

Pure Frost 2.0



Introduction

Out of all mono-color decks, pure Frost might be the one that suffers from the most structural weaknesses. Frost is known for its slow playstyle which comes from a shortage of fast units and the fact that many abilities only work next to structures, effectively locking your units “in place”.

Frost is labelled as “defensive” but a better word to describe the faction is “positioning”. The gameplay idea of Frost is to take a position and fortify it. This document serves as an analysis and a direction to go for addressing the many weaknesses of pure Frost decks. In part, this also touches on Frost splashes, but pure Frost is the primary concern.

Archetype:

- Catchphrase: Methodical Destruction
 - Power over finesse
 - Macro over micro
 - Positioning over agility
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Part 1: Analysis

Likely, Frost will never become the color of choice for fast clearing times, but this does not mean that Frost must be embarrassingly slow. Ideally, Frost should become a low-intensity macro faction where you work with position and army synergy. Where Fire is very reactive and micro-intense, Frost should be proactive and macro-oriented.

In general, the units of Frost tend to have lower DPS and speed than average, and freeze spells are considered “anti-meta” due to the 50% damage reduction freeze applies. To some degree, this is the DNA of Frost, and we cannot inherently change that. But it makes sense to continue our design-path where we find ways to circumvent these disadvantages via card synergy.

Tools & Preferences

Preferences:

- **Durable:** This is the primary aspect of Frost. Not only do units have much health, but there are also many ways to lower incoming damage.
- **Group Buffs:** All unit buffs affect multiple units instead of one. This is one of Frost's main advantages and serves as a powerful force multiplier.
- **Fortification:** Many units have abilities that make them stronger but cut down movement. Other abilities only trigger near buildings. This enforces a playstyle focused around certain locations.
- **Less Micro Intense:** Frost is more about group effort. Fire relies on a few key units to do the work, but Frost is more lenient and expects to have multiple units around. This adds a layer of redundancy which makes losing units not as punishing. Similarly, Nature and especially Shadow rely on well-timed spells and abilities. All in all, Frost is the most forgiving faction, but good unit management should always be rewarded.
- **Slow:** While not an advantage, Frost units generally move slower and fights last longer.



Tools:

- **Freeze:** Freeze is one of the few CC spells that neutralizes enemies but leaves them attackable. This gives Frost the time to focus down priority targets and reposition troops.
- **Ice Damage:** Frost can turn frozen enemies into a source for damage via “Shatter Ice”. Additionally, units like Tempest or Core Dredge also deal extra damage to frozen units.
- **Ice Shields:** Even better than replenishing healing is increasing the total health of a unit.
- **Shield Support:** There are several abilities which focus on shields and/or replenishing them.
- **Gravity Surge:** This ability is exclusive to Stormsinger, Stone Launcher, and the Gravity Surge spell. This is a tool that could see more usage in higher tiers.





Throughout the Tiers

T1

Card	Role
	Frost Mages provide perma-CC against common S-size units. They provide burst damage, allowing to instantly kill whole squads in one volley.
	This is one of the few buffs in the game that affects whole groups of units. Along with Ice Barrier, this can be used offensively to capture key points.

With access to Glyph of Frost, Home Soil, and Frost Mage, Frost has a formidable T1. This gives the faction 2 forms of CC as well as strong sustained damage. However, Frost does not scale as well as Nature and due to the lack of healing a Frost player might find that the health of their army slowly deteriorates over time. Frost also has difficulties in killing backline targets such as Healers, Snipers, or spawn buildings.



T2

Card	Role
	Coldsnap might be the most archetypical spell for all of Frost. It provides a long and cheap freeze and scales well into T4.
	War Eagle has good DPS for a Frost T2 card and its ability is Frost's only form of burst damage in T2. However, it struggles to kill key-targets quickly (such as spawners).

T2 can be a major weakness in a pure Frost deck. While there are a few good units such as War Eagle or Stormsinger, they lack the spell support to carry a difficult T2. At this point, the S-knockback of Frost Mage starts to become less effective, leaving Frost with freeze as the only reliable CC available. With freeze alone, Frost cannot sustain CC chains.



