

My Rhinofesto - A Guide to Crashing Footfalls in Modern

Introduction

Hello there, and welcome to my Rhinofesto!

My name is Jonatan Nahnfeldt, also known to some as FjodorSascha. I've been playing Crashing Footfalls in some iteration since 2019, starting with the Electrodominance variant, going to Temur with the Modern-printing of Shardless Agent and now to 4-color after the banning of Violent Outburst.

On my resume I have two RCQ wins with the archetype, one with Temur back in 2022 and one just recently in the current season of 2025. I have a multitude of RCQ top8s in the period in between, as well as a top16 finish at Swedish Modern Nationals and a 2k dollar cash win in Arena Open Aetherdrift.

But enough about my middling accomplishments! Let's get to the deck that I just love to play!

After falling into obscurity after the Violent Outburst ban, little innovation has been done to the deck. It makes sense, to a degree, it was never a very popular deck until it rose to dominance just ahead of the ban, but even then it was relatively underplayed for the quality of the archetype.

Due to the deck building restrictions there are few new cards that make the cut. Wizards have been careful about printing efficient high mana value cards that have an alternate casting cost lately, in part due to the whole Up the Beanstalk disaster.

However, this is not to say that the archetype is in any way dead! In my mind it has the potential to be more alive than ever! So why isn't it putting up any performances in larger tournaments? I will go through the main reasons in the next section.

An Underappreciated and Misbuilt Deck

If you have looked for lists for this deck on for example MTG Goldfish, you will have seen a common theme. Most lists contain the now classic Leyline-Scion combo, utilizing the interaction between Leyline of the Guildpact and Scion of Draco.

At face value it's a strong combination that can be hard to break up for a lot of decks, especially pre-sideboard. Domain Zoo has long used this 2-card combo to good effect, and with Rhinos moving into the Domain space it should have a similar slot there, right? My firm answer to that question is no.

There are several reasons as to why this is my stance. First and foremost, the odds of you having both Leyline and Scion in your opening hand is about 16%. This does not account for the playability of the rest of the hand. Not every hand out of those 16% will be otherwise playable. It can be a onelander, contain one or more Leylines or Crashing Footfalls or similar. I'm not a mathematician, but I'd estimate that the true number of hands where you have the combo and a playable hand is closer to 10% or less. The percentage is decreased further by the games where the opponent has the prerequisite interaction to deal with the combo. Someone once said "never tell me the odds", but when it comes to Magic I appreciate the estimate and this one does not satisfy my requirements for consistency.

Because if it's anything that Rhinos has always been, it's consistent. You generally have the same outline for the first three turns of the game. I will go through this in more detail later, but what this means for Leyline-Scion is that it reduces your consistency in terms of playable opening hands.

In Domain Zoo, Leyline has many different uses. It turns on Territorial Kavv, Wild Nacatl, Nishoba Brawler and Tribal Flames without needing the appropriate lands in play. Even if you don't have Scion in play it will affect the game in some fashion. This is not true for Rhinos.

If you don't have Scion in play, Leyline does stone cold nothing when in play apart from providing you with color fixing. That is not something that the deck really needs. Conversely, having Scion in play does not meaningfully impact your other creatures.

In Zoo, it gives Ragavan first strike, Kavv first strike and trample and if you play Psychic Frog it gets hexproof and lifelink. It truly does affect the board on the turn it comes down. In Rhinos it does not grant any other creature any meaningful buffs in the same fashion. Your Rhinos already have trample, giving hexproof to Shardless Agent and Subtlety is hardly relevant and Phlage does honestly not need more keywords to take over a game.

If you have Scion and Crashing Footfalls in your opener, but not Leyline, there is no way for you to suspend Footfalls turn 1 and play Scion on turn 2. This means that you will either not

suspend or play Scion until turn 4 (assuming you are cascading on turn 3). This is essentially a mulligan as either option is lacklustre at best.

There is no way to truly mitigate getting Leyline-flooded in Rhinos. Zoo can discard redundant copies with Kavu, or be pretty happy casting it with Scion in play as it, as previously mentioned, affects the board in a completely different fashion.

In Rhinos you can of course pitch the Leyline to Force of Negation or Subtlety, but this is hardly an upside to the card.

Another downside of Scion is that it makes you weaker to post-sideboard Consign to Memory, something everyone plays and will board in to counter cascade triggers.

Countering Scion is a 1-for-1, but Shardless Agent and Ardent Plea never are. You will still get your cascade card into play, and both can be very relevant to either still present some sort of clock or to enable attacks that otherwise wouldn't have been possible. Essentially, Consign is a pretty medium sideboard card against you if you're not playing Scion.

In summary, while having the Leyline-Scion obviously will win you some games, it will not meaningfully improve your win-rate and in my opinion more likely decrease it over a greater sample size of matches by making the deck more inconsistent. It causes awkward opening hands and decreases the amount of interaction you have available to you. Therefore, the commonly proposed build of Rhinos is a misbuild and actively hurts the deck's overall win rate.

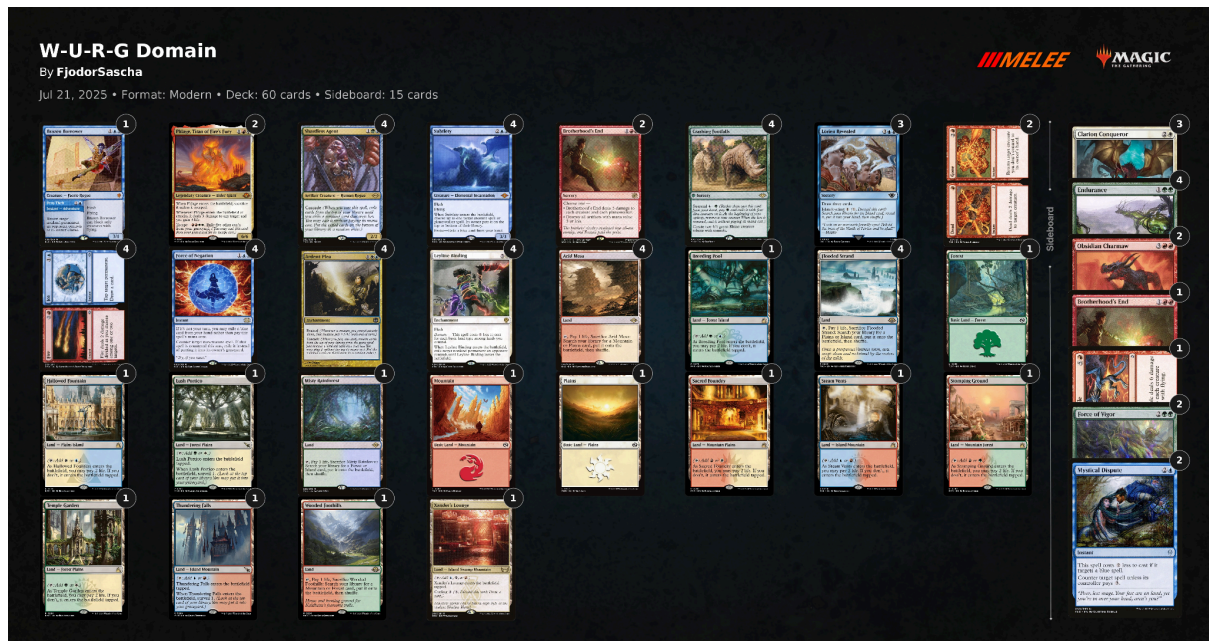
A problem that follows due to this is that if people pick the deck up and take it for a spin, they will likely do poorly and then drop it as soon as they 2-3 their first league on MTGO. The deck also does not have any online champions, such as Living End and similar off-meta decks have. The perceived play rate drops even more as it does not put up results in leagues or in challenges.

