



MONO UTRON

THE BEST DECK IN MODERN

"I have no idea what they're up to over there in the Blue Tron corner...and at this point I'm afraid to ask"

- MTGO User 'aspiringspike'



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INTRODUCTION



Mono UTron is the misunderstood shy sibling of the Tron family of decks; going unnoticed at the dinner table while its bigger brothers scream and throw Karns at each other. It is a deck that is often thought of as being inherently less powerful, less linear, and less unfair than Gx or Eldrazi Tron, unless you put it in the hands of someone who's spent a great deal of time with their version of the deck. I like to think I fall into that category, and so want to try and put down what I've learnt in the eight years I've been playing Islands and hating Teferi.

This primer is long. So far, with the exception of the excellent FAQ put down by pierakor, Trelon's WIP primer and the original MTGSalvation thread with input from the deck's creator, Shoktroopa, there exists very little searchable content on this wonderful deck. I created this primer to try and put together a centralised source of information for both new and current pilots, with the aim of sparking in people the same affection for the deck that makes me miss it when I try and play with anything else. Since all the currently available material focuses on typical primer content (mainboard/sideboard inclusions, matchup ratings etc), this primer will try and describe more about strategy when playing the deck, and how the different cards complement each other. Hopefully this goes somewhere to putting UTron more firmly on the map of the Modern metagame. Failing that, I hope you enjoy reading.

WHAT IS UTRON?

UTron is a slow, draw-go value blue control deck that seeks to delay and disrupt the opponent's strategy and then use stabilising threats to take over the game. UTron is unique in that it generates a combination of higher combined card and mana advantage than any other deck in Modern. Anything that is trying to grind out value or play the long game is going to have an extremely hard time; playing threats into a quagmire of interaction and slowly running out

of gas while we drown in card advantage and play giant stabilisers backed up by even more permission and a ton of mana.

Our mana advantage comes in the inclusion of Tron; the affectionate name for the combination of the three 'Urza' lands: Tower, Power Plant and Mine. When assembled, these lands give you a total of 7 colourless mana, and it hardly needs explaining how generating 7 mana from three lands can put you in a very powerful position. More conventional Tron decks use these lands aggressively, to play threats early and hope they're good enough to win. UTron uses the Urza lands to complement our control game with a massive mana advantage, allowing us to play powerful colourless cards whilst always keeping our interaction live.

A WORSE GX TRON?

UTron is often thought of as a 'worse' or 'budget' version of its more infamous brother GxTron. In reality, it is a completely different deck.

The green variants of Tron are linear decks. They want to get Tron online as soon as possible, usually by turn 3, and play whichever threats they've drawn as fast as they can. They sometimes have interaction splashes in the form of Fatal Push or Kozilek's Return, but these are there as a means of protecting the deck until it can enact the primary game plan; to throw big colourless cards at the opponent. This game plan cannot be well adapted to the deck you're facing; getting turn three Tron is only good if the threats you have in your hand line up well against the opponent's deck. These threats are drawn largely at random, and also cannot be protected once they're on the board. The linearity of GxTron also means it performs a lot worse if the Tron element is removed, forcing it to tap a fair number of lands for its threats. The deck doesn't have enough interaction to stop any form of decent clock from killing it before turn 7.

UTron is the least linear deck in Modern; everything our deck does revolves around our opponent's strategy. Instead of hurriedly assembling Tron and throwing whatever we have in our hand against the opponent, we're in the business of slowly delaying and dismantling their game plan, buying time until a *specific* stabiliser for their strategy can be brought onto the table and protected. Our stabilisers are versatile in the type of attack they can stop, allowing us to tailor our lines of play to exactly what the opponent is doing, only looking to complete Tron and play large colourless cards when we're sure we have the correct ones for that matchup. We can also do this without Tron, since we are perfectly capable of protecting ourselves until we can get to turn 6+ and tap a fair number of lands for whichever stabiliser we've found.

UTron is a completely different deck from conventional Tron. It trades linearity and aggression for resilience, flexibility and inevitability. You still get to cast big colourless fun cards, but you get to choose the most effective ones to cripple your opponent and can make sure they stick.

WHY PLAY UTRON?

UTron is one of the most interactive decks in Modern. We have a huge amount of permission spells, counters and bounce spells that all aim to delay the opponent whilst digging and gaining card advantage. While you slowly disrupt and dismantle your opponent's strategy, they're also forced to watch you build up your inevitable huge mana advantage until you either win on the spot or generate a board state that completely invalidates any remaining threats. Successfully piloting the deck feels like playing the game with a loaded cannon pointed at your opponent, watching as they get increasingly desperate to resolve any sort of pressure before your endgame comes online and you completely take over. Most games end with the opponent out of gas, facing a hand of permission spells and a stabiliser they can't fight through anyway.

UTron is the best deck in Modern, the rest of the world just doesn't know it yet.

A TOOLBOX

Playing UTron is different to playing with most Modern decks, in that you feel like you have your entire deck at your disposal every game. The sheer amount of card draw and digging, combined with the number of tutors and recursion effects creates a playstyle in which you'll see a lot of your deck, allowing you to play a variety of different stabilisation cards knowing that in the right matchup you'll only need one of them to take over the game. This style of deck means you'll always have outs to your opponent's strategy, and after the first few turns of each game you'll be able to work out which cards in your deck are effective and which are not. The dig spells then allow you to play a toolbox style deck; carefully choosing the required stabilisation spells for each matchup whilst you control the game, eventually creating a situation in which the opponent has no hope of winning.

A PERSONAL STATEMENT

UTron, more than other control decks, has a huge scope for personal deckbuilding choice. Whilst a good number of the cards are staples (Thirst, Condescend, Ruins to name a few), there are a large number of flex slots, and a wide range of cards that are completely playable. Our plentiful supply of colourless mana opens the doors to a lot of weird cards that would normally only see the table during EDH games. Due to the huge level of digging and tutoring the deck does naturally, these cards only need be included as singletons or in the Karnboard, meaning you can test and play whichever few curveball inclusions you have a soft spot for without them detracting from the primary game plan. This allows you to customise your deck for both the local meta and your personal style of control. You may prefer a more prison-style strategy and include more Chalice and cards like Ensnaring Bridge and Pithing Needle, or prefer a tempo approach and play more Talismans to ramp into Thought-Knot Seer, Karn, the Great Creator and The One Ring. This customisation aspect is important for the deck's competitiveness, but mostly allows you to create a deck that you thoroughly enjoy playing whilst still being effective.

FLEXIBLE AND ADAPTABLE

A lot of Modern decks lose games as a result of their opponent playing cards that they just can't deal with. Be it cards like Rest in Peace against Dredge or Blood Moon against Creativity, a lot of matches can come down to 'they played a card that invalidates my strategy, so I just can't do anything meaningful now because I can't remove it'. This sidebar lottery idea is a well-known curse in Modern that doesn't really plague UTron. Our flexible interaction suite means that we're virtually never in a situation in which our opponent has dumped a card that just shuts us off forever. We have bounce spells, boardwipe spells and other types of removal that allow us to sit across from the opponent's prison cards, happily playing the longer game until the perfect moment to remove their hate and drop the hammer. Even in games that UTron loses, it's never the sour loss of having nothing to do and watching your opponent just take free turns. You always feel like you have a decent number of outs when you're on the back foot, and due to the absurd digging power of the deck, you're quite likely to find them. UTron has the ability to adapt to any strategy, any deck, and come out on top.

CHECKLIST

UTron is the right deck for you if:

- You like drawing lots of cards,
- You like countering spells,
- You like having enormous amounts of mana to do both of these in the same turn,
- You like playing big, stabilising threats that are likely to immediately force a concession,
- You're fed up of not being able to protect your win conditions,
- You enjoy using your entire deck as a giant digging, tutoring toolbox with lots of one-ofs,
- You're happy to put in a lot of hours learning both your deck and every other one you need to stop,
- You enjoy the thought required to completely readapt your game plan multiple times each round,
- You like the feeling of always being able to do something, even if you're still losing,
- You enjoy taking control of all your opponent's turns and watching the light die in their eyes,
- You need salt for your chips.

UTron is the wrong deck for you if:

- You want to throw big colourless threats at your opponent as rapidly as possible and hope they stick,
- You like linear decks,
- You like fast decks,
- You prefer decks that prioritise how best to win, as oppose how best to not lose,
- You want a deck that you can just pick up fresh and take down a tournament with,
- You enjoy having friends.

Overall, the deck is one that rewards you for learning how to play it. A new player with UTron will lose a lot, but an experienced player will seem invincible. This characteristic of the deck is due to its slow inherent power; being able to have a free run with absurd card advantage spells and absurd lands once you've spent the time to master the play lines of your particular brew. It's one of the hardest decks in Modern to become competent with, but once you do, the deck feels like you're playing chess against draughts.

DECK OBJECTIVE

NOT A TRON DECK

The main misunderstanding when playing UTron for the first time is in the belief that we are a Tron deck.

Tron decks are best defined as decks whose primary objective is to get the Urza lands out as soon as possible and perform optimally when they can do this. GxTron aims to do this by turn three, then drop Karn Liberated down so early that he takes over the game. Eldrazi Tron is similar but also uses Eldrazi Temple as a 'fourth Tron land'; it wants as much colourless mana as it can to play the Eldrazi from Oath of the Gatewatch, then beat the opponent to death with objectively more powerful creatures than they are facing. Both of these decks would ideally like Tron online fast, and in the case of Gx, usually perform a lot worse if their Tron assembly is delayed or destroyed.

UTron is not a Tron deck. Granted, our manabase contains 4 of each Tronland and we have the ability to drop a Turn three Great Creator if luck waves its hand on our opening 7. Against some aggro decks this can win a quick game. However, getting to turn three Tron is both not a requirement for our deck to work, nor is it something we can easily capitalise on given that our threat choice is fundamentally different from GxTron. Our deck is designed to control the game with blue spells, and our threats are designed to stabilise an advanced board state, not to be dropped aggressively with no protection and hope they're good enough.


UTron is better thought of as a control deck that has Tron included as a way to be better than other control decks. Any control player knows the value of making sure you hit your land drops to sooner get into the stage of playing slow threats whilst having countermagic up. The inclusion of Tron allows us to suddenly leap ahead on resource and play multiple spells per turn with ease, slowly taking over the game with growing card advantage and always having interaction up.

UTron is a blue deck that splashes Tron, not a Tron deck that splashes blue.

HOW THE DECK WINS

The generic game plan is similar to other control decks: Work out your opponent's strategy, stop their key cards, stay alive and gain card advantage until either they're out of gas or you can just take over and win. To this end, we include a number of counterspells, bounce spells, boardwipes and stabilisation cards, allowing us to prolong the game into a situation where our card advantage matters, and we can use Tron to overwhelm their remaining threats with a combination of bigger threats and more permission, whilst never having to tap out.

A key difference between us and other control decks lies in the idea that their threats are usually relatively slow or incremental and need a cleaner board to win. With this requirement, the control parts of those decks need to completely run the opponent out of gas and maintain an empty board for the threats to push through. Since we have Tron included in the deck, our threats can be much bigger and focus more on stabilising developed boards



single-handedly. With this in mind, our control cards need only to slow down the opponent and deal with cards that the stabilisers cannot stop. This provokes a greater level of consideration when playing, as the objective turns from 'stop everything' into 'does this card prevent me from stabilising or kill me too quickly? Can I just ignore it?'. This is one of the reasons that UTron is considered one of the harder decks in Modern to just pick up and win games with.

Our early game is spent holding up countermagic to stop the opponent and dig, whilst using the end of their turn to progress our game plan with Expedition Maps and Thirst for Knowledge. This early stage is the toughest part of the game, as we try and remain in control of multiple early threats that may get underneath our permission spells. Often the nature of your opponent's deck and your hand will force you to pick and choose which cards to stop, and it is here that knowledge of your opponent's strategy is most required.

As we progress to the midgame our card advantage gained in the early game starts to matter. By this point the opponent is usually trying to play their deck's win condition, and if the early turns have gone well we should be in a position to stop this from happening. This is where most of the games are decided, as we aim to precisely cripple their attempt to force through a win and leave them with little left to do. By this point we are usually at or close to Tron and can prepare to get to the tipping point where our card and mana advantage are both fully online and the game swings dramatically in our favour.

The endgame is our playground. Here we usually have a stabiliser down, Tron online, supreme card advantage over the opponent and can turn our game plan around to concentrate on winning over not losing. Usually a stabiliser or two is enough to force through a victory, but if the game is dragged out further we will just eventually get to our inevitability with Mindslaver lock. Either way we're heavily favoured; we have more mana, more resources and our topdecks are all strong, live cards. It's our turn now, and we have a formidable endgame.

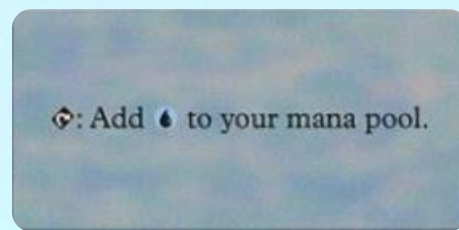
This is only a brief summary of the deck's high-level strategy and is discussed in far more depth in [How to Play the Deck](#).

DECK CONSTRUCTION

This section focuses on the core cards of the deck and tries to explain the reasoning behind what is included. This will always try to draw from the [Deck Objective](#), and focus on explaining why our card choices differ from conventional control decks and conventional Tron decks.

MANABASE

The manabase for UTron is the most important part of the deck, and often the one which is most abused by new players trying new brews. When starting the deck for the first time, it's tempting to think of all the awesome flashy blue spells you could play, like Cryptic Command or Omniscience, whilst ignoring the fact that the most pivotal card in the deck is, without doubt, Island.



Well, obviously. We're a control deck and we need Islands to play our blue spells. So does UW Control, but their primer doesn't make a big song and dance about pointing out the obvious. We are not UW Control, however, and crucially our manabase is locked into at least 12 lands that cannot ever produce blue mana. 13 if you count Academy Ruins, which we are doing, and even more if you start considering other utility lands like Field of Ruin, Blast Zone or Gemstone Caverns, although some of these can be blue sources in their own way.

The point is, only half of our lands produce blue mana, meaning we are a 'two-colour' deck even with just blue spells. Every opening hand you draw will be primarily defined by whether or not it contains a blue source. If your opener had Mine, Power Plant, Tower, Wurmcoil and three other nonlands, it would be an acceptable keep, but you should be very worried about not having a blue source, and it would immediately become the best thing you could draw each turn until it appears. Our limited supply of reliable blue sources is the primary reason we cannot play cards like Counterspell, Archmage's Charm or Cryptic Command. Having UUU rarely happens through the course of an entire game, let alone reliably by turn 4. This concept informs a lot of the card choices later on.

The core of our manabase looks like this:

12 TRONLANDS - Shouldn't need much explaining, these give our deck its identity. Some variants play a few less than 4 of each in favour of more blue sources or utility lands, but they are few and far between, and usually have a very good reason for doing so with regards to the rest of the deck.

ACADEMY RUINS – This is both a very useful utility land and also half of our inevitability. This, Mindslaver and 11U wins the game. Academy Ruins is probably our best land after Island for the reason that it allows us to recur so many useful things. This is one of our most essential cards and is discussed further in [Card Advantage and Value](#).

5-8 ISLANDS – Our most important land. The number of Islands that should be included varies based on a number of factors: how many other blue source lands you're playing (Hall, Tolaria, Otawara), how many nonland blue sources you're playing (Talismans, Signets), and how many times you want to mulligan away hands that would have been great with a blue source in them. It's up to you to find the right balance of these cards, but as a base starter:

- You want to have about 10-12 cards that directly produce blue mana. Most should be lands.
- At least 5 of these should be basic Islands.
- Blue sources that are conditional or painful (Taplands, Shocklands) should be limited to 1 or 2.

As with most things in this deck, it's not an exact science and people will show success with brews that seem wildly wrong to others. However, it cannot be denied by anyone with experience that your blue source count and availability is a fundamental consideration when building your deck.

With the core lands covered, some other good options include:

FIELD OF RUIN – This has shown itself as being straight up better than the older inclusions of Ghost Quarter or Tectonic Edge in our deck. It doesn't put us down a land drop, and it can turn itself into an untapped blue source. The activation cost is also generic mana, which we will usually have ample supply of. Field of Ruin can also let good hands without blue sources be keepable, which GQ and TE can't do. The other two are both still very playable, but most control decks as a whole have realised the benefits of FoR.

BLAST ZONE – A tutorable Engineered Explosives on a land is basically an auto-include in the deck. There is the consideration that this doesn't make blue mana, however the payoff is absolutely worth it and this card will win you games by itself.

OTWARA, SOARING CITY – This card is a fantastic unconditionally untapped blue source that can also instant-speed bounce any nonland permanent. The Channel cost only requiring one blue source to activate is also perfect for this deck. An auto-include in most decks, usually in multiples.

URZA'S SAGA – It hardly needs stating how powerful this card is. Great in our deck for tutoring up Expedition Map for completing Tron or just chaining Sagas. Crucially however, this does not make blue mana and so is not essential for the deck. This card can also produce deckbuilding conflicts if you're playing Karn, since Saga wants you to put tutor targets like Relic and Needle in your deck, whereas Karn wants them in the sideboard.

HALL OF STORM GIANTS – This is our premier manland. A great finisher effect that can enter untapped if you play it before turn 3, this is especially good in our deck as we can utilise Tron to pay the expensive activation cost and still leave mana up.

OBORO, PALACE IN THE CLOUDS – This is here as a 'non-Island Island' that doesn't get hit by things like Boil or Choke, which people will occasionally bring in against us and can hurt a lot if they resolve. Oboro also has a number of edge cases uses thanks to its second ability, including but not limited to:

- Using itself as double blue; tap Oboro, bounce it using some Tron mana then replay it, giving you UU from one blue land. This can be used for playing something like a Treasure Mage on your turn then having blue to hold up countermagic.

- Bouncing in response to 'discard a card' effects to save the last card in your hand.
- Putting abilities on the stack to deny your opponent access to sorcery speed plays when they have priority.

GEMSTONE CAVERNS - This card is used to offset the considerable disadvantage this deck sometimes faces on the draw; not being able to counter a scary two-drop and remaining on the back foot for the rest of the game. It comes with a steep cost – card advantage and having it be pretty bad when it doesn't do its trick, but it is certainly playable and very powerful when it works correctly. Also worth noting it can produce black mana for Dismember, EE and Surgical.

MINAMO, SCHOOL AT WATER'S EDGE – This is an Oboro with a less useful second ability. Played for the same reason and can untap a Mindslaver, The One Ring or an Eldrazi titan in edge cases.

TOLARIA WEST – A solid tutor for Lands, Chalice, EE and Walking Ballista whilst also being a blue source, this card is often questioned as to why it doesn't deserve a spot in the core lands. When you draw in such a way that the ETB tapped stings you, you'll realise why. It's absolutely a very playable card and has the great advantage of turning your late-game Maps into a threat in the form of Ballista, but the awareness needs to be there that the tapped clause will get you from time to time, and it will hurt.

CASTLE VANTRESS – A low-cost-to-run utility land that taps for blue and allows us to dig for answers in the late game. Most builds should run a single copy of this card if you have the space without dipping too low on Islands.

ELDRAZI TEMPLE – Used if you are running the full playset of Thought-Knot Seer in the main to form a more aggressive playstyle, similar to Eldrazi Tron.

DUAL LANDS – Darkslick Shores, Watery Grave, River of Tears, Underground River. These lands trade life or consistency for the bonus of less painful Dismembers, Surgicals and getting EE on more counters. If you're relying on EE, you can likely run 1-2 of these in conjunction with some Talismans. These likely aren't worth it just to pay for the phyrexian mana costs of other black cards.

The number of lands in the standard deck is usually dependant on your number of nonland blue sources, usually Talismans or Signets. If you're running those cards, you can go down to 23 lands. If you're not, best to stick with 24/25. You really don't want to miss land drops. There are advantages and disadvantages of both types of manabase, and these can be readily realised when considering tradeoffs like ramp vs artifact removal. When choosing an option, it's also worth considering if you're the sort of player who would prefer to tap out on turn 2 for the ramp from a Talisman (to ramp into Thought-Knot Seer, Karn or Wurmcoil Engine), or play the deck more reactively and always be holding up counterspells.

The balance of your manabase after the Tronlands and Ruins should be based on trying to keep the blue source count as high as you can whilst including the utility lands you would like to use. Much as most players would love to just jam four Urza's Saga, we can't dip that low on Islands. Blue sources will always be the first indicator of a good UTron manabase.

To explain this more fully, it's worth considering our deck's blue source bottleneck, which is something not immediately apparent until you've played the deck a while and start to experience it first-hand. The concept is that, due to our low ratio of blue sources to overall lands and especially given the nature of Tron, often our play lines are limited not by overall mana (as would be the case with other blue control decks) but by the number of blue sources we have out. If we have Tron and Island out, we're still in the rough position of not being able to play a Treasure

Mage and hold up countermagic, nor being able to counter a spell then Thirst for Knowledge at the end of our opponent's turn. For this reason, the mana costs of cards we play are evaluated quite differently than other decks. A card that costs 1U is far closer in 'bottleneck mana cost' to a card that costs 2U than it is to one that costs UU. The extra generic mana for the 2U is usually readily available to us, whereas the extra blue source required in the UU spell is often a tough requirement. This concept is very important, and is part of the reason why UTron plays very few UU-costed spells and never plays anything requiring UUU.

Despite being important, the UTron manabase isn't too tricky to build. 12 Tronlands, Academy Ruins, 10 blue sources, then any utility lands you want to run. Just remember how important those Islands are.

CONTROL MAGIC

After the manabase, these are the cards that should merit the greatest consideration when deckbuilding. This section of the deck allows us to implement the core part of our strategy – not to die to whatever our opponent is trying to do. With the current wide-open Modern meta, the strategies you'll face will vary considerably in the way they try and blitzkrieg you to death or grind you out. This section of the deck aims to stop all of them as best it can, buying time for your card advantage to matter and stabilising threats to land and do their job. The cards fall into four main categories:

- Counterspells. These are how we stop most things, by ensuring they never hit the board. Nothing new here for control.
- Bounce spells. If things we couldn't or didn't counter have hit the board and need to go away for a bit, we can get them back to our opponent's hand, and maybe even get to counter them later.
- Removal spells. If things really need to go away, we kill them. This includes boardwipes and cards like Thought-Knot Seer.
- Prison cards. Static cards, usually artifacts, that prevent a strategy from winning or seriously hamper it whilst they're on the field. This is mostly Chalice and our sideboard suite.

Due to the nature of our manabase, and the fact that we inherently need to dig through our deck as much as we can to get to the cards we need for that matchup, a lot of our control spells either cantrip or scry. This is why Remand is usually favoured over Mana Leak, and Repeal over Petty Theft. Our cards have the requirement of buying time and digging for specific cards instead of having to completely stop anything the opponent does. This is the reason Cyclonic Rift, which seems like it should be a 4-of in our deck, only takes up one slot in most variants. It's a great card, being able to bounce anything early and often being a complete blowout late game, but it doesn't cantrip or dig, so we can't run too many copies of it or we run out of cards.

Our spells also have to be flexible. Vapor Snag is an example of a tempo card this deck doesn't want. It only hits creatures and it doesn't dig. For the same number of blue sources tapped, we have Repeal, which hits everything, cantrips and the X cost scales with Tron. Condescend is an example of another card that is very good on Turn 2 and on Turn 8, as the permission cost gets big fast with Tronlands.

Being in Mono U and colourless, we don't have a great suite of obvious removal to choose from. Blue has a number of polymorph style options like Pongify or Reality Shift, but these cards leave bodies down on the board that we still have to get rid of and are thus card disadvantage. Some variants of UTron splash additional colours to help mitigate

this issue, and these are discussed further in [Colour Splashes](#), however the manabases for these variants have to be built exactly right to maintain consistency. As a result, our standard removal package is usually a combination of colourless spot removal in Dismember, Spatial Contortion and Walking Ballista, and boardwipes like Oblivion Stone, Engineered Explosives and Ugin.

Our prison cards are our way of answering decks that we otherwise have trouble with; usually hyper aggressive or efficient decks that get under our countermagic and kill us before our card and resource advantage matter. The most obvious and widely used candidate here is Chalice of the Void. This card is usually played on 1, and generates virtual card advantage by blanking only 4 of our spells (Maps) vs a good number of spells in the opponent's deck, or just outright winning the game. It can also be played on 0 against the cascade decks.

Other 'prison cards' include sideboard cards like Ensnaring Bridge, Spellskite, Grafdigger's Cage, and Pithing Needle. The majority of these will be in the [Sideboard](#).

The card choices for the control section of the deck are as follows:

4 CONDESCEND – Our best counterspell. Scales with Tron and sets up our draws. Always a four of, as it's very often the best spell in your hand at all stages of the game.

3-4 REMAND – Another staple of control decks, buys time and digs. Remanding our own spells in grindy matchups or control mirrors is strong to create card advantage.

0-2 MANA LEAK – Your 9th counterspell if you feel like you need more.

2-4 REPEAL – Our bounce spell that scales with Tron and cantrips. Also deal with token creatures really well (Rhinos, Constructs, Creativity targets).

0-4 SPATIAL CONTORTION – Our normal mainboard removal spell, this kills all small creatures, even those with regenerate or indestructible. Can also be used to gain more life with Wurmcoil Engine, pump a Sundering Titan for lethal, and doesn't cost us blue mana. Be careful of Blood Moon.

0-3 DISMEMBER – Dismember is our more suicidal mainboard removal. Costs 1 less than Spatial and hits more things, but 4 life can hurt a lot in multiples. Very useful for dealing with scary 2 drops on the draw since it only costs 1 mana.

0-1 OBLIVION STONE – Very useful boardwipe that can be paid all at once with Tron or in instalments without, both of which are equally effective. Is also recurrable with Academy Ruins for a board-lock and can put fate counters on things to save our own permanents from the explosion. Also extremely good against Leyline Binding, as you'll be left with whatever important card they froze. If you're playing a more aggressive build with Karn and Though-Knot Seer it's acceptable to omit this card to not destroy your own board presence.

1-4 CHALICE OF THE VOID – Our salt-mining prison card. The number of Chalice played mainboard vs sideboard vs at all is up for debate, but generally it's accepted that playing 3 in some combination of main and side is a good number. Your mileage may vary; Chalice is very meta dependant. The main advantage with Chalice in our deck is that it is often played on 1, only blanking four of our spells (Expedition Map), which usually come down earlier than the Chalice anyway, and can be discarded to Thirst for Knowledge to maintain value. Chalice is a very strong card and is discussed in further detail in [Utility and Aggression](#).

