

Miracle Loam Primer

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github.com/wenxuanjia/Miracle_Loam_Primer

2024/11, Latest set: FDN



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.

2024/11 update (6-5, Rank 261/1165 on North America Eternal Weekend)



This year's premier set, Modern Horizons 3 (MH3), has followed the trend of printing extremely busted creatures to generate more sales of the product. New cards like Psychic Frog and Tamiyo, Inquisitive Student provide continuous card advantage with little cost. History has told us that any card that keeps giving you card advantage at the cost of two mana or less will be banned (Ragavan, Nimble Pilferer, Dreadhorde Arcanist, etc.), partially because they have heavily warped the deck-building and metagame. It's pretty clear that they are leaning towards black these days, after red (Ragavan, Arcanist), and green (Oko, Wrenn and Six).

We still can't play Mox Diamond because of the prevalence of Vexing Bauble, in addition to Orcish Bowmaster and Thoughtseize. Although there's way to build a deck with turn-one Psychic Frog, the creature is easily removable unlike Sylvan Library or Chalice of the Void. We can't risk a bad top-decking for an explosive opening.

Endurance and Triumph of Saint Katherine are useless against Frog and Tamiyo. Endurance can't safely block Frog and dies to Fatal Push. Triumph can't block either one. We'd love to replace them with Psychic Frog, but the black color is awkward. Therefore, we chose two Tamiyo and one Counterbalance.

Teferi, Time Raveler is terrible against Orcish Bowmaster and dies easily to Psychic Frog, which has been known since the last update. In addition, Teferi can't remove the planeswalker form of Tamiyo. So we switched back to Prismatic Ending. The current metagame is not friendly to control decks. I can safely say that both Frog and Tamiyo will be banned sooner or later.

2024/02 update (5-1-1, Rank 9/97 on SCG CON Hartford Legacy 1K)



The Legacy metagame has been fundamentally changed to the impact of the LTR set, especially the Orcish Bowmaster. The Orcish Bowmaster singly shuts down Sylvan Library and stops us from holding Brainstorm for Counterbalance. It popularizes more black decks and thus more discard spells like Thoughtseize and Grief in the metagame, which is a powerful play when we keep an explosive hand like turn 1 Sylvan Library.

In addition, the Broadside Bombardier and Namesticker Goblin powered up the red aggro decks, which also carries Bloon Moon effect in the sideboard games. We need more basic lands to fight against these non-basic land hates. Therefore, Mox Diamond is not a suitable card in current metagame because our best turn 1 action is susceptible to discard spells and Orcish Bowmaster. It's better to replace them with basic lands for red decks.

The increase of Orcish Bowmaster pushes Teferi, the Time Raveler nearly out of the metagame, and less control decks are putting them in the main deck. This benefits us in the way that we can actually cast miracle spells at instant speed and play more miracle cards. Therefore, we replaced Counterbalance and Sylvan Library with Triumph of Saint Katherine in the main deck.

2023/08 initial list (3-3-1, Rank 40/106 on SCG CON Baltimore Legacy 5K)

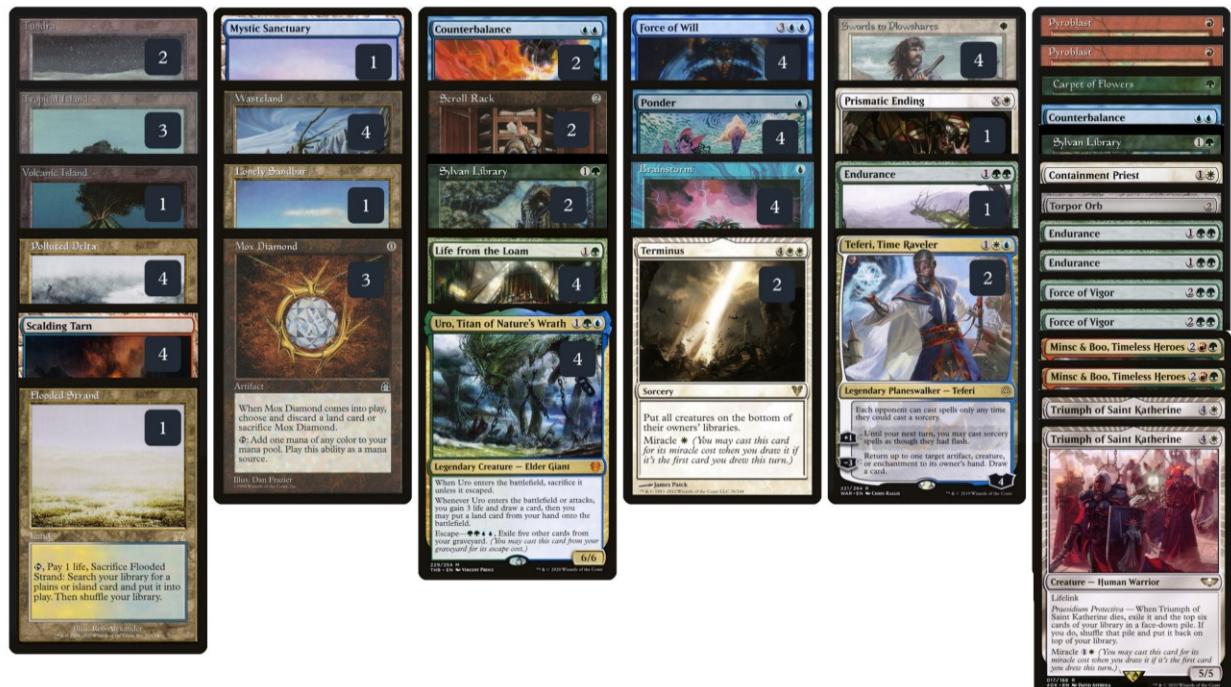


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1 Introduction

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 my favorite format 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. It pays some tribute to the historical deck “Miracle Gro” by sharing some soil-y flavors. 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. Player 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 originates from the Aggro Loam deck that dates back to 2007. The control variant of it 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 a large percentage of lands as well 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 Miracle Loam