It's a negative feedback-loop that inevitably leads to lower play rate and a preconceived notion that the deck is worse than it actually is. I'm not saying that Rhinos would be guaranteed to be in tier 1 if it was built "correctly" but it definitely deserves more attention than it currently gets as a paltry 0.2% of the MTG Goldfish meta share would tell you.

There are also a multitude of suboptimal sideboard choices, which I will discuss further in the sideboard section of this guide.

But enough about how you *shouldn't* build the deck. How *should* it be constructed?

Interact, Counteract, Attack



Decklist: <https://www.mtggoldfish.com/deck/7172136#online>

In this part, I will go through all of the cards in my build by sections. The core, the interaction, the flex slots and the manabase. I will also go over the sideboard, why I've made the choices I have as well as flex cards to approach different metas.

The general plan of the deck is to play a tempo-oriented game plan, making use of your one-card combo to deploy a fast clock early on while keeping your opponent off balance with cheap and efficient interaction.

Proper threat-assessment will be integral to your success. While your interaction is great, you don't have access to true card advantage outside of Lórien Revealed. This makes it difficult to deal with *everything* your opponent can throw at you, but you can definitely set yourself up to handily deal with their key cards. I will explore threat assessments in each matchup in the sideboard guide later.

Let's start with the cards the whole deck is built to accommodate.

The Core



These cards hardly need introduction or explanation. These 12 cards are the core of the deck and your main threat. Playing either Shardless Agent or Ardent Plea on turn 3 to put 8-10 power on board with a single card is the main goal of almost every game.

Game 1 you often want to mulligan towards having at least one cascader in your hand, with few exceptions. Most decks just can't compete with the explosive change in board presence backed up by interaction, and regardless of what is on the other side the Rhinos present a fast clock that needs to be dealt with quickly.

If you have the choice to play either Shardless Agent or Ardent Plea, you should always go for Shardless as it will add to your board even if the opponent has a counterspell.

Next, let's look at how we complement this powerful threat package.

On the Battlefield



Fire // Ice, Dead // Gone and Leyline Binding are your main source of interacting with permanents on the battlefield.

The two split cards have been staple cards in Rhinos since the Temur days, and they continue to be prime real estate. While Dead // Gone has been cut down to two copies, Fire // Ice continues to be your primary turn 2 plan.

Icing your opponents land on their turn two upkeep can really set their plans back, especially if you're on the play. If the opponent didn't have a turn one play it feels very similar to casting Time Walk, setting you up to really put your opponent on the back foot and having to play catch-up immediately.

Fire is hardly an irrelevant side of the card either. 2 damage is enough to kill most early threats from the opponents' side, and being able to split up the damage to kill two one toughness creatures is icing on the cake. Fire can also go face to push the last couple points of damage, making sure your opponent is never safe when at a low life total.

Dead // Gone has more disparity between the two halves, as Dead will be the half you cast probably 90% of the time. Gone providing bounce to deal with high toughness or mana value creatures is not irrelevant though, as sometimes all you need is to get a blocker out of the way, by all means necessary.

Leyline Binding is one of the best removal spells printed in the last few years. With full domain in play, being able to deal with any nonland permanent at instant speed is massive for any deck, but this one in particular and it's the main reason for going into the full 5 colors of mana. It's castable as early as turn 2 with several combinations of lands and provides

much needed flexibility in your ability to deal with whatever your opponent might throw at you.

On the Stack



Rhinos isn't just able to deal with things on the battlefield, the deck is equally adept at dealing with cards on the stack, and it is one of the best to make use of the Modern Horizon pitch cards. Free spells are broken, and if you can take advantage of them, you absolutely should.

In my configuration I play a full 4 copies of both Subtlety and Force of Negation. This is not something that most decks can support due to the inherent card disadvantage when playing them for free. However, since we get virtual card advantage in being a one card combo that requires essentially no set up to present our clock, cards in hand have less significance.

As long as you can keep the pressure up the opponent only has a couple turns to deal with your trampling 4/4s, and as such just delaying your opponent and keeping them off balance gives you the time you need to finish the game before the card disadvantage matters.

Another upside of the free spells is that it allows you to tap out on turn 3 to deploy your cascader while not leaving yourself completely open to the opponent's counterplays. It is quite simply some of the most efficient tempo plays you can present in the Modern format.

The Flex Slots



Calling Phlage a flex slot is probably disrespectful to the card. It is more or less mandatory to play two copies. It is your main backup wincon and an excellent way to make use of your graveyard, which is otherwise an unused resource in the deck.

Playing Phlage does put significant strain on the mana base. Even with the powerful mana fixing of fetchlands having access to UU, RR, WW and G is no easy task without paying significant amounts of life, but Phlage is such a powerful card as well as offsetting the life loss it is a much needed inclusion to give the deck some extra closing power.

Brazen Borrower has been a staple inclusion for Rhinos ever since the deck's conception. The number of copies has varied, but one little sneaky Faerie has always stuck. It's just a very versatile card to answer troublesome permanents as well as providing a decent flying threat on the creature side. With the addition of Leyline Binding it does bring a little less value, as we then already have permanent answers to any nonland permanent. The one toughness is definitely more noticeable nowadays with Orcish Bowmasters and Lava Dart being more prevalent, but it can still do the job.

