

MAGIC The Gathering® **Old School**



Vintage 1993-1996
(Also called "A2A" - Alpha to Alliances)

An Introduction

*Collected and edited
by Allan Linderup Smed*

MTG Old School Vintage 1993-96 “in the Time of Ice - Alpha through Alliances”

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Introduction

Old School MTG has grown since its humble beginnings in the snowy Swedish fjords and is a very popular format today around the world. Old School 93/94 format focus on the very first core set of Magic (ABU – alpha/beta/unlimited) as well as the 4 first expansions also called the 4 horsemen Arabian Night, Legends, Antiquities and The Dark). Several Old School 93/94 formats also include the fifth expansion Fallen Empires from 1994.

Old School Vintage 1993-96 (also called “A2A” format in the US) builds on the same Cardpool but further includes the Silver Age of Old School cards (1995-1996) and further includes the next three expansions Homelands, Ice Age and Alliances.



Sample popular cards

The reason for this is that Homelands, Ice Age and Alliances add a great amount of flexibility, while maintaining the same feel and gameplay experience as in Old School 93/94. New archetypes are added to the format, while the existing archetype decks are given new options and tools to work with. The sets also increase the size of room to brew in. Additionally, the flavors of specially the Ice Age and Alliances sets are a favorite for many Old School players, who have played since the early years of MTG. The Homelands set, while taking place in a different planar setting, still fits the overall Old School theme despite being a small set with relatively few strong cards. This article tries to provide some insight into what Homelands, Ice Age and Alliances adds to traditional 1993/94 Old School.

But before diving into this a few words on the banned and restrictions list in the Danish version of the Old School Vintage 1993-96 format.

A word on rules and banned and restricted list

The rules in Old School Vintage 1993-96 builds on the existing Danish Old School 93/94 format rules, both in terms of the banned and restricted list, allowed sets and reprint policy. Only changes are the inclusion of *Fallen Empires*, *Homelands*, *Ice Age and Alliances* sets as well as the few promo cards from 1994-1995. Please also refer to the full rule Guidelines (which can be found on this site as well).

Baseline is restricted card list from Danish Old School 1993-94: *Ancestral Recall*, *Balance*, *Black Lotus*, *Braingeyser*, *Channel*, *Chaos Orb*, *Demonic Tutor*, *Library Of Alexandria*, *Mana Drain*, *Mind Twist*, *Mishra's Workshop*, *Mox Emerald*, *Mox Jet*, *Mox Pearl*, *Mox Ruby*, *Mox Sapphire*, *Regrowth*, *Shahrazad*, *Sol Ring*, *Strip Mine*, *Time Walk*, *Timetwister*, *Wheel Of Fortune*

In addition to this following 1995-1996 cards from the official restricted WotC Vintage list has been added as restricted cards: *Merchant Scroll*, *Brainstorm*, *Necropotence*, *Demonic Consultation*, *Mana Crypt*.

Zuran Orb in addition is also restricted as this card was officially restricted in 1996

Finally, two cards have been added to the restricted card list based on play experience from the Old School community (and therefore as a subjective Community decision):

Force Of Will, *Hymn To Tourach*

This alignment of banned and restricted list with OS 93/94 allows for a good compatibility and smooth transition for existing 1993/94 Old School players that want to start exploring this format. It is thus fully up to the player if he/she wants to include cards from the additional sets – and in practice a player can play in the format with an existing legal 1993/94 deck or one with only few card additions.

The re-printed core set cards in Ice Age with new alternative art are allowed to play. These are: *Counterspell*, *Dark Ritual*, *Death Ward*, *Disenchant*, *Fear*, *Giant Growth*, *Howl From Beyond*, *Hurricane*, *Lure Power Sink*, *Circle of Protection: Blue*, *Circle of Protection: Green*, *Circle of Protection: Red*, *Circle of Protection: White*, *Circle of Protection: Black*, *Regeneration*, *Shatter*, *Sleight of Mind*, *Stone Rain*, *Swords to Plowshares*, *Wild Growth*, *Icy Manipulator*

A word on new card mechanics

The addition of the extra expansions introduce a few interesting new mechanics that allow for new archetype decks and ways to play. The most important are introduced here:

Cantrip cards, *Pitch spells*, *Cumulative upkeep*, *Snow lands* and Allied dual Color *Pain Lands*

Cantrip cards – Introduced in Ice Age set. A “Cantrip” is a simple spell you can cast cheap, often just one or two mana, that does a small effect. In MTG the cost of a card is not only the mana cost it is also the cost of the card itself compared to what else you could have gained from your normal draw. A *cantrip* in MTG replaces itself, so you get the card for free as you get to draw another card

before it is your next turn. A cantrip can effectively "thin" a deck, so more useful cards can be drawn faster, while at the same time produce a small effect that can aid the player in various situations and not costing a card draw.



A Cantrip card can be identified if the effect reads: "Draw a card at the beginning of next turn's upkeep". Here it is important to notice it says: "...next turn's upkeep" and not "your next upkeep". This means you get an additional draw in your opponent's upkeep and if you draw e.g., an instant, you can also use this card to respond to your opponents' actions. Cantrips are great because they allow you to generate more card draws than your opponent, further gathering resources and extending a lead or catching up.



Brainstorm (restricted) is still today the first place cantrip in Magic. It's basically a nerfed-Ancestral Recall, and it becomes a nearly equally powerful card if you combine it with some shuffle effects or other hand manipulation. You can argue that Ancestral Recall also is a cantrip even if it was printed before the concept was introduced to Magic as it somewhat fulfills the same criteria. In Ice age Blue is the king of cantrips having the most (eight) and cheapest ones followed by white (four). Black and Green each have three cantrips, where all or most cost three mana to cast and Red only having two cantrips. However, Green is the only color to have a creature card *Pyknite* as a cantrip.



Snow Lands – Introduced in *Ice Age* set and continued in *Alliance* set. Every basic land type gets a Snow-covered version. *Snow* is a supertype with no inherent functionality. Instead, it serves as an identifying characteristic of this type of permanent. *Snow* as a type does nothing other than to identify snow cards. In the *Ice Age* set and also in the *Alliances* set there are some build-around cards that reward you for having these lands, but there is also multiple *snow* hate cards

Cumulative upkeep - Introduced in *Ice Age* set and continued in *Alliance* set. *Cumulative upkeep* is a keyword ability on permanents that requires the permanent's controller to pay an increasing cost each turn, or else sacrifice that permanent. The cost is based on the number of age counters on the permanent. *Cumulative upkeep* was introduced in *Ice Age* and can be considered an additional cost to play the card, that must be paid from your next upkeep on and will continue to increase. The *cumulative upkeep* cost offset an often very strong card effect. If a player through card synergies or tricks can work around the cumulative upkeep cost (e.g., bouncing the card back into the hand) this can often be very strong cards.

Allied Colored dual pain lands – Introduced in *Ice Age* set. Lands that cost life to use. Until *Ice Age* only pain land in Old School was *City of Brass*. *Ice Age* introduced new dual lands as a hybrid

between the original *Core Set dual lands* and *City of Brass* only proving colors in two *Allied Colors*. *Allied colors* are two adjacent colors of the color pie. *Allied colors* tend to naturally complement each other, but also tend to share same blind spots.



Pitch spells – Introduced in *Alliances* set. A *pitch spell* is a spell with rules text that allows the card to be cast for an alternative cost which includes discarding or exiling ("pitching") at least one card from its owner's hand. Most of these spells require no mana if the pitching mechanism is used. Also more formally named *alternative cost* spells. *Pitch spells* thus allows a player to cast a spell even if a player does not have any available mana to cast it. Some pitch spells require a cost of 1 life point in addition to the requirement to discard a card in hand. Each color has one *pitch spell*, which are: *Scars of the Veteran* (white), *Force of Will* (blue), *Contagion* (black), *Pyrokinesis* (red) and *Bounty of the Hunt* (green). *Force of Will* is by far the most powerful and the only one that is restricted.



Fetch land – Actually not recognized as a mechanism in 1996 as it was not until much later sets this mechanism got a formal name. *Alliances* set introduces one card which is the first “fetch land” in the history of MTG. The land *Thawing Glaciers* only grabs basic lands, but also allows reshuffling of Library.