0-1 CYCLONIC RIFT – Bounce spell in the early turns and can be a complete game-changer with Overload. Only seen as a 1 of maximum since it doesn't cantrip and thus is card disadvantage.

0-2 DRESS DOWN – This card is surprisingly versatile, being able to turn off a lot of strategies whilst cantripping. Notable uses involve turning off a lot of the Omnath-pile cards, Primeval Titan, Archon, Yawgmoth's Undying creatures, countering Walking Ballista and killing Urza's Saga Constructs on sight. Also adds enchantment to the graveyard for Emrakul's discount.

0-3 FORCE OF NEGATION – A staple of other control decks, Force is a very powerful card that lets you tap out for a threat and not have your shields completely down for the following turn. Whilst we just meet the criteria in most builds for the 17-18 other blue spells you theoretically need to be able to run Force, the card disadvantage coupled with the fact this requires double blue to be hardcast means Force is a slightly harder sell in this deck.

0-2 SUBLETY – The blue incarnation from MH2 forms the other side of Force – being a free spell that we have enough blue fuel to enable. Slightly worse than Force as it cannot be used to push your own threats through and does just put the spell back on top of their deck ready to go again next turn, but perfectly playable and feels a lot better to hardcast.

0-1 SPELL BURST – A useful card for countering cheap spells that can get past Remand and Condescend, and also can be a hard lock in the late game with Tron. However, this card doesn't dig or cantrip unless you can start buyback-locking them, so space for it is hard to come by over the staple counterspells.

0-1 WARPING WAIL – A colourless charm. This has an attractive mana cost and an interesting array of abilities that are good in the right meta, but often just too narrow to merit a slot over our other interaction, and doesn't dig. The first mode is clearly the strongest, allowing us to kill a whole bunch of creatures, including Ragavan, but the counterspell and ramp can be relevant to. Overall a distinctly average yet playable card.

0-2 SQUELCH – This card is only playable because it replaces itself. Although primarily used against fetchlands as a cantripping Sinkhole, Squelch has a surprising number of relevant ways to delay your opponent.

0-2 NIMBLE OBSTRUCTIONIST – This is an uncounterable Squelch effect that can also be a flash blocker or a tempo card. A comfortable mana cost for us on both sides of this card mean it is very reasonable to play and feels great when you get someone with it.

0-1 AETHERIZE – As is as close to a boardwipe as we get in mono blue, and it's pretty good at what it does. The obvious disadvantage is the timing restriction, however often this can function as a 4 mana Cyclonic Rift overload. Usually seen in the sideboard if at all.

0-1 AETHERSPOUTS – As with Aetherize, this is a blue boardwipe. This is a turn slower and costs double blue, but it functionally removes all the creatures as oppose to just filling up the opponent's hand with gas. Also can be seen in the sideboard.

This is not by any means of an exhaustive list of the control cards playable in this deck. However it serves to highlight why we play the cards we do. Hopefully the themes of flexibility, single-blue mana cost and digging are readily seen, and these concepts are useful for evaluating curveball additions to your own brews.

CARD ADVANTAGE AND UTILITY

This section of the deck (with some exceptions) gives living space to the greatest number of flex spots. It allows for the most leniencies for personal preference, as the aim of this part of the engine is difficult to describe in a concise way. However, in general, these cards aim to generate card advantage and prepare our late game strategy in tandem with the control suite of the deck.

4 THIRST FOR KNOWLEDGE – Our best nonland card in the deck. Thirst is always a 4-of and never boarded out. This is the card you want in your hand at all stages of the game and is discussed further in [Card Advantage and Value](#).

3-4 EXPEDITION MAP – This card's purpose is fairly apparent; it helps us find Tronlands or utility lands and does so extremely well. This is usually your best turn 1 play. Also pitchable to Thirst after you've put a Chalice on 1. Usually a 4-of but can very rarely be cut down to 3.

0-2 TREASURE MAGE – This is our Fabricate with a blocker attached, which is the reason we play it over Fabricate. This finds almost all of our threats and is card advantage if it trades with a creature or with a removal spell. Does annoyingly give a target for opponent's low-level removal (Fatal Push, Lightning Bolt) which is otherwise largely dead against us, but occasionally you'll get an opponent waste a Leyline Binding on this, which is great.

0-1 TRINKET MAGE – The other side of the Treasure Mage coin, this card is normally used as part of a package with a single Chalice, Engineered Explosives and Walking Ballista. Trinket can then find us a Map for lands, a Threat from Ballista, a boardwipe from EE or a Prison from Chalice, turning the card into a very flexible tutor.

0-3 TALISMAN OF DOMINANCE – A mana ramp artifact and another way to include blue sources. A few of these allow you to run more utility lands and are pitchable to Thirst in the late game, but can be destroyed to take you off colours and do cost life. Often played in the more aggressive builds to ramp into Karn or Thought-Knot Seer. Also enables black mana for things like Engineered Explosives on X=2.

0-3 MAZEMIND TOME – A low-cost incremental card advantage engine that can be used aggressively to gain life and be recurred with Karn, this card is an excellent addition to Thirst to help us stay ahead in card advantage and keep up with the heavier card advantage decks. Even in faster matchups, this is pitchable to Thirst for value.

0-4 THOUGHT-KNOT SEER – A strong colourless card that is our only realistic form of targeted discard. This card is a nice proactive play for us against combo decks, and using this to pave the way for your Karn or Ugin is usually strong. This will however likely turn on your opponent's removal, which gives them the card back.

0-1 SOLEMN SIMULACRUM – Sad Robot is sadly now likely outclassed by other four drops, despite how good he can feel to cast. As a value generating artifact and blocker though, he is still playable.

0-1 SNAPCASTER MAGE – Although this is usually played as a 1-of since double blue to flashback spells is tough for us to have reliably, this card needs no introduction in control decks as it allows us to play our spells twice whilst blocking big creatures. Snapcaster is great, just make sure you have enough targets to make him more than just an Ambush Viper.

0-2 MEMORY DELUGE – This card is very powerful because of how well the flashback mode scales with our mana advantage. Usually resolving the big version allows you to find everything you need to win the game. Double blue for the initial mode is sometimes tough to achieve by turn 4 however.

0-1 FACT OR FICTION – This has a fantastic effect for a very easy mana cost for us. Fact or Fiction digs 5 deep and often creates an impossible choice for your opponent. The strength of this card is twofold; you can always choose to get the best card out of the top 5, and due to the tendency for opponents to have poor knowledge of our deck, you will often get a much better pile of cards than you would allow yourself if you were sat the other side of the table. This card competes with the Memory Deluge slot, and it's up to you to decide if the single blue pip consistency of FoF is worth it over the potential for the big flashback mode of Deluge.

0-2 IMPULSE – A very serviceable dig spell, this only costs us 1 blue source and dodges our own Chalice on 1.

0-1 THE ONE RING – This card hasn't been released at the time of writing, however most UTron players are excited at the idea of this as a Karn target. Karn plus the Ring costs 8 mana, which is our normal amount available when we complete Tron. This allows us to freely withstand the next turn even while tapped out, then untap safely with Tron while drawing a bunch of cards from the Ring in the process. An added bonus is that we can Repeal our own Ring if the pain gets too much and can then recast it for a second go at the protection effect.

0-1 TORRENTIAL GEARHULK – Snapcaster's bigger brother. This card is a straight up value engine, allowing us to cast a big flash blocker and get a free Thirst, Dismember, Fact or Fiction, Remand, the list is endless. Unfortunately not as effective with our UX spells, but casting a Thirst for an extra 2U and getting a 5/6 tank on top is worth his inclusion. Gearhulk is also tutorable with Treasure Mage and Karn, and very useful against reactive decks to try and present a clock at the end of their turn as opposed to during ours.

0-1 CRUCIBLE OF WORLDS – Given that our lands are a key part of our strategy, this has a fairly obvious use of defending against land destruction. Crucible can also be used to pair with Ghost Quarter/Tectonic Edge/Field of Ruin for a repeatable land destruction engine of our own as another way to lock opponents out of the game.

0-2 GIFTS UNGIVEN – Gifts can be a very strong card if the deck is built to take advantage of it. Our deck can use this to find a suite of cards that all enact a variant of whatever answer we need at the time. These include but are in no way limited to:

- **Last Tronland, Map, Crucible:** Whatever they give you, you're getting the last Tronland. Could also include Ruins in the package, but you open them to putting Ruins and Crucible in the yard, and suddenly you have no way to Mindlock.
- **Mindslaver, Academy Ruins, Crucible, Buried Ruin:** You have Mindslaver Lock.
- **Ugin, OStone, Cyclonic Rift, EE:** You have a boardwipe. Could also include Walking Ballista or another good card like Wurmcoil or Thirst.
- **Snapcaster, Thirst, Memory Deluge, Fact or Fiction:** Value for more value – you're winning a longer game now.
- **Snapcaster, Gearhulk, Dismember, Spatial:** Whatever they give you, you have a choice of both removal spells.
- **Pithing Needle, Sorcerous Spyglass, Phyrexian Revoker:** An example of a more focussed Gifts package – a number of cards that all do the same thing.

This just gives an idea of what can be done with Gifts. It can be quite readily jammed into a 'standard' UTron list, however Gifts is best utilised by including more one-ofs and redundancy in card function, as well as more tutors and recursion effects. Overall, instant speed and the variety of value plays make Gifts Ungiven a perfectly playable card.

The cards listed above are a short sample of the most common card advantage and utility cards played. As mentioned earlier this is the section of the deck with the most flexibility, and with the exception of Thirst for Knowledge, these cards are often temporarily removed to test new ideas and brews. Feel free to experiment, but try to remember the purpose of cards here is to advance our game plan and generate card advantage.

THREATS AND STABILISERS

This is the fun part of the deck, and our reward for restricting our manabase with the Tronlands. Unfortunately, it's the part that a lot of brews miss the mark on. When you have a lot of colourless mana available, there is an enormous pool of sledgehammer-looking cards to choose from that basically read 'I win the game'. These can seem tempting, however our threat choices have to be quite specific due to the fact that they're often played into an advanced board state and have to stabilise that board as much as possible to allow us to start to turn the game around. It's very rare that you'll be in a position of complete safety when you drop a big threat, and a sledgehammer isn't very useful when your opponent already has a knife to your throat. Choosing a threat whose only role in the game is offensive is not what we want. Our big cards should aim to stabilise the game, then close the door on the opponent after we fractured and delayed their gameplan sufficiently with our interaction suite.

In addition to stabilising after interaction, our threats have to be good enough to turn the game around when we're losing. Unfortunately, 'losing' in Modern takes on a wide variety of forms. It could be anything from one big creature about to beat you down (Murktide), several creatures about to chip you to death (Goblins, Rhinos), our opponent about to combo off (Creativity, Amulet, Living End) or get the last Burn or Mill spell in and kill us that way. The point is that not only do our threats have to bring us back from near execution, but they also have to be flexible enough to save us against different guillotines. An added bonus is if they can help us win after we stabilise.

Another important bonus for our threats is for them to be artifacts. Our inclusions of Academy Ruins, Thirst for Knowledge and Karn/Treasure Mage make the reasoning for these conditions obvious; suffice to say that being able to tutor up a variety of stabilisers for use against different strategies is a powerful tool.

Since War of the Spark, the threat suite of any UTron build starts with a single question:

Am I running 0 or 4 copies of Karn, the Great Creator?



0/4 KARN, THE GREAT CREATOR – This card has changed the face of multiple decks in Modern since his printing. Even after being de-fanged with the banning of Mycosynth Lattice, Karn proves his ability to provide a toolbox sideboard of hate pieces, locks and wincons that cement his place as a ‘kill-on-sight’ card. Coupled with his static ability to shut down artifact strategies simply by existing, Karn has earned his place in our deck just as rightfully as he has in the relevant builds of Gx and Eldrazi Tron. Karn comes with a great deal of considerations for both the makeup of his ‘Karnboard’ and the right way to use the card. Karn’s sideboard and strategy are discussed more in [Stabilisers, Threats and Wincons](#), with the focus here being on answering the above question.

The decision to include Karn is entirely down to player choice. A number of advantages and disadvantages are included here to help the reader make an informed decision, however it is in this author’s opinion strictly correct to either not run the card at all or run the full 4; if you’re damaging your sideboard to make room for Karn’s toolbox, you want the maximum utility out of it.

For this list, Karn has been compared to the traditional Treasure Mage packages that UTron classically uses.

Advantages:

- **Raw Power:** The greatest advantage to Karn is simply how powerful the card is. Karn is a hate piece, a lock piece, a stabiliser and a wincon all in one card and can win games simply by existing. He starts on a high loyalty, has a low mana cost and has a relevant uptick that allows you to pull tricks like Dismembering your opponent’s noncreature artifacts. He is not a fair card and will up the overall power of your deck just by being in it.
- **Versatility and Repeatability:** Related to the above advantage, Karn has the ability to tutor more than just a 6+ CMC artifact and has the potential to continue to do so if our opponent cannot deal with him. This flexible card advantage can be game winning and aligns well to our philosophy as a control deck.
- **No blue-source required:** A well-known issue for UTron in the past has been a fast completion of Tron to leave a main phase board state of Mine, Power-Plant, Tower and Island with the desire to begin pressuring the opponent whilst holding up interaction. Previously, this was impossible, as Treasure Mage required us to tap our blue source, and Wurmcoil left us with solely the Island or a Tronland untapped. Karn allows you to commit a serious threat to the board (himself), whilst holding up 3U for relevant interaction and the promise of a huge threat or crippling hate piece next turn.
- **Reduced CMC Spread:** Karn allows you to move higher-CMC threats into the sideboard to be fetched as needed. This lowers the CMC cost of your win conditions and improves the winrate of games where you are far from Tron, as Karn can do a good deal of damage with Ballista and Liquimetal Coasting without having to have buckets of mana for the Sundering Titan that would otherwise be stuck in our hand.
- **Mainboard Stony Silence:** You’re playing against Food or Breach? Cool, their combo doesn’t work now. Bauble/Vial decks? Enjoy your dead cards. Hammertime? No Puresteel equipping for you. Karn has the ability to just shut off random pieces of your opponent’s deck just by existing and will win you games because of it.

Disadvantages:

- **RIP Sideboard:** Karn’s obvious big disadvantage: to make him effective you will have to dedicate anywhere between 7 to 10 cards of your sideboard to cards that are never really switched in. We are a control deck and we need to have space for a range of relevant sideboard cards. Using Karn makes your sideboard incredibly tight, and you’ll have to sacrifice winrate percentages against some matchups.
- **4 Mana vs 3:** Treasure Mage comes down one turn earlier. Sometimes you need your tutor target right now, and you’re one short of mana to spend. Other times you’re on 5 mana and have to wait another turn before being able to advance your board state and still hold up Remand.

- **Karn Doesn't Block:** This is likely Karn's second biggest disadvantage – against aggressive decks Treasure Mage has the dual role of advancing your gameplan whilst chumping against a threat to buy you time. Karn does the former brilliantly, but cannot do the latter and sometimes just sits in your hand as a dead card because you cannot afford to tap out. This is coupled with the above disadvantage; in this situation you are forced to survive one more turn before safely playing Karn whilst holding up a piece of interaction. This disadvantage is mildly alleviated against poorer players who will tunnel-vision a resolved Karn to attack into it at times they should be attacking you, but this cannot be relied on and giving the opponent the choice is always worse than having a 2/2 they have to spend a turn walking into.
- **Karn Doesn't Attack:** Despite being a real disadvantage, this is often solved by Karn's ability to +1 an artifact (Map, Talisman) and provide an attacker. The trade-off here is that Treasure Mage passively tutors whilst being able to attack, whereas Karn is forced to choose between the two. Karn's attacker, however, will likely be able to attack the turn Karn comes down.
- **Force of Negation:** This is a real consideration; Treasure Mage cannot be Forced and Karn can.

Overall, this author believes that Karn should be run as a 4-of. The card has real disadvantages and can feel stuck in your hand in aggressive matchups, but the raw power combined with the current Modern metagame demands a threat that is both versatile and punishing, and Karn has the capability to provide a range of roles all in one card. The current metagame sees our deck less able to simply tap out for an 8-mana threat and ensure it will take over the game – rather we are required to ensure our threat both resolves and can be protected, and Karn's mana cost is perfect for us to be able to hold up our interaction whilst putting pressure on our opponent.

Once the Karn question has been answered, the rest of our threat suite can be considered:

1-3 WURMCOIL ENGINE – This card is our classic stabiliser against most forms of aggro. Decks that want to attack with creatures or chip at your life total will have a hard time beating this. Wurmcoil also does extremely well against midrange decks not running white, like Murktide. Here it keeps your life total high and provides such value as they get rid of it that you can usually pull ahead in card advantage, which is what usually matters most in those matchups. Wurm's natural enemies are the white exile cards in Solitude and Leyline Binding, which are both very clean answers to it - stopping both the split into tokens and the recurring of Wurm with Ruins. Wurm is also very castable without Tron, and delaying the game until we have 6 lands isn't a problem for our deck. If Karn is being run, Wurmcoil is usually run as a 0-1 in the main and 1 in the board.

1-2 MINDSLAVER – This card is primarily used to form half of our inevitability package and can be run either in the main or in the Karnboard. This allows us to prolong the game indefinitely, knowing we will eventually win. Mindslaver is also very strong against some decks as a one-shot, since even controlling a player for one turn can allow you to completely cripple their game. Mindslaver is one of the most essential cards for our deck and is discussed in more depth in [Stabilisers, Threats and Wincons](#).

0-1 SUNDERING TITAN – Previously omitted from most decklists, this card has made a strong recurrence with the rise of Domain piles and their delicious fetch-shock-triome manabases. This card is a complete blowout against greedy manabases and forms a gigantic wall that promises to repeat the one-sided Armageddon if it's removed in any manner. A lot of the power of the card comes from the second ability reading 'leaves the battlefield' as opposed to 'dies', not only ensuring the trigger always occurs but allowing you to start bouncing your own Titan and replaying it to destroy more lands. Care is required as this will destroy our own Islands if the opponent doesn't have any. As a result of this card's immense relevance, he is seen in both the mainboard and is a staple in the Karnboard.

0-1 PLATINUM ANGEL – A single Platinum Angel can be included in a Karnboard as hail-mary if you're at death's door. Against some decks this is very difficult to remove however usually Angel is very soft to interaction, being hit

by Boseiju, Unholy Heat and Leyline/Solitude means that there are very few decks that exist solely in colours that that can't deal with her.

UGIN, THE SPIRIT DRAGON – A staple in all decks running Tronlands, Ugin is a complete house against strategies that need a (coloured) board presence to win. Typically, Ugin comes down, wipes the board with his $-X$, then ticks up against remaining threats or the opponent's face with his $+2$ until he needs to $-X$ again or can win the game with his ultimate. Despite being suboptimal against control or combo decks (which use spells or manlands to win instead of permanents), Ugin is an enormously powerful card and very often one of the best things we can do with our Tronlands. Even if we are running Karn, a singleton Ugin is pretty much always in the deck.

1-4 WALKING BALLISTA – Ballista is a removal spell, a threat, a direct damage spell, planeswalker killer and most importantly a mana sink all in one card. Often one of the best spells to have in your hand, it can be used with Tron as a giant wincon or played early then pumped at the end of your opponent's turn if you have nothing better to do, ensuring you're always using your mana. Can also be recurred with Academy Ruins for repeatable direct damage and can often provide a sacrificial alpha strike to snap you an unexpected win. Ballista is a fantastic card that is seen in both the maindeck and in the Karnboard.

0-1 EMRAKUL, THE PROMISED END – A very powerful game-ender, small-Emrakul is a great combination of stabilisation with the on-cast Mindslaver, and a strong threat that you'll hopefully be able to strip away any answers to. Unfortunately we can't take too much advantage of her discount clause, since (barring tactically discarding cards with Thirst) it's likely we have only instant, artifact and occasionally land or creature in the graveyard, meaning Emrakul usually costs us 10 or 11. Despite this, Emrakul sees inclusion in a lot of variants and is definitely playable.

0-1 CITYSCAPE LEVELER – This is a more aggressive stabiliser than the rest, but is fantastic in our deck as it can be discarded to Thirst early on and then always be waiting as an uncounterable 8/8. The cast trigger also being uncounterable is great if you definitely need something killing right now.

As with other sections of the deck, there are a lot of other cards that see play and see success. Cards like Myr Battlesphere and Hydroid Krasis are all viable inclusions in UTron, and there's a good deal of room to customise your threat selection to your meta. Just keep in mind the important requirement that these cards should aim to stabilise a game you're about to lose, not overkill one you were winning anyway.

SIDEBORDING

The sideboarding suite of any deck is hard to pin down in writing, due to meta shifts driving constant changes and personal preference having a large impact. As we are a control deck with the potential to make a ton of mana, there are a wide variety of cards available to us that can stop different strategies. With that in mind, this section will aim to introduce a number of common sideboard cards and describe their roles to inform choice when brewing.

This section will refer to cards that are not specific to Karn, the Great Creator's wishboard. The construction of the Karnboard is discussed further in [Stabilisers, Threats and Wincons](#).

AGGRO WEAKNESSES

It's no secret UTron is weaker to fast decks. We have a number of sideboard options to try and shore up against decks that are trying to kill us as soon as they can.

SPATIAL CONTORTION – As seen earlier in the maindeck, it's an option to have more in the sideboard.

DISMEMBER – As seen earlier in the maindeck, it's an option to have more in the sideboard.

AETHERIZE/AETHERSPOUTS – As seen earlier in the maindeck, it's an option to have these effects in the sideboard.

SILENT ARBITER – A bit of an old hat, but this is a good stonewall against swarm aggro decks, this can often buy you enough time to stabilise fully with Wurmcoil or Angel, or just win with Ugin. Toughness 5 is also very useful to block the one creature that can attack.

CHALICE OF THE VOID – As seen earlier in the maindeck, it's an option to have more in the sideboard.

ENGINEERED EXPLOSIVES – A low-cost sweeper than can be a complete game winner against a swarm of tokens or low-cost creatures. EE also has good game against decks like Prowess, 8Rack and Bogles. It's advisable to have a way of producing colours other than blue when making use of EE, using UB dual lands like River of Tears or Underground River. You can also pump colourless mana into EE's cost to get it past a Chalice.

HURKYL'S RECALL – Fallen out of favour with the decline of aggressive artifact strategies, but this is still useful against anything that needs artifacts on the board to win (Affinity, Urza, Hardened Scales). This followed by Chalice on the correct number can often trap a lot of spells in your opponent's hand and win you the game.

SUBTLETY – As seen earlier in the maindeck, this is a great sideboard card to slow down the faster creatures that would get under our countermagic. Can also be hardcast as a blocker.

BATTERSKULL – as this comes down a turn before Wurmcoil, it's an option to run more of these in the side to try and stabilise earlier.

AETHER GUST – A powerful card with a wide range of applications, most blue sideboards have adopted anywhere from 2 to 4 copies of this. Most relevant in this section against the Burn and Prowess decks, this also has utility against many other strategies and gets past things like Cavern of Souls.

GRAVEYARD HATE

GRAFDIGGERS CAGE – This card is often seen as weaker graveyard hate, as it's a 'softer' prison hate card than those that directly exile everything. It can also be removed eventually. However its utility comes from it also stopping cards like Chord of Calling, Eldritch Evolution and Collected Company, the latter of which especially is a tough card for us if it resolves. Overall, it's a wide prison card that we can protect if needs be, and is an artifact for Thirst, which makes it a great sideboard card.

RELIC OF PROGENITUS – First ability can be rough since the opponent gets the choice, however this cantrip when it ultimates, making Relic a good inclusion. This card is also more useful against Murktide to keep their graveyard too taxed for Delirium, and can even be used to exile our own artifacts to turn them into valid Karn targets. Can be played in the maindeck for these reasons.

TORMOD'S CRYPT – A cheaper Relic that doesn't cantrip but leaves our graveyard intact and isn't stopped by Chalice on 1, which is useful. Another playable option.

SOUL-GUIDE LANTERN – A good alternative/complement to Relic. This also has the bonus of hitting twice against specific decks like reanimator.

ASHIOK, DREAM RENDER – Repeatable graveyard hate whilst also having a static that turns off fetchlands, this card is a reasonable meta-call.

LEYLINE OF THE VOID – This card is really, really good against graveyard decks. Hard to remove and free, this should stick around longer than the other options we have. The trade-off for this is fairly obvious – we basically have no way of casting it outside of it being in our opener, meaning it's a dead card that can't be pitched valuably to Thirst. Used if your meta includes a lot of graveyard decks and you want to aggressively mulligan towards this, but otherwise this is usually too restrictive to go in the average sideboard.

BOJUKA BOG/SCAVENGER GROUNDS – Slightly different manifestations of the same idea: restricting your manabase to include a tutorable one-shot graveyard hate effect. The fact that one produces black mana over colourless mana is fairly irrelevant over the much larger consideration of neither of these cards producing blue mana. The main trade-offs here are:

- Bog enters tapped, but lets you keep the land as opposed to having to sacrifice.
- Scavenger lets you play the land as a normal land whilst holding up the exile effect at instant speed. To effectively use Bog you may have to hold back on making your land drop with it.

With this in mind, this primer would advise Scavenger Grounds over Bog. The untapped clause is nice, but the main aspect is being able to use the land as a land before committing to the exile effect. Doubled with the fact that you can use the ability at instant speed, Scavenger Grounds' flexibility gives it the edge over Bog. With that said, the mana restriction of these cards mean that their inclusion is likely only warranted in a graveyard-heavy meta.

LAND HATE

SPREADING SEAS – This card is great because it cantrip. We can also move it onto other lands if they become a bigger issue. Having a Tron opponent play another Tower after you turned the first into an Island lets you just Repeal the Seas and put it on the Mine in your turn, whilst also drawing 2 cards. This card is also a cantripping sinkhole against Urza's Saga, which is very good.

FIELD OF RUIN/GHOST QUARTER/TECTONIC EDGE – As discussed in [Manabase](#), there are all very viable land destruction options, with Field of Ruin the usual choice given that it doesn't put us down a land and can become a blue source. However, if you have a Field of Ruin in the mainboard it may be correct to play another option in the side for flexibility. Ghost Quarter is also likely the better option to pair with Crucible of Worlds if you're including that package.

DAMPING SPHERE – This seems like a strange inclusion for our deck given that it stops our Tronlands too, but we have a much better chance of winning without them than other decks that play Sol lands. Turning UTron vs GxTron into a 'fair' matchup usually means we win with our counterspells. We can also Repeal the Sphere if we ever need to, or we manage to take the opponent off their advantage. Sphere is also a good card against Storm and Titan.