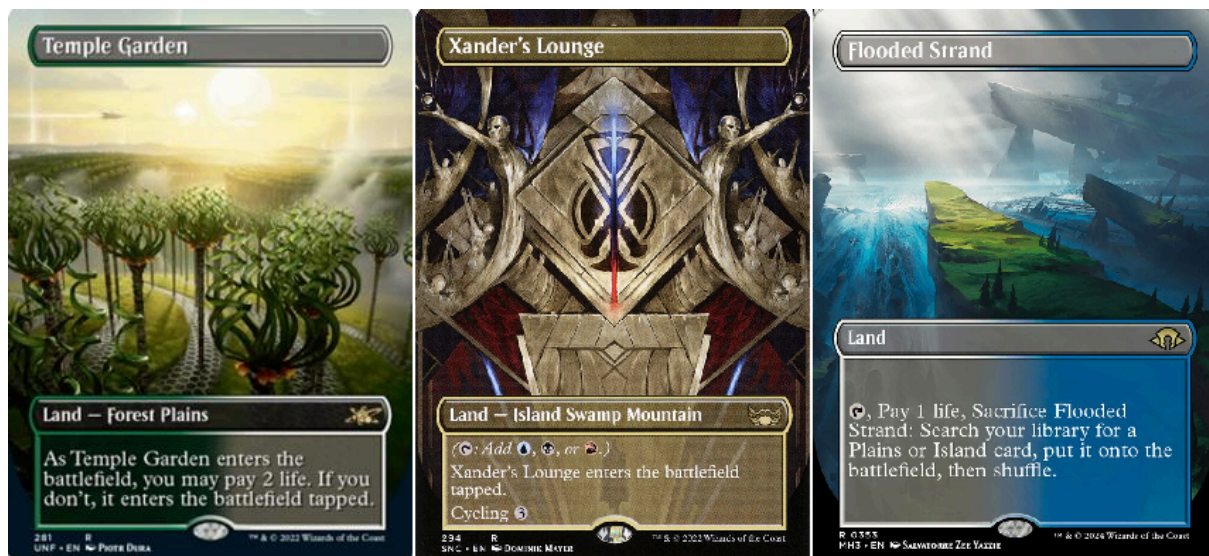
A true flex slot inclusion, however, is Brotherhood's End. Since its printing in Brother's War it has seen plenty of sideboard play in multiple formats, with both modes of the card being very relevant in many matchups. So relevant today, that I have chosen to include it in the main deck.

Its main purpose is to deal with Boros Energy, as controlling their board presence is vital to the matchup. It also shines against Prowess, Broodscale and BW Blink decks, in essence having high relevance against roughly 50% of a given field. It can also deal with more

off-meta decks such as Merfolk and Affinity, and has high value vs Urza's Saga decks to clear big constructs which is something the deck can struggle against.

In the current meta I wouldn't leave home without my two maindeck copies, but as metas change and vary, these two slots can always be something else that attacks the current meta in a different way.

The Mana



I will be the first to say it, the mana in this deck is absolutely atrocious. It's strained to the maximum with several different double pips in the deck, but it does work out.

Essentially, what we are working with is a Jeskai deck splashing green for Shardless Agent and a Xander's Lounge for Leyline Binding. However, to not instantly lose to Blood Moon effects, it is at the same time necessary to play 3 basic lands. I will go through the reasons for each basic below.

Plains: Gives you an out to play a 4 mana Leyline Binding to deal with all Moon effects.

Mountain: Gives you an out to kill Harbinger of the Seas with red removal.

Forest: Lets you play Shardless Agent through Harbinger of the Seas.

The exclusion of basic Island might look odd at first, but it does not actually provide you with any utility through the Moon effects. It doesn't let you interact apart from Petty Theft, nor does it allow you to cast any relevant spells as single blue is only good enough for Ice. It simply does not contribute to your potential outs.

Forest is still an awkward inclusion, as it is one of two lands that does not contribute to casting Phlage with Escape. The other is Breeding Pool, which is a concession to being able to get green mana with Lórien Revealed. They are necessary evils to make the mana work in a sufficiently consistent manner. For similar reasons, Sink Into Stupor is left out of the

deck as it does not cast Phlage and does not provide a typed land for Domain purposes. Lórien Revealed fills the “land that pitches to Force” space instead for these reasons.

Something I have wanted to be able to include a lot of the time is a third surveil land, but with 3 taplands as well as 3 Lórien Revealed (essentially a tapped land) you are too constrained on tapped vs untapped sources of mana. You risk not being able to play your spells on curve, which outweighs the benefits of additional surveil value.

The Sideboard



The sideboard of Rhinos is, of course, subject to the same deckbuilding restrictions as the main deck. However, this does not necessarily mean that it's inflexible. There are several options depending on what kind of deck or meta you want to attack.

The trio in the image above, Clarion Conqueror, Endurance and Mystical Dispute are cards I deem must-includes in your sideboard, along with at least two copies of Force of Vigor. I would never go below three copies of Clarion Conqueror or Endurance. Mystical Dispute is a very valuable counterspell against any blue deck, but particularly against Psychic Frog on the draw. I will always play at least two Disputes.

Clarion Conqueror takes over games by itself and hoses a multitude of strategies, most notably the Broodscale combo and all flavors of Emry-artifact decks. The games where the Conq is good it is THE card in the matchup.

Endurance is your graveyard interaction of choice and a great way to keep opposing Phlages in check, take away delirium and all of those other pesky graveyard shenanigans your opponents may be up to. I will note that Endurance, and by extension Force of Vigor are much more difficult to pitch-cast than they were in the Temur variant, as you only play 8

green cards in the main deck and a maximum of 14 postboard. Not suspending your Crashing Footfalls on turn 1 to be able to pitchcast either is often worth it.

My RCQ-winning list is tuned towards the Energy matchups, as that is one of the most popular decks locally. If you aim to beat Energy, board wipes are your friend and having access to additional ones out of the board is vital to the matchup. Rough // Tumble is a very valuable one, especially on the draw as it can relieve the early pressure and allow you to be more proactive as the game progresses.

However, the less Energy you expect to face the less the card deserves its spot, as it is not particularly strong in any other matchups.

Obsidian Charmaw is a sideboard choice against different flavors of Eldrazi and Tron, as well as against Amulet Titan (however it is much less valuable there).

Some notable exclusions compared to a number of lists I've seen floating around are Inevitable Betrayal and Teferi, Time Raveler.

I'm a firm believer that Inevitable Betrayal is a trap that does not improve the matchups that you would board it in against. It's a card that sees play almost exclusively against Emrakul decks and Goryo's Vengeance. These are both already unfavored matchups and what you are essentially doing when boarding in Betrayal against them is trying to beat them at their own game by putting their massive creatures into play before them. In my mind, this is the same as just giving up on the matchup.

The thing about constructed magic is that any given deck is just that; constructed to do a certain thing. You will extremely rarely be able to beat an opponent at their own game.

