

My take on “Ad Nauseam” after the ban of Simian Spirit Guide.

Introduction:

Hi, my name is Selami from Istanbul. I am a father of two boys (2 and 4 as we speak) and spend what's left of my spare time playing MTG or reading/watching contents about it. I started with Magic when Nemesis was freshly released and stopped playing it in 2004 due to other responsibilities. Time passed and my life came to a point in which all was settled and a certain routine took over. So, after a “short” break of 15 years, I decided to do something just for myself and my enjoyment... and oh boy, do I enjoy this game!

After this little introduction, I would like to mention in advance, this is by no means a full guide about ad nauseam. In fact, it will probably be a writeup with many flaws, so I encourage you to be skeptical about all you will read here. Furthermore, it will be specifically about what is by now known as the “TS build” among the ad naus player base on discord. Personally, I don't think this “build” deserves a branched name for itself just yet. Nor does it have any significant genius idea that would make up for the loss of SSG (nothing can make up for Mankey, you think I don't know that!!!). Instead, I just added disruptive elements, slowing down the opponent to compensate for the speed we lost and implement some new play patterns. So let's get started.

The Deck:

Currently, the deck looks like this:



The mana base, as you might have figured, tends more on UB rather than on W. It's the card choices and their mana requirements that lead the way. Moreover, the deck may need early U and B (for cantrips and TS), but does not need early W. This gives us time to draw a W mana source in time (if you don't already have it). From the various games I experienced, I think the land count of 20 is still applicable with all the mana ramp that we have.

I won't go over all the cards one by one, but would like to open a chapter for our deck's namesake card, which I think, still deserves to keep the deck name. There is a difference in playing *ad nauseam* (as a card) compared to pre-ban. Before, the focus was on getting *grace* or *unlife* and casting *ad nauseam* to combo off. To do that, we were very conservative with *ad nauseam* and very rarely cast it for value (maybe if we had a spare one).

Post ban, I think it's a good idea to cast it for value early on. A very common on curve play pattern would be

-T1: TS/Cantrip/Temple

-T2: Pentad Prism

-T3: end of opponent's turn cast *naus*

You might also cast *ad nauseam* in response to a threat on T3 that needs to be countered or removed.

This example brings me to the next point. I think it is very important to have low mana cost card choices for two reasons. 1- We still want to combo early at turn 3/4/5 while using cheap disruptive/interruptive spells in this very short period of turns. 2- We need our spells to be as cheap as possible, to draw as much as possible with *naus*, specially the pacts (slaughter or negation, depending on MU). This is also one of the reasons I prefer to have *Ad Naus* as a 3 of, as it sabotages itself with its 5 life cost the most.

This doesn't mean we can't use *ad nauseam* to combo anymore. There are many ways to combo the traditional way as we did before. 2x Lotus Bloom, 1x Bloom + 1x Prism, 1x Bloom + 1x Unlife... all these hands allow you to *naus* combo at T4.

So, why do we actually cast value *naus* at all, if we can't finish the game straight up? Simply to prepare for next turn. We get the missing combo pieces for our spoils combo AND the pacts that we use either the same or next turn as well.

I would like to have a word about *Thoughtseize* as well, which "unintentionally" slipped its initials beside the deck's name (which I think is a bad idea). As simple as it looks, this card has great potential messing with your opponents strategy and delaying whatever they are planning to do. It rewards your knowledge of the meta by making the right pick. This becomes less relevant of course, against very linear decks, which do have no key cards/threats that need to be removed (like burn, prowess, elves, jund, DS variants...). Being both cheap and a good delay, makes it invaluable. You can't replace it with any of the other hand disruptions we know of. It's practically a swiss knife.

The Sideboard:

Let's talk about our SB choices and then we move on to our specific choices for each MU. Our SB looks like this:



- Leylines are for Burn/Prowess and hand disruption heavy decks. Too good to pass on.
- Pact of Negation for control decks of any kind. Just like Slaughter Pact, these free to cast spells are a perfect fit. Either we use them the same turn we combo and don't pay their tax. Or we cast them the turn before, which means next turn we combo with angel's grace... and again we don't pay the tax. In very rare cases, we have to counter a threat and give up on an angel's grace next turn. Not only are they cheap, interact good with our grace, but they also are good draws with our value naus as they cost no life.
- Spell Pierce is a very contradictory card, as it has a very wide area of application... and a very narrow one at the same time. So you can use it on any non-creature spell for just a single mana (remember we need cheap interruption), but it also gets obsolete in late games most of the time. It's a perfect counter against tron maps and libraries... but it's useless against full tron mostly. It's perfect against t3feri, but useless late game when control players stock on lands. When it's good, it's great. When it's bad, it sucks! So use it at your own risk and don't be greedy with it early game.
- Echoing Truth is a good permanent remover. Ideally you cast it at the opponent's end turn to go off on your turn (blood moon, baby karn, damping sphere, etc...).
- Mystical Dispute... I came to the conclusion that deck/archetype specific hate cards are not for me. I don't use Sphinx of the Final Word against control, or Ceremonious Rejection against Tron or even Veil of Summer. But Mystical Dispute, which is essentially blue hate, covers so many MUs in the current meta that I made an exception for it.
- Slaughter Pact is great for the same reasons I mentioned for Pact of Negation, but for creature MUs this time.