New Archetypes compared to Old School 1993/94

The three sets *Homelands*, *Ice Age* and *Alliances* add over 600 cards to the 1993/94 Old School card pool. With that addition, new deck archetypes are born and a lot more flexibility and combo's. Here are a selected few that also support new types of decks:



Pox deck– Black control deck reliant on discard and board control that hinges on the *Ice Age* card *Pox*. Often combined with *The Rack* and/or some reanimator effects from *Animate Dead* or *Dance of the Dead*.

Browse/Digger deck – Blue/white control deck using the blue enchantment *Browse* to select your answer and *Soldevi Digger* to replenish your library. Once it gets going it's hard to break out of its grip.

Counter-Post deck – Another control deck rooted in blue and white named after the two key cards. This one use hard counterspells and the white utility land *Kjeldoran Outpost* to control the game.

Stormbind deck– The powerful red/green enchantment from Ice Age turns dead cards in hand into 2 damage. When coupled with card advantage like *Land Tax* or *Howling Mine*, or fast aggro creatures, *Stormbind* can close a game all by itself.

RG Aggro deck – RG tempo already exists in Old School 93/94 specially with the Erhnam-burn'en deck type. But ramp decks get a lot of help with *Tinder Wall* (a green card that makes RR) and *Orcish Lumberjack* (which turns Forests into *Black Lotus*s for R and G). With this amount of ramp, your big beater creature or *Stormbind* comes down easily and moves this deck type much more towards the Aggro side. *Deadly Insects* come down far too early.

Zur's Control deck – A control/parfait deck. This one utilizes *Zur's Weirding* to kill the opponent's draw. Other tools to gain life (*Zuran Orb*, *Land Tax/Ivory Tower*) enables a hard lock on the opponent so the denial of drawing cards can be maintained.



Fastbond/Storm Cauldron deck – This is a pure combo deck that uses the eponymous *Storm Cauldron* artifact from *Alliances* in order to generate loads of mana in conjunction with *Fastbond*. What you do with it is up to you.

Enduring Renewal – This white enchantment is quite famous and allows for multiple combo kills. Whether you're sacrificing *Su-Chi* to *Ashnod's Altar* or feeding *Ornithopters* to your *Fallen Angel*, Renewal can enable it and keep the creature supply coming.

Abyssal Knights – The addition of the pump knights *Order of Leibtur* and *Order of the White Shield* as well as *Death Speakers* – all with protection black – feeds a new creature type together with 2-3 The Abyss for board creature control.

Jokulhaups – Using the devastating spell *Jokulhaups* to reset the board for all artifacts, creatures and lands, leaving players with no mana at all from lands and moxes. Leverages often on *Ivory Gargoyle* or *Blinking Spirit* as well as *Mana Vaults* or the *Sacrifice Lands* from Fallen empires to generate mana before playing *Jokulhaups* in order to drop a “big beater” like *Orgg* or *Deadly Insects*

Necropotence – Gave name to “the Black summer of 1996” where mono black *Necropotence* decks dominated the tournaments. Based on the *Necropotence* card from Ice Age. Introduces card drawing based on using your life as a resource to gain cards. Combined with life gain from *Ivory Tower*, *Drain Life* or *Zuran Orb* – this proved to be too powerful, and the card was put on the restricted list. *Nevinyrral's disk* is also a fundamental card in a mono black *Necropotence* deck as

it can also be used to get rid of the enchantment before it kill you. The card can also supplement other archetypes including Land's Edge and other black based combo decks

New options cards for exiting 93/94 archetype decks

In addition to creating brand new decks, this format also introduces many cards that add new functionality or flexibility to existing archetypes.



Top row- new cards that can be considered as an alternative option to the below card

Control decks – With the addition of three very good counterspells (*Force of Will*, *Memory Lapse*, *Arcane Denial*), manipulation of your Library and draw options (*Merchant Scroll*, *Brainstorm*, *Portent*, *Browse*, *Lat-Nam's Legacy* and *Library of Lat-Nam*, *Soldevi Digger*, *Diabolic Vision*), and several new win conditions (*Helm of Obedience*, *Kjeldoran Outpost*), control decks have a lot more to work with more than the traditional counter package and *Jayemdae Tomes* + a few *Serra Angels* or *Su-Chi*.