COMBO MORE LIKE NONBO

PITHING NEEDLE/SORCEROUS SPYGLASS/PHYREXIAN REVOKER – Needle effects are all good choices. They can name cards like Yawgmoth to completely stop some decks, or provide good utility against planeswalkers, manlands and specific enablers like Underworld Cookbook. Spyglass and Needle are best suited to our deck, and it's up to you to trade off the lower mana cost and potential nonbo with Chalice vs the higher mana cost and Peek effect.

SUMMARY DISMISSAL/WHIRLWIND DENIAL – The counters to end all counters, these essentially read 'Counter the stack'. Dismissal in particular is very useful for dealing with uncounterable spells, activated abilities and cast triggers, and also performs well letting a Storm player combo off then exiling 20 copies of Grapeshot. Expensive and Dismissal does cost double blue, but these can often be a complete blowout.

THE STONE BRAIN – This is our artifact Necromentia. Very often included in the Karnboard as it exiles itself on resolution to be fetched again but very useful even without Karn.

SURGICAL EXTRACTION – A similar effect to Stone Brain but can be cast for 0 mana, Surgical is a good choice to combat both graveyard decks and combo deck. Can occasionally be paid for by your dual lands that produce black, but be careful of Chalice on 1.

CONTROL PILES

CAVERN OF SOULS – This is used to force through Thought-Knot Seer, Walking Ballista and/or Sundering Titan, all of which are very good against control piles.

FACT OR FICTION – As with the main, it's an option to have an additional copy in the sideboard.

MEMORY DELUGE – As with the main, it's an option to have an additional copy in the sideboard.

NIMBLE OBSTRUCTIONIST – This card forms a nice clock, a flash threat for planeswalkers and can be used as a cycling Wasteland against fetches. This usually has something relevant to hit and if not, a 3/1 Flash body is a good clock.

SHARK TYPHOON – Sharknado shines as a way to provide an uncounterable cantripping beater at instant speed. The shark can threaten planeswalkers, provide a clock or simply provide card advantage if they have to spend a card removing it. Our deck especially can use Tron to make the shark enormous and we have an added bonus of being able to realistically cast the card and generate tokens as we continue the game. This card also is a good way to answer a Time Raveler and pass with mana open.

SPHINX OF THE FINAL WORD – If you really hate losing the control matchup, this card exists.

COMPANIONS

UTron generally doesn't run a companion, as we don't neatly meet the requirements for any of them. The two exceptions that can be forced are:

JEGANTHA, THE WELLSRING – If you want to run Jegantha, you have to forgo Chalice, Memory Deluge and Walking Ballista. The Deluge we can replace with Fact or Fiction, however losing Chalice is a big deal and losing Walking Ballista is horrendous. If your particular build doesn't run these cards however, Jegantha is easy for us to splash for and a free 5/5.

KAHEERA, THE OPHANGUARD – Kaheera is easier to meet the companion requirement for, as we simply move Ballista to the Karnboard and forgo Emrakul. The mana cost however is much tougher in either double green or double white. This reason, combined with the fact that we don't have anything for Kaheera to pitch to like Solitude or Force of Vigor means she is also not really worth the strain.

There are many other cards that can see acceptable inclusions in sideboards, depending on your meta. Different counterspells like Mana Leak, Spell Pierce/Snare, Mystical Dispute, along with other utility and draw spells like Glimmer of Genius and Chemister's Insight are all valid sideboard cards. Find out what works for you and get some games in to test. As a control deck, your sideboard should be very dynamic and change with the metagame.

REJECTED CARDS

As mentioned, due to the green variants of Tron being more popular and more infamous than UTron, people new to building the deck often mistake us for being a Tron deck that splashes blue, as opposed to a blue deck that splashes Tron. Both new players and new opponents of the deck make the error of thinking we play the same threats and cards that Gx Tron plays. You will often see inexperienced opponents name Karn Liberated with Meddling Mage.

Another pothole to fall into is forgetting that our threats are required to stabilise a board more than just beat the opponent down. Our threats continue our early game plan of stopping our opponent's deck from winning. Failing to appreciate this fully can lead to a lot of incorrect threat choices, from cards that are too narrow, not effective enough at stabilising or whose only role is to try and hammer the opponent to death.

There are a number of cards that seem to fit the threat, control and manabase sections of our deck, but either violate the stabilisation roles, card advantage and digging style of control we play or are not worth losing a basic Island for.

This section aims to talk about the cards newcomers would expect us to play, and explain why they aren't right for our deck.

THREATS

KARN LIBERATED

If you are playing GxTron, you play 4 Karn Liberated. The primary objective of your deck is to have this card resolve on your turn three. Here, he starts exiling your opponent's lands and eating through their hand before they've even got into the game. Turn three Karn is the primary reason a lot of people dislike Tron; it is an absurdly powerful play and either outright causes a concession or leaves you opponent with one land on their next turn, staring down 7 mana and a huge planeswalker, with the looming threat of additional powerhouse cards coming in the following turns. So why doesn't UTron play Karn?

The answer is pretty simple; Karn doesn't stabilise an advanced board. We're not in the business of reliably getting him out early enough to play him aggressively like GxTron does, and in the later game Karn just isn't very effective. Chances are you're facing down lots of creatures or your opponent is looking to combo off and you need a card that stops them doing this. Exiling a single permanent or card in their hand is usually not going to stop a deck that's about to win, and next turn you're probably losing your Karn. It's just not a card that stabilises a developed board and so doesn't fit into our deck.

Karn is also not an artifact, so we can't tutor for him. This fundamental requirement of our threat selection is only relaxed for cards that are incredibly stabilising if they resolve, like Ugin or Emrakul, the Promised End. On top of this, when we get to Tron we will basically always have at least one other land down in the form of a blue source, so Ugin's cost of 8 mana isn't a huge difference to Karn's 7, and Ugin is a much better late game stabiliser than Karn.

ULAMOG, THE CEASELESS HUNGER

Karn on steroids. Ulamog is GxTron's enormous game finisher. Coming down as an indestructible 10/10 that kills you even if you can block and bringing his friend the essentially uncounterable double Vindicate is something that ends games extremely quickly. Ulamog is very strong, however the issue with Ulamog is very similar to that of Karn; he's only that good if you can play him unreasonably early, or following up a Karn that your opponent has crippled themselves having to deal with. We're not doing either of those things. We are not in the game of getting Tron online quickly and throwing big scary things at our opponent hoping they're good enough. We control what our opponent is doing until we have the *right* stabilising threat that their strategy can't win through. Consider Ulamog against an advanced swarm aggro deck about to kill us – he exiles two creatures and then the rest swing past him for the win. Here, Ugin, OStone, Angel and even maybe Wurmcoil or Rift would be better cards to have. Against a combo or control deck, a late Ulamog could exile some lands, but the combo deck just throws spells at us and the control deck just Solitudes the Ulamog and keeps going. Here Karn TGC, Emrakul or holding up counters would be so much better. Ulamog is by no means bad, but we have much better cards we could be casting for 10 mana given our strategy.

EMRAKUL, THE AEONS TORN

Emrakul, the Aeons Torn is the biggest, baddest, most scary thing you can hardcast in Magic. Emrakul is the ultimate big red button, and in 90% percent of situations simply reads '15: You win the game'. Given that we want to go on as long as possible and have a completely reasonable chance of generating the mana to cast Emrakul, why don't we play her as our ultimate inevitability package?

Mindslaver and Academy Ruins. Slaver lock is our inevitability package. Not only does it win the game more reliably than Emrakul, but crucially both cards slot into our deck far better and are very useful without assembling the lock. Until you can cast her, Emrakul is a dead card. Slaver is very useful as a one-shot and can easily win the game that way, and Ruins is our best land after Island. If either of those are ever banned (they won't be) then perhaps the Flying Spaghetti Monster will see play in our deck. But until then, she is simply outclassed in flexibility.

BLIGHTSTEEL COLOSSUS

Ok, so our threats should be artifacts, right? Then let's use the biggest artifact creature around! Blightsteel Colossus is the phyrexian version of his predecessor Darksteel Colossus, and as a result gets bigger and has Infect, meaning it can win the game in one swing. Being an artifact and having CMC over 6, why don't we play this card to tutor up and close out games when we're ahead?

The answer here is in the question – *'when we're ahead'*. Blightsteel is a very strong threat, but it's *only* a threat and he's *only* useful when we're already doing well. The only stabilisation this card is doing is blocking one creature, which is far too narrow to consider his inclusion. Apart from very odd theoretical cases, any game that Blightsteel can win, any other of our tutable threats can also win. But all those other threats can stabilise far more flexibly and are a lot more readily playable without Tron than Blightsteel.

CONTROL CARDS

COUNTERSPELL

Surely this should be in our deck? We have already made allowances for double blue cards in Gearhulk, Memory Deluge and Snapcaster and this card is exactly what our deck is trying to do, right? Sadly, the double blue here is a lot more taxing than it is for those other cards. While our deck can pretty reasonably achieve double blue, it rarely achieves triple blue, and we would need triple blue online reliably to allow us to double spell with Counterspell. Having Tron and two Islands up with Counterspell and Thirst in your hand feels way worse than having Condescend and Thirst, since with the latter we can play both spells that turn. In short, Counterspell isn't an impactful enough spell for it to be the only thing we cast that turn cycle if we have an abundance of colourless mana to use up.

UTILITY AND LANDS

CONSIDER/OPT

Consider and Opt are often used in control, combo and tempo decks to spend turn one sculpting their next few draws. The reason it isn't included in UTron is not solely because it makes playing Chalice on 1 a whole lot worse, but mainly due the blue source bottleneck and the fact that it pales in comparison to Thirst for Knowledge. On turn 1, we would much rather play a Map than this, or even hold up Dismember. On any turn after, we have to have two blue sources up to make any use of this card, since no UTron player is going to tap their only blue source for Consider and have that be the only play they made in a turn cycle. After turn 3, Thirst is just better than either of these.

SANCTUM OF UGIN

Sanctum of Ugin in GxTron does a distinctly average job of filling the gap left by Eye of Ugin, a card that allowed GxTron's otherwise redundant land tutors to find threats after they'd found Tron. It lets them follow a threat with another for the cost of a land, which is conducive to GxTron's idea of going all out on throwing threats at its opponent. UTron's gameplan is longer and more patient, and our threats are chosen to do well by themselves against an established board. Playing an Emrakul and being able to get a follow-up Wurmcoil is pretty good, but is much worse than untapping with the spaghetti with a wall of counterspells in your hand, and not having just sacrificed a precious land. Sanctum also only triggers from cards with a CMC of 7 or greater, so doesn't fire off when we play a Wurm, or Gearhulk, or Slaver. We also have better tutors in the form of Treasure Mage and Karn, and plenty of dig to get to our bigger cards. It's not worth taking out an Island for, and we really don't want to be sacrificing lands.

HOW TO PLAY THE DECK

This section covers aspects of strategy and decisions when piloting UTron. Due to the flexibility of deck construction making discussing specific tactics difficult, this section will assume a fairly 'standard' build, using cards described in [Deck Construction](#). Additionally, since UTron is anything but linear, this section does not have the luxury of being able to concisely describe a detailed method of executing a single game plan and maximising its resilience. The interactive style of our deck means it's only realistic to provide a high-level guide of play lines and thought processes, including some examples to demonstrate certain decisions.

YOUR OPPONENT'S DECK

Your opponent's deck is your first and foremost consideration. Playing UTron effectively absolutely requires knowledge of how your opponent is trying to win, and more specifically knowledge of their key cards that enable that strategy. Since it's rare that you'll be able to stop every card they play, knowing which cards to interact with is critical to maintaining control of the game. This section will describe a few categories of deck classification and give a brief overview of how our deck can best deal with them.

AGGRO, CONTROL, MIDRANGE OR COMBO

Most decks you face can be characterised into one of these archetypes. This in no way fully defines the deck you're facing, but does give you a good idea of how the game is going to progress, the important high-level concepts and therefore which types of cards in your deck are more suited to the situation.

AGGRO decks are trying to overwhelm you with damage before you've had a chance to fight back. This requires you to survive the initial onslaught until you can bring down cards their cheaper spells can't compete with. The cards to prioritise are those that either do the most damage (Colossus Hammer), incremental, evasive damage (Eidolon of the Great Revel) or compound the damage of other threats (Lord of Atlantis).

Running the aggro player out of gas is important, as your card advantage won't matter in the early stages of the game where the aggro player is trying to fight. To this end, removal and boardwipes are the strongest elements of our deck. If you're on a reasonable life total when the blitzkrieg is over your cards are all stronger than one small threat per turn, and you have more of them, so you can start to climb to your feet again and take over. Often they will get a decent amount of damage through in the early game, and you should focus on denying them their reach and maintaining your remaining points of life until you have a stabiliser down, at which point you can turn the game around.

CONTROL decks are the opposite to aggro; you'll have a great deal of time and the focus should be on making sure you hit your land drops and maintain card advantage right from the off. Since we are also a control deck, the two most important concepts are card advantage and clocks. The games are inevitably going to go on for a long time so any threat serves as a respectable clock, as it forces the other player to play proactively, which isn't something control decks do well at.

Important cards are therefore anything that can provide a clock (Thought-Knot Seer, Shark Typhoon) or provide card advantage for the opponent (Teferi, Hero of Dominaria, Jace, the Mind Sculptor). As we have a superior mana advantage, we are happy for the game to go on as long as possible, allowing us to lever that advantage into playing threats whilst never tapping out. We can also use this to initiate proxy counter wars, baiting the opponent to tap out over a relatively minor threat and giving us a clear path to land either a much larger threat or Mindslaver lock.

MIDRANGE decks hover between aggro and control. They play a proactive strategy that cares about card advantage and try to grind the opponent out of the game by playing lots of high value plays like Ragavan, Expressive Iteration, Wrenn and Six and Omnath, Locus of Creation. Often a midrange deck will be defined as playing the most efficient value cards in the chosen colour combination, ensuring their draws are all isolated gas.

Since midrange decks are trying to win by grinding out proactive card advantage, we usually have a strong matchup here. The only serious worry is the tendency for these decks to run a number of one mana discard spells, which can hamper us quite severely as we need to hold cards in our hand. Apart from that, our normal game plan of gaining value with our counterspells and drawing card advantage fares extremely well, as Thirst for Knowledge proves its ability to dominate a grindy matchup. Other good card advantage engines like Karn TGC are able to repeatedly provide gas and so good choices. We also win on the threat front, as they match our style of playing isolated singular strong threats, except that ours are just objectively more powerful, and we have Tron to cast them at the same rate.

COMBO decks are trying to play a particular combination of cards that either outright win, create an unlosable game state or provide an insurmountable advantage. This archetype stands slightly apart from the other three but can be sub-classified within them. Aggro-combo decks (Goblins, Titan) are usually trying to force their combo as soon as possible whereas control-combo decks (Coffers, Creativity) seek to delay the opponent and protect the combo as it goes through. Midrange combo decks (Yawgmoth, Breach) are usually primarily midrange decks that have a combo element included within them to snap occasional wins out of nowhere.

Dealing with combo decks is where knowledge and quick recognition of the opponent's deck is most vital. You have to be aware of how the combo works so you can save your interaction for what matters. Usually the strategy is to let them play their set-up cards that don't directly enact the combo (Wrenn and Six, Wall of Roots, Emry) and save your counters for winning the war over their key combo pieces (Primeval Titan, Yawgmoth, Underworld Breach). Always bear in mind that a lot of these decks will have ways of forcing through their combos with cards like Spell Pierce and Pact of Negation, so Chalice always has a role to play in allowing you to win the counter wars. Since they have the ability to win out of nowhere from an otherwise unthreatening board, tapping out is almost never advised unless you're completely sure they can't kill you next turn. Overall, our plentiful interaction and array of counterspells make most combo decks a good matchup. After they've failed to force the combo through we can prevent them digging for the pieces again and win with any form of clock.

PROACTIVE VS REACTIVE

All games of Magic are defined by one side taking the form of the 'beatdown' deck and one taking the form of the 'control' deck. The beatdown role is to take the initiative with threats and kill their opponent faster, whereas the control role is to survive the beatdown and prolong the game into a state where their inevitability will win. This is a fairly fundamental concept, and is usually decided by which deck has the faster goldfish; which of the two would kill a deck of basic lands first. Even in an aggro vs aggro matchup, one player will be inherently slower than the other and have to provide some form of interaction to stop the opponent's quicker clock. Similarly, for control mirrors, the

deck that generally generates the least card advantage or has less inevitability will try and present a clock and force the opponent to remove it.

UTron is usually as far toward the reactive end of the scale as any deck can be. We have superior card advantage and formidable inevitability with Mindslaver lock. We do have the ability to present powerful clocks with the cards we can power out with Tronlands, but this is usually just a way of harassing the opponent to stall the game further. This means the opponent's deck will very often take a proactive role; trying to end the game before we have our mana and card advantage online and take over.

PROACTIVE decks allow us to play our control game unimpeded, safe in the knowledge that we're likely not going to be fought too hard on the stack. The games should largely consist of the opponent playing sorcery-speed cards into our interaction, and is usually decided by them either getting a threat to stick or running out of anything meaningful to do. Playing against proactive decks feels easier and safer for UTron, since we can comfortably organise our spells knowing we won't be punished at instant speed for tapping out on their turn. However, good pilots of proactive decks will try and bait us into letting them resolve instant-speed high-impact cards like Chord of Calling or Violent Outburst so it's worth being wary of the opponent has a lot of unused mana at the end of their turn with cards in hand. A Yawgmoth player leaving three untapped lands and a bunch of creatures they didn't attack you with passing the turn is likely going to punish you for tapping out for Thirst.

REACTIVE decks require more thought. It is in these matchups that card advantage is most key, since the matches are often decided in the late midgame or early endgame. Since both decks are best suited to reactive play, the player who tries to resolve a key spell first is going to have a tougher time, as they'll have less mana remaining for the inevitable counter war. The general advice is to try and hit land drops every turn, concentrate on resolving Thirsts and Maps to get towards your card and mana advantage, and force them to play proactively. The longer the game goes on, the closer we get to our final inevitability with Mindslaver lock, so we can focus on drawing into a stage where we're ready to lock and then fighting over a proxy threat in their turn to bait them into tapping out.

ESSENTIAL VS REDUNDANT

It is important to know if the deck you're facing has a few key cards are required for them to win or are piles of functionally similar cards that win once they reach a critical mass. Essential decks are usually combo-style decks or decks full of specific hate or prison cards that are required to find the right one to stop whatever they're facing. Redundant decks can take on many forms, but examples are tribal aggro decks, Burn decks and Omnath piles.

ESSENTIAL decks tend to be easier for UTron to control, since we can save our counters for the key cards that enable the opponent's strategy. These are not necessarily always combo pieces but could include cards that provide a strong combo enabler, like Grist, the Hunger Tide. Decks that play in this way force us to have a very good knowledge of their payoff cards, since these can quickly swing the game in their favour. The good news is that if we can stop these payoff cards, the deck often has little else to do and we have a lot of time to win, meaning we can concentrate less on having to build card advantage in favour of always having interaction ready for a combo.

REDUNDANT decks require us to lean on our card advantage. Here we need to have more answers than the opponent has threats to prevent them building up a critical mass. This is theoretically more difficult, but the saving grace here is that each single card they have is not an instant game winning threat in itself. This allows us to be flexible and use our softer removal to hold the opponent from building up too big a board presence until we can stabilise. When facing a lot of threats that are functionally similar, it's vital to consider how your interaction lines up

with what you know you're going to face. This could be a simple decision, like waiting for turn 2 to cast Spatial on a Dragon's Rage Channeler and thus saving your Dismember for a connived Ledger Shredder, or a more complicated idea, like casting Mana Leak instead of Condescend to counter a spell, missing the scry because you want a good target for your Gearhulk, which is your next turn flash blocker for the Jegantha currently beating on you.

IDENTIFYING DECKS

Correctly identifying an opponent's deck is something that comes primarily with experience. In some cases it can be simple; a fetchland into Goblin Guide is very likely Burn, however playing a Scalding Tarn and not fetching could be anything from Creativity wanting a Triome to Murktide holding Spell Pierce. You won't really know until they've cracked their land and played a few spells. Despite this, in most situations you can at least gain an idea of how the opponent's deck fits into the archetypes above. Cracking fetches for Ux lands and leaving them untapped is likely some sort of control deck or 4c Pile, but could have a combo element as well in Creativity or Reanimator, depending on the colours. Opening with fast artifacts and Saga is a deck likely doing some sort of unfair combo, like Breach or Food. Anything playing a series of fast cantrips may well be fuelling a Delve spell or Delirium and so you're likely looking at a proactive midrange deck.

Identifying a deck into these archetypes, even before having perfect knowledge of the specific deck or variant your opponent is playing, is very useful to start helping you realise the cards in your deck that stand out as the most effective ways of stopping or stabilising, but also which cards are not so useful. This allows you to make better decisions when digging, which your deck will start doing very early on. Our deck sees a lot of cards, but part of that is having to temporarily reject some of our deck by either scrying cards to the bottom of our library or binning them to Thirst. These decisions are heavily influenced by knowledge of your opponent's strategy, and even against an unknown deck, being able to recognise characteristics of these archetypes can help make correct choices, which can have huge impacts on the later game.

UTRON'S ARSENAL

The knowledge of your opponent's deck, or at least the classification of it into some archetype categories allows you to which aspects of the game will help determine the win, be it card advantage, walls of counters or removal, digging for threats or Tron, or just having a specific hate card like Chalice. We can then use this information to decide on a lower level which cards are worth digging for and keeping, and which are good to pitch to Thirst or scry away.

UTron has a way of fighting on all types of fields. The flexibility of the deck can only be fully utilised by the pilot if they're experienced with their version if it and know how the cards behave in different situations. This section aims to provide a more contextual description of how best to use the different cards in the deck, with brief example scenarios.

COUNTERSPELLS, BOUNCE AND REMOVAL

Our counterspells, bounce and removal are the way we control threats one at a time. Chaining these against a proactive opponent is the primary method the deck gets ahead; slowing or stopping their strategy until we've dug into a stabiliser. Whilst we include a lot of interaction, the nature of the deck will require you to choose which threats to interact with as opposed to trying to keep your opponent's board completely clean. Correctly making these choices each game is drawn primarily from experience and knowledge of your opponent's deck, but there are some general guidelines if we consider that our deck wins by stopping threats, generating card advantage and playing stabilisers. With this strategy in mind, the most dangerous cards your opponent can play are:

FAST THREATS – things that are going to kill you before you can stabilise. Whilst all threats are a form of clock, some are clearly too strong or explosive for us to let hit us if we're looking to play a longer game. The decision for what comes under 'too fast' is dependent on how long you see the game going on. The expectation for a control matchup to play a very long game and interfere with our ability to stabilise means a simple Ledger Shredder can present a worrying clock, as it forces us to play proactively to remove it. Against Murktide the same threat pales in comparison to Murktide Regent, and won't have the time to kill us before we can reliably drop a Wurmcoil Engine, which if they don't counter they can't really beat.

CARD ADVANTAGE GENERATORS – cards that allow your opponent to keep drawing into gas and compete with Thirst for Knowledge. Generally, this covers cards that keep generating whilst they're on the board like Ragavan or Jace, the Mind Sculptor, but also 2 for 1's like Expressive Iteration, and things that hurt our card quality like Thought-Knot Seer and Liliana of the Veil, although these are scarier as threats. These types of cards usually mean that the opponent can continue digging into gas and eventually we won't be able to stop them, however sometimes they can be less impactful if we get to a stabiliser their deck just can't beat. It doesn't matter how many cards Prowess draws pre-board if we have Chalice on 1 and Wurmcoil.

KEY COMBO PIECES – These cards are a fairly obvious choice since they usually win the game on the spot (Creativity, Primeval Titan, Yawgmoth), however the trickier cards to evaluate are those that could be combo enablers. Cards like Azusa in Titan isn't going to kill us very fast, but could let them generate enough mana next turn to get a Titan past your Condescend. On the other hand, Grinding Station is a card we can let sit about doing nothing, then either counter Underworld Breach or Repeal the Station in response to them resolving Breach and sacrificing their first Mox Amber.

Choosing between types of interaction is also important. Our counterspells, removal and bounce spells all do slightly different things and are useful in different situations. The choice between what to use for various threats is very situational and quite complicated to work out, but some general questions you should be asking yourself are:

- **How does your interaction line up against this threat?** Most of the time, cards that fall into the categories above are best dealt with by a Condescend they can't pay for. It's a hard counter that also digs us up to three cards deep. But there are situations where our other interaction can be better; if your opponent is casting a Creativity with a single blue mana up, it's likely not wise to tap three out of four of your lands to Condescend on 2 when they're likely holding Spell Pierce. Here a Remand is a better choice, as this leaves you with two mana to get around Pierce, and next turn you will have the extra mana to Condescend anyway. If their spell has incurred an additional cost, such as Eldritch Evolution, Remand is also useful to force them to pay the cost again and get some card advantage. This also applies to the idea that hard removal is usually favoured over bounce spells. Needing to deal with a 5/5 Urza token is something that can be done with Dismember, but a

Repeal is much stronger here to not cost life and also draw a card. Repeal is also better against cards that are inefficient to play from hand but are free from the graveyard, like Bloodghast.

- **How is the interaction in your hand going to fare later on in the game?** If you have a fairly even choice between Condescend and Remand for the current threat, consider which you'd prefer to have in your hand going forward? They're casting a Ledger Shredder and have a big graveyard? Condescend is probably better, since Remand is going to do well in the future against the Murktide they might play. As a wider example, the idea of choosing to delay spells with Remand or Repeal instead of hard removing them with Condescend or Spatial is strong if you're confident of landing an Ugin or OStone in a few turns, since you're only looking to buy time and prevent these cards from hurting you until they get eaten by your boardwipe, after which you're left with your hard counters and removal for further threats.
- **Does your interaction have the potential to be made redundant?** Some decks run cards that are resilient against different types of interaction. If you're against Merfolk and have a choice between countering a threat or letting it resolve for removal, the counter should probably be prioritised, as they could drop Cavern next turn and then you'll be happy you have the Dismember remaining and not the Condescend. On the other hand if you're facing Boggles and they tap out for Kor Spiritdancer, it's better to let it resolve and hit it with Spatial, since your removal is dead against anything else they play, whereas the Spell Burst you have is still useful.
- **Do you need to dig?** This is a core aspect of our strategy. Often your success rate will be correlated to the number of cards into your deck you see each game, and this can mean playing suboptimal interaction for an early threat to make sure you hit land drops or to find a specific stabiliser. If you're stuck on 3 lands and have no Thirst, your choice between Dismembering a Ledger Shredder and Repealing it EoT should often be Repeal. You can likely still remove the Bird next turn, but right now Repeal digs you further into your deck to find that all important land. For similar reasons, sometimes it's better to let smaller threats resolve if it means you can freely dig at the end of your opponent's turn and vastly increase the quality or size of your hand.