Miracle Loam is the deck that attempts to combine pros of Miracles and Four-Color Loam while avoiding cons. It has land interactions like Wasteland, something that Miracles deck can't do. It also has cantrip spells to smooth out inconsistencies and Force of Wills to disrupt fast combo decks, something Four-Color Loam can't do. It's designed to be able to battle against all archetypes.

1.4 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 (21 cards)

There are 21 lands + 3 Lorien Revealed in the main deck. The slots for Lorien Revealed used to be Mox Diamond, but the explosive turn 1 Sylvan Library play is susceptible to discard spells and not so great against Orcish Bowmasters and Vexing Bauble, both of which are heavily played in the current metagame. Lorien Revealed serves as effectively a mana source that can be pitched to Force of Will. It's also a decent single-use value card.

We used to run no basic lands for these reasons:

- Enable Counterbalance while holding Brainstorm on turn 3.
- Enable Mystic Sanctuary as soon as possible.
- We can use fetch lands with wrong colors to confuse them.
- Trick opponents to Wasteland our lands to help us fuel Loam. Do this smartly.

But the Orcish Bowmaster makes us feel awkward holding the Brainstorm for Counterbalance. We are also vulnerable to Blood Moon that is also very popular now. So we run one Island and one Plains. We don't want to see Plains in the early game because it delays the escape of Uro, Titan of Nature's Wrath by one turn. Although Forest enables Life from the Loam, it doesn't enable our removal spells.



1x Tropical Island

The color depths of Miracle Loam are blue > green > white >> fourth color. We absolutely need three green sources of mana 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 another green source, the third one is the only hope of getting any immediate green color. Three green sources also lets us play Loam and cast Uro in one turn to maximize land drops.



1x Hedge Maze

We replaced one Tropical Island with a surveil land. It's just a better target for our fetch lands, and great for Counterbalance.



1x Savannah

Having one Savannah over a Tropical Island makes us more resilient to Wasteland. We cut one Counterbalance, so our need for blue is reduced.



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 Island and 1x Plains

We absolutely need basic lands given all the Blood Moon and Harbinger of the Sea. The Island can be found by Lorien Revealed even when they land their moon effects. A Plain is our hope for removing the moon permanents. In a tempo matchup, a Plain is resilient to their Wastelands and allows us to cast all the removal spells in time.



1x Underground Sea

This slot is for the fourth color in the deck. We need the fourth color in the main deck to cast Prismatic Ending to remove a 4-mana permanent (most notably The One Ring). The fourth color could be Volcanic Island for sideboard Pyroblast and Minsc & Boo or Underground Sea for sideboard cards like Orcish Bowmaster and Psychic Frog. Or no fourth color at all, just use Island as one basic land. We chose Underground Sea to confuse them with potential Psychic Frogs.



8x fetch lands:

4x Misty Rainforest + 4x Flooded Strand

Fetch lands are essential to enable a reliable mana base. They are more than just fetching dual lands like Tundra; they provide fuel for Life from the Loam and shuffling opportunities for Brainstorm and more importantly, Counterbalance. Since we are running Savannah, we have to use the Misty Rainforest and Flooded Strand to maximize our possibility of finding it. We could also run 9 fetches and put Plains in the sideboard, when the Blood Moons are not so prevalent.



1x Mystic Sanctuary

The one Mystic Sanctuary 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 Hydroblast 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 non-basic lands and disrupt their mana base. More details about using them properly will be discussed in the metagame section.

2.2 Value Spells (16 cards)

A control deck never wins when it trades every spell with opponent in an one-to-one manner. The value engine is required to break the mid-game stalemate and move the game forward. The art of playing a control deck is to balance the value spells and control spells.



1x 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). 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. More than one Library would be a bit too many since their effects don't stack as neatly as, for example, Sphere of Resistance or Hardened Scales. Even one Library is risky in such a Bowmaster-infested metagame.



3x Lorien Revealed

This is a very flexible as a value spell, mana base, and can be pitched to Force of Will. It's the best value spell that also smooths our mana base. Occasionally, its shuffling effect is suitable for Brainstorm and Counterbalance.

Another candidate is the flip card that has land on the back side, like Sink into Stupor. It's sweet when we want to turn 1 with Mox Diamond, but it's a soft removal spell.



2x Scroll Rack

Scroll Rack allows us to control the top cards of the library. It combos with Life from the Loam as a very powerful card-advantage engine. As a deck that runs four Wastelands, we can't reliably cast these common 4-mana engines like The One Ring, Minsc & Boo Timeless Heroes. In addition, Scroll Rack can put Terminus, etc. on top of the library to enable miracle mechanics. When combined with counterbalance, they can soft-lock the opponent out of the game unless our hand is empty. 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. Note that the Scroll Rack is not drawing! 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.