Combo decks - All the Library manipulation and draw option cards mentioned above also significantly benefit combo decks for finding the right cards needed to combo out a lot faster. For combo decks this make *Howling Mine* and *Sylvan Library* a significantly stronger cards as a lot of Library re-shuffling opportunities allow you to see new cards without spending four life.

Reanimator decks – Reanimation in 1993/94 format is relatively scarce and is primarily strong using the very expensive *Bazaar of Bagdad* card from *Arabian Nights* set. Reanimation themed decks gets much more help to be not just viable, but also very competitive. *Dance of the Dead* is the improved *Animate Dead* five through eight cards. *Krovikan Horror* and *Ashen Ghoul* make for an engine that can overwhelm an opponent turn after turn. If you happen to have the *Bazaar* in play as well - things can get out of hand quickly for your opponent. The *Card Pox* can also support an reanimator strategy by helping a player to put creatures into the graveyard.

White Weenie decks— This well-known aggro deck gets so called “pump knights” from both Fallen Empires and Ice Age. Phyrexian War Beast is a respectable artifact creature that can continue to keep a *Land Tax* active. *Zuran Orb* and *Kjeldoran Outpost* are also good additions. *Zuran Orb* followed by *Armageddon* can be a backbreaking swing in the game. *Inheritance* an enchantment can provide mono white with a much-needed card draw option every time a creature is put into the graveyard and therefore a good alternative compared to using *Jalum Tome*. *Reinforcement* can ensure you still are drawing plenty of creatures in the mid to late game.

Mono Black – *Necropotence* (restricted) adds a card draw option to black decks. Like White Weenie, it also gets pump knights with *Order of the Ebon Hand* and *Knight of Stromgald*. *Lake of the Dead* is another utility land that serves to smooth your heavy black mana costs in the deck and feed *Drain Lifes*. *Abyssal Specter* adds nicely to discard themed decks together with *Hymn to Tourach* (restricted) and *Mind Warp*. *Ihsan's Shade* provides an expensive but very powerful big beater finisher immune to Swords to Plowshares and difficult to get rid of. Inclusion of *Lake of the Dead* for fast play of a *Sengir Vampire*.

Stasis /Turbo Stasis decks— When you don't have an untap step, how do you counter spells? *Force of Will*, of course. Add to that *Arcane Denial* (counterspell AND card draw) and *Brainstorm*, and Stasis gets some powerful cards to work with. Don't have a *Boomerang* to reset Stasis because you have been forced to use it on opponent? *Despotic Scepter* can be added as a second way to get rid of your *Stasis*. With *Storm Cauldron* in play you can return to hand a tapped land you have used to pay for *Stasis* in play in order to keep it going indefinitely. If you play *Kismet* your opponent will never be able to benefit from the effect.

Erhnamgeddon decks – Erhnamgeddon benefits first of all from *Zuran Orb*. But Ice Age brought us an additional mana dork in *Fyndhorn Elves* to get ahead faster. And if you're afraid of *City in a Bottle*, consider the powerful Protector of the Great Woods: *Autumn Willow* as an alternative. “Shroud ability” is rare in Old School and proves to be very powerful. Alliance's *Deadly Insect* is similar and can also be considered, but a 4/4 can be more resilient to sweeping damage than a 6/1. *Lodestone Bauble* combines great with *Armageddon* decks as you can put the lands in the graveyard on top of your library for a fast recovery and as an alternative (or supplement) to *Land tax*. Or you can put the lands top of the opponent's library preventing the player from drawing any answers to your Serra Angel or Erhnam Djinn that will then finish the game

Burn decks – Any deck that revolves around direct damage benefits from the inclusion of the extra sets. *Incinerate* supplants *Chain Lightning* (or even replaces it) for your Bolts five through eight. *Stormbind* provides for repeatable damage. *Balduvian Hordes* is the new red *Juzam Djinn*. *Guerrilla Tactics* is versatile when cast, but even better when Twisted out of your hand. *Pyroclasm* and *Pyrokinesis* clear the board. But the most important addition red receives is possibly *Gorilla Shaman*—also known as “Mox Monkey”. One colorless mana is enough to kill any Mox or Lotus, but as *Zuran Orb* and *Sol Ring* shows up in so many lists, the Mox Monkey's job becomes more important.