You are much better off sticking to your main plan of Rhinos and trying to disrupt the opponent as much as possible. You have access to Force of Negation in the main deck after all, and after sideboarding a well timed Endurance or Force of Vigor can seriously disrupt the opponent.

While cascading into Betrayal and stealing an Atraxa feels great, it does not end the game quicker than Rhinos nor does it provide you with better card advantage than your opponent. At least the Rhinos can force your opponent to use multiple cards to deal with them, while a single Solitude quickly clears your board presence if you've played Betrayal. Board presence matters so much more to Rhinos than card advantage, and as such sticking to your main plan is much more important than anything else.

Similarly, Teferi does not contribute meaningfully to your main plan. There aren't many counter wars happening in the current meta, and shutting off your opponent's instant speed interaction simply isn't as relevant today as it was a few years ago. It is far from a bad card, but in my opinion it doesn't make the cut in the current meta.

I have also seen people including Balustrade Spy for Belcher and silver bullet cards to cascade into, like Doorkeeper Thrull, Drannith Magistrate and High Noon. These are all traps, and should never make it into your sideboard.

Balustrade Spy will probably steal you a game once or twice against Belcher, but there are two major flaws with this. Firstly, it requires that you fetch Xander's Lounge. This is not always something that you have the privilege to do, depending on your opening hand. Nearly all Belcher players also sideboard Harbinger of the Seas, which will make you completely unable to cast it anyways.

Secondly, a competent Belcher pilot will not let this line of play happen and have access to way too many ways to counter the Spy in the majority of cases. Never assume your opponent is a bad or incompetent player and sideboard in a way that assumes your opponent knows their outs and their way to win. And besides all of this, the matchup is already skewed favored for Rhinos, so you don't need such a specific sideboard card to win.

As for the "cascadeable" sideboard cards, you either need to sideboard out all of your Footfalls or gamble on which card you will cascade into. Neither of these options are good. You want to know with 100% certainty what you are cascading into. Putting yourself in a situation where you don't know exactly what your turn three play will give you will make you unable to plan ahead in an efficient manner and then hitting the "wrong" card likely hurts you more than the opponent. Your cascaders are meant to present your clock, not your counterplan. The absolute best way of preventing your opponent from winning is winning before them, and approaching the game by focusing on preventing your opponent from winning is playing to not losing rather than playing to win.

This is a common fallacy that many fall into, but I guarantee you that just playing to win will provide you with much more success than doing your darndest to prevent your opponent from doing their thing.

Alternative Card Choices



Two interesting recent potential additions to the deck are Magmatic Hellkite and Quantum Riddler.

Magmatic Hellkite can be an excellent follow-up to cascading, especially against decks like Eldrazi strategies.

I've tested it to decent success, including an RCQ top 8 and an MTGO 5-0 result. However, depending on the matchup or your draw, it can span from being a completely bonkers 4 mana 4/5 flier that Stone Rains your opponent to being an uncastable card that doesn't even pitch to anything.

If you expect to face a lot of Eldrazi, Tron or Amulet Titan I can fully endorse this card as excellent, but the inherent variance in its usefulness causes it to not make the cut in the current meta.

At the time of writing this, Quantum Riddler has not yet been released, but I have goldfished quite a bit with the card and I feel it has great potential to be a two- to three-of in the deck.

It not only gives the deck an additional turn 2 play, but also crazy inevitability in the late game. The body is massive and evasive, as well as doubling up your draw steps allowing you to pitch-cast your cards even more aggressively. It even has the flexibility to make a very good Expressive Iteration impression by casting it for its warp cost in the late game if you

can't or don't want to tap out. It has the potential to be the new best card advantage spell in Modern.

Riddler requires further testing, and if the meta stays Boros heavy Brotherhood's End might still make the cut over it as a meta call, but I will definitely be acquiring a playset of them at release.

The Gameplay

Moving on to the gameplay, I will go over the first four turns of the game. These are the most “scripted” turns and will often look very similar in the majority of your matches.

The Opening Hand

The exact composition of your ideal opening hand is of course always dependent on the matchup in question. However, if we assume that we are in game one against an unknown opponent it looks something like this.



The above hand gives you access to all necessary mana, versatile interaction and cascading on turn three. This hand simply sets you up to have the ideal conditions to progress your game plan.

So how do we play our first few turns? There are quite a few ways to do it, and I will go through the general sequencing here.

Turn One



Despite being a deck that technically doesn't contain cards below a mana value of three, Rhinos has several different ways to play its turn one.

The best turn one play is most likely to suspend *Crashing Footfalls*, a surprisingly relevant play in many matchups. It lets you take more of a controlling approach to the game in matchups like *Prowess* where you will be under heavy early pressure by evasive creatures, as well as against control decks where you are setting up for a turn where you try to break through countermagic by cascading twice in the same turn, similar to how you could play *Violent Outburst* in the opponents end step to then untap and cascade again.

Second best is just to play or fetch a surveil-land or getting an untapped land to cycle your *Lórien Revealed*. This sets up your land drops and makes sure you can cast your spells on curve. This land should in most cases be *Temple Garden* or *Lush Portico* to best set up for domain mana, but can also be *Xander's Lounge* if it suits your curve better.

Turn Two



Your optimal turn two play, especially when you are on the play, is to cast Ice on your opponent's land. If they haven't made a turn one play this can very closely mimic a Time Walk and can be absolutely vital for you to keep the upper hand in the match.

If you don't have Fire // Ice in hand for turn two this is an excellent time to fetch Xander's Lounge. Ideally you've gotten a Lush Portico or Temple Garden on turn one, and this sets up the full domain to enable the one mana Leyline Binding. With a Binding already in hand this also lets you cast it to deal with a problematic early play from the opponent.