Our interaction is the most important part of the deck, and knowing how to use it effectively comes primarily from knowledge of your opponent's deck and exactly how it wins. However, since we are such a reactive deck it's easy to sit behind your interaction for too long and fail to progress your own gameplan. There is a big difference between being 'far away from losing' and 'close to winning' the game, and your pattern of interaction should reflect a high-level idea of how you plan to stabilise and turn the game around. This plan may change throughout the game based on anything from incorrect assumptions of your opponent's deck, the specific cards they draw, what you draw and how long you see the game going on. Try and always be mindful of your best stabilisers, how reliably and quickly you can get them out, and how close you are to Tron and the tipping point where you have both card and mana advantage online. This lets you best line up your interaction with the opponent's strategy and delay them just long enough for you to create an insurmountable board state on your side, from which you can turn the corner, overwhelm the opponent and win the game.

STABILISERS, THREATS AND WINCONS

UTron's stabilisers are the payoff cards for running Tron. These are cards that aim to invalidate the opponent's strategy and immediately create a state where their board presence and spells are much less threatening than they were previously. In some cases, the stabilisation card can line up so perfectly against the opponent's deck that they can be cast without backup and without need to properly consider a subsequent game plan, since the stabiliser will either cause a concession immediately or single-handedly hold their threat suite off for the foreseeable future. In most cases however, if chosen well the stabiliser forms an enormous speed bump that the opponent has to commit both time and resources into removing to allow them to continue to threaten us. This time is something we can spend finding more stabilisers, getting to our inevitability or just using our interaction to prevent them dealing with our threat and closing the game out.

To be effective, it's important to dig or tutor for the right card to stabilise against the opponent's strategy. Treasure Mage and Karn allow us to tutor for most of our big artifacts, however cards like Ugin, Oblivion Stone and Cyclonic Rift need to be dug for to find. It is therefore useful for the stabilisers chosen for the deck to be flexible and able to turn games round against a wide variety of strategies. This is covered more specifically in [Matchups and Sideboarding](#), but each stabiliser is considered here with an explanation of their primary roles.

KARN, THE GREAT CREATOR is a card that drastically changes the way you build the deck. Included either not at all or as a four-of, if used Karn allows you to play at a lower curve and drag your higher-CMC stabilisers in from the sideboard, minimising the potential for having dead 8-drops in your hand during the early and mid-stages of the game without Tron. The scope of playable inclusions for the Karnboard is wide and subject to both continuous debate and personal choice, therefore all that is provided here is this author's opinion of the essential, recommended and otherwise playable inclusions for new pilots building a Karnboard:

Essential:

- **Liquimetal Coating:** This is the baby brother of the banned Mycosynth Lattice, allowing us to turn lands into artifacts and then kill them with Karn's uptick. Once safely established this engine is hideously strong; destroying a land every turn whilst requiring no extra investment of resources or mana and growing Karn puts you at an enormous incremental advantage. Against some matchups this combo merits us mulliganing aggressively to Tron and Karn, to start taking them off lands by turn 3/4. Coating can also be used as a Pithing Needle in the opponent's upkeep to turn off planeswalkers, and allows us to use our removal on any permanent in conjunction with Karn's animation. Overall, Liquimetal is the most powerful thing you can be doing with Karn if you can't resolve a big stabiliser and have no relevant lock pieces to fetch.
- **Walking Ballista:** Having tutorable removal and direct damage is extremely useful. Walking Ballista needs no introduction and will likely only be omitted from the Karnboard if you are running 4 in the main.
- **Ensnaring Bridge:** This card isn't fair and just straight-up wins against some decks. We have to do more work than other Tron decks to get cards out of our hand to exploit this, however it's a completely reasonable play to cast Bridge and Condescend it on 0 twice just to dump cards out of your hand if the Bridge is going to prevent you from dying. A lot of decks just can't deal with this card, and we can win over the top of it.
- **Grafdigger's Cage/Relic of Progenitus/Tormod's Crypt/Soul-Guide Lantern:** Some form of graveyard hate is absolutely required in the Karnboard, even if you run Relics in the main. The specific card is up for player choice, however these are the usual options to choose between.
- **Sundering Titan:** If this isn't in the main, it's in the side. Sundering Titan is a staple of the deck in the current Domain metagame and is an excellent threat to have 4 virtual copies of with Karn.

- **Pithing Needle:** Or a similar effect like Spyglass or Revoker. This card shuts down a number of combos (namely Breach, Yawgmoth and Food) and is specifically useful to take out manlands and a number of problematic cards like Wrenn and Six and Boseiju.

Recommended:

- **Chalice of the Void:** Other Tron decks either run all 4 Chalice in the main or not at all. Most UTron builds will run 1-3 in the main and so having another in the side to grab is extremely useful.
- **Wurmcoil Engine:** This card is usually in the main however it is correct to also include in the Karnboard, allowing Karn to provide the Treasure Mage role of absorbing damage and finding us our classic stabiliser.
- **The Stone Brain:** This is very close to being essential – having a recurrable Necromentia available game 1 is huge and will steal you games that would otherwise be bad matchups.
- **Mindslaver:** As with Sundering Titan, there is an option to put this in the Karnboard to lower the CMC curve of your deck. In the very late game this allows Karn to provide an instant wincon with Academy Ruins.
- **Cityscape Leveler:** As with Wurm and Titan, this can be mainboarded or Karnboarded, and is a really nice tutorable mini-Ulamog.
- **Engineered Explosives:** This is a wide-utility target that not only stonewalls Creativity, but also deals with Urza's Saga Tokens and a lot of Hammertime. Can also be used to destroy opposing hate pieces like Needle. If you're running this, make sure to have some Talismans and/or dual lands to enable X=2. Also with noting that detonating EE on 0 will destroy your own Chalices.

Other Playable Inclusions:

- **Trinisphere:** This is more popular in decks that cannot run Chalice since it forms the same general role of preventing your opponent from chaining multiple cheap spells. Can be lights out for some decks but does hurt us slightly more than Chalice.
- **The One Ring:** This is included here as it hasn't been released yet, however this author expects this card to earn a slot in Recommended. Being able to tutor an impenetrable shield until your next turn that then allows you to untap with Tron *and* draws you a bunch of cards is perfect for our deck, and that's even before we consider that we can Repeal this to do it again and reset the burden counters.
- **Oblivion Stone:** If this isn't played in the main it's an option to include here. The downside is that this will probably take your Karn with it, since if you're fetching this it's likely that you need to pop it as soon as you can. This will still win games by being in the Karnboard and is a worthwhile inclusion.
- **Witchbane Orb/Orbs of Warding:** Having hexproof is really good against Burn, and some combo decks just can't win while these effects are in play. Their downside is their high mana cost and relatively narrow utility, making them very meta-dependant.
- **Skysoverign, Consul Flagship:** This is a staple in the Eldrazi Tron builds as a fantastic tempo card. A play pattern of turn 2 Chalice, turn 3 TKS, turn 4 Karn into turn 5 Flagship is an incredible amount of pressure for your opponent to deal with. This card can be animated by Karn without the need to be crewed and shoots planeswalkers and threatening creatures while providing a strong clock. Whilst that's everything ETron wants to do, we have to consider that Flagship is far worse in the later game than many of our other stabilisers. If your UTron build is more aggressive with an Eldrazi Temple and the playset of TKS then this is a viable inclusion.

- **Crucible of Worlds:** As discussed in [Card Advantage and Utility](#), this is useful for both getting back your lands against land destruction, but also for pairing with Ghost Quarter to slowly eat your opponent's lands as they run out of basics. In decks utilising this engine, there's an option to have Crucibles in the Karnboard.
- **Torpor Orb:** This shuts down Primeval Titan and does well against Omnath and Soulherder decks. It does stop a few of our own cards, namely Sundering Titan, Torrential Gearhulk and Snapcaster/Treasure/Trinket Mage, but this downside can be easily played around and Torpor Orb is a solid meta call.

There are many other choices that can be chosen based on your specific meta, however it is extremely important to remember that we are a control deck and we need sideboard space for actual sideboard cards. This primer would recommend limiting your Karnboard to a maximum of 8 cards, and an example of this is shown in the author's decklist in [Appendix 2: Further Reading](#).

Using Karn is not as straightforward as it initially seems. Whilst it is sometimes obvious to tick him down to find either a threat or a relevant lock piece, being left on 3 loyalty and subject to a Bolt or lethal attack is a realistic reason to sometimes tick Karn up on playing him. This is likely more preferable if Karn's static is relevant in the matchup, as Karn himself becomes better than any hate piece or wincon you could fetch, and being able to untap with interaction before downticking and weakening Karn is a viable strategy. The opposite of this is if Karn is very likely to get removed before you untap, and here it is correct to downtick to find either a big stabiliser or a relevant prison piece like Bridge or Chalice. Since Karn is a pivotal card for the decks that run him, it is useful to examine how best to use him against various different archetypes. For obvious reasons this is a very general analysis on how to use Karn and is completely subject to the specifics of the game.

- **Aggro:** Generally, Karn is best ticked down to find Chalice, Bridge, Ballista or Wurmcoil, depending on the specific matchup. Here you are almost hoping to lose your Karn afterwards by having him soak up some combat damage or eat a Bolt. Better plays might ignore the Karn and allow you to tutor up another relevant artifact in favour of being more aggressive, but either way unless you have an artifact in play and need a blocker, you should be using Karn to find something that stems the damage.
- **Midrange:** If you have Tron, you find Sundering Titan. If you don't, you find Wurmcoil Engine. The best thing here is just that Karn will likely cost them a card to remove and this 2 for 1 will be relevant. If Karn survives then you get another card off him and the value train keeps going.
- **Control:** If you manage to resolve a Karn and do not have an opposing planeswalker you can animate an attacker into, the best target is Liquimetal Coating. Aside from Leyline Binding the control deck will likely have a hard time removing Karn, and we should have the ability to force through a 2 mana artifact far more easily than an 8 mana Titan. If Coating resolves you can hold up interaction for the rest of the game whilst destroying their lands. If you are running Cavern then you can search up some big threats to cast with it, or a Walking Ballista to hit their planeswalkers.
- **Big Mana:** If you're up against Tron and land a fast Karn that is likely to stick, it's Liquimetal Coating. If you can play it that turn you can stop them in their upkeep to at least remove the text from a land before you start Sinkholing next turn. Primeval Titan decks are softer to Ensnaring Bridge, Chalice on 0 or if they have Dryad of the Ilyisian Grove in play, Sundering Titan to destroy all their lands. The Stone Brain is also useful to exile Tron.
- **Combo:** If it's artifact combo, tick Karn up. Nothing in your sideboard suite is going to help more than the one-sided Stony Silence you just played. After you untap you can be a bit more reckless and start to find a way to win with interaction up but it is likely in these matchups that Karn's board presence alone swings the game in

our favour. For other combo decks, Stone Brain is usually the choice to just remove whatever their combo card is. Failing that, a selection of Chalice, Bridge, Pithing Needle role or Grafddigger's is sufficient to at least cause them to stumble.

Karn is undoubtedly a very powerful card, but notwithstanding the relevancy of his static ability he doesn't immediately affect the board. Care should be taken when tapping out for Karn that you are not going to allow your opponent to gain an insurmountable advantage in their next turn, whether that's enacting a combo, committing creatures to the board, knocking your life total down too low to recover or simply resolving something backbreaking like a T3feri. Karn is always a tempting play as soon as you have the mana for him, and is often correct to just jam onto an empty board to start pressuring your opponent, however it's important to keep in mind that we are not good at providing continuous pressure on our opponent like Gx or Eldrazi Tron, and when playing Karn you should consider the potential for the state of play when you untap with him. That being said, Karn's incredible flexibility will usually mean that the card you fetch has the power to pull you very far ahead, and if cast with Tron and a blue source online is an exceptionally strong card to play with interaction still available. Overall, Karn is absurdly powerful and is often the best threat in our hand.

WURMCOIL ENGINE is our most versatile stabiliser, since it forms a big blocker, a threat, a life gain engine, removal for big creatures and a value machine if they try and remove it. All of this for the low cost of six mana! Wurmcoil is our answer to creature decks without excessive evasion or anything that wants to chip at our life total or grind out card advantage. It's also our strongest clock if we need to apply pressure. Against most of these decks, Wurm can simply be dropped without much thought and will often take over the game. Wurmcoil is also resilient to our boardwipes, allowing us to attack for a lifelinking 6/6 before blowing up an OStone and still be left with two decent blockers. Wurmcoil's weak spots are anything that can remove it efficiently (the most flagrant offenders here being Leyline Binding and Solitude), or creatures that somehow invalidate its keywords, like a big Bogle with first strike or cards like Dauthi Voidwalker preventing Wurmcoil splitting in two when it dies.

Wurmcoil Engine is rarely a pure wincon. Against some creature decks, it can be thrown down as early as possible and will immediately take over the game or force a concession. However, against most decks Wurmcoil is played as a gigantic speedbump that says to your opponent 'spend a few turns and 2-3 cards dealing with this, since you can't win whilst it's on the board'. While our opponent scrambles around for a bit answering Wurmcoil, we likely gain some life, trade Wurm and the tokens with some creatures, and run our opponent down on resources. All these things culminate to give us *time*. Mindslaver lock dictates that all our deck really needs to win is time. Wurmcoil is our main way of getting a few free turns and climb back into the game. By the time our opponent is threatening us again, we have likely found another stabiliser, interacted with their board enough to slow them down even further, got to Mindlock or even just used Ruins or Karn to bring the Wurm back for another go.

SUNDERING TITAN is a meta-dependant threat that is currently very strong. With the recent impact of Domain cards in the format and the ease of enabling these with fetch-shock-triome manabases, Titan's ET/LTB trigger is often a one-sided Armageddon than leaves a high body behind that can't be removed without repeating the effect. Sundering Titan is tutorable with Karn and Treasure Mage, uncounterable by Force of Negation and is an absolute death sentence for these decks. A bonus here is that if the opponent is in blue, we don't even lose our own island. Sundering Titan is the best thing you can do against these greedy manabase decks and should be your main priority for threat selection when tutoring with Karn or Treasure Mage. Some builds even run a Cavern of Souls in the side to allow you to mulligan aggressively to this card and force it through. It is also perfectly acceptable to Repeal your own Titan to trigger it again if the opponent starts to effectively rebuild their manabase.

EMRAKUL, THE PROMISED END is our big Eldrazi Titan of choice. This card has the highest impact in our deck, as controlling the opponent's turn is easily more backbreaking than exiling two permanents, and a 13/13 flampler that dodges most removal is going to close the game out very fast. Emrakul's discount is not something that we enable naturally in the deck, however the inclusion of Thirst for Knowledge in our deck facilitates targeted discarding of cards to fuel a cheaper Emrakul. The cards types we can enable here, in order of ease, are:

- **Instant:** Our whole deck is instants and we start casting them from turn 2. This one is free.
- **Artifact:** Generally facilitated by Expedition Map, however the value discards to Thirst allow this one to be easily enabled.
- **Land:** We can discard lands to Thirst, and we have a number of lands like Otawara, Tolaria, Field and Blast Zone that find their own way into the graveyard. Opponents will also target our Tronlands with cards like Boseiju, so this is fairly easy to enable.
- **Planeswalker:** Often your Karns die, and sometimes you discard Ugin in the earlier game if he's not relevant or you're nowhere near Tron. This one is doable but not reliable.
- **Creature:** If you're running the Treasure/Trinket Mages then these two cards will often block and end up in the graveyard. If not, our only reliable way to enable this is with Walking Ballista or Nimble Obstructionist
- **Enchantment:** Shark Typhoon and Dress Down.
- **Sorcery:** Rarely do we run Sorceries in UTron. All is Dust is worse than Ugin.
- **Tribal:** Nope. All is Dust is worse than Ugin, and we're not running Not of This World.
- **Battle:** Also no but probably too early to tell.

With this in mind, Emrakul usually costs 9-10 mana. The practical implications are that you'll likely have to buy yourself another turn after completing Tron before using her, but she is powerful enough to end the game on the spot. It is very important to remember that the Mindslaver effect is slightly softer than the namesake card, as your opponent gets another turn straight afterwards so you don't get the free Time Walk. This means that you don't get the freedom and tapping your opponent out and resolving anything you like, and have to be a lot more careful with selecting which spells you waste. A good plan is to take advantage of any library manipulation they have available in order to try and leave them with a dead draw on their extra turn.

UGIN, THE SPIRIT DRAGON is a card that owns any board he lands on. It will be very difficult for your opponent to establish any kind of board presence whilst Ugin lives (unless they're playing with colourless things). The usual line with Ugin is to cast him, -X to clear away anything dangerous and then tick up against any remaining threats or go to face. The combination of these two abilities is what allows Ugin to single-handedly completely control the board, deterring your opponent from committing any more threats whilst forming a clock in the form of direct damage or growing towards his game-winning ultimate. Ugin's -10 is obscenely powerful; stabilising us with some lifegain and letting us dump our hand +7 new cards onto the field. Sometimes this finds you a free Mindslaver lock which just wins, but most of the time just lets you put down a Wurmcoil or Karn, a bunch of lands, and maybe a few ETB triggers like Gearhulk or Treasure Mage, digging you into even more gas. It's enormously difficult to lose after Ugin has ultimated, and most opponents just concede.

Choosing to tick Ugin up or down when he is cast can be tricky. Usually, the choice is obvious; if Ugin comes down against multiple threats then you should -X for whatever is needed to reset the board. However, landing an earlier Ugin vs two smaller threats (Shredder and Channeler for example) could mean it's better to shoot the Channeler for 3 and race Ugin ticking up against the Shredder. If they attack Ugin, you're not taking damage and can deal with the Shredder next turn. If they attack you, Ugin keeps his higher loyalty. Even if they attack Ugin *and* play something that requires Ugin to -X next turn (like a Magus of the Moon), he ends up with more loyalty than he would have if

he'd wiped twice, and everything's still dead. Now you have an Ugin that's out of bolt range and about to tick up again next turn.

Ugin's power over the board cannot be overstated, however not all decks fight in that way. Ugin is not as strong against decks that are trying to win with spells in their hand, most notably control and spell-combo decks. Against these, Ugin only forms a two-turn clock to his ultimate, and that usually isn't worth tapping 8 mana if we hamper our ability to play counterspells on the following turn. This draws from the idea explained in [Threats and Stabilisers](#); big colourless cards that provide nothing but a threat in that matchup are not worth tapping out for. Ugin is still a good card, since sometimes these decks need a few cards on the field for their combo to go through (Yawgmoth needs creatures, Breach needs Emry or Ragavan) and Ugin still has some stabilisation role to play by delaying these decks.

MINDSLAVER is our top end wincon. This card, combined with Academy Ruins, is our way of punishing opponents that let us drag the game on too long. To explain the package, Mindslaver with Academy Ruins and 11U worth of other mana allows us to play and pop Slaver, take our opponent's turn, then at the end of their turn activate Ruins to put Slaver on top of our library, draw it, and do the same thing again. Essentially we take over all of our opponent's turns. The wincon is usually to mill them out, since we draw Slaver every turn so our deck doesn't get any smaller whilst theirs does, however you can also try and use their deck to kill them to save on time. This strategy allows our deck to beat things like infinite life, which opponents may not be aware of when they enact these strategies and claim they have won.



When Mindlocking a player, you want to spend their turn tapping them out and ensuring they can't stop the lock, which there are very few ways to do once it's started (watch out for Force of Negation). In some cases, it is correct to try and kill the opponent with their own deck if you think you can, or stop locking once you've run them completely out of resources to try for a quicker kill from threats you might still have in your hand. These ideas are used to save time if the opponent is making you play the lock out, instead of conceding as most people do.

Mindslaver is also very useful as a card even without the lock, as a lot of decks can be completely crippled by controlling them for a turn. You get to attack their creatures into yours if you have them, waste their spells and removal and generally run them out of a lot of resources. Sometimes you can just win the game on the spot. Examples of this include:

- Blasting through all of Infect's pump spells then not attacking, leaving them with nothing,
- Killing an Amulet Titan player with their own deck,
- Playing a Yawgmoth and then activating it over and over until the Yawg player dies,
- Using GxTron's hand and board to exile their own Tronlands and threats, crippling their game,
- Pointing burn spells at the Burn player's face,
- Casting Spoils of the Vault naming Black Lotus/Storm Crow/Splinter Twin/You Are Already Dead.

Optimally using Mindslaver on an opponent is extremely difficult, especially against decks with a high spell to creature ratio. The best advice to take on board is to take the time fully establishing your line of play. It's easy to get excited and play suboptimally by flying through the first obvious steps of Slaving someone (Push their creature, Thoughtseize themselves) and not looking ahead because oh whoops you needed that Unholy Heat the Thoughtseize took to deal with their Wrenn & Six. Make sure you establish your line to its entirety, including other lines you're considering, before making actual plays. Some ideas to consider:

- Try and play a Tutor to look at their deck. Fetchlands are a good way of doing this and it gives valuable information about what variant they're playing, what you might still have to deal with and any sideboard choices they might have made. Plus you get to waste the Tutor by failing to find.
- Keep referencing your hand. If you have a Wurmcoil in hand and a choice between wasting a kill spell on their only creature or a scry spell that might let you put lands on top of their deck, the scry spell is probably the better choice, as your Wurmo can hold their board off and is probably too big for their removal to matter. They might have some cards you can counter and some you can't. Try and get rid of whatever you'll struggle to deal with when they get control back. Remember you can run their spells into Condescend on 0 and choose for them not to pay.
- Think about your follow-up play. Remember you get another turn straight after this. Do you have anything meaningful to do after Slaver? You might be able to clinch a win against Death's Shadow by making their creatures attack you down to 1 life if that opens the door for your Thought-Knot Seer with Spatial cast on it to finish them off. You might have nothing and so just need to slow them down as much as you can. Try and think about the cards they have that stop you stabilising most effectively, and any cards you can use against them for free 2-for-1s.
- Think about how best to waste their threatening spells. You can cast Creativity for X=0 to just have them discard it, but if they have Archon in play and all their other Archons are in their hand/graveyard/exile then cast it one X=1 and just kill the one on board for free. Maybe cast it on one of *your* artifacts, hoping it wheels you into a free Wurmcoil or even a Map to find Ruins to get the lock online. Be creative!
- Holding back on casting Chalice of the Void until after you've Slavered a player can be backbreaking if you play their hand in a way that allows you to untap and just invalidate the remaining cards in their hand.
- Tap them out at the end of their turn. You get a free turn of resolving anything you like.

The last thing to consider in Mindslaver turns is that the card gives you control over 'target player during that player's next turn'. You control the player, and they play their spells. Some opponents may be quite happy to just give you their hand and watch, but some may not want you to grab their expensive cards and start throwing them around the table whilst laughing inanely. Always be polite, and it's a good idea to phrase plays in the form of instructions to that player, for example 'tap Steam Vents to cast Unholy Heat targeting your Ledger Shredder', not 'I'll kill this with that'. Manners and clarity go a long way into avoiding hostility and judge calls during one of the more complicated modes of Magic gameplay.

Overall, Mindslaver is incredibly powerful and one of the most demoralising things you can do to your opponent. It's also part of your wincon. For this reason, it is included in pretty much every build.

CARD ADVANTAGE AND VALUE

This section gives further discussion about our card advantage and value engines. These cards are how we pull ahead in the mid and endgames, by ensuring we always have more answers than the opponent has threats, and allowing us to dig into our finishers. Although this part of the deck has a lot of room for personal variety, here only the most essential and most common cards will be discussed, with the aim of both explaining these inclusions and giving pilots a good understanding of the objective of this part of the deck when evaluating their own choices.

The main card advantage we have in UTron is an absurdly powerful, three mana instant that reads:

Draw three cards. Then discard two cards from your hand unless you discard an artifact card from your hand.

THIRST FOR KNOWLEDGE was restricted in Vintage for a time. It only takes a few tries with the deck to appreciate how obscene this card really is, but on the face of it, the reasons for it being a permanent 4-of staple are:

- It says 'draw three cards',
- Its instant speed,
- We have a large number of artifacts in our deck that we can pitch to this, most of which we can get back with Academy Ruins,
- The cards you discard don't have to be from the ones you've drawn; this card can completely transform a bad hand,
- It only costs one blue source,
- *It says 'Draw. Three. Cards'.*

Thirst is the best nonland card in the deck. It is our primary way of both generating card advantage and digging through our library. Thirst is best cast at the end of your opponent's turn if you have the spare mana, but can be cast main phase and even chained in multiples if you have Tron and enough blue sources. If you manage to discard an artifact (which you should be aiming for unless you have lots of other dead cards) Thirst nets you strict card advantage along with the virtual advantage of improved hand quality.

The inclusion of Thirst also drives home the importance of our deck's artifact count. In Legacy card evaluation, if a card is blue, it gains a deckbuilding advantage simply because it can be pitched to Force of Will, the defining card of the format. The defining card of our deck is Thirst, and so any artifacts we consider gain a similar bonus when being evaluated. This is part of the reason our threat suite is mostly artifacts, and why we can run seemingly odd one-ofs like Talismans and Oblivion Stone as well as multiples of matchup-dependant cards like Chalice. These have the potential to be dead cards by themselves but can provide us with indirect card advantage by being available to pitch to Thirst.

Never board Thirst for Knowledge out. Never run less than 4. It's our best nonland card and it wins us games we have no right winning. We also have our 5+ copies of Thirst in cards like Fact or Fiction and Memory Deluge.

The rest of our value and card advantage/quality comes from our interactive spells cantripping or digging. The staples of Condescend, Repeal and Remand all dig you a couple of cards deep and are card neutral, which is why

they're the core of our deck's engine. Rejected cards like Unsubstantiate and Petty Theft both fail to dig and are card disadvantage, so (despite their attractive mana costs) cannot be included. We're a slow control deck, not a quick tempo deck, and we need to dig through our library for continued answers to whatever we're facing.

