
- In: +2 Force of Vigor, +2 Pyroblast, +1 Endurance, +1 Minsc & Boo, Timeless Hero

On draw:

- Out: -2 Counterbalance, -2 Scroll Rack, -1 Sylvan Library, -1 Life from the Loam
- In: +2 Force of Vigor, +2 Pyroblast, +1 Endurance, +1 Minsc & Boo, Timeless Heros

Tips:

- Uro, Titan of Nature's Wrath is the best card against 8-Cast. Chalice on 1 doesn't stop Uro.
- Remember to use Mystic Sanctuary to buy back Force of Vigor.



Burn

On play:

- Out: -2 Sylvan Library, -2 Scroll Rack, -1 Life from the Loam
- In: +2 Triumph of Saint Katherine, +2 Force of Vigor, +1 Endurance

On draw:

- Out: -2 Sylvan Library, -2 Scroll Rack, -2 Life from the Loam
- In: +2 Triumph of Saint Katherine, +2 Force of Vigor, +1 Endurance, +1 Containment Priest

Tips:

- Don't make unnecessary land drops! Always beware of Price of Progress.
- Eidolon of the Great Revel is an enchantment and can be hit by Force of Vigor.
- Prepare to Sword your own Uro, so stack Uro's draw trigger first.
- It's OK to lose if opponent has exactly three lands and dump all spells. It's their nut draw and we need something nutty to beat that.



Death's Shadow

On play:

- Out: -2 Sylvan Library, -2 Scroll Rack, -2 Life from the Loam
- In: +2 Triumph of Saint Katherine, +2 Endurance, +1 Pyroblast, +1 Carpet of Flowers

On draw:

- Out: -2 Sylvan Library, -2 Scroll Rack, -2 Life from the Loam
- In: +2 Triumph of Saint Katherine, +2 Endurance, +1 Pyroblast, +1 Carpet of Flowers

Tips:

- If opponent is not running Delver of Secrets, consider having 1 Counterbalance when on play.
- Sometimes it's worth casting Endurance targeting ourselves to protect from Surgical Extractions.
- Wasteland opponent's Urza's Saga in response to its first trigger, so opponent has one less mana.



Delver

On play:

- Out: -2 Sylvan Library, -2 Scroll Rack, -2 Life from the Loam, -1 Counterbalance
- In: +1 Carpet of Flowers, +2 Pyroblast, +2 Endurance, +2 Triumph of Saint Katherine

On draw:

- Out: -2 Sylvan Library, -2 Scroll Rack, -1 Life from the Loam, -2 Counterbalance
- In: +1 Carpet of Flowers, +2 Pyroblast, +2 Endurance, +2 Triumph of Saint Katherine

Tips:

- Most of the games lost is due to mana screw. We won't lose easily if our mana is working.
- Never try to win with Wasteland when on draw! Sometimes it's better to not Wasteland if opponent already has creatures on battlefield, to deal with Daze.
- Always Force of Will the second Delver or Dragon's Rage Channeler, if you don't have removal spells.
- Beware of opponent's Wasteland + Daze. Crack your remaining fetch land if you see opponent's Wasteland open.
- Wasteland opponent's only Volcanic Island and skip phase before casting Uro (avoid getting Pyroblasted)
- (Grixis Delver) Beware of Orcish Bowmaster. Cast Brainstorm when opponent has no 2 mana open (in response to a fetch land, etc).



Eldrazi

On play:

- Out: 2x Counterbalance, 2x Life from the Loam, 2x Sylvan Library
- In: 2x Endurance, 2x Minsc & Boo, Timeless Heroes, 2x Triumph of Saint Katherine

On draw:

- Out: 2x Counterbalance, 2x Life from the Loam, 2x Sylvan Library
- In: 2x Endurance, 2x Minsc & Boo, Timeless Heroes, 2x Triumph of Saint Katherine

Tips:

- It's similar to Mono-Red Prison, which tries to resolve three spells on their first three turns. We need removals and Force of Will to stop this. Wasteland is great.



Goblin

On play:

- Out: -2 Sylvan Library, -2 Scroll Rack, -2 Life from the Loam
- In: +1 Containment Priest, +1 Torpor Orb, +2 Endurance, +2 Triumph of Saint Katherine

On draw:

- Out: -2 Counterbalance, -2 Sylvan Library, -2 Life from the Loam
- In: +1 Containment Priest, +1 Torpor Orb, +2 Endurance, +2 Triumph of Saint Katherine

Tips:

- Torpor Orb is fantastic.
- When on draw, we might need Terminus badly.



Humans

On play:

- Out: 2x Sylvan Library, 2x Counterbalance, 2x Life from the Loam
- In: 2x Endurance, 2x Minsc & Boo, Timeless Heroes, 2x Triumph of Saint Katherine

On draw:

- Out: 2x Sylvan Library, 2x Counterbalance, 2x Life from the Loam
- In: 2x Endurance, 2x Minsc & Boo, Timeless Heroes, 2x Triumph of Saint Katherine

Tips:

- This deck is similar to Death and Taxes, except that they are vulnerable to Wasteland.



Infect

On play:

- Out: -2 Scroll Rack, -2 Life from the Loam, -1 Uro, Titan of Nature's Wrath
- In: +1 Carpet of Flowers, +1 Pyroblast, +1 Sylvan Library, +2 Endurance

On draw:

- Out: -2 Scroll Rack, -2 Life from the Loam, -1 Uro, Titan of Nature's Wrath
- In: +1 Carpet of Flowers, +1 Pyroblast, +1 Sylvan Library, +2 Endurance

Tips:

- Teferi, Time Raveler is the best card against this deck.