In general, there is little support outside of Home Soil and Coldsnap. Gravity Surge and Area Ice Shield just do not scale well enough for PvE use. And the combination of Ice Age and Ice Shields doesn't synergize as well as one is lead to believe due to the low number of Ice Shields available.

T3

Card	Role
	Avatar does not play to a particular strength of Frost, it is simply a good unit that can carry a T3 in many circumstances. However, the bad support for shielded units means that you cannot get extra mileage to deal properly with difficult situations.
	Ward of the North halves incoming damage but there are not many suitable targets in T3. It does not work on Avatar because damage reduction does not work on shields and no other T3 creature can take the role of Avatar at this time.



The situation in T3 is similar to T2. Where other decks gain significant benefits from strong spell or shrine support, Frost T3 still does not have much outside of freezing. And out of all Frost T3 cards, only Core Dredge (blue) actually synergizes with freezes (a card that is effectively sub-average). Changes to Shrine of Martyrs and Frost Shard have added some breadth into T3 but it is not enough yet.

T4

Card	Role
	Ironclad has become a powerful backline unit and a good source of anti-XL damage. Buffing this unit was an important puzzle piece to make Frost T4 viable.
	One of the few freeze-synergizing spells. Low in cost, but causes devastating damage to creatures and structures.

With access to Ice Tornado and Shatter Ice, the damage potential of Frost in tier 4 is much better than in prior tiers. As of now, the shields of Winter Witch provide formidable extra durability, and while this is somewhat micro-intense, this will improve with the introduction of the upcoming spell "Coat of Protection".

Worldbreaker Deck

Card	Role
	Kobold Inc. is one of Frost's only way to get a global effect and it is restricted to this deck archetype. It allows instant construction of Worldbreaker Guns and is therefore mandatory for this deck archetype.
	With high range and a high damage cap, Worldbreaker Gun can nuke whole camps. This card synergizes with Skylef Sage to effectively double the damage. This results in single target damage of +4500 and max damage of +26000.

Structural Weaknesses

- **Slow:** Many Frost units move slowly and fights last longer. In time-critical missions, this is a problem.
- **Army Deterioration:** Frost units generally have good stats, but they have no way of healing between fights. Frost needs a way to maintain its army and keep it strong from fight to fight. You should not be forced to put Viridya into your deck, and slowly healing up your army next to an Ice Barrier is not acceptable.
- **Shield Availability:** Shields are central to the gameplay of Frost, but there are not many ways to get them. This has been improved with Winter Witch and "Coat of Protection" will improve this even further.
- **Damage Reduction on Shields:** A big downside of shields is that they are not affected by damage reductions.
- **Bad Support:** Apart from Shrine of Martyrs and Northern Keep, Frost does not have access to buildings with a useful global effect (outside of fringe-decks). Even worse, Frost has little support outside of several freeze spells. To a large degree, Frost is just a one-trick pony.
- **Freeze Immunity:** For the most part, Freeze is the only crowd control available for Frost. This abundance of a singular CC creates the problem that Frost cannot deal with large groups when they are temporarily immune to freeze. Several other factions can cycle through different types of CC, but Frost cannot.
- **Anti-Meta:** The reliance and abundance of freeze spells can be a liability for allies. Instead of helping you win a fight, you just make clearing a camp last longer due to freeze's built-in damage reduction. Frost should provide capabilities to mitigate this. This is most problematic



in T4 where many other factions can cause massive damage and are only slowed down by freezing whole camps.

Part 2: Envisioned Playstyles

One of the issues with Frost is that some of its common mechanics are mutually exclusive or possess anti-synergy. Damage reduction spells like Ward of the North do not overlap with Ice Shields, while damage spells have their effectiveness reduced by freeze's 50% damage reduction.

Some of these issues can be mitigated by simple changes, such as allowing certain damage spells to deal full damage to frozen units, while others like Ward of the North and Ice Shields cannot be overcome for technical reasons.

For Tier 3 and Tier 4 we envision two distinct playstyles, one resolving primarily around **Ice Shields** while the other utilizes **Freeze** more heavily. This allows different mechanics to find their place in different decks.

We do not expect these to be mutually exclusionary paths. Instead, we expect overlap between the decks but with some cards finding their place more in one style than in the other.