CHALICE OF THE VOID is one of the deck's greatest assets. This card is very often a virtual X-for-1, blanking a good number of very relevant cheap cards that our opponents have versus very few of ours given our wide CMC curve. Chalice is usually played on 1, hitting only our four Expedition Maps, which are usually played most usefully on turn 1 before Chalice hits the field and can then be discarded to Thirst. To contrast this extremely minor drawback with the advantage Chalice gives us, it is worth showing the effect of the card on a number of decks in the format, with the recommended number of charge counters shown in brackets. In a usual game 1, Chalice:

- Straight up wins unless they're specifically ready for it:
 - o Infect (1), if you can counter Become Immense which we can,
 - o Living End (0),
 - o Boggles (1), if it's early enough,
 - o Breach (0),
 - o Rhinos (0),

- Is very strong, usually requires removal for the opponent to continue their game plan:
 - o Death Shadow (1),
 - o Hammertime (1)
 - o Burn (2),
 - o Lantern (1),
 - o Murktide (1),

- Blanks a good number of their cards and creates dead draws:
 - o Burn (1),
 - o Amulet Titan (0),
 - o Scam (1),
 - o Obosh Red (1),
 - o Gx Tron (1),

- Blanks more cards than our 4 maps, but most likely sided out game 2/3:
 - o Jund Saga (1),
 - o Creativity (1),

- Is bad, either due to a wide range of CMC, the opponent also playing Chalice, or 'can't be countered' effects:
 - o Tribal decks running Aether Vial and Cavern of Souls (Humans, Goblins, Merfolk),
 - o Control,
 - o Eldrazi Tron,
 - o 4c Omnath,
 - o Mono U Tron,
 - o Dredge,

As can be seen, Chalice is often more useful than not, which is why it deserves a mainboard slot. Chalice also has a protection role to play, found with blanking Unholy Heat to allow Karn to continue generating value, Spell Pierce to allow us to stop Creativity, and stopping things like Pact of Negation in combo decks. Chalice is a very strong card

and forms a decent chunk of our 'anti-aggro' plan, but tied to its strength is knowledge of which number to play it on given your matchup.

EXPEDITION MAP is a card that deserves special mention. This is our third 4-of and is only really boarded out against Death and Taxes decks. Much as we can play our game perfectly well without Tron, having access to a low investment, artifact, EoT tutor for our Tronlands and utility lands is our main way of ensuring our late game is as strong as it should be. Expedition Map is your best and often only option for a turn 1 play, and it gives you the benefit of having something very relevant to do with your mana at the end of your opponent's turn if they didn't play anything that required our interaction. Even aside from Tron it helps you hit your land drops in the early turns.

If you have a lot of time in the early turns (against control, for example), then Map has the additional advantage of being recurrable with Ruins to find all three Tronlands. The first activation finds the Ruins, then we can use the end of our opponent's turn to alternately crack Map and activate Ruins, slowly tutoring into Tron whilst keeping our interaction live in their turn.

THOUGHT-KNOT SEER allows us to play a more proactive gameplan but often being cast on turn three after a Talisman. Generally, this card is good if it's the biggest creature on the board, but also allows us to rip their interaction out of their hand and clear the way for landing other threats and is especially good against Force of Negation. TKS can also be used aggressively to strip their removal out from their hand and then just beat down for 4 damage each turn whilst your interaction fights over them stopping it. This card in particular is backbreaking in multiples. Just watch out for Blood Moon.

Our other utility cards are mostly sideboard cards, which are explained better in [Matchups and Sideboarding](#), or Karnboard cards.

ACADEMY RUINS is the best land in our deck after Island. Obviously the primary role of this card is for Mindslaver lock, and as this has been discussed in [Stabilisers, Threats and Wincons](#), this paragraph will briefly showcase a few other uses for this incredible land:

- OStone lock; getting Oblivion Stone back and playing it every turn to deny your opponent a board until it doesn't matter what they play. This is often a complete victory against most permanent decks and will very likely cause a concession.
- As mentioned earlier, if you're sure of a slow game you can get Ruins with your first Map activation with the aim of recurring the Map over and over to get to Tron.
- Getting back Walking Ballista every turn and shooting your opponent with it for repeatable damage. Similar to OStone lock but better against a threat-clear board, this is a way to win against Ensnaring Bridge or other prison decks that may have found a way to stop you Mindlocking.
- Getting back threats that have previously been discarded to Thirst for value. Ruins allows us to pitch our expensive artifacts early game into the graveyard for safekeeping, knowing that during the later game we can crack a Map for Ruins to get them back.

Overall, Ruins is a very strong card that often attracts removal over our Tronlands. For this reason it is usually correct to hold Ruins in your hand over other land drops, keeping it safe from removal until it can start doing its job. It is never correct to board Ruins out.

KEY THREATS

This section aims to describe two types of cards; cards that are strong against our deck, and cards that opponents think are strong against our deck, but aren't. This aims to help players with their decisions in game, by giving a few notable examples of cards can be left to resolve and dealt with later, and some cards have to be removed right now or risk the game going downhill fast.

PROBLEMATIC CARDS

The cards listed here are from a variety of decks, but are special in that they give the opponent a huge advantage, will quickly take over the game, or just straight up blank our strategy of stopping them. This isn't an exhaustive list, but the cards showcased here should serve to inform the types of strategies and cards we have trouble dealing with. For this section, it is assumed that these cards have resolved, since repeatedly adding 'but try and counter this' serves little purpose.

TEFERI, TIME RAVELER

This card is the single worst designed card ever introduced into the game; banned in several formats and widely despised in the formats in which he remains legal. To explain for those unaware, T3feri's static ability removes the use of the stack, but only for one player. This turns the game into Magic vs Hearthstone and has a number of effects that aren't immediately realised upon facing the card:

- Your counterspells have no text on them whatsoever,
- All your opponent's spells are uncounterable,
- Cascade cards no longer function,
- Suspend cards no longer function,
- Random cards like Gearhulk and Bring to Light no longer work,
-*the list goes on.*

There are far more nightmarish/unintuitive effects this card's static has, and wrapping it up on a cantripping, three mana planeswalker that bounces anything that could threaten it and is also a Leyline of Anticipation results in a card that is obnoxious to the point of being a straight-up design mistake. Teferi's only redeeming feature in Modern specifically is being a policing hate card for the Cascade decks in Rhinos and Living End.

T3feri has the ability to completely shut off half of our deck just by existing and is a card type we typically have trouble dealing with. Against any deck that looks to be reactive in Azorius colours this card should be top of your list of considerations at all stages of the game. If it resolves and we aren't about to do something stupid with Tron the game swings obscenely far in our opponent's favour and our gameplan resorts to 'play cards at sorcery speed and hope they stick', which our deck is not very well equipped to do and the opponent's deck is likely very well equipped to handle. If the opponent's deck is playing T3feri to freely combo off the following turn, your only hope is to have already played a Walking Ballista or be about to win.

Our best strategy against a resolved T3feri that we cannot immediately remove is to abandon the interactive side of our deck and focus on completing Tron and repeatedly hammering down threats. If we are able to do this it is likely T3feri will fall into irrelevancy and we can push through the win. In short, T3feri is bad against Gx and Eldrazi Tron, and therefore if he resolves we need to use our deck to best imitate either of those, since our deck's interactive USP doesn't exist any longer. Failing that, better hope you packed the Ballista or Shark Typhoons that day.

VEIL OF SUMMER

Also banned in multiple formats, Veil quickly gained deserved infamy under the tagline 'why does green get a one-mana Cryptic Command?' An unintuitive card at best and an egregious hoser at worst, this card hits a lot of our interaction and will very frequently lose you games by being a cantripping one mana counterspell. Thankfully this is stopped by Chalice on 1, but against any green deck that cares about interaction you should be very careful about them having untapped green sources when trying to resolve any of our blue or black cards. Remember to fight it whilst it's on the stack, as once it's resolved none of your interaction does anything for the rest of the turn. Spatial Contortion and Ugin/Ostone/Ballista do all get past it though.

CAVERN OF SOULS

Cavern is the king of cards that do powerful things with no drawback. Fixes colours, enters untapped, makes all your creatures uncounterable and can even be used to pay for noncreature spells; Cavern of Souls has nothing in the way of disadvantage apart from forcing you to lock into a specific, usually already strong, tribe. Our main issue with Cavern is clearly the uncounterable clause, immediately blanking a great deal of the most important part of our deck and often resulting in us having to change game plan completely to try and rush a stabiliser down.

When you see a Cavern, make note of the named creature type. This tells you a lot about the type of attack you'll be facing and lets you reevaluate your hand based on both the tribe you're dealing with and the presence of Cavern. From here on, your plan will normally change into one of three ideas:

- Remove Cavern as quickly as you can to try and make your counterspells relevant again,
- Ignore Cavern and use other types of permission to control the game as best you can whilst using your counters to dig (usually this is the case if you have few or no counters in your hand anyway),
- Rush to a threat or Tron and try and stabilise before they can kill you.

This type of rapid re-strategising is where Thirst for Knowledge shines as the best card in our deck, allowing you to refresh your hand into something that ditches the now irrelevant cards for either a quick rush to Tron or just some cards that still have text on them. Choosing between these strategies (and others) is completely dependent on your build, your sideboard choices, the deck you're facing and most importantly how many still relevant cards you now have in your hand given the presence of Cavern. You may have a hand full of good removal for Merfolk and that could buy you time to land an Ugin, or you could have a Sundering Titan and Tron vs Elementals so can play that and know that it'll beat their board and stop them resolving anything else. You might have a Field of Ruin ready to crack on Cavern and continue right away with countering creatures. Despite these all being realistic and viable ways to manage Cavern, it's no secret that the card can just completely wreck our day.

AETHER VIAL

Aether Vial is in this section for similar reasons to Cavern; it makes spells uncounterable. It also has the benefit of allowing the Vial player to 'play' two creatures a turn, or Vial in cards at instant speed for both combat tricks and blink effect shenanigans.

Despite Vial's obvious benefits against us, it's less scary than Cavern. Firstly, it's a terrible card in the late game, as it has to build counters on it to be useful. For this reason, our bounce effects (Repeal being the best) are a good way of making this card largely redundant. Vial also has the strange effect of being worse the more of them you have, since you can only bring in creatures if you have them in your hand to begin with, which you won't have if your hand is full of Vials. A Taxes player showing us three Vials is usually not such scary news, since that's three less Thalias, Arbiters or Thought-Knot Seers they could have had.

Vial is a tricky card to play around. Chalice on 1 isn't quick enough unless you also have Repeal (but then it's great) and bringing in Needle effects just to name Vial is often quite a narrow solution, potentially leaving you with a dead card in hand if they don't have Vial. Our main solution to this card is just to play Karn TGC, but aside from this, the best way of dealing with Vial is just to be mindful what could be coming in each turn, and play in a way that minimises the impact of these cards. This is much easier said than done, but doing things like tapping the last of your mana to crack Maps EoT and opening yourself up to a Vial in Leonin Arbiter you can't pay for is lazy play. As above, the good thing about Vial is that eventually they'll be topdecking for creatures, and then Vial gets a lot worse, so if you can minimise its impact for a few turns you should be ok.

THOUGHTSEIZE

One mana targeted discard is a staple of many, many decks in Modern. So much so that even the land they've played T1 can't always tell you which deck you're up against. It could be midrange, like Jund Saga or Scam, it could be Creativity, Whirza, Coffers or some older decks like 8-Rack or Boomer Jund. Either way, Thoughtseize effects are quite good against us, but can be devastating if they come in multiples very early on. Simply put, we need spells in our hand to win, and having three discard effects go off by turn 2 turns the game into a tough affair by often leaving us with just lands and one irrelevant spell. Even if your opponent only has one threat after they've burnt through their discard, that's usually enough once they've taken all of your answers. Chalice on 1 is a great way to provide insurance against last game discard, but this is usually way too late for the initial barrage.

Discard can't really be played around, however, the more discard your opponent hits you with, the less they have in the way of actual threats to stop. Best hope we topdeck well or they're not smart enough to take Thirst. If you're facing a discard-heavy deck, be really careful about mulligans and about keeping land-heavy hands. Don't do their job for them.

RAGAVAN, NIMBLE PILFERER

Ragavan is usually the bane of slow controlling decks – it comes down turn 1 and starts providing both card and mana advantage, the former of which competes on our axis and the latter is usually something the Ragavan deck is very well equipped to utilise.

Ragavan is usually less of an issue for our deck than other control decks, simply because the cards in our deck are usually not readily playable in other decks. Chalice is a mirrored effect, our counterspells and Maps are usually bad hits and the large Tron threats are uncastable. That being said, Ragavan is still clocking us for 2 damage per turn and ramping the opponent makes our Condescends and Remands way worse. Some builds have been including copies of Gut Shot simply to deal with Ragavan, however this usually conflicts with Chalice one 1 in the late game and cannot be pitched to Thirst. If you are scared of Ragavan, include more copies of Dismember. There also exists the trick of Remanding or Repealing whatever your opponent decides is good enough to play with Ragavan, essentially drawing you a good card for free.

CARDS THAT AREN'T ALL THAT

This section describes cards that opponents unfamiliar with UTron think are good against us, but are not. These players will bring these cards in from their sideboards, and this section will explain why you can largely just let them resolve and deal with them later.

BLOOD MOON

The original and most iconic way to shut off unfair lands and greedy manabases, Blood Moon is played all over Modern and is the normal answer to Tron decks and Domain manabases. Against GxTron, Blood Moon does what it says on the tin and forces them to remove it or pay the fair cost for their big threats. If the Blood Moon player can apply sufficient pressure before the Tron player gets to 6/7 lands, they'll win. This strategy is usually successful and Blood Moon's utility against greedy manabases often put it in the forefront of players' minds when sideboarding against anything running scary lands. This is excellent news for us.

People will board in and slam Blood Moon against you with the same vigour that they would against GxTron, thinking that they've gained a great advantage now it's resolved. And it's very true, this card turns our Tronlands, Academy Ruins and other utility lands into basic Mountains until it's removed. However, we have two reasons why we rarely care about Blood Moon, and one reason we sometimes love to see it played:

- We run 5-10 basic Islands. We can still easily play blue cards through Blood Moon.
- We don't need Tron to win, by any stretch. Karn is only 4 mana, even if that mana is red.
- If the opponent has played Blood Moon, *they haven't played a threat that could have done us damage.*

These points are summed up by saying that Blood Moon doesn't stop our deck doing what it does (because we are not a Tron deck), and because Blood Moon can't kill us. It's not a Murktide, a Fury, or a Fable of the Mirror Breaker, or any other actual threat we would have needed interaction to stop. Coupled with the fact that we have a number of decent ways to remove it later on in the game, this means that Blood Moon is often a three mana do-nothing spell that has the added bonus of shutting off your opponent's manlands and often taxing their mana. We just enjoy the fact that the opponent has essentially skipped their third turn, maybe get a Thirst for Knowledge in, continue playing a control game then either win by hardcasting threats or bouncing the Moon at a later stage to turn our lands on again.

There are occasions where Blood Moon is dangerous or worth countering. If you have Island, Mine and Tower in play, Condescend, Power Plant and Ugin in hand then it's usually completely correct to counter the Moon and slam Ugin whilst they're tapped out next turn. Blood Moon is also worth stopping if your only blue source isn't a basic Island, like Hall, Tolaria West or Otawara, because if you let Blood Moon resolve you're going to be completely stuck until you find an Island, Map or Oblivion Stone.

The last thing to consider with Blood Moon is that whilst it doesn't shut our Islands off, it will shut off cards like Spatial, Thought-Knot Seer and Warping Wail, since we can't pay the colourless mana costs. It is not even slightly worth running a Wastes to try and mitigate a fringe problem like this. If you suspect Blood Moon, shift Spatial into the sideboard for Dismember mainboard.

ALPINE MOON

Blood Moon's smaller brother. While this can still be Nature's Claimed, this card is reasonably good against GxTron, which is great for us for the same reason as Blood Moon; people think we're a Tron deck.

People playing this against us should name Academy Ruins or Blast Zone. Whilst that's a far better use of this card than naming Tower, this is still something we really don't care about, for the same reasons as Blood Moon. We can remove it, Repeal it and trap it behind a Chalice, or just ignore it, and it's one more card in their hand that wasn't a threat. This card has the added bonus of giving us another blue source and some other colours for EE and phyrexian black cards, as opposed to useless red mana from Blood Moon.

BOSEIJU, WHO ENDURES

This card is a more problematic piece of land hate than the two above. Not because it takes our Tronlands away (this card costs the opponent two mana and gives us a blue source) but because it can also be used on our prison artifacts, and it can be recurred with Wrenn and Six. This card is one of the times it's worth bringing Pithing Needle out of the Karnboard and into the maindeck after sideboarding.

STONY SILENCE

Stony Silence is a moderately-played sideboard card that does well against GxTron by shutting off Maps, Stars, Spheres and OStones - usually about 15 cards. As with Blood Moon, opponents will bring this in against you and assume it's just as good. Against our deck, however, this shut off 4 Maps, OStone, Slaver, and Ballista - 7 cards, making it literally less than half as good. Sometimes it has the added bonus of shutting down opponent's cards too, like Aether Vial.

As with Blood Moon, depending on your hand and your plan for the game, you can usually ignore this and bounce it later on, if and when it becomes a problem. Stony's biggest crime against our deck is shutting off Mindslaver, Karn targets and Oblivion Stone, and with it our inevitability and best boardwipe. Thankfully, we have many ways of winning games without these cards, and Stony Silence doesn't stop our key idea of using blue spells to control what our opponent is doing. As with Moon, it's also a turn 2 play that isn't a threat.

DAMPING SPHERE

Damping Sphere is included here for the same reason as the Moons; it's a way of turning off Tron that really isn't very effective against us, and isn't a scary early threat. The second ability however, is very much worth consideration when facing Sphere. This hampers our ability to play counterspells and Thirst at the end of our opponent's turn, and also makes things like Snapcaster and Gearhulk more awkward.

FIELD OF RUIN

If people are wasting time and mana to try killing our Urza lands because they believe we can't function without Tron, then we gain more time to play Thirsts and sculpt our hand to win the game with Islands because the opponent isn't playing as aggressively. We have ample supply of basics to fetch up, ensuring we never actually go down a land, and we can just continue making land drops until we get to our stabilisers. Against control decks these cards are more annoying, but hopefully the game should go on long enough to allow you to find Tron again and lever your mana advantage to victory.

EXAMPLE HANDS

This section will discuss a range of example hands and explain the concepts that determine the strength and keepability of different opening sevens. The decision to mulligan is heavily dependent on the deck you're facing; control decks make land heavy hands more acceptable, whereas aggro decks require quick interaction or Chalice. Discard decks generally force you to have a very good reason to mulligan and give them a 'free' discard, and combo decks mean you want to see counterspells forever. This section won't cover obvious cases, since the decision to mulligan a 0-lander doesn't require much in the way of explanation.

GODHANDS



These are the most absurd starters we can have. These hands have a blue source, are close to or at Tron, have early game interaction, and have a good stabiliser or a way to dig for one. All of these hands can start controlling the game from turn 2, whilst digging and using the imminent completion of Tron to quickly arrive at a point where we can play stabilisers and hold up countermagic in the same turn. From here we can either push through for a win with the threat or hold the game long enough to arrive at Mindslayer lock. There is not much else to be said for these hands, other than them nearly always being a keep.

KEEPPABLE HANDS



These are a few examples of hands that are good, but not great. These hands have a good number of lands, including a blue source, have some interaction, some utility or threats, but crucially are missing a Thirst for Knowledge, easy Tron, or more than one counterspell. These are the hands that need to have more interactive cards on the top of the deck to continue our game plan and will require you to be very careful about which of your opponent's plays you need to stop. To take these examples one by one:

- 1) This hand is the best of the three here. We have a turn one play, are reasonably close to Tron, and have our best counterspell. Condescend is the best card in this hand and will hopefully dig us into more good cards. Solemn is also nice here to try and ramp into a hardcast Wurmcoil Engine if Condescend doesn't dig us into a Tronland. Ideally here you would like to refrain from cracking the Map until you've found your second Tronland, avoiding the issue of drawing the same land you just tutored with Map.
- 2) This hand is awkward, but still an acceptable hand. We have a counterspell, a decent threat, and Chalice might just win by itself. This hand's main issue is that we're so far from Tron that Mindslaver is a long way off, however given the Academy Ruins we can happily pitch the Mindslaver to any Thirsts that we draw for card advantage, and hopefully we can draw more interaction from the Remand and get to Wurmcoil. Thoughtseize taking the Remand is a real issue for this hand.
- 3) This hand is a long way from Tron but has good interaction from the two blue spells. Gearhulk is a bit awkward given that we don't yet have a flashback target for it, but Oblivion Stone could be an excellent card to base the game plan of this hand around and against most decks will likely see the board on turn 4.

The majority of hands you will draw will fall into this category – hands that need some thought to play correctly. Unfortunately, given the nature of control and the wide open Modern meta, it's impossible to cover all the lines of play. Some situations and opponents may make these hands perfect or completely useless, but as a rough guide in order of importance, a good hand should:

- Contain a blue source,
- Have between 2 and 4 lands,
- Have some early-game interaction, the more varied the better,
- Be able to a reasonable pathway for getting to a stabiliser,
- Be close to Tron,

Occasionally some of these guidelines can be overlooked if you're in a situation where your hand has a strong card against the opponent, like Chalice against Living End or Needle against Yawgmoth. However, even in these scenarios, it's important to see if the hand has any real way of continuing our game plan after these cards have bought us time to draw into something relevant. Six lands and a Chalice is not a keepable hand.

BORDERLINE HANDS



The hands shown here are borderline keepable. These hands crucially are all lacking a blue source, but do have a way of getting one, or have other cards to play in the meantime:

- 1) This hand is more keepable than the other two – it has a turn three Wurmcoil Engine but cannot cast anything else in the hand unless you draw a blue source, so for now relies entirely on the Wurm being good. The playability of this hand comes from the fact that efficient removal of the lands (Field of Ruin, Spreading Seas) will probably give you a blue source and switch on the rest of your hand. The dangers here are Thoughtseize and Stone Rain effects, or Wurmcoil just being irrelevant or efficiently removed.
- 2) This hand lives on Field of Ruin, since at this point this is our only way of playing the rest of our hand. Whilst this is a definite blue source, it could well be too slow to matter if your opponent has a way to capitalise on you doing nothing for the first three turns. If you draw a blue source immediately, this hand becomes incredibly good. We also have the option of topdecking the third Tron piece and hoping Angel is good enough until the blue source appears.
- 3) This hand is barely keepable. We are far from Tron and have no blue source. This hand relies on drawing the latter to get the Condescend online, and if this is done quickly this becomes a reasonably good hand. Failing that, the plan here is to use Chalice and Spatial to slow the opponent down until we play Solemn, which finds us a blue source and hopefully lets us get back into the game.

The choice to mulligan hands like these is completely dependent on the deck you're playing. Hand 1 is good against creature aggro decks that won't be attacking your lands, and hand 2 is a perfectly acceptable keep against control, since you'll have time to get to the blue source before the game really starts. Hand 3 is a tough keep, but works well against something like Prowess, where Chalice and Spatial could buy a lot of time and Solemn blocks effectively. These are often the hands that require the most thought, and a good strategy is to plan your first few lines of play and work out how many live draws you have versus useless ones given your hand.

MULLIGANS



The hands shown here are pretty much unkeepable. Either they don't have any spells we can play, or the hand is completely dependent on immediately drawing good cards. This section only shows two examples, since diving into the endless pit of theoretically unkeepable hands serves little purpose here. To explain each hand:

- 1) This hand has a decent array of spells, but the lands just don't match them. We have no blue source and no way of getting one, and are nowhere near Tron. If we topdeck a blue source then this becomes a viable hand, but if we don't then we just can't play anything, so it's usually too risky to keep unless you know you'll have a lot of time.
- 2) This hand a better group of lands, but the spells are poor. We have two copies of Chalice, which might be good but also might just not do anything, and we're a long way from playing Angel. Here, we need to topdeck good blue spells every turn or the other two Tronlands to allow us to execute our game plan. As with the other hand, if this fails then we just can't do anything meaningful.

It is worth noting that these hands being unkeepable is not a result of the individual cards being bad. It's easy to think 'hand 2 has two Chalices and is a bad hand, so Chalice is bad', but this isn't true. The hands here are bad because the lands don't match the spells, or because we haven't drawn any of our control magic, which is the axis about which our deck rotates. A hand with multiple copies of the same support card and nothing else is a bad hand for any deck, but it does not mean the support card should be taken out.

COLOUR SPLASHES

Despite the deck's name being Mono U Tron, it is worth exploring the idea of splashing for additional colours to shore up the deck's weaknesses. Our primary objective here is to increase the efficiency of our interaction suite to allow us to better compete in the early turns of the game, however we can also increase our overall card quality by splashing into dual colour staples of modern. Each subsection here will focus on the benefits of each colour splash, along with discussing how we build the manabase to enable the splash and providing example decklists.

It is worth noting that the manabases for these decks, even if built correctly, are *strained*. With each of them you will inevitably have games in which you draw only Tronlands and have a bunch of coloured spells in your hand. This is true for conventional UTron, but for the splash decks this problem is exacerbated by the fact that you'll usually need to draw a dual land to re-enable your hand as opposed to just an Island. The resulting need to pack in dual lands when building the manabase makes us much softer to Blood Moon, since we cannot reliably draw basic Islands and continue playing our deck. This problem is mitigated somewhat by the inclusion of the mana rock Talismans. As with all of magic, these decks represent a trade of increasing power for a decrease in consistency and resilience as it is up to you to make the decision as to where you want to be on that curve. This part of the primer is here to give you ideas and direction when brewing your personal list and not to just dictate your 75.

The example decklists provided in each section are given here as exemplars of how the splash can be realised, and not as concrete lists that cannot be changed. For the most part, a lot of the conventional blue elements of the deck intentionally do not change between the splash lists in order to try and exemplify the flex slots in the deck that can be moved to accommodate the splash cards. With this in mind, what the decklists *do* aim to show is the minimum core inclusions required to make the splash worth it. Additional off-colour cards can be added to each list in order to tailor it to your style or local metagame, provided the core considerations of deckbuilding outlined in the above sections are respected, however straining the manabase to accommodate a second colour and then picking and choosing only a few copies of the off-colour cards presented here is likely a bad idea.

OVERVIEW

The splashes presented are as follows, with a brief highlight of their purpose:

- **UB Tron:** Splashing black to allow for efficient removal in Fatal Push, and a boardwipe in Damnation. This increases the deck's efficiency by lowering the curve.
- **UR Tron:** Enabling Fury to try and patch up our weakness to quick aggressive creatures. This increases the deck's power level at a cost to consistency and is good against specific metagames.
- **UW Tron:** Allowing us to lean far more on the control plan with Solitude, March and the white Remand. This increases the deck's resilience as a control deck, allowing us to function better without Tron.
- **UG Tron:** Allowing us to lean more on the Tron plan with Sylvan Scrying and Hydroid Krasis. This increases the deck's exploitation of Tron, reframing the deck to have the control plan as a backup.