Initiative

On play:

- Out: 2x Counterbalance, 2x Scroll Rack, 2x Life from the Loam, 2x Sylvan Library
- In: 1x Torpor Orb, 1x Containment Priest, 2x Force of Vigor, 2x Triumph of Saint Katherine, 1x Endurance, 1x Minsc & Boo, Timeless Heroes

On draw:

- Out: 2x Counterbalance, 2x Scroll Rack, 2x Life from the Loam, 2x Sylvan Library
- In: 1x Torpor Orb, 1x Containment Priest, 2x Force of Vigor, 2x Triumph of Saint Katherine, 2x Endurance

Tips:

- Containment Priest can stop Fable of the Mirror-Breaker from flipping. It also stops the last ability of the Undercity.



Maverick

On play:

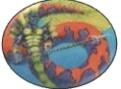
- Out: 2x Counterbalance, 2x Scroll Rack, 2x Life from the Loam
- In: 1x Containment Priest, 1x Force of Vigor, 2x Triumph of Saint Katherine, 2x Minsc & Boo, Timeless Heroes

On draw:

- Out: 2x Counterbalance, 2x Scroll Rack, 2x Life from the Loam
- In: 1x Containment Priest, 2x Force of Vigor, 2x Triumph of Saint Katherine, 1x Endurance

Tips:

- Containment Priest can stop Green Sun's Zenith.
- Beware of Choke.



Merfolk

On play:

- Out: -2 Sylvan Library, -2 Scroll Rack, -2 Life from the Loam, -1 Counterbalance
- In: +1 Carpet of Flowers, +2 Pyroblast, +2 Endurance, +2 Triumph of Saint Katherine

On draw:

- Out: -2 Sylvan Library, -2 Scroll Rack, -1 Life from the Loam, -2 Counterbalance
- In: +1 Carpet of Flowers, +2 Pyroblast, +2 Endurance, +2 Triumph of Saint Katherine

Tips:

- Not super familiar with Merfolk. Need to collect more data.



Ninja

On play:

- Out: 2x Counterbalance, 2x Scroll Rack, 2x Life from the Loam
- In: 1x Carpet of Flowers, 2x Pyroblast, 1x Containment Priest, 1x Endurance, 1x Minsc & Boo, Timeless Heroes

On draw:

- Out: 2x Counterbalance, 2x Scroll Rack, 2x Life from the Loam
- In: 1x Carpet of Flowers, 2x Pyroblast, 1x Containment Priest, 2x Endurance

Tips:

- Don't forget that the Ornithopter can be cracked by Retrofitter Foundry. Remove it before Foundry enters the battlefield.
- Save Prismatic Ending for Retrofitter Foundry, which is very problematic.
- Don't wait to remove creatures after blockers are declared. Opponent can Ninjutsu in response.
- Beware that opponent can Ninjutsu again on the Ninjutsu creature. Watch out for opponent's unspent mana.



Phoenix

On play:

- Out: -2 Sylvan Library, -2 Scroll Rack, -2 Life from the Loam
- In: +1 Carpet of Flowers, +1 Pyroblast, +2 Endurance, +2 Triumph of Saint Katherine

On draw:

- Out: -1 Counterbalance, -1 Sylvan Library, -2 Scroll Rack, -2 Life from the Loam
- In: +1 Carpet of Flowers, +1 Pyroblast, +2 Endurance, +2 Triumph of Saint Katherine

Tips:

- Some Phoenix lists only have 4 creatures, so they are more like combo decks. In that case, we should burn life to draw cards via Sylvan Library.



Slivers

On play:

- Out: -2 Sylvan Library, -2 Life from the Loam
- In: +2 Endurance, +2 Triumph of Saint Katherine

On draw:

- Out: -1 Counterbalance, -2 Sylvan Library, -2 Life from the Loam
- In: +1 Containment Priest, +2 Endurance, +2 Triumph of Saint Katherine

Tips:

- Terminus is our best bet, so we keep Scroll Rack all the time.

3.2 Fast Combo

Fast combo decks are extremely straightforward. It has only one game plan – assemble the full combo in hand and resolve it. If we can disrupt the combo, it's difficult for opponents to reassemble another one quickly. Therefore, the only goal for us is to stop the combo.

Sylvan Library and Counterbalance are our best tools. Our life resource is not relevant in this matchup. Besides these permanents, we also have spell disruptions like Force of Will and Endurance. We are very favored against Fast Combo archetype.

General tips:

- Read your opponent's face and reaction before he or she announces to keep or mulligan. It tells a lot of information about their hand quality.



Ad Nauseam Tendrils

On play:

- Out: 2x Terminus, 4x Swords to Plowshares, 2x Life from the Loam
- In: 1x Counterbalance, 1x Sylvan Library, 2x Pyroblast, 2x Endurance, 2x Force of Vigor

On draw:

- Out: 2x Terminus, 4x Swords to Plowshares, 2x Life from the Loam
- In: 1x Counterbalance, 1x Sylvan Library, 2x Pyroblast, 2x Endurance, 2x Force of Vigor

Tips:

- Counterbalance is the best card. We either put 0 on top if they need mana or put 2 on top if they need tutor spells.
- Need Prismatic Ending and Force of Vigor to remove their Carpet of Flowers.



