

The Spiciest Standard Decklists from Magic World Championship 31

A Deep Dive into the Most Innovative and Unexpected MTG Standard Builds

Magic World Championship 31 showcased 126 Standard decklists, representing the world's best players and the most refined interpretations of the metagame. Unsurprisingly, the majority of the field gravitated toward well-established archetypes such as **Izzet Lessons**, **Temur Otters**, **Bant Airbending**, and **Izzet Looting**. These strategies capitalize on powerful new cards introduced in *Magic: The Gathering*® | *Avatar: The Last Airbender*™, offering consistency, synergy, and the safety of established performance.

Yet, the true thrill of any World Championship lies not in the expected, but in the **ingenious, experimental, and boundary-pushing lists** that appear despite the competitive pressure. A handful of players refused to follow the crowd, instead choosing innovative card pairings, new synergies, and ambitious archetypes that challenged Standard norms. These are the decks that sparked intrigue, conversation, and admiration from fans and analysts alike.

Below, we explore **seven of the most intriguing and spicy Standard decks** from Magic World Championship 31—each a testament to creative deckbuilding and the unexplored potential of Avatar-era cards.

Golgari Dragons: A Bold and Brilliant Break from the Meta

One of the standout innovators of the tournament was **Hall of Fame player Ben Stark**, known for bringing unexpected yet highly refined brews to high-level events. At Pro Tour Aetherdrift, he piloted an unusual **Orzhov Pixie** deck to an impressive 8-1-1 record—an achievement that later helped push the deck into established competitive territory. So when Stark registers a spicy list at a World Championship, the Magic community pays attention.

This time, he arrived with **Golgari Dragons**—a deck no other competitor dared to submit. Despite being the lone pilot of this archetype, Stark showcased its potential as a uniquely powerful strategy in the post-Avatar Standard environment.

Dragon Payoffs That Hit Hard

Golgari Dragons revolves around two primary payoff cards that scale dramatically with Dragon density:

Caustic Exhale

This removal spell is often mediocre in decks with a low Dragon count, but in a dedicated Dragon shell, it transforms into an efficient **one-mana answer** for opposing threats. That kind of efficiency is rare in Standard, and it allows the deck to stabilize or maintain tempo against faster strategies.

Scavenger Regent

What makes this card especially appealing is its **Adventure mode**, which acts as a near-one-sided board wipe. Because the Adventure leaves Dragons untouched, it provides both stability and inevitability—clearing the board while maintaining your own presence.

To support these payoffs, Stark's list includes **Bloomvine Regent** and **Disruptive Stormbrood**, two Dragons that provide both pressure and synergy. These creatures help fuel the deck's removal, combat tricks, and late-game board dominance.

A Graveyard Engine That Adds Depth and Velocity

What pushes Golgari Dragons from “interesting” to “potentially competitive” is its secondary engine: **self-mill**. This subtheme enhances consistency, fuels recursion, and activates powerful effects tied to card type diversity.

Cards that fuel the graveyard include:

- **Icefill Explorer** – This creature allows repeated replaying of *Fabled Passage*, generating landfall and fixing while loading the graveyard.
- **Esper Origins** – With flashback, this spell becomes the ideal bridge between early-game setup and late-game value.
- **Urgent Necropsy** – A spell that improves dramatically the more card types you accumulate in the graveyard.
- **Overlord of the Balemurk** – A key payoff card that thrives when the graveyard contains multiple creatures to recur.

Together, these pieces create a self-sustaining graveyard engine that smooths the deck's draws, enables recursive loops, and ensures that your Dragons and payoffs perform at their highest potential.

A Mana-Hungry Strategy That Demands Reliable Ramp

One of the biggest challenges—and strengths—of Golgari Dragons is its **demanding mana curve**. Between Dragon-based removal, high-impact threats, recursive spells, and value engines, the deck needs consistent and accelerated access to mana.

That's where **Shared Roots**, a standout card from the Avatar crossover set, becomes an essential piece.

Why Shared Roots Matters

- Provides classic **Rampant Growth-style acceleration**
- Immune to creature removal, unlike mana dorks
- Synergizes with the self-mill plan by thinning the deck and improving draw quality
- Supports splashes, recursion, and multicolor spells

Reliable and resilient ramp effects are rare in modern Standard, and Shared Roots offers exactly the kind of consistency an ambitious, high-curve deck like Golgari Dragons requires.

With this tool, the deck gains the stability needed to deploy Dragons earlier, maintain pressure, and transition smoothly into powerful mid- and late-game turns.

Why Golgari Dragons Stands Out in Standard

While many decks in the tournament relied on predictable synergies and well-tested engines, Golgari Dragons represents something different—a **bold mixture of tribal synergy, graveyard recursion, and efficient removal wrapped in a midrange shell**.

Key reasons this deck deserves attention include:

- **Unique card combinations** rarely seen together in Standard

- The ability to **pivot** between board control, value recursion, and creature pressure
- A playstyle that mixes resilience with explosive power
- High ceiling for mastery and tuning
- Synergistic use of *Avatar: The Last Airbender* cards that few competitors explored fully

Even though it wasn't a widely adopted deck, its design demonstrates that the current Standard format still contains vast unexplored territory—and players willing to experiment can uncover powerful strategies overlooked by the crowd.

Final Thoughts: Innovation Still Matters in Standard

Magic World Championship 31 proved that even in a format dominated by well-established archetypes, there is room for creativity, surprise, and bold deckbuilding vision. Golgari Dragons—and the other spicy lists revealed at the event—remind us that Standard remains a fertile environment for innovation, especially with new mechanics and themes introduced through crossover sets like *Avatar: The Last Airbender*.

As the metagame evolves, these inventive strategies may inspire new builds or become competitive contenders in their own right. For now, they stand as exciting examples of how much unexplored potential still exists within the format.