UB (DIMIR)

The black splash for DimiTron enables a key card in Fatal Push. This is a premier piece of removal that kills the majority of creatures in modern and critically allows us to not be overwhelmed in the early game. In order to reliably enable revolt, we will include fetchlands into the manabase and play a number of Chromatic Stars. The latter here is a fantastic card to both enable Fatal Push and also assist with our dual manabase, whilst being an artifact to pitch to Thirst and crucially cantripping to dig us further into our deck. Due to our inclusion of Push and Star, we can no longer include Chalice of the Void in the maindeck. It can still be played in the side if required to be fetched with Karn or brought in against the cascade decks to be played on 0.

The black splash also opens the way to a more efficient boardwipe in Damnation, although this is double black and so likely only a 1 of in the maindeck. We can also play some amount of discard effects in the sideboard and cards like Cling to Dust as we are no longer playing Chalice.

EXAMPLE DECKLIST



UG (SIMIC)

The green splash for SimiTron enables us to run both additional land tutors in Sylvan Scrying and a great control-breaker threat in Hydroid Krasis. The big jellyfish has a really strong cast trigger that does the exact two things our deck wants to do – gain time (life) and draw cards. If you dip into green you likely run 4 Krasis and 2-4 Scrying, and play a bit more like a conventional Tron deck with the ability to draw a ton of cards.

EXAMPLE DECKLIST



CLOSING NOTES

UTron is an extremely powerful deck in the right hands. Our formidable card and mana advantages come at a steep price; locking ourselves into a single colour without the bonus of being able to play aggressively costed 'mono' spells like Archmage's Charm. Blue is a strong control colour, but lacks in decent hard removal, making the deck seem very fragile to those who are used to playing with more efficient cards like Fatal Push and Unholy Heat. To these players, the deck just seems like a pile of bad control cards and Tron threats shuffled together, because their decks are used to being able to straight-up remove anything that stops the proactive part of their gameplan.

Our deck doesn't need to do this. The inclusion of Tron and the cards that come with it mean we are only required to delay and disrupt the opponent's strategy, keeping the pace and threat level of what they're doing under control until we can start dropping our stabilisers, then continue to impede them fighting through the bigger cards. This results in them being in a place where they feel like they took too long and are now too low on gas to deal with our stabilisers. The longer the game goes on, the more chance we have of winning, all the way up to an assured victory with Mindslaver lock.

This is how our deck works. We're clearly a draw-go control deck, but could also be described as the slowest tempo deck ever built. Our entire strategy revolves around playing cards that stop our opponent winning until we get into a situation they can't beat anyway. That situation could be just an Ugin, an Emrakul, a recurrable Oblivion Stone, or a Karn finding a Liquimetal coating to never let them past 4 lands. These board states might not always win on the spot, but they stop the opponent's ability to hammer out a win over the manabase restrictions placed on our control magic. Our stabilisers complement our gameplan of delaying our opponent, and ensure that the other player just doesn't have the card advantage or raw power to push through the stabiliser *and* the ongoing control cards until we land another stabiliser, or just win with Mindslaver. Throughout the game we continue saying 'no, not yet' until we turn around and win.

Once this idea is realised, suddenly the whole deck makes sense. Our control cards aren't necessarily all hard removal, but they all delay and disrupt very well, and all dig us towards our stabilisers. Our tutoring creatures allow us to block and buy more time, and come with card advantage stapled to them. Our stabilisers are all enormous roadblocks that the opponent has to spend considerable time and resources dealing with before they can start to get near threatening us again. We have ridiculous draw spells to keep ahead of the opponent in card advantage, Tron to keep ahead in mana, and an unbeatable inevitability. UTron is an absolutely beautiful deck when played with the correct mindset, as all the cards harmonise together into a single, adaptable, well-oiled machine to get the job done.

I hope you enjoy it as much as I do.



APPENDIX 1: MATCHUPS AND SIDEBORDING

This appendix covers a brief look at how we match up against a wide range of established Modern decks that you may face. The advice of both play lines and sideboarding strategies assume that the opponent is on a fairly standard version of their deck and doesn't take time to consider wildly deviating brews or otherwise spicy inclusions. Each section includes a categorisation of the deck respecting the ideas presented in [Your Opponent's Deck](#), along with our favourability, lists of the tell-tale cards, and UTron's best and worst cards in that matchup.

Since this section is large, a quick summary of each matchup is included here.

Matchup	Rating	Deck Type
Aggro		
Burn	Average	Proactive, Redundant
Rakdos Scam	Average/Poor	Proactive, Redundant
Hardened Scales	Average	Proactive, Essential
Merfolk	Very Poor	Proactive, Redundant
Hammertime	Average/Good	Proactive, Essential
Rhinos	Very Good	Proactive, Essential
Mill	Average/Poor	Proactive, Redundant
Dredge	Poor	Proactive, Redundant
Midrange		
Jund Saga	Good	Proactive, Redundant
Murktide	Good	Proactive (can pivot to Reactive), Redundant
Eldrazi Tron	Good	Proactive, Redundant
Death's Shadow	Average	Proactive, Redundant
Control		
UWx Control	Average	Reactive, Redundant
4c Omnath	Good	Proactive, Redundant
Coffers Control	Average	Proactive, Essential
Mono U Tron	Average	Reactive, Redundant
Combo		
Creativity	Good	Proactive, Essential
Reanimator	Average	Proactive, Essential
Breach	Good	Proactive, Essential
Gx Tron	Average	Proactive, Essential
Amulet Titan	Average/Good	Proactive, Essential
Belcher	Good	Proactive, Essential
Yawgmoth	Good	Proactive, Essential
Living End	Very Good	Proactive, Essential

AGGRO

'Aggro' is short for 'aggressive', and is the name for the archetype of decks that are trying to kill you as quickly as possible. Usually this involves playing low cost efficient-by-themselves creatures or tribal creatures that synergise with each other, but can also be done with spells. Aggro decks are tough for UTron whatever the strategy, since our lack of cheap efficient kill spells and very early game interaction often mean these decks get underneath our counterspells and we're forced to play catch-up. Our card advantage also won't matter during the early turns where the aggro player is committing to their win. We have a number of speed bumps to deploy like Chalice, Spatial and Ensnaring Bridge, and these can often slow the aggro down enough for us to make our card advantage matter and turn the game around.

BURN

Favourability:

Average

Archetype:

Proactive, Redundant

Tell-tale Cards:

- Lightning Bolt
- Boros Charm
- Goblin Guide
- Eidolon of the Great Revel
- Lava Spike

Tell-tale Lands:

- Sacred Foundry
- Inspiring Vantage

Burn covers all variants of red spell-based decks that want to get your life total to 0 as quickly as they can. They utilise a combination of cheap red damage spells (Lightning Bolt, Lava Spike) and cheap fast creatures (Goblin Guide) to hit at your life total and kill you before than you can enact your own game plan.

These decks come in two main variants:

- Mono Red Burn: Has a more consistent manabase and is a cheaper deck, but lacks access to Boros Charm and white sideboard cards.
- RW Burn – The typical build, contains a balance of the strongest Burn spells available.

Burn can be a tough matchup, but we have ways to fight back. The combination of fast, cheap spells and creatures and a linear reliable game plan means our counterspells are awkward and we often don't have the time to get our wall up before our life total becomes too low. Our game plan doesn't change too much with the variants of Burn we're facing, apart from those without white being weaker to Wurmcoil and Angel, which are the best stabilisers we have against them. Even though our counterspells are tough against the multitude of cheap spells they have that all do the same thing, we have Chalice as a good card to slow them down. Chalice is good on both 1 and 2 here, with the edge slightly on 2, as their artifact removal is normally Smash to Smithereens. Getting a Chalice on both 1 and 2 is very strong. Our removal and bounce are good against their cheap creatures; Repeal, Spatial and Warping Wail are all relevant cards, whereas Dismember's life cost is usually just unacceptable. We also have blockers that will often trade with their low toughness attackers.

Your game plan should hope to see Ballista, Spatial, Chalice, Angel and Wurmcoil Engine, as these are your best cards here. Often a single Wurmcoil connecting can set them back long enough to steal the game, and if you can untap with Angel or get a Chalice down, you're in great shape as they'll have to waste spells and time dealing with it. Ugin's strength here is largely dependent on whether you're facing more creatures or more spells, although his ultimate is obviously great. At 4 CMC, Karn is usually boarded out in favour of bringing in more Ballistas, Chalices and Wurmcoils. You can use Mazemind Tome to aggressively scry and hit the 4-life trigger to deny them their reach.

Tips and tricks:

- Let Goblin Guide triggers resolve before hitting it with Repeal or Spatial, so you get the land if there is one.
- Scry lands to the top if they have a Guide to attack you.
- Eidolon is the card what will hurt you the most if you don't have Tron, since it hits a lot of our interactive spells.
- Remanding a spell with Spectacle is a decent play if they have to work to retrigger Spectacle again next turn.

Good Cards:

- Chalice of the Void
- Wurmcoil Engine
- Platinum Angel
- Repeal
- Spatial Contortion
- Walking Ballista
- Spellskite

Bad Cards:

- Remand
- Dismember
- Cyclonic Rift

RAKDOS SCAM

Favourability:

Average/Poor

Archetype:

Proactive, Redundant

Tell-tale Cards:

- Fury
- Grief
- Undying Evil/Malice
- Ragavan, Nimble Pilferer
- Blood Moon

Tell-tale Lands:

- Blackcleave Cliffs
- Malakir Mire

The Rakdos pile nicknamed 'Scam' gets its name from the inclusions of a number of ways to 'scam' the opponent out of a free game. This is achieved by trading card advantage for the ability to play out a line that quickly snatches a win or bricks the opponent's gameplan, winning before the opponent's deck can get off the ground. These lines include:

- Evoking Grief or Fury turn 1 and then casting Undying Evil/Undying Malice on it, giving them a turn 1 4/4 double striker or a 4/3 double Thoughtseize with menace. This then beats the opponent to death before they can deal with it.
- Fast Blood Moon – using Ragavan to power out a t2 Moon to lock down the opponent's mana, then keep the Ragavan going or playing Seasoned Pyromancer and Fury to close out the game.

- Discard + Ragavan – The fairest scam is just to take the opponent’s removal and then let Ragavan win the game by itself.

UTron is usually equipped to deal with most of the Scams, with the exception of the Grief/Undying combo. This likely takes too many of our cards in hand to deal with the 4/3 beater and any other cards they have in hand to increase the pressure. If they evoke Fury instead, we can deal with this with Dismember or try and race to a fast Wurmcoil to beat it on the board. The Blood Moon ramp usually doesn’t bother us too much, we can let it resolve and continue playing our blue spells.

Our threat suite is good – Wurmcoil is amazing here; it beats all their threats and they can’t beat it. Ugin is good to clear the board. Angel is reasonably fragile to cards like double Bolt and Fury. Sundering Titan is average – they play a lot of non-basic-type lands in fastlands and manlands and so Titan may not hit that hard. It is still the biggest thing on the board so worth playing. Karn will very likely die as soon as he’s played, so it is worth getting Wurmcoil or Bridge here, as they cannot beat or remove either of these cards.

Chalice is good on 1, although this can be a bit late for the Scam. Going turn 1 Dismember their Fury into t2 Chalice is likely a winning line.

Tips and tricks:

- They usually mulligan to one of the Scams, so it is worth mulliganing to Dismember/Spatial.
- Let them resolve Blood Moon – try and turn the game into a card advantage fight.

Good Cards:

- Chalice of the Void
- Dismember
- Wurmcoil Engine
- Spatial Contortion

Bad Cards:

- Platinum Angel
- Solemn Simulacrum

HARDENED SCALES

Favourability:

Average

Archetype:

Proactive, Essential

Tell-tale Cards:

- Hardened Scales
- Ozolith, the Shattered Spire
- Arcbound Ravager
- The Ozolith
- Walking Ballista

Tell-tale Lands:

- Urza’s Saga
- Inkmoth Nexus

Hardened Scales is a deck that seeks to abuse their namesake card to generate a board of aggressive artifact creatures that are resilient to removal. The deck abuses how Hardened Scales works with transferring +1/+1 counters around to cumulatively grow the power of their board, and has the potential to use the Ozolith to generate massive Ballistas and Inkmoths to alpha strike a win.

Scales is a tricky but very winnable matchup. We have a good array of interaction here, as despite being fast their deck is very mana intensive and will be soft to Condescend. Spatial and Dismember can also kill their early creatures before they get too out of hand with Scales, and Repeal is great against the 0-cmc threats. We also have Chalice, usually played on 1, blocking a number of their key cards and forcing them to play their Ballistas and Ravagers more fairly.

Aside for their lightning fast godhands, we should be able to let them resolve Scales and both Ozolith, then focus on denying them their important creatures. The big ones here are Arcbound Ravager, Walking Ballista and Hangarback Walker. Fortunately, these will usually be cast greedily with X as big as they can, so Remand and Condescend line up well. Be careful with using our removal too rashly, as they have both Inkmoth Nexus as a primary target and the Ozolith to hold onto the +1/+1 counters for the next creature.

Our stabilisers line up relatively poorly. Wurmcoil is likely not big enough to stop them amassing their army, and doesn't stop the Ballista or Inkmoth kills. Angel is killed by Ballista, and Ugin can't deal with colourless creatures (although Oblivion Stone is fantastic here). A notable and obvious exception is Karn, who can both find a lot of extremely relevant prison pieces and shuts off a huge amount of their deck. Having Karn and Bridge down is usually lights out. Emrakul is also good here, as the Slaver effect allows us to either waste all their counters and walk something into Emrakul, or just kill them with their own Ballista.

Tips and tricks:

- Dress Down in response to Ballista, Hangarback Walker or any modular creature will cause them to enter as a 0/0 and immediately die. Dress Down also stops Hangarback's death trigger.
- Try and get Chalice on 1 and then Repeal cards like Ozolith and Scales.

Good Cards:

- Spatial Contortion
- Dismember
- Chalice of the Void
- Repeal
- Dress Down
- Oblivion Stone
- Karn, the Great Creator

Bad Cards:

- Platinum Angel
- Wurmcoil Engine
- Ugin, the Spirit Dragon

MERFOLK

Favourability:

Very Poor

Archetype:

Proactive, Redundant

Tell-tale Cards:

- Sylven of Sea and Sky
- Master of Waves
- Silvergill Adept
- Lord of Atlantis
- Master of the Pearl Trident

Tell-tale Lands:

- Mutavault
- Cavern of Souls

Welcome to our worst matchup. Merfolk is a tribal aggro deck that runs a multitude of 'lord' creatures to buff each other up and beat you to death, along with the normal array of strong tribal cards like Cavern and Vial. The main strength of Merfolk against our deck is their ample ability to gift their entire army with Islandwalk, rendering our blockers useless. To compliment this game plan, they usually run mainboard Spreading Seas and/or Force of Negation, and so can attack our lands and counter our payoffs if we try and go for an early Tron. On top of this, being in blue they can fight us on the stack with sideboard counters and bounce spells and other tempo plays, and some of their creatures have interactive effects, protection effects or card draw stapled onto them. All in all, they have decent resilience against every way we could try and stop them.

Merfolk runs a number of functionally identical lord creatures; UU costing 2/2s that give all other Merfolk +1/+1 and in most cases Islandwalk. These are the key cards of the deck, and ones that should be targeted with interaction, as allowing them to build up and start applying the buffs to each other is a ticket to a quick death unless you have a boardwipe ready to go. Thankfully these have low starting toughness and so get hit by all our removal.

Chalice is pretty good on 2 if they have no Cavern or Vial, or average on 1. This variance and their ability to ignore it here is usually not worth its inclusion postboard.

Ugin is our best stabiliser, doing his usual job of just eating the board and remaining on high loyalty. Oblivion Stone can often do the same thing, whilst also hitting any Vials they have out. Engineered Explosives is very good if you can get it on 2, as all their lords and the majority of their creatures are of 2 cmc. Apart from boardwipes, Platinum Angel is hard from them to remove. Be careful attacking with Angel, since this can turn on Harbinger of the Tides. Wurmcoil is a good beater but will very often not be able to block, meaning it needs to survive a turn to stabilise, and often they'll be able to race against gaining 6 life per turn. Karn is good at fetching hate pieces like Ensnaing Bridge, as well as turning off Aether Vial whilst he lives.

Our chances against Merfolk are largely dependent on how aggressive a hand they draw. If they have no Vial, no turn 1 play and so have to play lords one by one, we should be able to use counter and kill spells to preserve our life total until the midgame where we have a chance to fight them with our threats. However if they have a hyper aggressive start with Cavern into Vial, Cursecatcher into lord, then sometimes all you can do is pray for a boardwipe or sit back and wait for the pain to be over.

Tips and tricks:

- Combat tricks like letting them attack then targeting a lord with removal to turn off Islandwalk and open up favourable blocks are a good way to gain advantage.

Good Cards:

- Spatial Contortion
- Dismember
- Ugin, the Spirit Dragon
- Platinum Angel
- Oblivion Stone

Bad Cards:

- Emrakul, the Promised End

HAMMERTIME

Favourability:
Average/Good

Archetype:
Proactive, Essential

Tell-tale Cards:

- Colossus Hammer
- Stoneforge Mystic
- Sigarda's Aid
- Puresteel Paladin
- Esper Sentinel

Tell-tale Lands:

- Urza's Saga
- Inkmoth Nexus

Hammertime is one of the fastest decks in modern. The deck aims to play cheap artifact creatures and then use one of their equip-cheating effects to strap Colossus Hammers to them and alpha strike their opponent to death as quickly as possible. The deck also exploits synergies with Urza's Saga and Stoneforge Mystic both fetching Hammer to allow complementary backup plans in Kaldra Compleat and Saga constructs.

Hammer is a fast deck, capable of turn 2 kills. This is usually bad news for us, but the saving grace here is that our interaction lines up really well against Hammer. Repeal, Spatial and Dismember all work wonders against their small creatures in response to equip triggers, and Chalice on 1 is pretty backbreaking. We also have Karn in the midgame to shut off a lot of their artifacts and they have no way of stopping us getting to Tron.

Despite this, our counterspells are pretty bad here. Their spells are cheap and easily replayable, so we need to be keeping hands with the board control cards and Chalice to buy us the time we need. Priority cards for the counterspells are the two cards that cheat equipment onto creatures; Puresteel Paladin and Sigarda's Aid. Also watch out for Inkmoth Nexus, as this only needs a single hammer equipped to kill you and is tough to remove.

Our stabilisers are mostly great. Wurmcoil is good against anything apart from the Kaldra, which can be dealt with using both Repeal and Dismember (indestructible doesn't get around having 0 toughness). Angel is very hard for them to remove unless they have Aether Spellbomb to fetch off Saga which is rare and also stopped by Karn. Ugin is reasonably average; his -X won't kill Saga constructs or cheap artifact creatures but he will deal with the two equip enablers and Germ tokens.

Tips and tricks:

- Remember creatures with the Hammer equipped on them lose flying. If they equip to Inkmoth Nexus at sorcery speed, your Treasure Mage can chump block,
- If they have Sigarda's Aid in play, respond to attacks last – let them take the initiative with casting the Hammer and triggering it onto a creature and then interact in response.

Good Cards:

- Dismember
- Spatial Contortion
- Chalice of the Void
- Repeal
- Wurmcoil Engine
- Platinum Angel
- Karn, the Great Creator

Bad Cards:

- Ugin, the Spirit Dragon

RHINOS

Favourability:
Very Good

Archetype:
Proactive, Essential

Tell-tale Cards:

- Force of Negation
- Dead // Gone
- Crashing Footfalls
- Shardless Agent
- Violent Outburst

Tell-tale Lands:

- Ketrion Triome
- Gemstone Caverns

Rhinos is a deck that abuses the cascade mechanic to cast Crashing Footfalls from turn 3. This works by way of building the deck to include no cards with a cmc less than three, ensuring that all your 3-cmc cascade cards always hit Footfalls. The rest of the deck is then packed with the best over-3-cmc interaction in the format, namely Leyline Binding, Force of Negation, Fury, Dead // Gone, Fire // Ice and Prismari Command.

Rhinos is a good matchup for us. A lot of their interaction is focussed around buying them up to turn 3 to get their Rhinos into play and then forcing them through. This gives us the first couple of turns to set up to counter the Footfalls and continue from there. We have a good array of countermagic as well as the premium cascade hate card in Chalice on 0. The only real way for them to compete is to use Ice to tap your blue source down on the end of your turn, giving them a window to put 10 power on the board, or to bait us into letting them resolve Violent Outburst. We should be able to play around this, and even then Repeal just reads 'destroy a rhino and draw a card'.

While we are well equipped to stop their threats, they are reasonably equipped to stop ours with four Force of Negation in the maindeck. Unless they have already resolved Footfalls, it is worth just holding your threats back until you can push them through with countermagic of your own. Our threats are all good; Wurmcoil dominates the board against Rhinos unless it is removed by Leyline, Ugin removes everything and forces them to restart, and Karn can get both Chalice to shut off cascade, and Engineered Explosives to deal with any Rhinos already in play. Sundering Titan destroys all their lands and stonewalls the Rhinos.

Tips and tricks:

- Counter the Footfalls, not the cascade spell.
- Get Chalice down and protect the Chalice. Remember you can't play a second Chalice on 0 if you already have one down.

Good Cards:

- Chalice of the Void
- Engineered Explosives
- Ugin, the Spirit Dragon
- Wurmcoil Engine
- Ensnaring Bridge
- Oblivion Stone

Bad Cards:

- Spatial Contortion

MILL

Favourability:
Average/Poor

Archetype:
Proactive, Redundant

Tell-tale Cards:

- Hedron Crab
- Jace, the Perfected Mind
- Tasha's Hideous Laughter
- Archive Trap
- Fractured Sanity

Tell-tale Lands:

- Shelldock Isle

Mill gets its name from the mechanic named after the card Millstone, which can repeatedly deck the top two cards of a player's library. Modern Mill takes that idea and runs haywire with it, aiming to aggressively 'mill' the entirety of its opponent's library into their graveyard before they can enact their gameplan. To protect itself, it runs a number of blockers that enable its strategy like Hedron Crab and Ruin Crab, and makes use of Drown in the Loch to hold off the opponent.

Mill is weak to strategies that can provide an aggressive plan, like Burn or Hammer. Unfortunately, we are not one of those decks and we're not aggressive enough to punish the Mill player for fielding a slow strategy. We push the game to go on as long as possible, which means the Mill player has a free run for their idea without having to protect themselves. Mill's strategy is good against us for two main reasons; we need the cards in our deck for our endgame to work properly, and we help them count to 60 by cantripping, drawing with Thirst and turning on Archive Trap with our many search spells.

Our key card is Academy Ruins. Whilst this lives on the field, it's enormously difficult for them to mill us out, and we can repeatedly recur things like Expedition Map and Walking Ballista to buy time to Mindlock. Mill uses a reasonable number of Field of Ruins mainboard, but they will use these aggressively to take us off Tron and trigger Archive Trap if they're unfamiliar with the deck. To encourage this, try and keep Ruins in your hand until they've used up as much land destruction as you can bear waiting for. If they run out of ways to kill it, you have a very good chance of winning.

Apart from Ruins, we need to aim to use our counterspells to hit their bigger Mill spells, and point our removal at the Crabs. Try to do as little tutoring as you can to leave Archive Trap in their hand, and get a clock down fast since 20 life is less than 53 cards to count to. This is a tough matchup and we need to try and run them out of cards. Chalice is best on 1, stopping a good number of their mill spells, and crucially Visions of Beyond, which rapidly becomes Ancestral Recall, arguably the most powerful card ever printed in Magic.

Tips and tricks:

- Only tutor if the bonus you get is worth losing 13 cards, as they'll nearly always have Archive Trap. Karn does not trigger the trap.
- If you sideboard any of the original Eldrazi titans, now is the time to bring them in.

Good Cards:

- Academy Ruins
- Chalice of the Void
- OG Kozilek, Ulamog or Emrakul

Bad Cards:

-

DREDGE

Favourability:

Poor

Archetype:

Proactive, Redundant

Tell-tale Cards:

- Shriekhorn
- Creeping Chill
- Cathartic Reunion
- Bloodghast
- Narcomoeba
- Prized Amalgam

Tell-tale Lands:

- Gemstone Mine
- Dakmor Salvage
- Copperline Gorge

Dredge exists in some form in all nonrotating formats. The deck is based around using cards with its namesake ability to fill up its own graveyard, then get free animation triggers from Narcomoeba, Bloodghast and Prized Amalgam to generate an endlessly recurrable free board of small creatures. The deck wins by attacking you to death, has Conflagrate's flashback mode for reach and Creeping Chill to just randomly dome you for 3 throughout the game.

Dredge's gameplan is hard to interact with, since their creatures come into play in a way that we can't counter. Similarly, using our spot removal and even boardwipes on them is not a reliable plan, as most of their creatures are just one land drop away from all coming back. Our only real option against them is graveyard hate or rushing to a stabiliser. Wurmcoil is very strong against their smaller creatures, and they have to invest cards and time into dealing with it, gaining us some life. Ugin is our best card, as he exiles everything to make sure they don't come back. Angel is useful, as they don't run a mainboard way of dealing with her outside of Conflagrate, which is readily answered by Remand. Mindslaver is only really good for the lock, since we can't do much to damage them if they already have a big board presence, outside Conflagrating them to death.

Karn is great if we can get to him fast, and it is worth mulliganing towards Tron to do this. He can get both direct hate pieces in Relic/Crypt, and Ensnaring Bridge to hold off their army, then finish up with Wurmcoil to stabilise or Mindlock to win.

Chalice is worth boarding out here, it's too slow a play and doesn't hit many cards. This gives you more room to board in graveyard hate.

Tips and tricks:

- Most of the time, we win by throwing blockers and graveyard hate in the way and rushing to Wurmcoil. It's acceptable to mull more aggressively towards this objective.
- Karn is very useful to fetch both graveyard hate and Ensnaring Bridge.
- Sometimes it's better to leave a Bloodghast on the battlefield rather than killing it and letting a fetchland trigger bring back a whole army.

Good Cards:

- Wurmcoil Engine
- Ugin, the Spirit Dragon
- Grafdigger's Cage
- Tormod's Crypt

Bad Cards:

- Chalice of the Void
- Dismember

MIDRANGE DECKS

Midrange decks are all about value. They are often a collection of the strong isolated cards in the colour combination of the deck, and seek to grind out 1 for 1 trades to turn the game into a state where both players are low on gas. Here, the midrange player has better isolated topdecks and will continue to grind out a win. Midrange decks are usually a good matchup for us, since trying to grind value against Thirst for Knowledge is rarely a winning strategy, and as the game progresses our threats are just stronger than theirs.