Bomberman

On play:

- Out: 2x Counterbalance, 2x Scroll Rack, 2x Life from the Loam
- In: 1x Pyroblast, 1x Sylvan Library, 2x Force of Vigor, 2x Minsc & Boo, Timeless Heroes

On draw:

- Out: 2x Counterbalance, 2x Scroll Rack, 2x Life from the Loam
- In: 1x Sylvan Library, 1x Endurance, 2x Force of Vigor, 2x Minsc & Boo, Timeless Heroes

Tips:

- Their combo is pretty easy to break. Just watch out Karn, the Great Creator.



Doomsday

On play:

- Out: 2x Terminus, 1x Prismatic Ending, 2x Scroll Rack, 2x Life from the Loam
- In: 1x Carpet of Flowers, 2x Pyroblast, 1x Sylvan Library, 1x Counterbalance, 1x Containment Priest, 1x Torpor Orb

On draw:

- Out: 2x Terminus, 2x Swords to Plowshares, 1x Prismatic Ending, 2x Scroll Rack, 2x Life from the Loam
- In: 1x Carpet of Flowers, 2x Pyroblast, 1x Sylvan Library, 1x Counterbalance, 1x Containment Priest, 1x Torpor Orb, 2x Endurance

Tips:

- Doomsday has its own [theory](#). They will board in creatures like Sheodred, the Apocalypse, Orcish Bowmaster, Opposition Agent against us. We keep all four Swords to Plowshares when on play, since they are most likely not committed to the combo when on draw.
- They typically run 1x Cavern of Souls, 1x Lion's Eye Diamond, 2x Edge of Autumn, and 2x Thassa's Oracle. Count these first after they resolve Doomsday.



Dredge

On play:

- Out: 2x Terminus, 2x Scroll Rack, 3x Life from the Loam
- In: 1x Counterbalance, 1x Sylvan Library, 1x Containment Priest, 2x Endurance, 2x Triumph of Saint Katherine

On draw:

- Out: 2x Counterbalance, 2x Sylvan Library, 1x Life from the Loam
- In: 1x Containment Priest, 2x Endurance, 2x Triumph of Saint Katherine

Tips:

- Dredge is like a Reanimator but no protection. Counter their discard cards like Lion's Eye Diamond or Faithless Looting will slow them by a lot.



Elves

On play:

- Out: 1x Counterbalance, 2x Life from the Loam, 1x Endurance
- In: 1x Containment Priest, 1x Torpor Orb, 2x Triumph of Saint Katherine

On draw:

- Out: 1x Counterbalance, 2x Life from the Loam, 1x Endurance
- In: 1x Containment Priest, 1x Torpor Orb, 2x Triumph of Saint Katherine

Tips:

- One of the worst matchups. We can only win if opponent commits too much on the battlefield while we Terminus. Good Elves player won't do that.



Helm Combo

On play:

- Out: 2x Mox Diamond, 2x Scroll Rack, 2x Life from the Loam
- In: 2x Endurance, 2x Force of Vigor, 1x Minsc & Boo, Timeless Heroes, 1x Triumph of Saint Katherine

On draw:

- Out: 1x Mox Diamond, 2x Scroll Rack, 2x Life from the Loam
- In: 2x Endurance, 2x Force of Vigor, 1x Minsc & Boo, Timeless Heroes

Tips:

- Be careful of their Orcish Bowmaster and Opposition Agent.



High Tide

On play:

- Out: 2x Terminus, 2x Swords to Plowshares, 1x Life from the Loam
- In: 1x Carpet of Flowers, 2x Pyroblast, 1x Counterbalance, 1x Sylvan Library

On draw:

- Out: 2x Terminus, 2x Swords to Plowshares, 1x Life from the Loam
- In: 1x Carpet of Flowers, 2x Pyroblast, 1x Counterbalance, 1x Sylvan Library

Tips:

- Need Prismatic Ending to deal with Candelabra of Tawnos or Defense Grid.



Madness

On play:

- Out: 2x Scroll Rack, 2x Life from the Loam, 1x Prismatic Ending
- In: 1x Sylvan Library, 2x Endurance, 2x Triumph of Saint Katherine

On draw:

- Out: 2x Scroll Rack, 2x Life from the Loam, 1x Prismatic Ending
- In: 1x Sylvan Library, 2x Endurance, 2x Triumph of Saint Katherine

Tips:

- Always Force of Will their first Faithless Looting. The play style is similar to Reanimator.



Mono-Red Prison

On play:

- Out: 2x Counterbalance, 2x Scroll Rack, 2x Life from the Loam
- In: 2x Force of Vigor, 2x Minsc & Boo, Timeless Heroes, 2x Triumph of Saint Katherine

On draw:

- Out: 2x Counterbalance, 2x Scroll Rack, 2x Life from the Loam
- In: 2x Force of Vigor, 2x Minsc & Boo, Timeless Heroes, 2x Triumph of Saint Katherine

Tips:

- Really need Force of Will or Force of Vigor to keep a hand. Their goal is to resolve more than two important spells on their first two turns.
- Can't keep a hand with only Mox Diamond when playing on draw. Their Trinisphere would be devastating.



Mystic Forge Combo

On play:

- Out: 2x Counterbalance, 2x Scroll Rack, 2x Life from the Loam
- In: 1x Pyroblast, 1x Sylvan Library, 2x Force of Vigor, 2x Minsc & Boo, Timeless Heroes

On draw:

- Out: 2x Counterbalance, 2x Scroll Rack, 2x Life from the Loam
- In: 1x Sylvan Library, 1x Endurance, 2x Force of Vigor, 2x Minsc & Boo, Timeless Heroes

Tips:

- Pyroblast is for Echo of Eons.
- They need mana and card draw engine, similar to Enchantress. It's easier to break their card engine in this case.