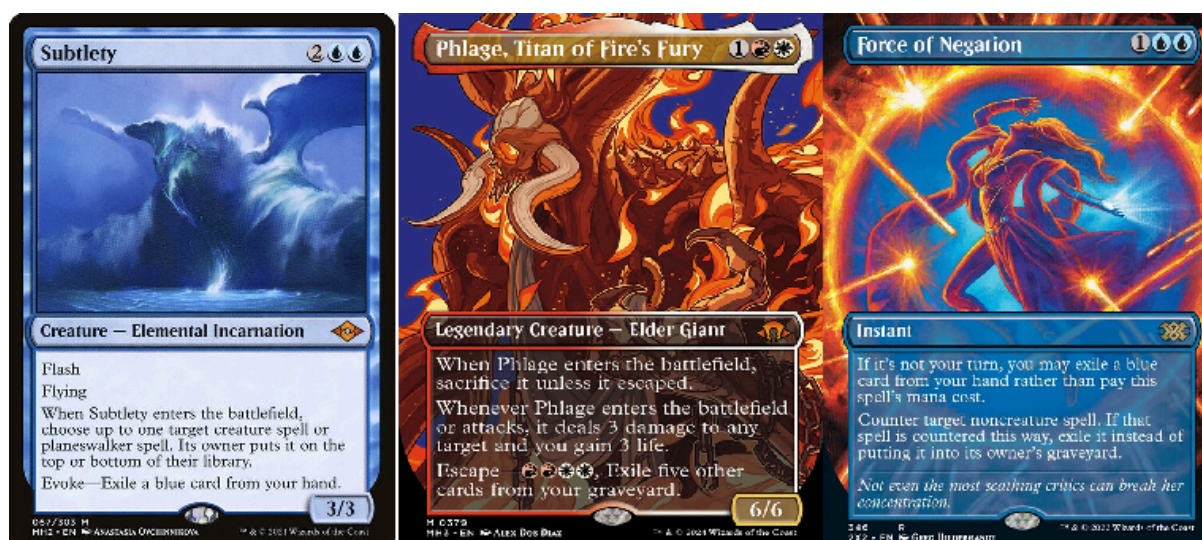
Turn Three



This one is hardly a secret. This is *the* turn that the deck wants to execute in the same fashion every game. What you want to do on turn three is basically always to cascade and get your Rhinos in play. There are of course edge cases where this might not be your best play, but it's rare for it to not be.

The situations you diverge from this plan may be when you have a Footfalls suspended and want to focus on interacting with your opponent until the last suspend counter has been removed, or post board when you want to play around a counterspell by holding up an additional mana for Mystical Dispute.

Turn Four and Onwards



This is where the fun begins. From turn 4 onwards you want to protect your Rhinos and keep up the pressure. Maybe you play proactively and deploy more Rhinos, or you go in on utilising your free interaction to keep your opponent on the back foot.

This part of the game is very matchup dependent and from here you will have to figure out how to navigate the specific match in the moment. However, some general directions can always be provided.

If you don't foresee any board wipes, such as Wrath of the Skies or similar, you can pretty freely just keep cascading turn after turn. Very few decks can actually deal with 4+ Rhinos, especially if you can keep them off balance with your free interaction.

Anything that halts your ability to attack is something that needs to be dealt with, however trading off your Rhinos can often be fine. Even chump attacking can be sometimes reasonable just to push damage, especially if you have additional cascaders in hand.

Setting your mana up to be able to escape Phlage is also important at this stage of the game, as well as having double blue available to hardcast Force of Negation and Subtlety.

Subtlety in particular is also a very reasonable evasive threat that can close out games if your Rhinos have dealt some damage but then been dealt with. Don't be afraid to just flash it in on end step as a flash Phantom Monster!

After sideboarding you can expect opponents to bring in countermagic, in particular Consign to Memory and Orim's Chant to prevent you from getting your Rhinos into play. You might ask, how do we play around this? To that I say, just jam into the counters. If the opponent commits to playing reactively rather than proactively they make themselves slow down, sometimes by a significant amount.

Countering Crashing Footfalls will always be a card-negative interaction for OP, as you will resolve either Ardent Plea or Shardless Agent to get at least one piece of cardboard down. It

might not seem like much, but this deck aims to eek out every little piece of card advantage it can and this is a great way to do it.

The more troublesome sideboard cards are proactive anti-cascade cards like Vexing Bauble and Chalice of the Void. Neither of them requires the opponent to keep up mana, allowing them to progress their gameplan without concerning themselves with our main plan. Vexing Bauble also stops pitch-casting, severely impacting our tempo-gameplan, especially if it comes down on turn one.

The Matchups

So how are you supposed to approach different matchups? In this section I will discuss the sideboard and matchup approach of the most popular decks in the meta (according to MTG Goldfish). You will find a summary sideboard guide at the end of this section.

I will preface this whole guide that the exact cards I sideboard are mainly based on vibes rather than thorough research. If you feel the vibes of the listed sideboarding is off, feel free to divert from the guide.

A lot of the even matchups can easily be swung in your favor if you pilot the deck well, especially control matchups as well as BW Blink.

Boros Energy

Favored

In: +1 Brotherhood's End, +1 Rough // Tumble, +3 Endurance

Out: -1 Force of Negation, -4 Subtlety

Boros Energy and its variants is the deck you want to be able to beat, and I can say with confidence that this matchup is favored for Rhinos.

The cards you care about answering the most in the matchup are Guide of Souls, Goblin Bombardment and Phlage. Guide of Souls providing a solid life buffer as well as granting evasion to their otherwise ground-based threats will make it difficult for you to stabilise the board. In a similar way, Goblin Bombardment provides "evasive" damage that makes blocking as well as removal ineffective. Phlage hardly needs introduction, but it too simply is reach-damage as well as a sticky threat that is hard to properly answer.

Your own best cards will in every matchup be the cascaders, for obvious reasons, so going forward I will only discuss cards other than those as key for each matchup.

Dead // Gone and Brotherhood's End are crucial to be able to control the board and the early game. Note that Brotherhood's End also hits planeswalkers so an Ajani that has not been plussed will also die to it.

Fetching in a way that lets you play one-mana Bindings is very good if you have the opportunity, as you will often be pressured into answering multiple cards in the same turn.

Your own Phlage's provide a life buffer as well as removing threats from your opponents side. If the game goes long it is often decided by which player can make Phlage stick for long enough to attack.

Post-board you get access to two additional sweepers to have greater control of the board as well as Endurance to keep your opponent's Phlages in check. Due to the greater number of sweeps Subtlety drops in value as you care less about individual creatures resolving and more about dealing with threats in play. Subtlety also does not deal with Phlages that are discarded with Fable or Seasoned Pyromancer, or surveiled into the graveyard if your opponent is lucky. It can also proactively deal with the graveyard to prevent escaping Phlage in a situation where you don't get priority, such as discarding to Fable of the Mirror-Breaker. Take note of every situation where you get priority if the opponent has a Phlage and the prerequisite cards to escape it, as Phlage can make or break a game, especially with Arena of Glory.

One Force of Negation is often what gets cut to accommodate the sideboard cards, but you need access to them to deal with cards that in many situations cannot be allowed to resolve. These include Goblin Bombardment, Vexing Bauble and Wrath of the Skies.

Domain Zoo

Unfavored

In: +2 Mystical Dispute* OR +2 Endurance*, +2 Force of Vigor

Out: -2 Brotherhood's End, -2 Force of Negation

**Mystical Dispute comes in v Psychic Frog variants, otherwise you generally want Endurance.*

This matchup is bad, but with that said it's not unwinnable. You need the opponent to stumble a little bit, and it's not impossible to engineer this.