To dredge or not to dredge: during our upkeep, we can choose to draw a card or dredge Life from the Loam. This is more interesting when we are at the topdeck stage with opponent. Dredging can find Uro quickly, but dredging a Scroll Rack is painful. My rule of thumb is that if we haven't seen Uro with less than 40 cards in our deck, we should dredge Loam, and usually we can find Uro in one dredge or two.

When playing against slow decks with Wasteland, it benefits us to play nonbasic land on our first turns to trick opponent into Wastelanding us. They are literally help us fuel the graveyard for Loam.



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.



2x Tamiyo, Inquisitive Student

This is a new card from Modern Horizon 3 that would be banned sooner or later. It's a self-contained value engine at a cost of only 1 mana. It's a card that is worth a Force of Will to protect from opponent's removal spells, just like a Dreadhorde Arcanist.

We have multiple ways to trigger its flip: Brainstorm, Sylvan Library, and Lorien Revealed. The Tamiyo planeswalker is also busted by itself. It recycles spells from the graveyard and has the ultimate ability that ends the game. It has few synergies with our deck except for providing instant draws to trigger miracles. It's just an unfair card that everyone has to use to win.

2.3 Control Spells (23 cards)

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 22 blue spells:

8x Cantrips + 4x Force of Will + 4x Uro + 1x Counterbalance + 2x Tamiyo, Inquisitive Student + 3x Lorien Revealed



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 a 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 ran 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.



1x 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. It is a great card against combo and control decks. It’s a very annoying card that counters too many of their spells or their combo pieces. 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.



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.



4x 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. In the current metagame, we need all four to remove Psychic Frogs and Tamiyo planeswalkers.

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 (15 cards)

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 same value engines of the main deck despite extra graveyard hates from opponents. The second one is to abandon the Miracle Loam strategy and board in other value engines such as Minsc & Boo Timeless Heroes. From my experience, the Miracle Loam still works despite heavy graveyard hate like Rest in Peace, Leyline of the Void, and Surgical Extractions. We will use the first sideboard strategy.



2x Hydroblast

The current metagame is heavily on red. We need these for Mono-red and Painter decks.



2x Consign to Memory

We need them for the colorless decks like Eldrazi and Mystic Forge combo. It sometimes gets combo decks like Doomsday and Storm. It's generally a flexible card, but it won't surprise opponents because it's the second-most used cards in the Asia Eternal Weekend.



1x Lavinia, Azorius Renegade

Another card that is great against Ancient Tomb decks. It stops Kozilek's Command, The One Ring, and etc. It's flexible like Consign to Memory.



1x 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. It is a great card against combo and control decks. It's a very annoying card that counters too many of their spells or their combo pieces. 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 March of Otherworldly Light

Additional removal spell when we are on play. It's great in the way that it deals with Frog and Tamiyo as well as The One Ring. However, it can't remove the planeswalker Tamiyo and Karn. We also can't run the other removal alternative Path to Exile, because it conflicts with our Wasteland.



2x Carpet of Flowers

Carpets are insanely good against other blue decks. Now that we don't run Mox Diamond anymore, the carpets are mandatory in the sideboard.



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.



3x Ghost Vacuum

We are now using Ghost Vacuum as graveyard hates against Tier-0 Dimir Reanimator. We used to have Endurance, but it's not so great against current tempo decks. Ghost Vacuum is also the only 1-mana artifact that continuously target and exile graveyard cards.

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.

Main deck:



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 lots of cards. However, they are extremely bad top deck cards. Four Moxes are too much for this deck.



It 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.



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.



Slogurk looks like an alternative Life from the Loam effect. However, it takes three mana to get back our lands and does it only when it leaves the battlefield. Sometimes, we need the Mox Diamond to provide the extra mana to cast Loam and catch up on tempo, or we keep a two-lander to use Loam for future lands. So three mana is too expensive.



Portent is a nice card that works like Ponder but allows us for immediate miracle effect. Its major drawback is also that it doesn't draw card on the same turn, which is very awkward when we are cantripping for lands.



Sideboard:



An additional Force of Will effect. This card is better than Counterbalance against fast combo decks, but you don't want it against control. It's hard to say which one is better for sideboard.



A good value engine card that fits our strategy very well. However, it doesn't pitch to Force of Will and bad against non-control decks.



Snapcaster Mage is a classical card in miracle decks. It provides a lot of flexibility at late game and essentially a toolbox for instant spells. It conflicts with Mystic Sanctuary because it exiles the card with flashback. It also easily dies to Orcish Bowmaster.



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.



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.



Our surprise win-con against control decks. Nothing can beat Mentor on the battlefield, even Griselbrand on some occasions (In round 8 of SCG Open Syracuse on 03/03/2019, Brad Bonin put Monastery Mentor from hand to play as Gregory Chen resolved Show and Tell and put Griselbrand onto the battlefield. Gregory drew a lot of cards but couldn't find another set of combo, and eventually lost to the army of Monks).

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).

Miracle Loam lacks a combo finish, making itself a control deck at its core. In most cases, it is worse than the Four-Color Control deck that simply compiles together all the best cards in the format, especially those that are both great against fast decks (Delver) and slow decks (mirror). Orcish Bowmaster is such a card in current format, but its color doesn't work with us. Therefore, we need a card that gives us combo finish or a ban-able card that's good against Delver and control, for example, Oko, Thief of Crowns.