Omni-Tell

On play:

- Out: 2x Terminus, 2x Scroll Rack, 2x Life from the Loam, 1x Endurance
- In: 1x Carpet of Flowers, 2x Pyroblast, 1x Sylvan Library, 1x Counterbalance, 2x Force of Vigor

On draw:

- Out: 2x Terminus, 2x Scroll Rack, 2x Life from the Loam, 1x Endurance, 1x Swords to Plowshares
- In: 1x Carpet of Flowers, 2x Pyroblast, 1x Sylvan Library, 1x Counterbalance, 2x Force of Vigor

Tips:

- Opponent probably runs Spell Pierce.



Oops All Spells

On play:

- Out: 2x Terminus, 2x Scroll Rack, 1x Lonely Sandbar, 1x Swords to Plowshares
- In: 1x Counterbalance, 1x Sylvan Library, 1x Containment Priest, 1x Torpor Orb, 2x Endurance

On draw:

- Out: 2x Terminus, 2x Scroll Rack, 1x Lonely Sandbar, 1x Swords to Plowshares
- In: 1x Counterbalance, 1x Sylvan Library, 1x Containment Priest, 1x Torpor Orb, 2x Endurance

Tips:

- One interaction is sometimes not enough to stop them.
- Can't board out all removal spells because they board in Xantid Swarm.
- Prioritize Counterbalance over Sylvan Library. Opponent casts a lot of various mana value cards to finish the combo, so it's not difficult for Counterbalance to hit one thing. 0-2 mana value are all effective.



Reanimator

On play:

- Out: 2x Terminus, 2x Scroll Rack, 1x Prismatic Ending
- In: 1x Counterbalance, 1x Sylvan Library, 1x Containment Priest, 2x Endurance

On draw:

- Out: 2x Terminus, 2x Scroll Rack, 1x Prismatic Ending
- In: 1x Counterbalance, 1x Sylvan Library, 1x Containment Priest, 2x Endurance

Tips:

- Read the opponent's body language when deciding to keep or mulligan. Sometimes, it's easy to tell if they have turn 1 or not.
- It's OK to Force of Will their Dark Ritual, only if we have a Wasteland follow-up on their nonbasic land.



Sneak and Show

On play:

- Out: 2x Terminus, 2x Scroll Rack, 2x Life from the Loam, 1x Endurance
- In: 1x Carpet of Flowers, 2x Pyroblast, 1x Sylvan Library, 1x Counterbalance, 1x Containment Priest, 1x Force of Vigor

On draw:

- Out: 2x Terminus, 2x Scroll Rack, 2x Life from the Loam, 1x Endurance, 1x Swords to Plowshares
- In: 1x Carpet of Flowers, 2x Pyroblast, 1x Sylvan Library, 1x Counterbalance, 1x Containment Priest, 2x Force of Vigor

Tips:

- Opponent will board in Defense Grid and Blood Moon, so we need Prismatic Ending and Force of Vigor.
- Wasteland their Volcanic Island and cast Uro on post-combat main phase.



The EPIC Storm / The EPIC Gamble

On play:

- Out: 2x Terminus, 2x Life from the Loam
- In: 1x Counterbalance, 1x Sylvan Library, 2x Force of Vigor

On draw:

- Out: 2x Terminus, 2x Life from the Loam
- In: 1x Counterbalance, 1x Sylvan Library, 2x Force of Vigor

Tips:

- Counterbalance is the best card. We either put 0 on top if they need mana or put 3 on top if they need tutor spells.



Turbo Depths

On play:

- Out: 2x Terminus, 2x Scroll Rack
- In: 1x Counterbalance, 1x Sylvan Library, 2x Triumph of Saint Katherine

On draw:

- Out: 2x Terminus, 2x Scroll Rack
- In: 1x Counterbalance, 1x Sylvan Library, 2x Triumph of Saint Katherine

Tips:

- Teferi, Time Raveler is an insane card against Turbo Depths.

3.3 Slow Combo

Slow Combo decks are sometimes understood as midrange decks. They have more ways to win the game besides combo-ing off. The deck doesn't have to mulligan aggressively to have the natural combo in hand. Their combo pieces are also not totally dead card if it's not fully assembled. However, multiple game plans can lead to a case where you stand in the awkward middle ground and fail to do either.

Sylvan Library and Counterbalance are still excellent against Slow Combo decks. We don't have to mulligan aggressively for hate cards to disrupt their game plan, since they can just do midrange stuff and win the game. We are not favored against Slow Combo decks because we don't have a quick win condition and can't control both of their game plans simultaneously.

General tips:

- Counterbalance is one of our best cards. It can fully stop their combo so we only have to worry about their midrange plan.



Aluren

On play:

- Out: 3x Mox Diamond, 2x Scroll Rack, 2x Life from the Loam, 1x Endurance, 2x Teferi, Time Raveler
- In: 1x Carpet of Flowers, 2x Pyroblast, 1x Sylvan Library, 1x Counterbalance, 1x Torpor Orb, 2x Force of Vigor, 2x Minsc & Boo, Timeless Heroes

On draw:

- Out: 2x Mox Diamond, 2x Scroll Rack, 2x Life from the Loam, 1x Endurance, 2x Teferi, Time Raveler
- In: 1x Carpet of Flowers, 2x Pyroblast, 1x Sylvan Library, 1x Counterbalance, 1x Torpor Orb, 2x Force of Vigor, 1x Minsc & Boo, Timeless Heroes

Tips:

- Force of Vigor is probably not useful in this matchup? Need to test.