The strength of the matchup is dependent on how aggressive the midrange deck is in the early turns; a chain of discard spells or a quick Tarmogoyf can do well, but a slower start with the aim of playing powerful three and four drops is something we are well equipped to fight. Usually we'll be aiming to drop a Wurmcoil Engine here, which even if removed will buy us a great deal of time and card advantage. Sundering Titan is often the game-winner of choice against the greedy manabases typical of midrange decks.

JUND SAGA

Favourability:

Good

Archetype:

Proactive, Redundant

Tell-tale Cards:

- Thoughtseize
- Inquisition of Kozilek
- Wrenn and Six

Tell-tale Lands:

- Overgrown Tomb
- Blood Crypt
- Urza's Saga
- Stomping Ground

Jund is the classic midrange deck. Named simply after the colour combination it plays, Jund takes the best cards that black, red and green have to offer and puts them in a pile. The game plan of the deck is to trade 1 for 1, grind value and run the opponent out of resources, knowing that each card the Jund player topdecks is very strong on its own. The opponent is then left with no relevant cards to stop the Jund threats.

Some players still pilot the classic 'Boomer Jund' deck featuring Tarmogoyf, Liliana and Bloodbraid Elf. This deck has sadly been mostly outclassed by the inherent card advantage threshold of the format post MH1/2, and so the majority of Jund players have pivoted to include Urza's Saga as a tool to abuse with Wrenn and Six to give them the higher level of grind required in the 2020+ metagame.

Jund's scariest weapon against us is the array of one mana discard spells. We need to have cards in our hand and often two or more of these in the first two turns can significantly cripple our ability to answer their threats. Chalice often comes down too late to stop these, although often saves more important cards like Thirst by being infamous enough for the Jund player to take with Thoughtseize. We have no real hedge against multiple early discard, apart from hoping they make incorrect choices, we topdeck well or we have early Tron and can just start playing stronger threats.

The rest of the matchup is good news. With the exception of Saga our counterspells shine here, as their game plan is just to curve their hand out as best they can and they have very little in the way of interacting on the stack. Our normal idea of holding up interaction and progressing our gameplan in the background should work well. Dismember is better removal than Spatial here, as Constructs quickly get too big for Spatial to matter. However it's worth keeping both in if you see them running lots of Dark Confidants or Elvish Reclaimer. Thirst for Knowledge serves its usual role as our best card to win against a grindy deck, and Fact or Fiction/Memory Deluge allow us to leap ahead in cards and very often win us the game. Often their only real weapon to compete with our card advantage is Wrenn and Six buying back cycling lands, but W6 should be high on your priority of Repeal targets anyway because it buys back Sagas and also wins the game.

Our best threat is Wurmcoil. This buys us a ton of time and often trades as a 3 for 1, which gains a huge advantage in the exact strategy they're trying to win with. It trades well with their creatures, gains us time and they can't remove it efficiently. They may board in Haywire Mite as a Saga target for it, but this can be dealt with by Karn.

Whilst Wurmcoil is very good, Platinum Angel is distinctly average, They have so many ways to remove her that unless you're at death's door or have a wall of counterspells to protect her, she's not worth tutoring up and is usually boarded out game 2. Sundering Titan is a far better choice if for some reason you're not getting Wurmcoil. It usually destroys three lands and will be able to block all their threats.

Karn is good in that it generates multiple cards in hand and may eat a Goyf attack, but can be slow if they're pressuring you. Ensnaring Bridge however can sometimes be a house against Jund, as it gives us the time to complete Tron and just slam Wurmcoil and Sundering Titan to victory.

Tips and tricks:

- Jund is as redundant as it gets. Every threat has the ability to kill you, however most are invalidated by Wurmcoil Engine or Ugin. Our key to winning is just to lean on our superior card advantage and go over the top of them with Tron.
- Playing any creature against a sole Liliana will usually make them tick down, which is useful to delay the ultimate. If it's a Walking Ballista as your only creature make sure to respond to the Liliana activation by shooting her all the way.
- Bouncing a Liliana in response to her tick-up when your opponent is hellbent forces them to discard it.

Good Cards:

- Wurmcoil Engine
- Sundering Titan
- Torrential Gearhulk
- Ugin, the Spirit Dragon
- Karn, the Great Creator

Bad Cards:

- Platinum Angel
- Chalice of the Void

MURKTIDE

Favourability:

Good

Archetype:

Proactive (can pivot to Reactive), Redundant

Tell-tale Cards:

- Ragavan, Nimble Pilferer
- Dragon's Rage Channeler
- Ledger Shredder
- Murktide Regent

Tell-tale Lands:

- Spirebluff Canal
- Steam Vents
- Fiery Islet

Murktide is more of a tempo deck than a midrange deck, but is included in this section for simplicity. Murktide's primary aim is to win on the efficiency axis; by having its spells have the greatest impact for the smallest cost. The gameplan of the deck is to play a number of cheap costing creatures in Ragavan, Shredder, Darcy and Murktide and then protect them with countermagic, all while clearing the way with efficient removal in Lightning Bolt and Unholy Heat.

Murktide's efficiency is something we can't match. Our deck is clunky at the best of times and this disadvantage is put on full display against Murktide. Our secret weapon however, as usual, is Chalice of the Void. This played on 1 is a huge problem for Murktide, as it shuts off around 20-24 of their maindeck spells, including all their removal, and crucially forces them to be as clunky as we are. From there, all we have to watch out for is not dying to a big Murktide, a card that specifically is answered very well by Remand. Condescend on the other hand is a little lacklustre here against all their cheap spells. Our removal spells are both good, they can usually answer any creature apart from Murktide. This is a game in which we should try and lean into our prison cards in Chalice and Bridge, and let them buy us time while we build up to Tron.

Our threats are all pretty good. Wurmcoil is tough for them to remove and the lifegain will likely race a Murktide. Karn getting graveyard hate and critically Bridge is worth making sure he resolves. Angel wins by herself if we have Chalice on 1, and Ugin's -7 destroys their entire board.

Some Murktide builds maindeck Blood Moon, and this should be allowed to resolve for the reasons mentioned in the main body of this primer.

Tips and tricks:

- Remand and Repeal are very useful if they hit a good card with Ragavan and decide to cast it, as resolving these effects will let it come back to your hand.
- Try and board in graveyard hate, as this shuts off Darcy, Heat and Murktide and significantly reduces their clock. Relic of Progenitus is the best option here.

Good Cards:

- Wurmcoil Engine
- Chalice of the Void
- Platinum Angel

Bad Cards:

- Condescend

ELDRAZI TRON

Favourability:

Good

Archetype:

Proactive, Redundant

Tell-tale Cards:

- Matter Reshaper
- Karn, the Great Creator
- Thought-Knot Seer
- Reality Smasher
- Chalice of the Void

Tell-tale Lands:

- Tronlands
- Eldrazi Temple
- Cavern of Souls
- Urza's Saga

Eldrazi Tron is an aggressive deck born from the lower-cost Eldrazi that appeared in Oath of the Gatewatch. With the combination of the Tronlands and Eldrazi Temple, Eldrazi Tron aims to power out these creatures earlier than they were meant to be cast and beat the enemy to death with them. As the deck also has the Tronlands included, they run four copies of Karn the Great Creator, alongside Ugin, the Ineffable and sometimes Ulamog, the Ceaseless Hunger some late game power or to abuse naturally drawn Tron.

Eldrazi Tron is a good matchup for us, as their restrictive manabase usually only lets them run 2 Cavern of Souls mainboard. Our counterspells therefore shine against their 4+ mana big threats, even if they're cast a turn or two earlier, and them being an entirely colourless deck means that find it difficult to deal with our threats. Their scariest cards are Thought-Knot Seer for the discard effect, Reality Smasher for the clock and the card disadvantage for removing it, and then the bigger Tron threats in Karn and Ulamog. Counterspells are the best way we have of stopping these, and Dismember shines as being able to hit all their mid-sized Eldrazi creatures.

Our stabilisers are good, with the exception of Ugin, who can't remove any of their scary creatures and won't stop them attacking. Wurmcoil Engine is the best of the bunch, as they can only really answer it with their big Tron threats. If we can keep them off Tron then Wurmcoil Engine does a good job of dominating the board and buys us loads of time to get to Mindlock. Mindslaver is only really good for the win condition here, as they don't have a great deal of interaction that works against their own board, but can still be strong to walk their creatures into yours to give unfavourable blocks. They have Ballista, Karn, Ulamog and Dismember to answer Platinum Angel, but a lot of these are counterable so Angel is not necessarily bad. Karn is good to shut off their Karn shenanigans and can fetch an Ensnaring Bridge to stop their creatures or a Liquimetal Coating to keep them off Tron.

As they run 4 Chalice of the Void, we should board ours out and be grateful that they mainboard 4 dead cards.

Tips and tricks:

- If you only have one piece of removal against a resolved Thought-Knot Seer, use it in response to the trigger so you don't lose it. If you have two, wait for the trigger to resolve and then kill it, so they don't see the extra card.

Good Cards:

- Wurmcoil Engine
- Dismember
- Spreading Seas
- Karn, the Great Creator

Bad Cards:

- Chalice of the Void
- Ugin, the Spirit Dragon

DEATH'S SHADOW

Favourability:

Average

Archetype:

Proactive, Redundant

Tell-tale Cards:

- Thoughtseize
- Inquisition of Kozilek
- Death's Shadow
- Gurmag Angler

Tell-tale Lands:

- Watery Grave
- Blood Crypt
- Breeding Pool

The variants of Death's Shadow are a close to a Legacy deck as it's possible to get in Modern. These decks exemplify the idea of 'Turbo Xerox' decks; those that use cheap cantrips and free cyclers to dig into the cards and lands they need for incredible consistency. The main focus is quickly powering out a 'one mana' big creature in the form of Death's Shadow or a Delve threat, then protecting it through to victory with Stubborn Denial. Most variants also use Temur Battle Rage or Dress Down for free wins with Death's Shadow.

The most notable characteristic of the deck is its desire to aggressively lower its own life total. Using an extremely painful manabase and cards like Thoughtseize and Street Wraith, the deck allows Death's Shadow to very easily become a one-mana 5/5 and above, which when attacking in multiples is a very quick road to victory. Shadow uses lots of interaction to ensure it doesn't get punished for putting itself in single digit life early on.

Shadow's insane efficiency and consistency is a problem for us. However, the 'dumb' nature of their threats allow our counterspells and bounce effects to be good, our blockers to buy time, and Wurmcoil Engine to completely dominate the board. Wurmcoil is bigger than most of their creatures and will trade very effectively with a Shadow. Walking Ballista can be used as a 'gotcha' if they lower their life total too far. Our other stabilisers are fairly average. Platinum Angel is soft to the red part of the deck, and Ugin has to cripple or outright kill himself to exile the Delve threats (although he's very strong against multiple Shadows and Goyfs). Karn is very good, being able to find both Chalice and Bridge to prison them out of the game or Wurmcoil and Sundering Titan to close the door.

Chalice of the Void is insane. Obviously this is played on 1, and blanks a disgusting 24-26 of their nonland cards. With discard and Stubborn Denial it can sometimes be hard to resolve, but usually just stops them doing anything except playing slow Delve threats and waiting to draw Kolaghan's Command. Ensnaring Bridge is similarly devastating for their strategy of attacking with big creatures, and will straight up stop them from winning until it is removed.

Tips and tricks:

- Remand is strong against Delve Threats if they're running them.
- They don't run a great deal of actual threats, but rely on cantrips and Traverse to find them. Often stopping just two of their eight creatures can buy a lot of time whilst they go and find another one.

Good Cards:

- Wurmcoil Engine
- Ensnaring Bridge
- Chalice of the Void
- Dismember

Bad Cards:

- Platinum Angel
- Spatial Contortion

CONTROL DECKS

Control decks are generally the matchups that require you to think ahead the most, since the games are going to go on a long time. The axes the matches rotate on are card advantage and clocks. As we are very good at the first of these, we should try and steer the game into a state where the opponent is forced to find a clock or drown in our card advantage and inevitability with Mindslaver lock. Control decks rarely do well at playing proactively, and we can use this to get value counterspells in on their turns and use our remaining lands to advance our gameplan.

UWX CONTROL

Favourability:

Average

Archetype:

Reactive, Redundant

Tell-tale Cards:

- Solitude
- Teferi, Time Raveler
- Teferi, Hero of Dominaria
- Kaheera, the Orphanguard

Tell-tale Lands:

- Hallowed Fountain
- Zagoth Triome
- Raugrin Triome

UWx Control covers a wide range of draw-go control decks. The majority of these have morphed into Domain manabases in order to enable Leyline Binding, but apart from this play the usual control cards in counterspells, removal and value-generating planeswalkers.

Control is a tough matchup. While our threats are better than theirs, resolving them is tricky when their deck's interaction suite is a lot better than ours. Their planeswalkers are also tough for us to deal with, and specifically Time Raveler is absolutely lights out if he resolves. Their removal is also relevant against us, with Binding, Solitude and Ending able to exile a lot of our threats.

However, we have a number of decent avenues to victory. With the exception of the UWx variants that maindeck 4 Memory Deluge over the planeswalkers, our value generation overmatches theirs, with Thirst for Knowledge showcasing itself as an excellent draw spell. They also no longer maindeck Field of Ruin, and so have no way to turn us off Tron. As a result, we should be aiming to run with our normal plan of making the game go on as long as possible, slowly getting to Tron and then Mindslaver lock. With Ruins down, we can just play Slaver over and over into their counterspells until they run out of them.

Failing Mindlock, our best threat is Sundering Titan, which is extremely good against their Domain manabase. Karn is also excellent if he resolves, allowing us to fetch cards like Liquimetal, Mazemind Tome and The One Ring to generate continuous value in a long game. Oblivion Stone is also strangely powerful here, as it destroys both planeswalkers and Bindings, giving you back whatever precious card they stole.

As they run 4 Chalice of the Void, we should board ours out and be grateful that they mainboard 4 dead cards.

Tips and tricks:

- If your non-critical spell is countered, Remand your spell, not theirs. You'll gain 1 card's worth of advantage and this will usually matter more than getting a threat down right then, unless it's Sundering Titan.
- Be patient, our endgame beats theirs.

Good Cards:

- Walking Ballista
- Sundering Titan
- Thought-Knot Seer
- Karn, the Great Creator
- Oblivion Stone

Bad Cards:

- Platinum Angel
- Wurmcoil Engine

4C OMNATH

Favourability:

Good

Archetype:

Proactive, Redundant

Tell-tale Cards:

- Omnath, Locus of Creation
- Risen Reef
- Wrenn and Six
- Teferi, Time Raveler

Tell-tale Lands:

- Ketria Triome
- Raugrin Triome
- Cavern of Souls

4C Omnath is the name for a family of 'decks' that all centre around the idea that putting 4 Omnath, Locus of Creation in your deck generally means you can put any 56 other good cards in the same deck and do well at a tournament. As a result, the specific decklists vary wildly, but are generally centred around every card being a value generating engine or the best removal in the format. Some builds lean harder into the Elementals tribal plan with cards like Risen Reef, Flamekin Harbinger and Cavern of Souls, whereas some try and play a more controlling game with maindeck Counterspell and Time Walk. However most of these are just big midrange piles enabled by Omnath and Wrenn and Six that seek to never draw bad cards and just jam sorcery-speed 2-for-1s until their opponent is dead.

This deck is a strange matchup. We can't hope to keep up with their value train when all of their cards have the safety net of functionally cantripping on entry, however we can counter their high-cmc plays and overmatch them on threats. This is one of those matchups where we have to lean on our completion of Tron to not just let them outvalue us. The key is to interact just enough to stop them gaining a snowballed board presence, and then complete Tron and play as aggressively as possible to pound out a win with our superior threats.

To this end, our best stabilisers are Sundering Titan, Ugin and Oblivion Stone. Titan destroys all their lands, which with the exception of Omnath being already in play should slow them down long enough for us to win. Ugin wipes their entire board, as does Oblivion Stone. Stone can also be recurred with Ruins, and this lock is usually game winning.

Our other threats are not good. Emrakul seems strong until you realise that none of their cards can be used against them because they're so pushed they can't even be played incorrectly. Wurmcoil is eaten by Binding and Solitude, and Angel is similarly not surviving.

Chalice is likely boarded out here – their curve is widely spread.

Tips and tricks:

- Wrenn and Six is probably their most dangerous threat, as it allows them to both recur Boseiju and recover from Sundering Titan.

Good Cards:

- Sundering Titan
- Ugin, the Spirit Dragon
- Oblivion Stone
- Karn, the Great Creator

Bad Cards:

- Wurmcoil Engine
- Platinum Angel
- Chalice of the Void

COFFERS CONTROL

Favourability:

Average

Archetype:

Proactive, Essential

Tell-tale Cards:

- Profane Tutor
- Thoughtseize
- Invoke Despair
- Expedition Map
- Karn, the Great Creator

Tell-tale Lands:

- Cabal Coffers
- Urborg, Tomb of Yawgmoth

Coffers is a deck based around its namesake card, Cabal Coffers. This card paired with Urborg, Tomb of Yawgmoth can start generating an absurd amount of black mana, especially in multiples. The deck is built like a slightly slower Tron deck, the payoff being that they get to run a decent suite of low-level interaction in Thoughtseize, Fatal Push and Sheoldred's Edict. The deck wins with Karn, the Great Creator, Archon of Cruelty and Emrakul, the Promised End.

Coffers, like Tron, is a deck that is hard to beat if they draw well. Their mana ramp curve is less aggressive but absolutely insane in the endgame and this makes it really difficult for us to counter their threats. We usually want to try and make sure we win somewhere in the midgame, and for this reason it is acceptable to mull towards a hand that can complete Tron fairly fast. Their midrange package is average against us. Liliana and Invoke Despair are easily countered and Fatal Push is a blank card. Their scariest lines are hampering us with multiple hand disruption spells and then running for Coffers/Urborg before we can pick ourselves back up again.

Karn is the best thing we can do here – as with Tron we want to land this and start going with the Liquimetal Coating as soon as possible. Failing that, Wurmcoil can apply pressure, but Ugin and Angel are best boarded out against their huge endgame. Sundering Titan isn't good against their mono coloured manabase but can be used to kill off a Coffers in a pinch (assuming they have Urborg)

Tips and tricks:

- Remand is really good against Profane Tutor when it comes off suspend.
- It is usually worth targeting the Urborg with Field of Ruin in the early game, and then Coffers in the late game.

Good Cards:

- Counterspells
- Karn, the Great Creator
- Mindslaver
- Wurmcoil Engine

Bad Cards:

- Dismember

MONO U TRON

Favourability:

Average

Archetype:

Reactive, Redundant

Tell-tale Cards:

- Remand
- Condescend
- Expedition Map
- Thirst for Knowledge

Tell-tale Lands:

- Tronlands
- Oboro, Palace in the Clouds
- Island
- Academy Ruins

Oh boy. This subsection will be fairly short, as hopefully from the rest of this primer it's fairly apparent how this works. Essentially, there are three main paths to victory for each player, assuming the builds are similar:

- Cast more Thirst for Knowledges than your opponent.
- Get to Tron earlier than your opponent.
- Start beating down with an early Mage or Thought-Knot Seer and force them to make the first move.

At a high level, these translate into getting either card or mana advantage over your opponent, or presenting them with a clock. Generally, whoever accomplishes one of these strategies first will put themselves in a strong position, and force their opponent to do something to prevent them being dead or outclassed in the endgame. However, the way of pushing these advantages is somewhat different.

If you get to resolve a few Thirsts, you want to start trading 1 for 1 and have the game go on for a long time. This is probably the easiest way to victory, as both decks are built to do this anyway. Card advantage, as it usually does, matters a lot in control matchups. If you get to an early Tron, then start piling on the pressure and see if you can force through a big card like Wurmcoil, Karn or Gearhulk. If you manage to land an early beater, you should either do what you can to protect it and force it through for the win or make them tap badly to remove it. This is a similarly aggressive plan to what goes on in option 2, but is here if you want to play aggressively without Tron. This does risk your opponent getting to Tron first and playing something bigger.

Our stabilisers are usually just ways of pressuring. Ugin and Wurmcoil are good here, however Angel is hard for our deck to remove so can be a good option to protect and beat down with. Karn is fantastic, and you're almost always going for Liquimetal Coating to just start eating their lands (starting with blue sources unless they have Tron).

Thought-Knot Seer is a great clock if you can get it to land, since you can likely take any card that can get it off the board. Mindslaver is very, very strong, as not only is your opponent playing an interactive deck, they're playing *your* interactive deck, so you should know how best to cripple whatever they've got going on. A single Mindslaver activation is usually goodbye. Clearly, Chalice of the Void should be boarded out.

Tips and tricks:

- Thirst is probably the most key card in the deck, and is the best way to punish your opponent if you have mana left at the end of their turn and they've tapped out.

Good Cards:

- Counterspells
- Thirst for Knowledge
- Mindslaver
- Karn, the Great Creator
- Thought-Knot Seer

Bad Cards:

- Dismember
- Spatial Contortion
- Chalice of the Void

COMBO DECKS

Combo decks are a good matchup for us. They usually don't do anything threatening for the first few turns, and allow us to sculpt our hand into a wall of counterspells for when they try and force through a win. Our difficulty in these matchups comes from balancing this wall with applying pressure, and getting to Tron can really help here to allow us to do both in the same turn. You very rarely want to drop your shields against decks that can win out of nowhere.

CREATIVITY

Favourability:

Good

Archetype:

Proactive, Essential

Tell-tale Cards:

- Indomitable Creativity
- Fable of the Mirror Breaker
- Bitter Reunion
- Persist
- Hard Evidence

Tell-tale Lands:

- Dwarven Mine

Indomitable Creativity is a deck that uses their namesake card to cheat big creatures into play, usually Archon of Cruelty or Emrakul, the Aeons Torn. This works by way of the deck containing no other creatures than the fatties,

and using token generators in Hard Evidence, Dwarven Mine and Fable of the Mirror Breaker to target with the Creativity. The deck comes in two main versions:

- 4C/5C Creativity: A deck that uses the most powerful card in modern, Wrenn and Six, to enable a rainbow manabase whilst still having all their lands as mountains for Dwarven Mine. Wrenn also allows them to recur fetchlands to search out more Mines for more tokens to hit with Creativity. As the deck is 4/5c, they can run the most premium interaction cards as well as enable the Domain cost of Leyline Binding.
- Grixis Creativity: A version that sacrifices the power of a 5c manabase and Wrenn to more consistently play a backup plan of 4 Persist as another way to cheat Archons into play. The deck runs a low to the ground interaction package in Thoughtseize, Spell Pierce, Fatal Push, Bolt and Fire // Ice to buy itself up to the turns in which it can start making Archons. Notably the deck can do this as early as turn 2 by Thoughtseizing an Archon out of its own hand to Persist turn 2.

Creativity is a pretty good matchup. We are in a good position to counter the Creativity itself, and we are able to go over their backup midrange grind plan. Despite this, Archon specifically can beat a lot of our Tron stabilisers, and Creativity and Prismari Command can destroy our attempts to prison them out of the game with cards like Ensnaring Bridge, so we need to ensure we keep ahead of their attempts to put one into play.

Our main plan is to try can counter their Archon enablers, and bounce or kill their other wincons until we get to Mindslaver lock. Mainly these backup threats are Wrenn and Fable, both of which come down early and provide a lot of enabling value for the Creativity player whilst threatening us. If we spend our first few turns setting up, then successfully counter the Creativity, we can then work to remove the backup threats and move towards our inevitability. Apart from counterspells, we have removal spells and the all-star Repeal to deal with Creativity itself.

Our threats are mostly good. Ugin can exile their whole board and all of their tokens, but be careful of tapping out and just letting them cast Creativity. Sundering Titan is amazing and will often win on the spot against their greedy manabase. Wurmcoil is pretty average – it'll hold off their backup plan if you've already Stone-Brained their Archons but it won't directly help vs Archon itself. Emrakul is pretty good to waste their Creativities.

Chalice is useful on 1 specifically to keep them off Spell Pierce, but it's acceptable to board it out.

Tips and tricks:

- Low level removal is best saved as additional counterplay against Creativity. Repeal is best here, as it hits any creature or artifact Creativity targets, costs one mana and cantrips.
- Cards like Torpor Orb aren't good against Archon. They stop the ETB trigger but the attack will still wreck our day.
- Game 1 Stone Brain is fantastic – name Archon of Cruelty as naming Creativity will just mean they start hardcasting Archons later in the game.

Good Cards:

- Counterspells
- Repeal
- Karn, the Great Creator
- Engineered Explosives

Bad Cards:

- Platinum Angel
- Wurmcoil Engine

REANIMATOR

Favourability:

Average

Archetype:

Proactive, Essential

Tell-tale Cards:

- Unmarked Grave
- Archon of Cruelty
- Persist

Tell-tale Lands:

- Blood Crypt
- Watery Grave

Reanimator refers to a number of decks that use the MH2 reanimator package of Unmarked Grave and Persist to cheat a big creature into play – usually Archon of Cruelty to gain value off the ETB trigger immediately. This package can come in a variety of shells:

- Esper Reanimator: Likely the most popular version, this is a deck that combines the Elemental Incarnation cards with Ephemerate and the reanimator package. The deck interacts unfairly using Grief and Solitude, draws cards with Mulldrifter and Tainted Indulgence, and makes Archons with Persist. Some variants also use Aethermage's Touch and Witch's Cottage as another way of cheating Archon into play.
- Rakdos Reanimator: Usually this deck leans on trying to break cards like Smallpox and Liliana of the Veil to turn their discards into Persist fuel. Can also be combined with an Asmo package to exploit the discard synergies of Underworld Cookbook. Plays like an aggressive resource-denial Rakdos shell with the ability to render you unable to answer their Archon.
- Dimir Reanimator: Primarily a UB control deck with Fatal Push, Thoughtseize, Counterspell and Archmage's Charm but includes Tainted Indulgence, Archon and Persist as a wincon that doesn't sacrifice on value. Slower to combo than the other decks but has the best backup plan in the control shell and has the ability to force the Archon through after it enters.

This matchup is average for us. While we are able to counter Persist, it is only a 2 mana spell and every deck that plays it will have some way of trying to force it through or take our counterspells. We also have no maindeck graveyard hate and Archon is a scary enough threat to compete with our Tron spells.

Our saving grace is Karn, who can tutor Tormod's Crypt et al out of the board and stop the combo. Once the hate is established, we are usually in a good position to grind out against the various backup plans and win with our Tron plan. We will need to protect the prison pieces against cards like Prismatic Ending, but we are in a good position to do this and can also re-fetch them out of exile with Karn. We can also try for Chalice on 2 to lock them out of Persist or try and bounce resolved Archons with Cyclonic Rift. Dismember will also kill a Persisted Archon.