Tier 3

Shield-based Decks

The only two cards with Ice Shields in Tier 3 are **Avatar of Frost** and **Shield Building**, which do not interact. Ward of the North and Armored Tower use absorption-based damage reductions and thus do not work on Ice Shields. We would thus like to add more ways to apply Ice Shields in T3.

Avatar of Frost, along with Northland Drake, is the payoff card for going Pure Frost T3 and must be strong enough to be worth giving up splash cards from other factions. Avatar of Frost will be the cornerstone of shield-based decks in T3 and exclusive to pure Frost.

We will be **adding an active ability to Avatar of Frost** to be able to apply low strength Ice Shields to nearby allies. These Ice Shields will start with low strength but are able to be "healed" or strengthened by Ice Age and other methods of replenishing Ice Shields.

To give Avatar and this playstyle some support we intend to **change Ice Age from T2 to T3**. This will also open up Ice Age's power budget to allow us to buff it to scale better into T4 where more Ice Shields will be present. Avatar's new shield ability should open up combat synergy with units like the (soon to be buffed) Skyelf Sage by helping to cover up their fragility.



Freeze-based Deck

There are a large number of cards which interact with freeze in Frost T3. These are Core Dredge (blue), Frontier Keep, Frost Shard, Northland Drake, Shrine of Martyrs, and Timeless One. Playing with and around freeze is a major part of playing Frost in T3 and T4 and many of the recent changes to Frost have been aimed at creating more freeze interactions.

We envision Core Dredge (blue) and potentially Northland Drake as the main carriers of freeze-based decks. Unlike shield decks, freeze-oriented decks can make use of the damage reduction from Ward of the North. Freeze-based decks will also be able to turn over void power faster through Shrine of the Martyrs.



On the test server, the following cards were buffed to support this archetype:

- Core Dredge
- Frost Shard
- Shrine of Martyrs
- Ward of the North

Finally, we are considering changing Frontier Keep to be a Frost version of Wheel of Gifts and possibly to add effects which interact with freeze or Ice Shields or both. Two examples of possible options are an effect that ignores freeze's damage reduction and an effect that replenishes missing strength from Ice Shields. This change is still under consideration and is not guaranteed to happen.

Tier 4

Shield-based Deck

Before the first balancing changes by the Skylords team, Winter Witch was the only T4 Frost unit to interact with Ice Shields. The recent changes to Winter Witch and Battleship have opened up a new playstyle for Frost decks.

Ice Shields in T4 face similar issues to Ice Shields in T3, in that the only pure Frost T4 unit in the game has anti-synergy with them. Dreadnought's ability does not work with Ice Shields. It is our opinion that Dreadnought, as the ultimate Frost card, should interact positively with Frost's two primary tools: freeze and Ice Shields.

In terms of Ice Shields, we are **adding a new passive to Dreadnought** which will cause any nearby unit to regenerate missing life points while under the effect of an Ice Shield. We also intend to introduce a new T4 pure Frost spell, tentatively named **Coat of Protection**, which will be able to apply Ice Shields to a large number of units. The addition of these two tools should provide pure Frost with the sustain it currently lacks and establish shield-based decks as a fleshed-out archetype.



Freeze-based Deck

Once Frost reaches T4, it has access to several freezing tools which all have their place:

- **Coldsnap**: A cheap and efficient freeze spell that affects large groups.
- **Frost Shard**: An instant freeze effect which also freezes and disables buildings.
- **Maelstrom**: A freeze spell with massive AoE that also deals damage and is not limited by a cap of frozen targets.



Frost Shard in particular has become a unique tool because **Shatter Ice** now also affects buildings. With this, Frost can get rid of important targets like large spawn buildings or Willzappers right at the start of an engagement.

Recent buffs to Ironclad, Shatter Ice, and Tempest are all intended to allow the Frost player to combo with their plentiful sources of freeze. We are **introducing an additional passive ability to Dreadnought** that gives him increased damage to frozen enemies while his active ability remains a good source of potential sustain if the player wants to use 4 Frost orbs. But given that the primary cards in a freeze-based deck require only 3 Frost orbs, players will also be able to opt into a splash orb.