4 Leyline, 4 S. Pacts, 1 Echoing Truth and 1 Pact of Negation is the backbone of my SB List and I would not consider changing these at the moment. But the rest is a matter of preference. I am actually looking to replace mystical dispute with a one drop (hate to draw it with value naus).

The Matchups:

Let's have a look at the MUs.

-Heliod Company:

On the play/draw:

In: 4x S. Pact, 1x Echoing Truth (I include the second on G3 if I see a damping sphere in G2)

Out: 3x Pact of Negation, 2x Sleight of Hand

Relevant TS Picks: Heliod and Skyclave. Heliod combos with Ballista and Spike Feeder. You can't remove it with pacts. So it comes first. Pick Skyclave if you depend on your Unlife or Prism. Next choice would be the Ranger, even first choice if you have a bloom you depend on and no removal.

I think we are well positioned against the top meta deck. It's a creature based combo deck which needs activations, to which you can respond with free removals. TS and S. Pact can delay their plan for quite some time.

-U/R Blitz/Prowess/Burn:

On the play/draw:

In: 4x Leyline, 4x S. Pact, 1x Echoing Truth

Out: 3x Pact of Negation, 4x TS, 2x Sleight

Against Blitz, unlike other Prowess decks, you can actually leave the Leylines out if you wish. It has less burn spells, but more pump spells. You can include mystical dispute, a spell pierce and the second echo if you wish. Sometimes I do that and it's just as good. Don't worry too much about opponents' spell pierce. They will have to leave a U mana open at all times, which slows them down. You will eventually out pay their Spell Pierce.

-Eldrazi Tron:

On the play:

In: 2x Spell Pierce, 1x Echoing Truth

Out: 2x Sleight, 1x Unlife

On the play, you actually are well on curve using pact of negation when it matters (mostly), so we keep 'em. We try to aggressively combo on T4 and mulligan accordingly.

On the draw:

In: 2x Spell Pierce, 2x Echoing Truth

Out: 2x Sleight, 2x Pact of Negation

We take a more defensive stance, not necessarily trying to mulligan for TS and spell pierce, but it's a good keep. Will eventually use echoing truth when it gets messy with chalice and karn.

Relevant TS picks: chalice, baby karn, TKS

Overall, a very bad MU for us.

-Amulet Titan:

On the play:

In: 4x Slaughter Pact

Out: 2x Pact of Negation, 2x Sleight

Delay your opponents with TS and slaughter pacts. They are fast and once dryad and amulet is in play, they just need to topdeck the titan, a summoner's pact or a tolaria west.

On the draw: (optional)

In: 4x Slaughter Pact, 4x Leyline

Out: 3x Pact of Negation, 2x Sleight, 1x Bloom, 1x Ad Naus, 1x Oracle

You might not be fast enough on the draw, Leyline may give you the time needed to prevent valakuts damage.

Relevant TS picks: in order: amulet, dryad, titan, summoners pact

-Control decks:

On the play/draw:

In: 1x Pact of Negation, 2x Mystical Dispute, 2x Spell Pierce.

Out: 2x Sleight, 1x Bloom, 1x Oracle, 1x Unlife.

Cards sided in should be trivial. Side outs look random, but they're not. You can't expect a fast T3 finish against Control, so the frequency of oracle can be lesser. Mana/ramp also becomes less important, as the game will stretch to mid/late game anyway. We can also cut an Unlife as the clock's very slow with control. We still want these cards, but in lesser frequency.

Relevant TS picks: FoN, lower cmc counterspells. We want them to keep cryptics, so they can cast a less amount of counters per turn when it comes to comboing off.

Conclusion:

I seriously don't know what to think of the deck. Comparing it with the pre-ban version, it's bad. But then again, I had 11x 5-0 runs and loads of 4-1's after the ban. A record of 5-2, 5-2, 6-1 the last 3 challenges I attended. Crunching the numbers, it seems consistent... I'm confused.

Thanks for reading!