Cephalid Breakfast

On play:

- Out: 2x Terminus, 2x Scroll Rack, 2x Life from the Loam, 1x Mox Diamond
- In: 1x Carpet of Flowers, 2x Pyroblast, 1x Sylvan Library, 1x Counterbalance, 1x Containment Priest, 1x Torpor Orb

On draw:

- Out: 2x Terminus, 2x Scroll Rack, 1x Life from the Loam
- In: 1x Carpet of Flowers, 2x Pyroblast, 1x Containment Priest, 1x Torpor Orb, 2x Endurance

Tips:

- It makes a huge difference whether we are on play or on draw. When on draw, we can't risk casting our two-mana spells without saving mana for Swords to Plowshares.
- Counterbalance is one of our best cards. It can single-handedly stop their combo plans. If they have Cephalid Illusionist, we put 1 mana on top, which even counters their Surgical Extractions. If they have Shuko or Nomad en-Kor, we put 2 mana on top but vulnerable to Surgical Extractions. With Counterbalance and Sylvan Library, the rest of the game is just to Wasteland their Urza's Saga.
- Endurance is not very good because they have Orim's Chant. It rarely protects me from losing.
- Wasteland their Urza's Saga on the first trigger. Don't let them take the free mana, even if it's one colorless. They can easily use it (Retrofitter Foundry, Shuko, Wizardcycling, etc.)



Cradle Control

On play:

- Out: 2x Counterbalance, 2x Life from the Loam
- In: 1x Containment Priest, 2x Minsc & Boo, Timeless Heroes, 1x Triumph of Saint Katherine

On draw:

- Out: 2x Counterbalance, 2x Life from the Loam
- In: 1x Containment Priest, 1x Force of Vigor, 1x Minsc & Boo, Timeless Heroes, 1x Triumph of Saint Katherine

Tips:

- Watchout for Orcish Bowmaster, Opposition Agent.



Crashing Footfalls

On play:

- Out: 2x Counterbalance, 2x Mox Diamond, 2x Life from the Loam
- In: 1x Carpet of Flowers, 2x Pyroblast, 1x Sylvan Library, 2x Triumph of Saint Katherine

On draw:

- Out: 2x Counterbalance, 2x Sylvan Library, 2x Life from the Loam
- In: 1x Carpet of Flowers, 2x Pyroblast, 1x Endurance, 2x Triumph of Saint Katherine

Tips:

- Not super experienced on this deck. Will add more thoughts once I collect more data.



Day's Undoing

On play:

- Out: 2x Terminus, 2x Swords to Plowshares, 3x Mox Diamond
- In: 1x Carpet of Flowers, 2x Pyroblast, 1x Counterbalance, 1x Sylvan Library, 2x Minsc & Boo, Timeless Heroes

On draw:

- Out: 2x Terminus, 2x Swords to Plowshares, 2x Mox Diamond
- In: 1x Carpet of Flowers, 2x Pyroblast, 1x Counterbalance, 1x Sylvan Library, 1x Minsc & Boo, Timeless Heroes

Tips:

- One of the hardest matchups.



Enchantress

On play:

- Out: -2 Counterbalance, -2 Scroll Rack, -1 Life from the Loam
- In: +1 Sylvan Library, +2 Force of Vigor, +2 Minsc & Boo, Timeless Heros

On draw:

- Out: -2 Counterbalance, -2 Scroll Rack, -1 Life from the Loam
- In: +1 Sylvan Library, +2 Force of Vigor, +2 Minsc & Boo, Timeless Heros

Tips:

- Opponent needs mana and card draw engine to win. We need to stop one of them, the easiest being the card draw engine.
- Force of Vigor their Sterling Grove on their draw step! Otherwise, they just crack it and draw any enchantment in their deck.



Food Chain

On play:

- Out: 3x Mox Diamond, 2x Scroll Rack, 2x Life from the Loam, 1x Swords to Plowshares
- In: 1x Carpet of Flowers, 2x Pyroblast, 1x Sylvan Library, 1x Counterbalance, 2x Force of Vigor, 1x Minsc & Boo, Timeless Heroes

On draw:

- Out: 2x Mox Diamond, 2x Scroll Rack, 2x Life from the Loam, 1x Swords to Plowshares
- In: 1x Carpet of Flowers, 2x Pyroblast, 1x Sylvan Library, 1x Counterbalance, 2x Force of Vigor

Tips:

- Don't Sword their Misthollow Griffin.
- They have Hydroid Krasis, so don't hold counter spells too late.



GWx Depths

On play:

- Out: 2x Counterbalance, 2x Scroll Rack, 2x Life from the Loam, 1x Mox Diamond
- In: 1x Sylvan Library, 1x Containment Priest, 2x Force of Vigor, 2x Minsc & Boo, Timeless Heroes, 1x Triumph of Saint Katherine

On draw:

- Out: 2x Counterbalance, 2x Scroll Rack, 2x Life from the Loam
- In: 1x Sylvan Library, 1x Containment Priest, 2x Force of Vigor, 1x Endurance, 1x Triumph of Saint Katherine

Tips:

- Don't Sword / Wasteland against an untapped Elvish Reclaimer...
- Opponent is very unlikely to combo in sideboard games. They will board out their Crop Rotation, unless time is running out for game 3.
- Watch out for Orcish Bowmasters.
- Force of Vigor for Mox Diamond and Choke.