Freeze-based decks in T4 are intended to revolve heavily around spell rotations with Shrine of Martyrs. Overall, they should tend to be faster than their shield-based counterparts. On the other hand, shield-based decks should possess greater staying power and that classic Frost feel of being a steadily advancing wall of ice.



PTS Highlights

The changes below are an excerpt from all the changes which we want to release in order to make pure Frost and Frost heavy decks a more compelling choice. We want to highlight some of these changes and provide some reasoning for these changes.

Card	Suggestion
 <p>Dreadnought (240)</p> <p>1 Giant Crusader</p> <p>Pledge of the Giants</p> <p>Shared Pain</p> <p>XL 4100 XL 6100</p>	<p>Changes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Shattering Blow (passive): This unit deals 50% more damage to frozen targets.• Father of Winter (passive): Nearby units with Ice Shields regain 3% health per second. <p>Dreadnought has become a central card in negating the weaknesses of pure Frost. With extra damage against frozen targets, he negates the low DPS of frost in a thematic way.</p> <p>Because shielded units around will now continuously recover health, pure Frost armies can now replenish their health between fights swiftly.</p>
 <p>Core Dredge (275)</p> <p>1 Ancient Dominator</p> <p>Crushed Ice</p> <p>Earth Dive</p> <p>Shatter Ice</p> <p>2240 XL 2700</p>	<p>Changes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Attack Increase: 2665 to 3250• Increased Freeze Damage: 50% to 75% <p>Core Dredge is predestined as a carrier for a freeze-heavy playstyle. This card can be seen as a Frost alternative to Stone Warrior. It allows using freeze spells not only for CC, but as a direct source of damage.</p> <p>As a ranged unit, it can be buffed via Ice Barrier + Home Soil and since its strength is not derived from shields, it also benefits from Ward of the North.</p>
 <p>Ironclad (280)</p> <p>1 Ancient Dominator</p> <p>Snowy Bomb</p> <p>Infused Winterfall</p> <p>XL 3400 XL 4980</p>	<p>Changes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Attack Increase: 3400 to 4680• Reduced Ability Time: 20s to 10s <p>As a ranged anti-XL unit, Ironclad is an attractive backline damage dealer which was hold back by embarrassingly low attack values. Its active ability locks the unit in place, which is why lowering its duration makes the unit more flexible.</p> <p>With these changes, Ironclad has not only become attractive for pure Frost, but also for potential decks with 3 Frost orbs, along with Shatter Ice.</p>
 <p>Frost Shard (200)</p> <p>4 Spell</p> <p>Freezing Shock</p>	<p>Changes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Increased Damage: 2600 to 3500• Lowered Cost: 150 to 140• Utility: Affects buildings and deals full damage to frozen targets <p>What makes Frost Shard stand out is its ability to freeze buildings. This creates synergy with cards that deal extra damage to frozen targets.</p> <p>On top, we increased its utility by making it affect more targets, lowering its cost and make it deal full damage to frozen units. This card used to be an inferior version of Coldsnap but now it has its own identity.</p>



Changes:

- **Frigid Birth:** When this unit is summoned, it freezes up to 3 enemy units around it. This unit is also summoned undazed.

One of the largest issues of Tempest is that it must transform to attack. Hence, if it is summoned mid-fight, it cannot transform or attack.

This is a simple Quality of Life change to address one of its core weakness. We don't expect Tempest to become a strong card, but at least it won't be embarrassingly weak any longer.



Changes:

- **Piercing:** This spell deals damage directly and ignores damage reductions or shields.

Because freezing increases the armor of enemy targets, such spells are not always welcomed by allied players. Non-Frost players also need some tools to ignore the damage reduction from freeze spells.

In this regard, Noxious Cloud is a low-hanging fruit because many toxin abilities already ignore damage modifiers. In particular, this is a buff to Stonekin decks which have freeze spells to begin with.

Conclusion

We hope this look into Frost has helped you to understand both the faction better and our reasoning behind the upcoming changes. Frost has been our primary focus for the past several months and our team is excited to finally get to share our work with the community. While Frost has been the first faction on our list, in the future other factions will also be receiving major changes. As our focus shifts from one faction to another we will continue to provide insights into our thinking through future documents like this one.