RG Aggro/Stompy decks – *Llanowar Elves*' twin *Fyndhorn Elves* aids in mana ramp and going wide. *Spectral Bears* as a sideboard card, can be used to great effect against black. The green pitch card *Bounty of the Hunt* distributes +1/+1 counters for an instant speed multi-pump. *Stunted Growth* and *Thermokarst* provides tempo. Dipping into red gets you the aforementioned *Stormbind*, *Gorilla Shaman*, and *Guerrilla Tactics*. And it also brings in some spicy inclusions such as *Bestial Fury*.

Green aggro decks – *Llanowar Elves*' twin *Fyndhorn Elves* aids in mana ramp and going wide. With *Kaysa* you can boost the power and toughness of your weenie green creatures and the land *Heart of Yavimaya* (which is not a legendary land – so you can play four). *Fyndhorn Druid* fits well into green aggro decks and has an in-built *Stream of Life*, which can be used against burn decks. If splashing white, *Juniper Order Advocate* should be a serious consideration to include

Land Destruction / Ponza decks – *Pillage*, *Thermokarst*, and *Icequake* are the major new land destruction spells added here. Specially *Pillage* also gives some versatility as partly a *Shatter* and a *Stone Rain*. This also provides more options for triggering the *Dingus Egg* as the win-con.

Millstone Decks – Addition of *Jester's Cap* fuels the milling decks strategy beautifully. Also *Lodestone Bauble* combines great with milling decks as you can put the lands in the graveyard on top of the opponents library preventing the player from drawing anything useful.

Mono colored Tribal Decks – Fallen empires especially adds creatures to make tribal decks like Goblin and Merfolk stronger, especially through the cards *Goblin Grenade* and *River Merfolk*. In addition it enables two new tribal decks for Thrulls and Thallids (Fungus). Homelands provide options for new Bird and Faerie tribal decks through *Soraya the Falconer*, *Faerie Noble* and *Serra Aviary*

Black Sacrificing decks – Decks that need to fuel *Fallen Angels* and *Lord of The Pit* or rely on sacrifice synergies gets several options through *Armor Thrull*, *Soul Exchange*, *Breeding Pit*, *Ashen Ghoul* and *Sengir Autocrat*. Combined with the Enchant Creature card *Casting of Bones* – this can also be turned into card draw. New cards like *Hecatomb* and *Kjeldoran Dead* can also be played based on more options for sacrificing.

Recursion decks – Specially the cards *Forgotten Lore* provide new recursion options for existing Fork recursion 1993/94 decks. *Enduring Renewal* provides a new type of recursion deck that focus on creatures.

Enablers and Sideboard Additions

What are some of the most impactful cards added? Several are mentioned above, but additional comments are provided in the following. Below are some of the stable cards that can improve many strategies, divided by main deck and sideboard.



Great enablers

Key cards for Main Deck

New Dual Pain Lands – Ice Age tried to fix dual lands. In a format where the allied colored pain lands are legal with duals, the need for *City of Brass*, which is vulnerable to *City in a Bottle*, is reduced and mana bases get just a little bit better. The allied colored pain lands can also be a better choice than *City in a Bottle* as it only provides the colors you need for your deck and thus limiting the potential colors opponent can get out of your lands when playing *Fellwar Stones*.

Zuran Orb – Trading lands for life is powerful. It being a zero costing artifact means it goes in every deck. It improves Armageddon strategies, Land Tax strategies, and so many others. If you're not brewing with these, you're missing out.

Necropotence – I can't say any more about this that I haven't already said. It wasn't called Black Summer for nothing. Pay life, draw cards. Make this devil's "Faustian bargain" wisely. Correctly restricted similar to the P9 and other 93/94 broken cards.

Stormbind – Repeatable targeted damage is very powerful and *Stormbind* can be included in several decks to enhance a certain strategy.