Lands

On play:

- Out: 2x Counterbalance, 2x Scroll Rack, 2x Swords to Plowshares, 2x Terminus
- In: 1x Sylvan Library, 2x Endurance, 2x Force of Vigor, 2x Minsc & Boo, Timeless Heroes, 1x Triumph of Saint Katherine

On draw:

- Out: 2x Counterbalance, 2x Scroll Rack, 2x Swords to Plowshares, 2x Terminus
- In: 1x Sylvan Library, 2x Endurance, 2x Force of Vigor, 2x Minsc & Boo, Timeless Heroes, 1x Triumph of Saint Katherine

Tips:

- Both Lands and us will change our strategy in the sideboard games, since we all board in heavy graveyard hates. Our primary way to lose is mana screw.
- Their Exploration is pretty weak without Loam or Crucible of Worlds. We should save removal spells on other things.



Mono-Green Cloudpost

On play:

- Out: 2x Counterbalance, 2x Scroll Rack, 2x Terminus
- In: 1x Sylvan Library, 1x Force of Vigor, 2x Minsc & Boo, Timeless Heroes, 1x Triumph of Saint Katherine

On draw:

- Out: 2x Counterbalance, 2x Scroll Rack, 2x Terminus
- In: 1x Sylvan Library, 2x Force of Vigor, 2x Minsc & Boo, Timeless Heroes

Tips:

- This matchup is like GWx Depths. We need to keep a removal hand to deal with opponent's small creatures first.



Painter

On play:

- Out: -2 Counterbalance, -2 Scroll Rack, -2 Life from the Loam, -1 Mox Diamond
- In: +1 Containment Priest, +2 Force of Vigor, +2 Minsc & Boo, Timeless Heros, +2 Triumph of Saint Katherine

On draw:

- Out: -2 Counterbalance, -2 Scroll Rack, -2 Life from the Loam, -1 Sylvan Library
- In: +1 Containment Priest, +2 Force of Vigor, +1 Endurance, +1 Minsc & Boo, Timeless Heros, +2 Triumph of Saint Katherine

Tips:

- Remember to float the mana from Mox Diamond when opponent casts Karn, the Great Creator.
- Don't sideboard Pyroblast because opponent won't name blue on Painter's Servant in sideboard games.
- Watch out life total because they might have lightning bolt.



Stiflenought

On play:

- Out: -1 Counterbalance, -2 Sylvan Library, -2 Scroll Rack, -1 Life from the Loam
- In: +1 Carpet of Flowers, +2 Pyroblast, +1 Endurance, +2 Triumph of Saint Katherine

On draw:

- Out: -2 Counterbalance, -2 Sylvan Library, -2 Scroll Rack, -1 Life from the Loam
- In: +1 Carpet of Flowers, +2 Pyroblast, +2 Endurance, +2 Triumph of Saint Katherine

Tips:

- There are different builds on Stiflenought. It can be more Control or more Aggro. This sideboard is more targeted on Aggro.

3.4 Control

Control decks are the slowest archetype overall. They don't have any active game plan and purely play the defensive role. Not being killed is a winning. Control decks have the best topdeck probability among all of the four archetypes.

We run all of our engines in this type of matchup. The games are usually very grindy so be mindful of the time. In game one, we should consider conceding early once the balance is fully tilted on the other side to save time for sideboard games. We are even against Control decks.

General tips:

- Use Sylvan Library wisely. Some control decks could have a fast clock so be careful with that.



Blue Zenith

On play:

- Out: 2x Mox Diamond, 1x Terminus, 2x Scroll Rack, 2x Life from the Loam
- In: 1x Carpet of Flowers, 2x Pyroblast, 1x Counterbalance, 1x Containment Priest, 2x Minsc & Boo, Timeless Heroes

On draw:

- Out: 2x Mox Diamond, 2x Scroll Rack, 2x Life from the Loam
- In: 1x Carpet of Flowers, 2x Pyroblast, 1x Counterbalance, 1x Containment Priest, 1x Minsc & Boo, Timeless Heroes

Tips:

- Don't board in Torpor Orb against an Uro deck, especially when they have Green Sun's Zenith.



Death and Taxes

On play:

- Out: 2x Counterbalance, 1x Mox Diamond, 1x Sylvan Library, 2x Scroll Rack, 2x Life from the Loam
- In: 1x Containment Priest, 1x Torpor Orb, 2x Force of Vigor, 2x Minsc & Boo, Timeless Heroes, 2x Triumph of Saint Katherine

On draw:

- Out: 2x Counterbalance, 1x Sylvan Library, 2x Scroll Rack, 2x Life from the Loam
- In: 1x Containment Priest, 1x Torpor Orb, 2x Force of Vigor, 2x Minsc & Boo, Timeless Heroes, 1x Triumph of Saint Katherine

Tips:

- Don't keep a mana-risky hand. Lots of lost games are due to mana screw.
- Spirit of the Labyrinth can be hit by Force of Vigor.
- Respect their aggro game plan. Stoneforge Mystic with Mother of Runes are very hard to deal with. The clock is very fast.
- Always be careful on their Aether Vial on 2. Play defensively when they have Aether Vial because they are much faster than us.