You can, for example, remove Leyline of the Guildpact in situations where they might not have great mana without it or to remove keywords granted by Scion mid-combat. Using removal as combat tricks is in general very good in this matchup as the trample from Rhinos lets damage go through even if they have been blocked previously.

Subtlety shines in this matchup to keep the pressure on and the opposing side of the board clear, but with full Domain online Territorial Kavv does very easily stabilize. Tribal Flames is also a problem as it constricts your ability to tank hits or deploy your mana in a timely manner.

The sideboard does not offer much, but with some luck Force of Vigor can provide additional answers to Leyline. Mystical Dispute is great to answer Psychic Frog on the draw, but if they play a different variant Endurance is a better fit to deal with Phlage.

The biggest issue is simply that Domain has larger creatures and a more evasive clock, but if you can keep them off good mana and break up the Leyline-Scion combo it is very much possible to win.

BW Blink

Even

In: +3 Endurance, +1 Brotherhood's End

Out: -4 Force of Negation

This matchup is a difficult one, and can vary quite a bit depending on variance and how each player's draw lines up against the other's.

If your interaction lines up just right, say for example that you answer Phelia on turn 2, then untap to cascade and have Subtlety when they try to go for a Solitude-Ephemerate line, it is hard to lose. The same goes for a well timed Brotherhood's End, which is also one of your best answers to a well-developed board on the opposing side.

If Phelia instead goes unanswered and they get to "flip" an Overlord early on, the matchup looks very different. A Flickerwisp-heavy draw can also be problematic as it is just a flying Nekrataal for your Rhinos.

As you can tell from my examples, Phelia is the main card that needs to be answered out of the deck. Second in line, it's Overlord of the Balemurk. If it flips, the game is more or less over, as they then have a profitable blocker as well as card advantage to mitigate having to spend multiple cards to answer your Rhinos.

Your main road to victory is to accrue virtual card advantage and run them out of resources for them to not be able to stabilize in time. By keeping Balemurk, Phelia and Flickerwisp off the board, this is achievable. But if you can't, you will have a bad time. Subtlety that Overlord!

Amulet Titan

Favored

In: +2 Force of Vigor, +2 Obsidian Charmaw, +2 Endurance

Out: -2 Dead // Gone, -2 Phlage, -2 Brotherhood's End

With 4 Subtlety and 4 Force of Negation in the main deck this matchup is always going to be favored.

While Titan is more resilient to interaction with the Analyst-loop, Rhinos presenting a fast clock with interaction backup puts Titan under heavy pressure to go off quickly.

The cards you want to counter at all costs are of course, the namesake cards in Amulet of Vigor and Primeval Titan. Scapeshift is a game winning play in more or less any situation they would go for it so that is always something you need to counter.

Note that both Scapeshift and Titan can be allowed to resolve if there are no Amulets or Spelunking in play, as neither will generate mana at that point. However, if you do not have to pitch-cast either Force of Subtlety it is still of course very worth it to do so.

Blue Belcher

Even, leaning favored

In: +2 Mystical Dispute, +3 Clarion Conqueror, +1 Endurance

Out: -2 Dead // Gone, -2 Phlage, -2 Brotherhood's End

This is another matchup that can go either way depending on how each player's draw lines up against the other's.

Icing your opponent's lands is an even more powerful play in this matchup, as a lot of your opponent's lands enter tapped, setting your opponent back even more than in other matchups.

Belcher also has trouble countering Footfalls for free, save for Flare of Denial. For this reason it's important to keep the board clear of Thundertrap Trainers and Fallaji Archaeologists ahead of your turn 3.

Take care to interact with your opponent's suspended Lotus Blooms, you can let it resolve and still cast a Leyline Binding on it in their upkeep, denying them the mana except for instant speed spells.

Postboard you really want to resolve and protect Clarion Conqueror, as they cannot combo through it. The single Endurance comes in to have at least one tool vs Tameshi, but since Endurance is hard to pitch-cast it is less valuable.

UB Frog

Even, leaning unfavored

In: +2 Mystical Dispute, +4 Endurance

Out: -4 Force of Negation, -2 Brotherhood's End

If the opponent's Psychic Frog gets to stick it is very difficult to accrue enough virtual card advantage to win.

The most recent iterations of these decks are playing 3-4 Force of Negations in the main deck which allows them to interact with Crashing Footfalls even when tapped out. When they were playing 1 or even none in the main the line of Subtlety the Frog into untap cascade was much more of a game winning sequence. For this reason the matchup has gone from favored to even.

Postboard you want to pivot into more of a "4c Flash" deck, putting pressure on your opponent's interaction on their own turn. Endurance isn't actually *that* great if you consider its normal usage of graveyard hate, but having access to another four cards that can be played on the opponent's turn is. It can also ambush Frogs, forcing them to discard at least 2 cards if they want it to survive.

Mystical Dispute is also excellent to answer Frog on the draw, as well as to fight for Footfalls on the stack on turn 4+. It is often worth delaying casting a cascader until turn four for this reason, especially if you have access to playing Endurance on turn 3 instead.

Living End

Favored

In: +2 Mystical Dispute, +4 Endurance

Out: -2 Dead // Gone, -2 Phlage, -2 Brotherhood's End

This matchup used to be absolutely atrocious. I'm talking about a 90/10 matchup in Living End's favor. Their cascade turns were simply bigger, better AND wiped your board. However, since the banning of Grief and Violent Outburst the matchup has turned on its head.

Of course, their cascades will still be bigger, better and wipe your board, but them only having access to cascading on their own turn makes your Force of Negations much, much stronger than they used to be. So much so that I think the matchup turns into a favored one, even if just slightly.

Having access to the full 4 Endurance is critical post board, and as always the one-mana interaction for counterwars in Mystical Dispute is fantastic.

Izzet Prowess

Unfavored

In: +1 Brotherhood's End, +3 Endurance

Out: -2 Force of Negation, -2 Subtlety

I've gone back and forth on this matchup, as I've had good results against it. However, I'm pretty convinced that against a competent player who knows not to over sideboard this matchup is unfavored.

Game one is difficult to win if you don't have a very interaction heavy draw. Their threats are evasive and their clock can be extremely fast. If they quickly get DRC online you will take considerable amounts of damage if it goes unanswered and stabilising will be difficult.

Cori-Steel Cutter is a source of virtual card advantage for Prowess and a card that leads them to their most explosive starts, Force this card every time you can.

Postboard is where the matchup can change. An opponent that focuses too much on interacting with your Footfalls sets themselves up to lose. They simply don't need to care about the Rhinos, because with a reasonable draw their clock is simply faster. The longer the game goes, the more favored you will be.