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 better Scroll Rack. Either it's blue that can be pitched to Force of Will if we don't have its combo pieces like Life from the Loam or Counterbalance, or it has other effects like mana acceleration or fixing, or ETB/sacrifice, draw a card.
- More Brainstorms, for example, a sorcery version of Brainstorm.
- More Wastelands.
- A powerful 2-drop that deals with Delver decks like Chalice of the Void or an engine that doesn't kill us fast like Sylvan Library / Dark Confidant. Or a powerful 3-drop like Oko, Thief of Crowns that is an engine itself.
- Bitterblossom with the right color.
- A blue Urborg, Tomb of Yawgmoth.
- A miracle version of Fastbond.

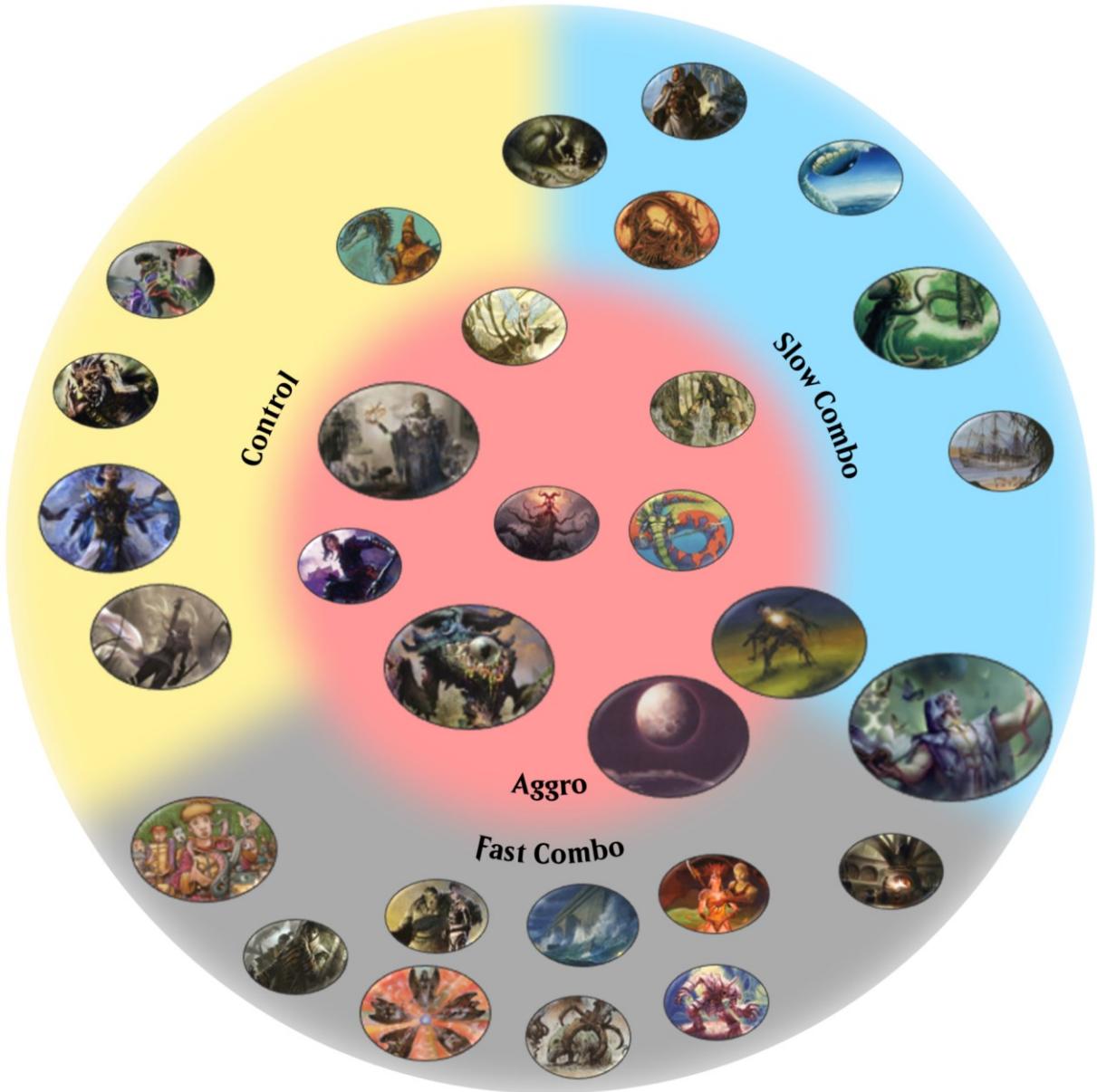
3 Metagame Analysis

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 the 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 win 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.

These four archetypes roughly form a rock-paper-scissor relation. 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.

Here shows the distribution of the top 30 decks in the metagame. The deck for each icon can be found in deck breakdowns.



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.

The sideboard guide is shown in the next page. I'll delve into these four archetypes separately in the following sections. I'll provide sideboard guides and tips for each deck.

3.1 Aggro

Aggro strategy is probably closest to what Richard Garfield initially intended on how the game should develop. The whole aggro deck usually has few lands, and their spells can usually be cast with two lands or less. 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 mana-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. The card advantage usually doesn't matter too much. Our goal is to stabilize the game before finding Uro. We are generally even 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. Fetch enough white sources to ensure all of our removal spells can be cast.
- Don't forget to replace draw (from Uro, Ponder, etc.) with dredging Life from the Loam to prevent from triggering Orcish Bowmaster.