Tips and tricks:

- Beware of hardcast Archons. We are a slow deck and will likely let them get to 8 mana naturally. These are soft to our tax counterspells though.

Good Cards:

- Counterspells
- Dismember
- Karn, the Great Creator
- Tormod's Crypt

Bad Cards:

- Repeal
- Wurmcoil Engine

BREACH

Favourability:
Good

Archetype:
Proactive, Essential

Tell-tale Cards:

- Grinding Station
- Underworld Breach
- Mox Amber
- Emry, Lurker of the Loch
- Ragavan, Nimble Pilferer

Tell-tale Lands:

- Urza's Saga
- Minamo, School at Water's Edge

Breach is a low to the ground grindy artifact combo deck. Their combo works by using Underworld Breach, Grinding Station and a 0 cost artifact to mill their entire deck, and then escape Thassa's Oracle or Grapeshot for the kill. The deck usually requires the 0 drop artifact to be Mox Amber, as they'll need this and a legendary creature in play to generate the mana to cast their wincon, however the combo can get started using Mishra's Bauble as the 0-drop, and then mill over the Amber to start the mana generation. Aside from the combo, the deck plays a good grind package in Ragavan, Emry, Saga, Ledger Shredder and Expressive Iteration, along with good interaction in Unholy Heat and Metallic Rebuke.

Breach is an interesting deck in that the combo is relatively easy to stop. It is weak to graveyard hate, artifact hate and creature removal. We are capable of all of these things and so are in a good position to stop the deck from speedrunning to its combo. The difficulty playing against Breach comes from their backup grindy plan being very strong, and we are not quite as good at keeping up with its efficiency. It is very easy to keep a hand with Karns and Relics and then get run over by Ragavan, Shredder and Saga.

We likely only need one or two pieces of hate to stop them going off, and so the rest of the deck should be focused on not dying to the backup plan until we can do bigger things with Tron. Specifically, Karn is our best card, as it stops the combo by itself as well as finding us more hate pieces for backup and wincons to go over their grindy plan. A hand with Dismember, a counter or two and a Karn is perfect. We also have the wrecking machine that is maindeck Chalice on 0 – completely stopping their combo and costing us 0 mana. They'll struggle to remove this card so any hand with a Chalice shouldn't need any other form of combo hate.

Our stabilisers outside Karn are varied. Angel won't help here – once they go off they'll have their whole deck to cast from the graveyard to remove her. Wurmcoil is bad against the combo but amazing against their grind plan so should be a good target here. Ugin kills their creatures, ensuring they have to drop all their combo pieces in one turn. Sundering Titan is quite average, as they run both Saga and Spirebluff and are only a 2-colour deck.

Tips and tricks:

- Mull reasonably aggressively to Chalice if you know what they're on game 1. Their deck does go for the combo game 1 and then usually brings in more backup grind and alt-wincons games 2/3.

Good Cards:

- Pithing Needle
- Chalice of the Void
- Karn, the Great Creator

Bad Cards:

- Platinum Angel

GXTRON

Favourability:

Average

Archetype:

Proactive, Essential

Tell-tale Cards:

- Ancient Stirrings
- Chromatic Star
- Chromatic Sphere
- Expedition Map

Tell-tale Lands:

- Tronlands
- Sanctum of Ugin
- Boseiju, who Endures

Our linear brother. GxTron uses our favourite lands in an aggressive way as a primary gameplan. Their aim is to assemble the combination of Mine, Power Plant and Tower as quickly as they can and play large colourless haymakers one after the other, relying on the fact that playing a much more powerful card than your opponent every turn is a winning strategy. It usually is; left unchecked Tron gets a Karn Liberated into play on their turn 3, and can be followed up by Ugin, the Spirit Dragon or even Ulamog, the Ceaseless Hunger if the stars align for them. Some builds also run the Karn, the Great Creator package for the ability to apply pressure without Tron.

The majority of their deck is focussed around cantripping and playing land search spells. Their main three ways of finding Tronlands are Sylvan Scrying, Expedition Map and Ancient Stirrings. The latter specifically is a very strong card, allowing them to dig for both Tronlands and threats and is a huge boost to their consistency.

The widely understood recipe for stopping GxTron is to deny them their lands and apply a fast clock. We are fairly well positioned to do the first, but can't really do the second, since we don't have a reliable way of applying fast pressure to our opponent. Our gameplan is therefore focussed around trying to keep them off Tron or from landing any scary threats, whilst building into Mindslaver lock or Karn. To this end, we want to be using Field of Ruin and Spreading Seas out of the board to lock down their lands and our array of counters to try and stop their Karns. We really want to keep them off Tron, as their colourless spells are very powerful and hard for us to deal with if they resolve. The most dangerous threat is clearly Ulamog, as even when countered the cast trigger is a free 2-for-1 and hurts especially when they take away our lands.

All our counterspells are great, with special mention going to Summary Dismissal and Whirlwind Denial for their ability to deal with cast triggers. Our removal is useless, with the possible exception of Dismember if they run lots of Thought-Knot Seers or Spatial if they run Thragtusk, although these can both just be countered. Chalice of the Void on 1 is very good, blanking 16 maindeck cards plus any Nature's Claims or Veil of Summers they may have in. If you can get them to stumble on their early Tron and get a Chalice down, they'll have a hard time getting back to the combo and your counterspells should allow you to build a wall. In these situations you can usually try to beat down with a Wurmcoil Engine or Thought-Knot Seer. Even Snapcaster or Treasure Mage can win games against them if you can stop them getting back to Tron, and Thought-Knot Seer can be used to take critical search pieces for their combo away.

Karn TGC can be used to turn off their artifact cantrips and Maps, and in conjunction with Liquimetal Coating or Stone Brain can shut their lands down as well. A turn 3 Karn into Liquimetal on the play is absolutely devastating and a good thing to mulligan towards if you know the matchup. The rest of our stabilisers are usually just clocks. Wurmcoil's lifegain doesn't mean much against a deck that fights with such enormous threats, and their way of removing it is usually exiling with Karn Liberated, World Breaker or Ulamog, meaning Wurmcoil is usually only good for pressuring them early on if they're stumbling over our interaction. Ugin forms the same role; all their main threats are colourless and so Ugin is simply a clock and a way to draw a bunch of cards with his ultimate. Angel is

almost completely overmatched as a threat. Mindslaver and Emrakul are both very useful, these can win even without Ruins, as we use their power against them to cripple their game.

Tips and tricks:

- If you have blockers to throw in the way of their Wurmcoil and suspect they have more dangerous threats, don't waste a precious counter on it. Them gaining life is irrelevant.
- Use Repeal to move your Spreading Seas around if they start playing multiples of the same Tronland.
- Mulliganing aggressively to Tron and Karn TGC on the play is a viable strategy.

Good Cards:

- Counterspells
- Chalice of the Void
- Field of Ruin
- Mindslaver
- Karn, the Great Creator

Bad Cards:

- Dismember
- Spatial Contortion
- Platinum Angel
- Ugin, the Spirit Dragon

AMULET TITAN

Favourability:
Average/Good

Archetype:
Proactive, Essential

Tell-tale Cards:

- Dryad of the Ilysian Grove
- Amulet of Vigor
- Cultivator Colossus
- Primeval Titan
- Timeless Lotus

Tell-tale Lands:

- Valakut, the Molten Pinnacle
- Simic Growth Chamber
- Castle Garenbrig
- Field of the Dead
- Golgari Rot Farm
- Gruul Turf

The few variants of Amulet Titan all have the high-level aim of using Primeval Titan to do broken things with lands. The wincons are usually:

- Having a Dryad of the Ilysian Grove in play and searching for two Valakuts, usually resulting in a game-ending amount of damage,
- Tutoring for Hanweir Battlements/Slayer's Stronghold to give the Titan haste and continue tutoring lands,
- Finding Sunhome, Fortress of the Legion to give their Titan double strike and swinging for the win.

Even without instantly winning a resolved Titan can tutor for a number of utility lands to help the Amulet player gain advantage. Their land-base runs Tolaria West, Blast Zone, Boseiju and other such lands to allow them to interact effectively against the opponent. They can also run Karn, the Great Creator simply because they are able to generate lots of mana.

Conventional Titan decks used Search for Tomorrow, Farseek and Sakura Trible-Elder to ramp into Titan, however Amulet of Vigor in conjunction with the Ravnica bouncelands and a way of playing multiple lands per turn allows the Titan player to make large amount of mana as early as turn 2/3. Dryad of the Ilysian grove especially does the job of

both allowing additional land drops and allowing Valakut to count all their lands (including itself) as Mountains to pull off the classic Scapeshift kill.

The deck is largely trying to pull off its combo as soon as it can, which although can be very quick we are in a good position to stop. They do however have strong backup plans in both Karn and just ramping into their threatening lands, and interaction denial in Cavern of Souls and Veil of Summer out of the board to force the combo through.

Playing against Titan requires us to lean on counterspells, Thought-Knot Seer, Chalice on 0 and win with Sundering Titan. The only ramp spell worth countering is Dryad, but even this is sketchy as it dies to our otherwise useless removal and whilst on the battlefield allows us to end the game with Sundering Titan. Apart from that, you should aim to run them out of Titans and apply pressure before they can either naturally start bolting you with lands or making zombies. We do this by playing Chalice on 0 to block both their Pacts, and get Titans out of their hand with Thought-Knot Seer and countermagic. Field of Ruin is also useful to stop them trying the backup plan of killing us with natural land drops.

Sundering Titan is the clear choice for our stabilisers. With a Dryad in play this destroys 5 lands, which is pretty much always game over. Wurmcoil Engine sounds good to block Primeval Titan, but if they've got to a stage where they've been able to play and attack with it the game is likely going too badly for 6 life to matter. Angel is not good here – it won't stop the Valakut kill and they can tutor and bounce Boseiju to kill it. Karn is good at finding lock pieces in Torpor Orb, Ensnaring Bridge and Chalice, and can start taking out lands if dropped early with Liquimetal. Ugin is usually just a wincon, as he's not very good at stopping our opponent casting combo pieces. Mindslaver has the potential to just win if we can kill them with their own Valakuts.

Some newer iterations of this deck forgo the Primeval Titan package in favour of using Amulet to power up Timeless Lotus for insane amounts of mana. If you're facing this variant, your counterspells become fantastic with no Cavern to stop them, and Karn's utility is massively increased by shutting off Timeless Lotus. Sundering Titan will, however, not be as game-ending, since this version doesn't run Dryad.

Tips and tricks:

- If you Mindslaver them, only play out their combo if you know you can kill them. Getting them to 1 life but not being able to close the game is not good if they're now left with Valakuts and a Primetime on the field when they get back control. If you can't kill them, you can at least use a Summoner's Pact and fail to find, ensuring their next turn will be hampered by having to pay the cost.
- Karn can plus an Amulet to allow us to kill it with removal, but this is often worse than just getting a relevant lock piece.

Good Cards:

- Counterspells
- Field of Ruin
- Sundering Titan
- Spreading Seas
- Chalice of the Void
- Thought-Knot Seer

Bad Cards:

- Spatial Contortion

BELCHER

Favourability:
Good

Archetype:
Proactive, Essential

Tell-tale Cards:

- Strike it Rich
- Desperate Ritual
- Goblin Charbelcher
- An Offer You Can't Refuse
- Ironcrag Feat

Tell-tale Lands:

- Valakut Stoneforge
- Bala Ged Sanctuary
- Spikefield Cave
- Sea Gate, Reborn
- Turntimber, Serpentine Wood

Belcher is a pure combo deck. Their deck works by ramping to and activating their namesake card. With all of their lands being MFC cards, the Belcher activation hits their entire deck and does the opponent for lethal. The rest of their deck is focused around ramping into this as fast as possible.

Belcher is a good matchup. Aside from their extremely fast godhands, we are usually given enough time to have prepared to counter the Belcher and can use the end of their other turns to progress our gameplan with Thirst. We also have Karn's static to shut the Belcher off completely, and they really don't have a good way of dealing with Karn. We also have Angel to stop them being able to kill us.

Apart from Karn and Angel, all of our threats are purely for pressure. Ugin, Wurm and Titan are just beaters to kill them once we've ensured they can't combo. Chalice is good to stop An Offer You Can't Refuse, which they usually play in favour of Pact of Negation. Obviously this card is used to force through the combo, and often competes well with our less efficient counters. You can sometimes let it resolve and then use the treasures to try and recounter the Belcher. Field of Ruin is also specifically useful here, as they run no basics to fetch up and taking a land away can slow them down.

The deck can board into backup plans, usually Goblin Rabblemaster, so keep Dismember in for this. They will also likely board into Blood Moon, but this doesn't stop our plan of countering their Belcher or landing Karn so can be ignored.

The deck can also run a secondary plan of using either Balustrade Spy or Undercity Informer to enact a graveyard version of the combo, similarly abusing the idea of having no lands in the deck. The combo uses Narcomoebas to trigger three Sword of the Meeks, then bringing back Salvage Titan and four Vengevines. This can be stopped in its tracks with graveyard hate; Karn into Tormod's Crypt will shut down both combos at once.

Tips and tricks:

- Using Repeal early on any treasures they make is good to slow them down, as the majority of their lands come into play tapped.

Good Cards:

- Counterspells
- Karn, the Great Creator

Bad Cards:

- Chalice of the Void

YAWGMOTH

Favourability:

Good

Archetype:

Proactive, Essential

Tell-tale Cards:

- Yawgmoth, Thran Physician
- Young Wolf
- Strangleroot Geist
- Chord of Calling
- Wall of Roots
- Eldritch Evolution

Tell-tale Lands:

- Urborg, Tomb of Yawgmoth
- Yavimaya, Cradle of Growth
- Blooming Marsh

Yawgmoth is a grindy combo deck that uses a host of undying creatures to combo off with Yawgmoth, Thran Physician. The combo works by using Yawgmoth's ability with a pair of undying creatures to alternately sacrifice one and put a -1/-1 counter on the other. This cancels out the +1/+1 counter from undying, allowing for repeated undying triggers and the Yawgmoth ability to be activated repeatedly. While this is powerful enough by allowing them to pay 1 life to draw a card as many times as they like, the true combo is when either Gerialf's Messenger or a Blood Artist effect joins the board, both of which mean that death triggers cause the opponent to die before the Yawgmoth player kills themselves. Aside from this, the deck has a strong backup plan of just beating down with resilient undying creatures and has fantastic utility and removal in Grist, the Hunger Tide. The inclusions of Chord and Evolution also let them play with their whole deck every game and run a number of utility creatures in the board.

Yawgmoth's combo plan is usually not too strong against us, as they have to resolve a four mana creature to enable it, which we are in a good position to counter. They do also have Eldritch Evolution and Chord of Calling to tutor Yawg out, and the latter here should be respected especially due to it being instant speed. If they left mana open and some of their creatures back after attacking, don't tap out for Thirst EoT and let them win on the spot. Aside from this, we need to make sure we get to a stabiliser before their backup beatdown plan kills us on the ground. Generally this is the plan – we let them play their undying creatures while we set up, counter their attempt to get the combo through and then try and run to Tron before they can beat us to 0 life.

Our stabilisers are good. Ugin is usually a free win – it wipes their board completely in a way that gets around undying and they need a board presence to provide any threatening plan. Wurmcoil helps enormously against the beatdown plan but won't stop the combo and won't provide much of a threat when they can just chump with undying creatures and Grist tokens. Angel will protect you but crucially dies to Boseiju and Grist, the latter of which can also be tutored out with Chord and Evo. Their manabase is fairly resistant to Sundering Titan.

Karn is great – not because of his static but because he can pull Grafdigger's Cage, Pithing Needle and Ensnaring Bridge out of the board. All of these are fantastic cards against Yawg – Cage shuts down undying, the combo and their creature tutor spells, Needle shuts off Yawgmoth and Bridge helps against their beatdown plan. Beware that they have Boseiju maindeck so will be able to interact with your prison cards here, although Academy Ruins can get them back and Boseiju fetching you Islands is great.

Tips and tricks:

- This is a matchup where you need to make sure they don't combo. Their beatdown plan is scary but the second we get to Tron all our stabilisers deal with it well – so we need to make sure they aren't in a position to just combo off the turn after we drop a big Tron card.
- Post-board the prison strategy is tougher with them having Force of Vigor and Haywire Mite, however it's still worth keeping these cards in as they form a decent speed bump and buy us time.

Good Cards:

- Karn, the Great Creator
- Grafdigger's Cage
- Pithing Needle
- Ugin, the Spirit Dragon

Bad Cards:

- Platinum Angel
- Chalice of the Void

LIVING END

Favourability:

Very Good

Archetype:

Proactive, Essential

Tell-tale Cards:

- Grief
- Shardless Agent
- Violent Outburst
- Architects of Will
- Curator of Mysteries
- Street Wraith

Tell-tale Lands:

- Botanical Sanctum

Living End is Modern's turbo-reanimate deck. Their gameplan is to spend the first few turns cycling creatures, then use one of their cascade spells with otherwise irrelevant effects to cast their namesake card for free, wiping the opponent's board and bringing back all the cyclers. They then use their massive board advantage to hammer their opponent to death.

A key part of Living End's plan is that it restricts them to only playing spells that are CMC 3 or greater, to ensure that their cascade spells definitely hit Living End and not something bad like Fatal Push. They do however get around this restriction by playing cards like Grief and Force of Negation to interact in the first few turns. Grief especially pulls double duty of attacking the opponent's hand and then becoming part of the reanimated army to do it again.

Living End is a great matchup for us. We have two effective weapons to stop their combo: counterspells and Chalice of the Void on 0. The latter is fairly easy to use, however with the former all UTron players will make the classic mistake of countering a cascade spell as opposed to the Living End it hits. It'll happen once, and you'll never do it again.

Chalice on 0 completely stops their deck working, so it's worth protecting. They likely only have Otawara to remove it, but this takes a lot of mana so we should be ready to counter the incoming Living End and then replay the Chalice.

The standard build runs three Living Ends. Once you've countered these, their only way of winning is hardcasting overcosted dumb creatures, so you can be much more relaxed about ensuring you always have countermagic open and start playing threats against them to close out the game. If the worst happens and they do manage to go off, all hope is not lost. We have Ugin, Angel, OStone, Bridge and Cyclonic Rift that can save us, and Wurmcoil Engine can sometimes stall against their army long enough to let us find a more permanent answer. Angel here has the odd role of being useless as a stabiliser before they've comboed off, but very useful for protecting yourself afterwards. Karn is also great if you have the time, as he can find an Ensnaring Bridge, Chalice and our graveyard hate. We can also proactively discard our bigger creatures to Thirst and then have them come back when Living End resolves.

Our graveyard hate options are less required here than they are for other graveyard decks, since we rely mostly on counterspells and Chalice, however Relic, Tormod's Crypt and even Leyline of the Void do good work against Living End. Grafdigger's Cage however, does not stop the combo.

Tips and tricks:

- Counter the Living End, not the cascade spell. Say 'cascade trigger resolves' in response to them playing one.
- If the Chalice in your hand doesn't get Griefed, don't play it until you can protect it from Force with a counterspell. Remand is perfect here – you Remand your own Chalice in response to Force and then just replay it for 0.
- If you Mindslaver them, remember cascade is a 'may' ability, so you can waste some of their combo pieces and fail to play the Living End. Another option if they have the mana is cascading twice, as this uses up two Living Ends and still leaves them in the same position.
- If you think they're going to be able to combo off, use Thirst to get some Wurmcoils or Platinum Angel into the graveyard. You might just be able to hold off their horde.

Good Cards:

- Counterspells
- Chalice of the Void
- Relic of Progenitus
- Tormod's Crypt
- Ensnaring Bridge

Bad Cards:

- Dismember
- Solemn Simulacrum
- Spatial Contortion

APPENDIX 2: AUTHOR'S DECKLIST

This section details my personal decklist at time of writing. I'll show the list, and then explain a few card choices and why I have liked them in the deck. I won't bother explaining the stock parts of the deck – the last thing you need to read is again me saying to never cut Thirst for Knowledge.

AUTHOR'S DECKLIST



CARD CHOICES

STOCK CARDS

The core cards that shouldn't need a great deal of explaining:

- 4 Thirst for Knowledge
- 4 Condescend
- 4 Remand
- 4 Expedition Map
- 12 Tronlands
- Academy Ruins
- Blast Zone
- 5 Island

INTERACTION

- 3 Repeal

This could easily be 4 Repeal, although I'm not sure what I'd take out for the 4th (maybe Dress Down). The current Modern meta plays very much to the board as opposed to on the stack, and Repeal is a really good card to help us slow the board state down. Also has specific utility against Creativity and Saga tokens. Repeal has been impressing me a lot lately.

- Dress Down

This was an experiment over the usual Relic in this slot, and I'm currently always pleasantly surprised seeing it in my hand. DD has a number of very useful interactions, most recently helping me trade in combat effectively with Yawgmoth's undying creatures, and having a Murktide enter as a simple 3/3 to be taken out with Spatial. Definitely the 60th card in the deck but a very good one.

- 2 Dismember / 2 Spatial Contortion

As with Repeal, Modern is playing to the board and so we want to go up on our spot removal. The 2/2 split is to try and not just lose all my life to Dismembering Ragavans.

- 3 Chalice of the Void

Should probably be 4. Chalice is really good at the moment and has been wining me so many games. Against the most popular decks this is great vs Hammer, Murktide, both Cascade decks, Burn, and even Tron and Mill. The ability to just steal games with a single card that can otherwise be value-pitched to Thirst is why I've kept the number of Chalice in my list high where others have dropped it to 1.

UTILITY & THREATS

- 1 Talisman of Dominance

This is here due to me running only 23 lands, only having 9 other blue sources and only 9 other maindeck artifacts for Thirst. Solves all three consistency problems in one card and also ramps.

- 1 Memory Deluge

This was Fact or Fiction in a previous list, however the ability to discard this to Thirst for value has won me over to Memory Deluge even though it is double blue and that does sting occasionally. The first mode stabilises you, the second wins you the game. This card is great.

- 4 Karn, the Great Creator

I'm a huge fan of this card – it's our 'MH2-power-level' card that allows us to do really obscene things with Tron. The synergy with our deck's artifact subtheme is also fantastic, as anything we tutor gains additional value when rebought with Ruins. Specifically not having to tap out of blue to land Karn is what has sealed the deal for me over the Mages.

- 1 Ugin, the Spirit Dragon.

I can't let go of this card, despite other builds eschewing him for Cityscape Leveler. This and Oblivion Stone have frequently been my only outs to situations I should be losing, and Ugin leaving himself as a continuous stabiliser and rapid win condition after he's done his main job is fantastic.

- 1 Oblivion Stone

I have only recently readopted this card as an experiment to try and help vs Leyline Binding and I had forgotten just how devastating looping this with Ruins can be. Again, Modern is playing overwhelmingly to the board at the moment and this loop can single-handedly clear the way for a win against 90% of decks.

- 1 Emrakul, the Promised End

Similar to Ugin, this card has won me a lot of games that nothing else would have won. Having to tactically discard to power her out earlier is an enjoyable subgame and an 8 mana 13/13 flampler with Mindslaver stapled to her doesn't feel even slightly fair.

- 1 Walking Ballista

This is here as a maindeck target for Tolaria West, allowing late game Expedition Maps to find a threat. Despite that being the main reason for inclusion, this card has impressed me immensely since its printing and provides a lot of utility that our deck would otherwise not be able to get. The card does an awful lot for just being one card and I could see myself including more in the maindeck in the future.

LANDS

- 1 Otawara, Soaring City

Should probably be 2 copies but with only 23 lands I don't want to go down on basics too much. This allows Expedition Map to tutor flexible interaction, which is an excellent line our deck didn't have before.

- 1 Hall of Storm Giants

As with Ballista, this allows Map to tutor up a threat. This coming into play untapped on turns 1-2 means this is a pretty free inclusion, and our Tronlands make the steep activation cost more manageable.

- 1 Underground River

I run an EE in the Karnboard and so run this to help enable X=2. This also taps for colourless for Spatial Contortion.

- 1 Tolaria West

This card is really good. I'm trying to play more aggressively with completing Tron and this performs very well as a 5th land tutor. Also being able to get Chalice and Ballista whilst tapping for blue makes this card my first choice in utility lands after Ruins.

SIDEBOARD

With the majority of the sideboard being the Karnboard, and the choices for that being explained in the body of the primer, here I'll just talk about the non-Karn inclusions.

- 2 Subtlety

This used to be 2 Force of Negation, however Modern at the moment seems a lot more creature-centric and so Subtlety is my card of choice for free interaction. This also feels a lot better to hard cast than Force and has a pseudo-combo with Dress Down.

- 2 Spreading Seas

Cantripping Sinkhole against Urza's Saga, which is both everywhere and puts down uncounterable board presence. This also has utility against Tron.

- Kozilek, Butcher of Truth

Mill is on the rise again with the printing of Jace, the Perfected Mind. This is Kozilek over Emrakul as we have a more reasonable chance of actually casting this card, meaning it can be brought in in control mirrors as well as for Mill. I also just kinda love this card; it's a draw 4 cast trigger.

I am also trying to find space for two Thought-Knot Seer in the sideboard, with the idea being that players will side out their removal after game 1, so we should capitalise on that.

APPENDIX 3: FURTHER READING

This section contains few links to some other sources of information about the deck and a few write-ups I've done whilst playing at tournaments. Due to COVID-19, the tournament reports are relatively dated but still serve to demonstrate lines of play.

OTHER MATERIAL

THE MONO U TRON DECK THREAD ON MTGSALVATION

<https://www.mtgsalvation.com/forums/the-game/modern/established-modern/control/220176-monou-tron-the-well-oiled-machine>

PIERAKOR'S FAQ

<http://magicgatheringstrat.com/2015/09/mono-u-tron-faq/>

MATCHUP WINRATE ANALYSIS BY PIERAKOR (WITH DATA FROM SHOKTROOPA)

https://www.reddit.com/r/TronMTG/comments/66lt0c/shoktroopa_vs_pierakor_mono_u_tron_matchup_data/

AUTHOR'S TOURNAMENT REPORTS

PPTQ 1ST PLACE (32 PLAYERS, 09/09/18)

https://www.reddit.com/r/ModernMagic/comments/9em2io/report_pptq_first_place_with_mono_blue_tron/

FNM REPORTS

https://www.reddit.com/r/ModernMagic/comments/8lh29k/40_last_night_with_mono_u_tron/

https://www.reddit.com/r/ModernMagic/comments/8axu88/went_40_the_other_night_at_fnm_20_people_with_the/

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<https://johnavonart.com/popular-sets/unstable-set>