For example, if the opponent sideboards something like four Consign and two Spell Pierce, they commit to the plan of holding up at least one mana for *the whole game* from turn three onwards. This severely affects their velocity and will grant you time to find your interaction. They also risk being interaction-flooded and unable to pressure your life total in a meaningful way.

However, if they stick to sideboarding only two Spell Pierce and stick to the game one beatdown plan they are suddenly heavily favored again. As long as they stay proactive, this matchup will always be difficult.

Goryo's Vengeance

Unfavored

In: +2 Mystical Dispute, +4 Endurance

Out: -2 Dead // Gone, -2 Phlage, -2 Brotherhood's End

This matchup is similar to the UB Frog matchup in that the Frog sticking around makes the matchup considerably more difficult to win. However, in contrast to UB Goryos has access to much more explosive starts as well as a more impactful late game.

The fact they can play around Force of Negation by casting Goryos on your end step severely hurts the matchup compared to many other combo-matchups. The life swing from Atraxa also swings the race as well as providing them with way too many cards takes away Rhinos two greatest assets, virtual card advantage and life total pressure.

This is simply a very difficult matchup if they have a good draw. However, there is always the chance that they have a bit of a clunky draw, something that Rhinos is very adept at capitalizing on.

Post board you get a few more tools to fight them, with four Endurance and Disputes coming in. This does improve the matchup greatly, but still not enough for me to consider it a favorable one.

Ruby Storm

Favored

In: +4 Endurance

Out: -2 Dead // Gone, -2 Brotherhood's End

Similar to the Titan matchup, access to free interaction puts you in a favored position. Of course, sometimes they just have the turn two nuts and you didn't have the right interaction, but it's important to note that Ruby Storm basically never has a deterministic kill until they cast Past in Flames with Wish in the yard. As long as you can deal with their discounters as well as Past in Flames you'll most likely win comfortably.

Endurance gives you additional ways to deal with Past in Flames after sideboarding, which is more or less all you need to safeguard the matchup.

Neobrand

Favored

In: +2 Mystical Dispute

Out: -2 Brotherhood's End

Another matchup where the free interaction really shines. It's very difficult for Neobrand to have enough protection to fight both Force of Negation and Subtlety, and you give them very little time to rebuild after a countered Neoform or Rider.

There is not too much to say about the matchup but to just make sure to have the free interaction in your opener and things will most likely go your way.

Broodscale Combo

Unfavored

In: +3 Clarion Conqueror, +2 Force of Vigor, +1 Brotherhood's End

Out: -2 Phlage, -4 Force of Negation

On face value this seems like it should be a good matchup, it's a combo deck where creature interaction has value. However, the deck is so resilient and has many roads to victory which makes it difficult to have enough interaction in the right order to deal with the deck.

That being said, Clarion Conqueror can completely solo the matchup postboard, as it shuts off more or less the whole deck and they can't combo through it.

Make sure to save your interaction for the main combo pieces in Broodscale and Blade, but keep in mind that Fleshrazer can put massive pressure on your life total, especially in multiples, and does need to be dealt with swiftly in most situations.

Eldrazi Ramp

Unfavored

In: +3 Clarion Conqueror, +2 Obsidian Charmaw, +2 Force of Vigor

Out: -2 Dead // Gone, -2 Brotherhood's End, -2 Phlage, -1 Force of Negation

Eldrazi Ramp has fallen from grace with the rise of Consign to Memory in almost every sideboard, which is good for Rhinos, because the matchup is a difficult one. They present creatures that outsize the Rhinos very early on and Ugin can be very hard to deal with even if it doesn't resolve.

Your plan will mainly be to play the mana denial angle. Ice their Sprawl:ed land, oftentimes it's even worth Forcing it. You want them to be constrained on their mana as much as possible and kill them before they can deploy their large creatures.

Post-board both Clarion Conqueror and Charmaw supplement this plan, making them unable to cast their spells ahead of schedule and clearing the way for tempoing them out.

Watch out for Blood Moon or Magus of the Moon after sideboarding and remember to fetch your basics.

Burn

Even

In: +2 Mystical Dispute

Out: -2 Brotherhood's End

A rare matchup in this day and age. It's favored on the play and unfavored on the draw. Every point of life matters in this matchup, and fetching your basics will be more relevant here than in other matchups just for managing your life total.

Playing Subtlety on their Goblin Guide is quite honestly a decent play, but save your counterspells for Boros Charm or a potentially lethal burn spell.

Mystical Dispute coming in out of the board might seem odd, but a 3 mana Mana Leak is quite honestly just good enough in a lot of spots as you often only need to counter one or two burn spells to save enough life to win.

Song of Creation Combo

Favored

In: +3 Clarion Conqueror, +2 Force of Vigor, +2 Mystical Dispute, +1 Brotherhood's End

Out: -2 Phlage, -2 Dead // Gone, -4 Subtlety

Somewhat of a newcomer to the modern meta, and maybe not even on the radar for most is Song of Creation combo. It's been popularized locally in Sweden by Rasmus Enegren, one of the best in the country, and has taken hold among the local players.

The goal of the deck is to play Song of Creation, then rattle off a ton of Moxen and other free spells to draw your deck and win with either Grapeshot or Jace, Wielder of Mysteries, similar to the Underworld Breach combo decks.

As every other combo matchup your Force of Negations pull a lot of weight, and after sideboarding Clarion Conqueror just solos the matchup completely. It shuts off their Moxen and their Emry, denying them the ability to generate mana on their combo turns and as such making their life extremely difficult.

Force of Vigor can deal with Urza's Saga starts and keep them off tempo, and Brotherhood's End is excellent on both modes to either clear off Emry/Tamiyo or all of their small artifacts and their large constructs.

Affinity

Even

In: +3 Clarion Conqueror, +2 Force of Vigor, +2 Mystical Dispute, +1 Brotherhood's End

Out: -2 Phlage, -2 Dead // Gone, -4 Force of Negation

The affinity matchup is mainly about keeping them off a critical mass of permanents. Brotherhood's End shines in this regard, as it can really set your opponents back by getting Moxen and Drums off the board to constrain their mana production.

Postboard Clarion Conqueror once again does its thing of just shutting everything down, including artifact lands! Force of Vigor prevents some early starts and dispute helps countering stuff like Kappa Cannoneer.

UWx Control

Unfavored to Even

In: +2 Mystical Dispute, +2 Endurance

Out: -2 Dead // Gone, -2 Brotherhood's End

The control matchup varies in "favoredness". Straight up UW control with Isochron Scepter and main deck Teferi, Time Raveler is possibly the worst matchup you could face, while Jeskai variants where Phlage is their main win condition are much more manageable.