Esper Vial

On play:

- Out: 2x Counterbalance, 1x Sylvan Library, 2x Scroll Rack, 2x Life from the Loam
- In: 1x Containment Priest, 1x Torpor Orb, 1x Carpet of Flowers, 2x Pyroblast, 2x Minsc & Boo, Timeless Heroes

On draw:

- Out: 2x Counterbalance, 2x Sylvan Library, 2x Scroll Rack, 2x Life from the Loam
- In: 1x Containment Priest, 1x Torpor Orb, 1x Carpet of Flowers, 1x Endurance, 2x Pyroblast, 2x Minsc & Boo, Timeless Heroes

Tips:

- If opponent is running Kaldra Compleat, board out all Sylvan Library.
- This is probably our hardest matchup. We really need Torpor Orb to win the game.
- Dark Confidant worths a Force of Will.



Grixis Control

On play:

- Out: 2x Terminus, 2x Swords to Plowshares, 3x Mox Diamond
- In: 1x Carpet of Flowers, 2x Pyroblast, 1x Counterbalance, 1x Sylvan Library, 2x Minsc & Boo, Timeless Heroes

On draw:

- Out: 2x Terminus, 2x Swords to Plowshares, 2x Mox Diamond
- In: 1x Carpet of Flowers, 2x Pyroblast, 1x Sylvan Library, 2x Minsc & Boo, Timeless Heroes

Tips:

- Life from the Loam is great against Hymn to Tourach.



Jeskai Control

On play:

- Out: 2x Terminus, 3x Swords to Plowshares, 3x Mox Diamond
- In: 1x Carpet of Flowers, 2x Pyroblast, 1x Counterbalance, 1x Sylvan Library, 2x Minsc & Boo, Timeless Heroes

On draw:

- Out: 2x Terminus, 2x Swords to Plowshares, 3x Mox Diamond
- In: 1x Carpet of Flowers, 2x Pyroblast, 1x Counterbalance, 1x Sylvan Library, 2x Minsc & Boo, Timeless Heroes

Tips:

- Bring in all the engines for the control mirror.



Nic Fit

On play:

- Out: 2x Scroll Rack, 2x Mox Diamond, 1x Life from the Loam
- In: 1x Sylvan Library, 2x Endurance, 2x Minsc & Boo, Timeless Heroes

On draw:

- Out: 2x Scroll Rack, 2x Mox Diamond, 1x Life from the Loam
- In: 1x Sylvan Library, 2x Endurance, 2x Minsc & Boo, Timeless Heroes

Tips:

- Nic Fit can also be a Aggro or Slow Combo deck, depending on the build. If they have removal spells, they are Control deck. If they don't, they are more likely Aggro. If they run Witherbloom Apprentice + Chain of Smog combo, then it's a Slow Combo deck. We need to sideboard based on our observation.



Smallpox

On play:

- Out: 2x Terminus, 2x Scroll Rack, 2x Mox Diamond, 2x Life from the Loam
- In: 1x Counterbalance, 1x Sylvan Library, 2x Endurance, 2x Force of Vigor, 2x Minsc & Boo, Timeless Heroes

On draw:

- Out: 2x Terminus, 2x Scroll Rack, 2x Mox Diamond, 2x Life from the Loam
- In: 1x Counterbalance, 1x Sylvan Library, 2x Endurance, 2x Force of Vigor, 2x Minsc & Boo, Timeless Heroes

Tips:

- Uro is the best card against these slow Mono-black decks.
- Be careful keeping a Mox Diamond + Life from the Loam hand when on draw. It's too vulnerable to Thoughtseize.



Standstill

On play:

- Out: 2x Terminus, 2x Swords to Plowshares, 1x Endurance, 1x Mox Diamond, 2x Life from the Loam, 1x Scroll Rack
- In: 1x Carpet of Flowers, 2x Pyroblast, 1x Counterbalance, 1x Sylvan Library, 2x Force of Vigor, 2x Minsc & Boo, Timeless Heroes

On draw:

- Out: 2x Terminus, 2x Swords to Plowshares, 1x Endurance, 1x Mox Diamond, 2x Life from the Loam, 1x Scroll Rack
- In: 1x Carpet of Flowers, 2x Pyroblast, 1x Counterbalance, 1x Sylvan Library, 2x Force of Vigor, 2x Minsc & Boo, Timeless Heroes

Tips:

- It's OK to keep a land-heavy hand, since they play Standstill.



Stoneblade

On play:

- Out: 3x Mox Diamond, 2x Terminus, 2x Life from the Loam
- In: 1x Carpet of Flowers, 2x Pyroblast, 1x Counterbalance, 1x Sylvan Library, 2x Minsc & Boo, Timeless Heroes

On draw:

- Out: 3x Mox Diamond, 2x Terminus, 2x Life from the Loam
- In: 1x Carpet of Flowers, 2x Pyroblast, 1x Counterbalance, 1x Sylvan Library, 2x Minsc & Boo, Timeless Heroes

Tips:

- Some Stoneblade decks are very heavy on creatures. Be careful when burning life with Sylvan Library. Or keep Mox Diamond and not board in Sylvan Library.

4 Deck Showcase

Here is the deck I've been working on for three years. My rule is to collect **signed nonfoil original prints in Chinese, simplified if possible**. Here are reasons of this specific criteria.

- Signed:

The all-time best recordings of Legacy are [Grand Prix Richmond in 2018](#) when the production team followed Reid Duke throughout his tournament. The Grixis Control deck Reid played had quite a number of cards signed by the artists. These signatures add a unique touch to the collectable cards and demonstrate the deep commitment of the player to his or her deck. They pay tribute to the creator of the art and can't be easily obtained by just money. It's the real value of the collection process when we put efforts and patience to finish the project.