Force of Will – The blue pitch spell and the most powerful of the five pitch spells. This spell enables the player to counter any card – even without having any mana available – leaving the opponent with a constant paranoia when casting important spells. Normally two open blue mana is a "warnings sign" when playing against a blue control player – this counterspell can come out of no-where. One of the strongest counterspells in the format together with *Mana Drain*

Merchant Scroll – This restricted card from Homelands searches up a blue instant. This can fetch counterspells, Mana drain, Ancestral Recall, Force of Will, Brainstorm etc. A very strong card in control decks.

Portent – Ice Age gives blue a lot of great tools. This sorcery is a cantrip that draws on the next upkeep that either shuffles or reorders the top three of your library.

Brainstorm – This restricted cantrip card has a place in the wider array of blue control decks. But without easy shuffle effects, it isn't going to run away with a game all by itself.

Hymn to Tourach – A nasty card in the opening hand of a player, that together with a fast Hypnotic Specter, can end a game before it started similar to *Mind Twist*.

Demonic Consultation – A second Demonic Tutor. This is the most powerful tutor printed to date. An only *one* mana cost *instant* makes it even better than its predecessor that cost two mana and is a sorcery. It has a potential downside – but if you are going for a life saving card or a win-con, this will almost always be acceptable.

Jokulhaups – the end of everything. An Icelandic word for a glacial outburst flood that wipes everything away. This quite expensive red Sorcery that cost 4RR to cast destroys all Artifacts, creatures *and* lands. A *Shatterstorm*, *Wrath of God* and *Armageddon* in one card.

High Tide – blue instant that can yield double mana from all Islands when tapped in the current turn. Specially in blue decks with creatures like *Air Elemental* and *Mahamoti Djinn* this can fuel a fast turn 3 big beater, an *Amnesia* or a large *Brain Geysir*.

Primal Order – This four-mana green enchantment from Homelands is a great answer to all opponents playing only or lots of non-basic lands as normally seen in Old School 93/94 format.

Serra Aviary – In the Legends expansion set from 1994 all colors except white got a world Enchantment card. Some have indicated that the legends card *Moat* should likely correctly have been a world enchantment card. This flaw was corrected in Homelands set when White was given the *Serra Aviary* world enchantment that quite uniquely grants flying creatures +1/+1. Who said *Serra Angels* can be Flying Juzams? A good option for UW skies decks.

Mana Crypt – Another powerful card (from the promo card list) that is restricted, Mana Crypt is a fast “Sol ring mana artifact” for zero casting cost – but with a potential lethal downside in the long run if not winning those coin flips. In the starting hand together with other mana dorks this card can provide a very fast turn 2 or 3 big beater, The downside can be significantly lessened by use of *Ivory Tower*, other life gaining cards or *Sage of Lat-Nam* to get rid of the card when needed.

Lodestone Bauble – Zero cost artifact that allows you to return lands from your graveyard to the top of your library. Combines great with *Armageddon* as you can put the lands in the graveyard on top of your library or you can put the lands top of the opponent's library preventing the player from drawing any answers next rounds. You can also use it for a fast mana recovery against land destruction in general or as a card drawing engine together with *Soldevi Sage*.

Enduring Renewal – For Weenie creature decks this can maintain the supply of creatures to put into play way into the mid and late game.

Lim-Dul's Vault – Reorder the top five cards of your library at the end of your opponent's turn. Can't find what you're looking for? Pay 1 life and look at the next five. Keep doing it until you find what you need. Not as good as Consultation, but still very powerful.

Balduvian Horde – a 5/5 red creature for the cost of 2RR quickly got the nickname “The Red Juzam”. Compared to Juzam Djinn with an ongoing downside effect of life loss. This can be played with a one-off cost that even can be very low if e.g., only having land in hand or one card which is a worse creature or dead card.

Autumn Willow – a 4/4 legendary creature from Homelands with “shroud” ability that can’t be targeted of spells or abilities – but you can still by paying one green mana be allowed to target it with spells.