	D		D		P		D		P		D		P		D		P		D		P	
	D		D		P		D		P		D		P		D		P		D		P	
Main:	P	D	P	D	P	D	P	D	P	D	P	D	P	D	P	D	P	D	P	D	P	D
Island																						
Plains																						
Dual lands																						
Mystic Sanctuary																						
Flooded Strand x4																						
Misty Rainforest x4																						
Wasteland x4																						
Lorien Revealed x3																						
Ponder x4																						
Brainstorm x4																						
Counterbalance x1			-1	-1	-1	-1	-1	-1	-1	-1	-1	-1	-1	-1	-1	-1	-1	-1	-1	-1	-1	-1
Force of Will x4																						
Swords to Plowshares x4																						
Prismatic Ending x4																						
Terminus x2																						
Life from the Loam x4	-2	-2	-1	-1	-2	-2										-2	-2	-1	-1	-2	-1	
Sylvan Library x1	-1	-1	-1												-1	-1	-1	-1		-1		
Uro, Titan of Nature's Wrath x4																						
Scroll Rack x2	-1	-1									-1	-1	-1	-1	-1	-1	-1	-1	-1	-1	-1	-1
Sideboard:																						
March of Otherworldly Light x1	+1	+1					+1	+1	+1	+1	+1	+1	+1	+1	+1	+1	+1	+1	+1	+1	+1	+1
Hydroblast x2		+1																+2	+2			
Consign to Memory x2		+2	+2	+2	+2										+2	+2						
Counterbalance x1																						
Sylvan Library x1							+1	+1														
Carpet of Flowers x2	+2	+2									+2	+2							+2	+2		
Force of Vigor x2													+1	+1								
Lavinia, Azorius Renegade x1		+1	+1														+1	+1				
Ghost Vacuum x3																						



Delver

- Most of the games lost is due to mana screw. We won't lose easily if our mana is working.
- Never try to win on Wasteland when on draw! Sometimes it's better to not Wasteland if they already have creatures on battlefield, to deal with Daze. It's only possible to win on Wasteland when on draw if you Force (or they don't have) their one-drop and keep up with multiple Wastelands.
- Always Force of Will the second threat, if you don't have removal spells.
- Beware of their Wasteland + Daze. Crack your remaining fetch land if you see their Wasteland open.
- Read which blue card they used to pitch for Force of Will. It's typically their lowest-value blue cards. For example, if they pitch a powerful threat, then it's very unlikely they have a Daze left in hand.
- Wasteland their only Volcanic Island and skip phase before casting Uro (avoid getting Pyroblasted)
- Beware of Orcish Bowmaster. Cast Brainstorm when they can't cast Bowmaster (in response to a fetch land, etc).
- Don't hold Sword when they only have a 1/1 on the battlefield and your life total is getting close to 3. They might not draw another Murktide, but they can certainly kill you slowly with a 1/1. Sword as soon as possible.
- Beware of Blood Moon and Price of Progress.



Eldrazi

- Be careful of their powerful instant spell, Kozilek's Command. Always leave one blue mana open for Consign to Memory.
- Wasteland their green-mana producing lands. It's much easier to cut off their green than their huge number of colorless mana.



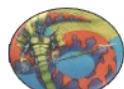
Elves

- Elves only work if they have both mana and card advantage. It's hard to disrupt their mana, so we need to always be careful of their payoff (keep the Force of Will ready). Counterbalance is bad against them because it can't counter Natural Order nor Green Sun's Zenith with $X = 7$.



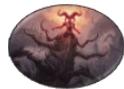
Maverick

- Beware of Choke. Fetch non-Island first.
- Their worst cards are Grist and Choke.
- Note that Gaddock Teeg also stops March of Otherworldly Light and Prismatic Ending.



Merfolk

- Watch out their instant-speed Hullbreacher, who is also a merfolk.
- They can do a lot of tricks with the vial. Giving creature +1/+1, counter noncreature spells, etc.



Mono-Black Aggro

- Fetch lands first due to Opposition Agent. It's very likely that they have Dark Ritual and Opposition Agent. This is literally one of their main game plans, not something by accident.
- Use dredge to avoid drawing cards and triggering Orcish Bowmaster, Sheoldred, etc.



Mono-Red Prison

- Current mono-red decks are more like an aggro deck than a prison deck. If so, we don't need to board in Force of Vigor.
- Be careful about their Broadside Bombardiers, which can kill our creatures and sacrifice their creatures in respond of our Sword to Plowshares. Always save one white mana for Sword.
- 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.
- Wasteland is surprisingly good against Trinisphere decks.



Ninja

- 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 until blockers are declared. They can Ninjutsu in response.
- Beware that they can Ninjutsu again on the Ninjutsu creature. Watch out for their unspent mana.

3.2 Fast Combo

Fast combo decks are extremely straightforward. It has only one game plan – assemble the full combo and resolve it. If we can disrupt their combo, it's difficult for them 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 their face and reaction before they announce to keep or mulligan. It tells a lot of information about their hand quality.
- When you have two Force of Will and two blue cards to pitch, try to pretend that you only have one Force to trick them into thinking that you only have one disruption. Similarly, try to cast Force quickly when you have only one set to trick them thinking that you are confident and have another set.
- Counter their ritual spells only if we have a Wasteland to follow up.