- Nonfoil:

The foil cards are naturally warped and very easy to damage its foil surface. Ironically, the most expensive cards in a Legacy deck are always nonfoil and only available in nonfoil. Therefore, I prefer the consistency of having nonfoil cards in my deck.

- Original print:

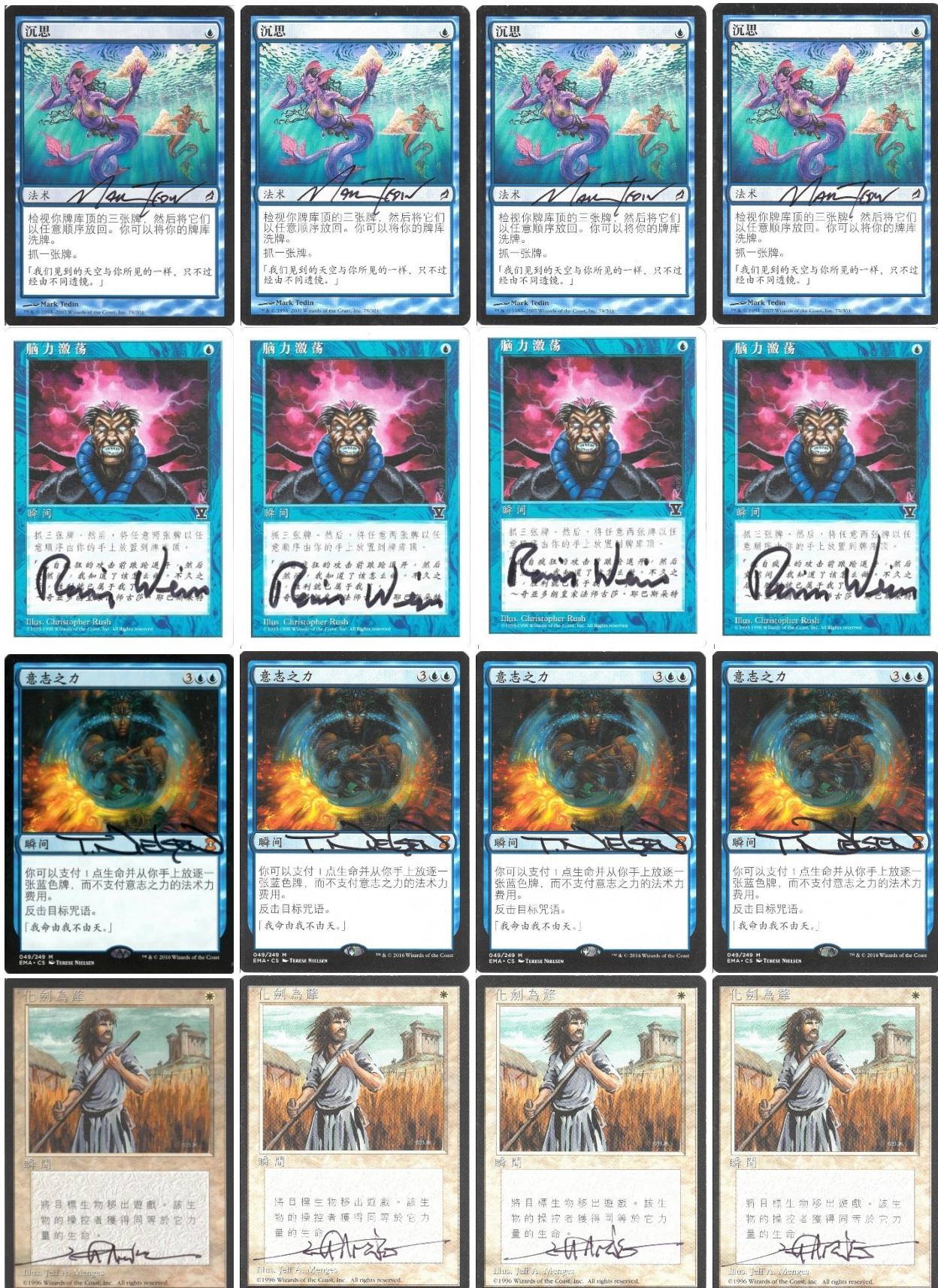
Wizards of the Coast has been expanding its production lines crazily these days. Foil, borderless, retro-frame, phyrexian text... you name it. These add-ups will be even more in the future, and I don't want to waste money to follow this. So I go the other way and only collect cards that were originally printed first time. They can't change that, right?

- Chinese, simplified if possible

The translation of Magic cards is one of the greatest I've ever seen, so shout out to the translation team! As a native speaker, I connect more with cards printed in simplified Chinese and love their flavor texts. If a card only has original prints in traditional Chinese and later prints in simplified Chinese, I still prefer the OG in traditional Chinese. It is part of the history when Magic chose to appear only in traditional Chinese instead of simplified.

Please behold the Miracle Loam deck in the following page!









This is mainboard of Miracle Loam. The sideboard cards are shown on the next page.



Acknowledgment

The author would like to thank the community for making this project possible. It has been great efforts to achieve the collection goal, where all cards are nonfoil signed original print in Chinese, simplified possible. Without the help of these fantastic artists and friends, everything could only be a dream:

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And numerous collectors for helping me search for rare and “deceased” signatures, from North America, Europe, and Asia.

The deck is finished 66/75. With Heather Hudson accepting mail-in this year, we aim at finishing 69/75 by the end of 2023.