One of the most important aspects of this matchup is to not play into board wipes. You have the privilege of being able to present a two turn clock with a single card, and it is something to make use of. Never over extend by playing an additional cascader when you already have Rhinos in play. Instead just keep up interaction and force the opponent to blink first.

Suspending Crashing Footfalls, even past turn 1 is actively good in this matchup, as it provides a steadily encroaching threat allowing you to hold up interaction, even on the turn that you deploy your threats.

Try to make sure that your suspended Rhinos don't overlap too much with your cascaded ones though, as you never want the opponent to have the opportunity to deal with two of your Crashing Footfalls with a single boardwipe.

Endurance out of the sideboard is mostly to have extra ways to deal with Phlage. But if you have exhausted all your Footfalls and still have additional cascaders in hand, there is real value in targeting yourself to shuffle them back in.

Samwise Combo

Favored

In: +3 Clarion Conqueror, +1 Brotherhood's End

Out: -2 Force of Negation, -2 Phlage

I will concede that I have little experience with this matchup, but it is a three-card creature combo. That is something that this deck is very adept at breaking up. As long as you can keep Samwise off the board this should as a baseline be a favored matchup.

Postboard Clarion Conqueror once again stops any combo from happening at all and can solo this matchup, and I don't really think any additional sideboarding is necessary apart from adding another Brotherhood's End.

Yawgmoth

Favored

In: +1 Brotherhood's End, +3 Clarion Conqueror, +4 Endurance

Out: -4 Force of Negation, -2 Phlage, -2 Fire // Ice

Yawgmoth is in many ways similar to Samwise (take that Vorthos-nerds) but it is in general more graveyard focused with Agatha's Soul Cauldron being a big part of their combo potential.

However, as long as you keep Yawgmoth from resolving this matchup is mostly smooth sailing. You can often get them low enough on life that they can't pay enough life enough to win.

It's important to note that nowadays they also have access to infinite life with Dredger's Insight, Young Wolf and a Ballista under Cauldron. Rhinos cannot beat this, which is why it's very worth it to bring in Endurance in addition to the obvious MVP Clarion Conqueror.

Tron

Unfavored

In: +2 Obsidian Charmaw, +3 Clarion Conqueror, +2 Force of Vigor

Out: -2 Phlage, -2 Dead // Gone, -2 Brotherhood's End, -1 Force of Negation

I haven't played this matchup since The One Ring was still legal in Modern. However, it has always been an unfavored one and I don't see that as having changed.

They play main deck Chalice of the Void and Trinisphere for the most part, both of which need to be answered for Rhinos to do basically anything at all, and nearly every spell has to be countered for Rhinos to not fall behind.

Mana denial is your best option, and keep in mind that you can tap Trinisphere to get around the tax, but this matchup is a rough one, no matter how you slice it or dice it.

Mirror

Even (duh)

In: +2 Mystical Dispute, +2 Endurance

Out: -2 Dead // Gone, -2 Brotherhood's End

The mirror usually revolves around one thing and one thing only, and that is who can resolve more Rhinos.

Whoever gets to cascade and resolve Footfalls is favored as they get to be on the offensive. Force of Negation is also high value, in the same way as against Living End as cascading is only done on your turn nowadays.

I will concede that I haven't played the mirror since the VO ban, but I'd boldly assume that most of the same heuristics apply. Just resolve more Rhinos and you will win.

To aid your goal Endurance is a good 2-of to come in out of the sideboard to shuffle back your Footfalls and keep deploying Rhinos forever.

Sideboard Guide

Shorthand Glossary:

BEnd = Brotherhood's End

Conq = Clarion Conqueror

D//G = Dead // Gone

Endu = Endurance

MD = Mystical Dispute

F//I = Fire // Ice

FoN = Force of Negation

FoV = Force of Vigor

OC = Obsidian Charmaw

Phlage = Phlage, Titan of Fire's Fury

R//T = Rough // Tumble

Sub = Subtlety

| Matchup | In | Out |
|--------------------|---|-----------------------------|
| Boros/Mardu Energy | +1 BEnd, +1 R//T, +3 Endu | -1 FoN, -4 Sub |
| Domain Zoo | +2 MD* OR +2 Endu*, +2 FoV *MD v Frog otherwise Endu | -2 BEnd, -2 FoN |
| BW Blink | +3 Endu, +1 BEnd | -4 FoN |
| Amulet Titan | +2 FoV, +2 OC, +2 Endu | -2 D//G, -2 BEnd, -2 Phlage |
| Blue Belcher | +2 MD, +3 Conq, +1 Endu | -2 D//G, -2 BEnd, -2 Phlage |
| UB Frog | +2 MD, +4 Endu | -4 FoN, -2 BEnd |
| Living End | +2 MD, +4 Endu | -2 D//G, -2 BEnd, -2 Phlage |

| Matchup | In | Out |
|------------------|---------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Prowess | +1 BEnd, +3 Endu | -2 FoN, -2 Sub |
| Goryos | +2 MD, +4 Endu | -2 D//G, -2 BEnd, -2 Phlage |
| Ruby Storm | +4 Endu | -2 D//G, -2 BEnd |
| Neobrand | +2 MD | -2 BEnd |
| Broodscale | +3 Conq, +2 FoV, +1 BEnd | -2 Phlage, -4 FoN |
| Eldrazi Ramp | +3 Conq, +2 OC, +2 FoV | -2 D//G, -2 BEnd, -2 Phlage, -1 Sub |
| Burn | +2 MD | -2 BEnd |
| Song of Creation | +3 Conq, +2 FoV, +2 MD, +1 BEnd | -2 Phlage, -2 D//G, -4 Sub |
| Affinity | +3 Conq, +2 FoV, +2 MD, +1 BEnd | -2 Phlage, -2 D//G, -4 FoN |
| UWx Control | +2 MD, +2 Endu | -2 D//G, -2 BEnd |
| Samwise Combo | +3 Conq, +1 BEnd | -2 FoN, -2 Phlage |
| Yawgmoth | +1 BEnd, +3 Conq, +4 Endu | -4 FoN, -2 Phlage, -2 F//I |
| Tron | +2 OC, +3 Conq, +2 FoV | -2 Phlage, -2 D//G, -2 BEnd, -1 FoN |
| Mirror | +2 MD, +2 Endu | -2 D//G, -2 BEnd |

Thank You!

Thank you for reading! This guide will always be free to read for anyone with the link, but if you feel like you got something out of this guide, I'd appreciate if you would send any amount of your choice to paypal.me/fjodorsascha

Happy Rhino-ing!