	Ad Nauseam Tendrils		Doomsday		Dredge		High Tide		Mystic Forge Combo		Oops All Spells		Reanimator		Sneak and Show		The EPIC Storm	
Main:	P	D	P	D	P	D	P	D	P	D	P	D	P	D	P	D	P	D
Island																		
Plains																		
Dual lands																		
Mystic Sanctuary																		
Flooded Strand x4																		
Misty Rainforest x4																		
Wasteland x4									-2						-1	-2		
Lorien Revealed x3																		
Ponder x4			-1	-1	-1													
Brainstorm x4																		
Counterbalance x1					-1	-1			-1	-1								
Force of Will x4																		
Swords to Plowshares x4	-4	-4			-1		-4	-4	-3	-3	-3	-3	-1	-1	-1	-1	-4	-4
Prismatic Ending x4	-2	-1	-1	-1			-1	-1			-1	-1	-3	-3	-2	-1	-2	-2
Terminus x2	-2	-2	-2	-2			-2	-2	-2	-2	-2	-2	-2	-2	-2	-2	-2	-2
Life from the Loam x4	-1	-1	-2	-2	-2	-2	-1	-1			-1	-1	-2	-2	-2	-3	-1	-1
Sylvan Library x1																-1	-1	
Uro, Titan of Nature's Wrath x4																		
Scroll Rack x2	-1	-1	-1	-1	-1	-1			-1	-1					-1	-1		
Sideboard:																		
March of Otherworldly Light x1							+1	+1	+1	+1				+1	+1			
Hydroblast x2						+2								+1	+2	+2	+2	
Consign to Memory x2	+2	+2	+2	+2			+2	+2	+2	+2	+2	+2	+2	+2	+2	+2	+2	
Counterbalance x1	+1	+1	+1	+1			+1	+1			+1	+1	+1	+1	+1	+1	+1	+1
Sylvan Library x1	+1	+1	+1	+1	+1	+1	+1	+1	+1	+1	+1	+1	+1	+1	+1	+1	+1	
Carpet of Flowers x2	+2	+2	+2	+2			+2	+2	+2					+2	+2			
Force of Vigor x2	+2	+2					+2	+2	+2						+2	+2		
Lavinia, Azurius Renegade x1	+1	+1	+1	+1			+1	+1	+1	+1				+1	+1	+1	+1	
Ghost Vacuum x3					+3	+3					+3	+3	+3	+3		+3	+3	



Ad Nauseam Tendrils

- 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. So, fetch non-Island first.



Doomsday

- Doomsday has its own [formalism](#). 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 can make a slow pile or a fast pile. They typically do a slow pile against us.



Dredge

- 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.
- Their Silent Gravestone shuts down our Loam and Mystic Sanctuary. Don't try to fetch for Mystic Sanctuary because it won't work.



High Tide

- Don't forget that our Islands are also affected by High Tide. Count our mana properly and we could possibly pay for their Defense Grid and Flusterstorm.



Mystic Forge Combo

- They have an instant spell Kozilek's Command to trigger Paradox Engine.
- Pyroblast is good if they have Echo of Eons.
- They need mana and card draw engine, similar to Enchantress. It's easier to break their card engine in this case.



Oops All Spells

- One interaction is sometimes not enough to stop them. We need to be very careful because they are all-in on the combo.
- Can't board out all removal spells because they board in Xantid Swarm.
- Teferi stops their Pact of Negation.
- Prioritize Counterbalance over Sylvan Library. They cast 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

- Read the they'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.
- Prismatic Ending the Animate Dead is a bad play. We should always exile or bounce their fatty because they have tons of reanimation spells.



Sneak and Show

- They 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, to avoid Pyroblast.



The EPIC Storm

- 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.
- Aggressively drawing cards with Sylvan Library is very risky. It only took them 6 storms to kill our 12 life points, which is very easy.
- Their Vexing Bauble will counter their free spells from Beseech the Mirror.

3.3 Slow Combo

Slow Combo decks are sometimes (mis)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 they're 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.
- Don't forget about their combo when we are ahead. Start digging for Force of Will.

	Cephalid Breakfast		Cradle Control		Cloudpost		Depths (GW)		Dimir Reanimator		Lands		Painter		Stiflenought	
Main:	P	D	P	D	P	D	P	D	P	D	P	D	P	D	P	D
Island																
Plains																
Dual lands																
Mystic Sanctuary																
Flooded Strand x4																
Misty Rainforest x4																
Wasteland x4																
Lorien Revealed x3																
Ponder x4	-1	-1														
Brainstorm x4																
Counterbalance x1			-1	-1			-1	-1	-1	-1			-1			
Force of Will x4													-4	-3		
Swords to Plowshares x4					-1	-1					-4	-4				
Prismatic Ending x4																
Terminus x2	-2	-2			-2	-2			-2	-2	-2	-2	-2	-2	-2	-2
Life from the Loam x4	-2	-2	-1	-1			-1	-1	-2	-2					-2	
Sylvan Library x1											-1					
Uro, Titan of Nature's Wrath x4		-2														
Scroll Rack x2	-1	-1	-1	-1			-1	-1	-2	-2			-1	-2		
Sideboard:																
March of Otherworldly Light x1	+1	+1	+1	+1	+1	+1	+1	+1	+1	+1	+1	+1	+1	+1	+1	+1
Hydroblast x2													+2	+2		
Consign to Memory x2	+2	+1	+1	+2	+2				+2			+1	+2			
Counterbalance x1	+1														+1	+1
Sylvan Library x1	+1					+1	+1	+1	+1	+1	+1	+1			+1	+1
Carpet of Flowers x2	+2	+2						+2	+2							
Force of Vigor x2										+2	+2	+1	+2			
Lavinia, Azorius Renegade x1	+1															
Ghost Vacuum x3	+1	+3						+3	+3	+3	+3	+2	+3			



Cephalid Breakfast

- 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.)