Blinking Spirit – a 2/2 white creature you can instantly return back into owner’s hand for zero mana activation

Mystic Remora – a very cheap Enchantment with a cumulative upkeep of 1 that can provide you with 1 card draw every time opponent cast a non-creature spell. Combined with cards like *Time Elemental*, *Boomerang* or *Obelisk of Undoing* – the upkeep effect can be worked around in order to allow multiple extra card draws or slow down your opponent considerably

Glacial Chasm – Cumulative upkeep on a land is new. But Glacial Chasm prevents all damage to you. This is a powerful protection card for some strategies. Combined with the enchantment *Hallowed Grounds* you can work around the accumulated upkeep cost.

Thawing Glaciers – A very reliable and easy shuffle effect as lands cannot be countered. This is the first “fetch land” in the history of MTG. It only grabs basics, but it’s got a spot with control and midrange strategies. In control and Combo decks it can be used together with the deck manipulation cards as *Soldevi digger*, *Diabolic Vision*, *Portent* etc. This card (and the other deck manipulation cards) also makes *Sylvan Library* very strong as you will be able to see new cards every turn. It is also a good alternative or supplement to Land Tax

Lake of the Dead – Very strong mana ramp possibility that cannot be countered. Great fuel for a fast *Sengir Vampire* as well as a large *Drain Life*, *Mind Twist* or *Mind Warp*.

Key cards for Sideboard

Guerrilla Tactics – *Guerrilla Tactics* is a great sideboard card to defend against *Pox* discard and the common *Hymn to Tourach*, *Mind Warp* and *Mind Twist*.

Serrated Arrows – *Serrated Arrows* is one of the most powerful artifacts in the additions. With fast aggro being so prominent, the arrowheads can dodge protection and eliminate that army of weenies across the table.

Energy Storm – This white enchantment hoses flying attackers and prevents damage from spells. It has a cumulative upkeep, but it isn’t as hefty as *Glacial Chasm*’s. If this enchantment hits the table, your *Serendib efreet*s will wind up killing you.

Dystopia – Another cumulative upkeep enchantment, this time for black, that hoses green and white. Eat it, Erhnamgeddon.

An-Zerrin Ruins – a red enchantment that prevents creatures of one type to untap. Great card against decks with multiple Knights, Goblins, Merfolk, Efreet or Constructs (robots)

Hallowed Ground – a white enchantment, where you can instantly return back lands into owner's hand for two white mana. Great protection of your *Library of Alexandria*, *Diamond Valley*, *Maze of Ith* or just sideboarding it in against land destruction decks.

Stromgald Cabal – Two words: black Counterspell against White

Order of the Sacred Torch – Two words: White Counterspell against Black

Sea Sprite – With the addition of so many red cards, Sea Sprite's protection from red could mean the difference in a game. And as a 1/1 flyer for 2 mana, that's nothing to sneeze at.

Pyroblast/Hydroblast – Red and blue get additional Blasts. Split these with Red/Blue Blast as desired to avoid the dreaded *Jester's Cap*.

Wrath of Marit Lage / Curse of Marit Lage – Red / Blue enchantment color hosers that prevents opponent to untap either red creatures or Islands.

Summary

Ice Age, Homelands, and Alliances add a lot of very playable cards that slot right into decks we already have, but Old School is in part an appreciation of an aesthetic. The three sets add so much to the flavor and art of Old School, while not seeming altogether too "modern" (as the addition of Mirage would). In addition to the artistic direction, there are many black border reprints of common playables present. Ice Age adds beautiful artwork for cards such as Counterspell, Disenchant, Swords to Plowshares, Hurricane, Shatter, Dark Ritual, and Icy Manipulator—all rather expensive in Beta, Unlimited or CE/IE. The new black bordered basic lands in Ice Age adds variety to the multicolored mana bases as well as a cheaper alternative to the standard dual lands.

In summary, give Old School Vintage 1993-96 a try. This article is not exhaustive for what this format contain. Appreciate some beautiful art, concoct some tasty brews, step out of the comfortable deck archetypes that seem "solved." And experiment with some of the new arketypes.

If you want to explore these sets further, use this Scryfall search to browse everything contained within the sets:

<https://scryfall.com/search?q=s%3Aice+or+s%3Ahml+or+s%3Aall>