Cloudpost

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



Cradle Control

- Watch out for Orcish Bowmaster, Opposition Agent.
- Don't forget Dryad Arbor. They can fetch and sacrifice it for Wight of the Reliquary.



Depths (GW)

- Don't Sword / Wasteland against an untapped Elvish Reclaimer...
- They are 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.



Dimir Reanimator

- They typically rely on creatures in post-board games. We can fully stop their combo with Ghost Vacuum.
- Fetch Plains early! They will board in Harbinger of the Sea.



Lands

- 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.
- Save Brainstorm to dredge at instant speed (saving our Life from the Loam).
- Don't Wasteland them to limit their mana. Their curve is very low so it's better for us to save Wasteland for their useful or mana-sinking lands, like Urza's Saga.



Painter

- Remember to float the mana from Mox Diamond when they cast Karn, the Great Creator.
- Painter naming blue will allow us to pitch non-blue cards for Force of Will.
- Boseiju, Who Endures is not very good against them. It doesn't stop combo when they have Goblin Welder or Engineer on the battlefield.
- Don't sideboard Pyroblast because they won't name blue on Painter's Servant in sideboard games.
- Watch out life total because they might have lightning bolt.



Stiflenought

- 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.

Main:	P	D	P	D	P	D	P	D	P	D
Island										
Plains										
Dual lands										
Mystic Sanctuary										
Flooded Strand x4										
Misty Rainforest x4										
Wasteland x4										
Lorien Revealed x3										
Ponder x4										
Brainstorm x4										
Counterbalance x1	-1	-1								
Force of Will x4			-4	-4						
Swords to Plowshares x4					-3	-3	-2	-2		
Prismatic Ending x4										
Terminus x2	-1				-2	-2	-2	-2	-2	-2
Life from the Loam x4	-2	-2	-2	-2			-1	-1		
Sylvan Library x1										
Uro, Titan of Nature's Wrath x4										
Scroll Rack x2	-1	-1	-1	-1						
Sideboard:										
March of Otherworldly Light x1		+1	+1	+1	+1		+1	+1		
Hydroblast x2						+2	+2			
Consign to Memory x2										
Counterbalance x1	+1				+1	+1	+1	+1		
Sylvan Library x1	+1	+1	+1	+1			+1	+1	+1	+1
Carpet of Flowers x2	+2	+2			+2	+2	+2	+2		
Force of Vigor x2		+2	+2	+2	+2				+2	+2
Lavinia, Azorius Renegade x1										
Ghost Vacuum x3										



Blue Vial

- Don't keep a mana-risky hand. Lots of lost games are due to mana screw.
- They can vial in Spirit of the Labyrinth so be careful casting Brainstorm



Death and Taxes

- 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 is very hard to deal with. The clock is very fast.
- Always be careful with their Aether Vial on 2. Play defensively when they have Aether Vial because they are much faster than us.
- Watch out for their 7th land. They can hard cast Kaldra.



Four-color Control

- They's deck plays like Cloudpost. It's impossible to out-grind them once their mana is developed. The only way to win is to either Wasteland them out or explosive opener like turn 1 Sylvan Library. We are under control archetype but not a control deck! Remember that.
- Cast all your spells that worth a Force of Will before their Up the Beanstalk resolves.



Jeskai Control

- Bring in all the engines for the control mirror.
- Mox Diamond is pretty bad against Prismatic Ending and Teferi, Time Raveler
- If they pass with one untapped red mana, they definitely have Pyroblast.



Smallpox

- Bring in all the engines for the control mirror.

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:

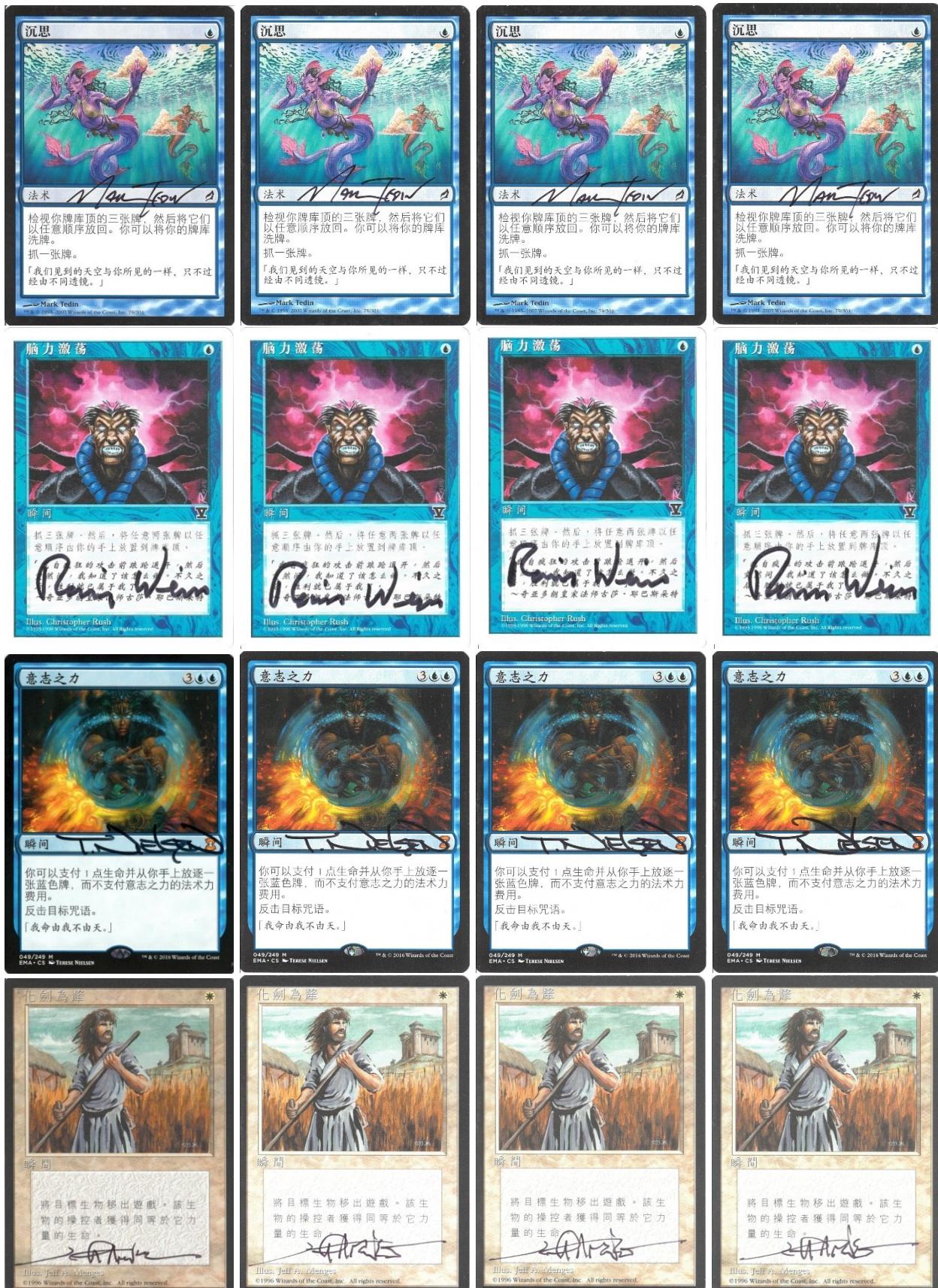
Wizards of the Coast has been expanding its production lines crazily these days. Foil, borderless, retro-frame, phyrexian text... you name it. These add-ups will be even more in the future, and I don't want to waste money to follow this. So I go the other way and only collect cards that were originally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



The missing three cards in the sideboard are Ghost Vacuum, which doesn't have printing in Simplified Chinese. It's extremely short-sighted for the company to decide to stop printing Chinese cards in the future, just to make the revenue report look better. MTG has always been connecting people, even those from different countries and cultures. Lots of great moments happen when we can't speak to each other but could enjoy the game together. Sadly, this gonna end soon.

Other collections 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:

Mark Aronowitz

Matthew Schneider

Terese Nielsen

Rainer Weiss

Anson Maddocks

Una Fricker

Michele Maggi

John Zeleznik

Harold McNeill

Joseph Pedersen

Rebacca Guay

Daneen Wilkerson

Rob Alexander

Jesper Myrfors

Dan Frazier

Jeff Menges

Philip Straub

Anastasia Ovchinnikova

James Paick

Randy Vargas

Chris Rallis

David Astruga

John Stanko

Brian Snoddy

Kaja Foglio

Mark Poole
Anthony Waters
Mark Romanoski
Sarah Finnigan
Drew Baker
Igor Kieryluk
Ekaterina Burmak
Ilya Shcherbakov
Aleyna Danner
Izzy
Pete Venters
Christopher Moeller
Svetlin Velinov
Colin Boyer
Kieran Yanner
Cliff Childs
Steven Belledin
Chris Ostrowski
Donato Giancola
Alan Pollack
Ron Spears
Filip Burburan
Todd Lockwood
Richard Thomas
Lake Hurwitz
Liz Danforth
Jason Chan
Doug Gregory
Volkan Baga
Sidharth Chaturvedi

Magali Villeneuve

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

The deck is finished on 58/75. Randy Gallegos is attending events this year, so we can get Lorien Revealed signed! However, we will never have a fully signed OG nonfoil Chinese deck, given Wizards of the Coast’s decision to stop printing Chinese cards after Modern Horizon 3.

Again, it’s extremely short-sighted for the company to decide to stop printing Chinese cards in the future, just to make the revenue report look better. MTG has always been connecting people, even those from different countries and cultures. Lots of great moments happen when we can’t speak to each other but could enjoy the game together. Sadly, this is no longer true. I’m not sure if I would continue playing legacy and updating this primer, now that the project is impossible to finish. Nonetheless, legacy is THE best and most elegant game I’ve ever seen and played. I’ll always remember the excitement and beauty brought by this game, especially in the very difficult times during the COVID pandemic.