

Magic Invitational Report: Noah Boeken

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It all started off at Worlds 2000 in Brussels Belgium. Going into the tournament I was the top ranked European in composite rankings, so I knew that a good record would give me an invite to the **Magic** Invitational in Sydney Australia. After eight rounds, my record was 2 wins 6 losses.... no Invitational, no Invitational, no Sydney. But after I won my finals 10 rounds, I felt that I still had a chance. A few weeks later, the invitations were posted on the net and I had made it! The 10 wins gave me just enough points to beat Dominik Hothow, who had 6 rating points less.



I left for Australia on Sunday morning on a 24 hour flight! It's not fun at all to spend a day alone on a plane. After 24 hours of playing Gameboy on the plane, I arrived in sunny Sydney. When I arrived at the hotel, I noticed that it was more like a huge casino that had a hotel then a hotel that had a casino, but that was fine with me; I just wanted some sleep, so I checked in. When I woke up next morning and walked downstairs to the lobby to look for some other **Magic** players. I ran into Kai and Gary who arrived a few days earlier. Before I knew it, I was in a draft with them, Randy Buehler and some other Invitational players. During the day, we did some more drafts in the lobby while more and more **Magic** players arrived. In the evening we had the player meeting. The next day we had the tour which was fun and wet.

Thursday

The first 3 rounds were Duplicate Sealed, constructed a black-red-green deck with a lot of beatdown and some combos around Living Plane. My first round opponent was Yoshikazu Ishii from Japan. The first game he took a mulligan and my quick beatdown creatures killed him, the second was not really fair because Ishii triple mulliganed.

Second round I played against Trevor Blackwell. After I won the first game, I one-way Armageddoned him in the second with Living Plane, Spidersilk Armor and Subterranean Spirit, which was enough for the win.

Third round Ben Rubin totally wrecked me with his Waterfront Bouncer/Winter Orb combo. Yep, that is Masques Block Constructed tech.

The last two rounds of the day were Bring Your Own Block. I played a Sligh deck with *Tempest-Visions-Destiny*. Tempest for the Jackal Pups, Visions for fireblast and Destiny for Reckless Abandons. Goal: turn 4 kill.

Round four I played against Chris Pikula, who was playing Survival with 4 Radiant's Dragons. We split the first two games and he got the third locked up at 23 life, until I tapped 5 mountains, double Fireblasted him and then played Apocalypse! After that, we went into topdeck mode - he only had 1 card in hand when I Apocalysped, and the Pups showed that they were faster than the Dragons.



Last round of the day I play against Kai Budde, who was playing Hermit-Opposition. Kai luckily didn't "click" in that round as I killed him turn five and then turn four with him having bad draws. So I end the day at 4-1 tied for second after Alex Shvartsman.

Friday



The first round of the day is the last round of BYOB, I played against David Price who was playing monored with Balduvian Hordes. After splitting the first 2 games, the better sideboard showed itself when Price played Pyrokinesis to kill three of my creatures on turn 2. Yep that's game. The next 3 rounds were Solomon Draft, the format I enjoyed most, because it is draft! First I played against my

AlphaBetaUnlimited.com teammate and friend Ryan Fuller. When we opened the first pack, we saw that we would become rich with this draft, all cards were gold! We both drafted funky 5 color decks, and split the first two games. I won the third after I thought I lost it... yep I lost but I still won, because when Ryan played Plague Spores in the 3rd game I asked him which creature he wanted to destroy, my 2/2 blue white flyer or my 2/3 blue black flyer. He said the 2/3 flyer so I buried that one (which he couldn't kill because Plague Spores kills nonblack

creatures only, which I forgot). So the turn after that he kills my 2/2 flyer with his Cinder Shade, which he could pump for one and he went on to win the game. So we shook hands and then Jeff Donais who was watching the whole match tells me that I had won. That Ryan had tricked me, he had seen everything but just didn't tell me till the end of the match - those Canadians just work together! But it was fun and I won in the end.

Next round I drafted against Alex Shvartsman, who was 7-0 at that point. The draft didn't go that well for me, I made one bad split, and Alex had the better deck, After losing the first game I made a come back two games in a row with some superb topdecking! That's how you have to take the KGB down (Just kidding, Alex)! The last round of the day was against Darwin Kastle, a draft all about colors. The draft went really well for me and I beat Darwin pretty easy, first game by Grindstone and the second by lots of early beats. So after the second day I was tied for first at 7-2.

Saturday

Saturday was the day at the GP, since the first two days were played at the hotel/casino. Next up was the Auction of Champions, where I got stuck with Finkel's Worlds deck. When I called 6 cards and 17 life, nobody wanted to go any lower. I still thought =I had a good deal until I saw me next matchup: Gerardo "Kavu Chameleon" Godinez, who was playing Tom Chanpheng's deck with 4 Strip Mines, 4 Disenchants and 4 Divine Offerings after board. No fun at all. 0-2. Next round, I played against Jon Finkel - this match was even less fun because Finkel Time Elemental-locked my game two on turn two! Nice deck, Mr. Dolan. In the last round, I beat Mike Long playing Hovi's deck, starting with 5 cards. First game, I won with 4 Tangle Wires and second game he mulliganed and almost pulled the combo off, but starting with 4 cards was just not enough. Last three rounds were Type 1, a format I hadn't played much before. I played a five-color control deck pre-sideboarded against control because I knew what my last three opponents were playing. Round 13 I play against Bob Maher with a similar deck. We split the first two games but it was all over when he Teferi's Responed my Strip Mine in the third game. Round fourteen, Gary Wise beat me down with his Masticore with me having poor draws. During the last round, I managed to beat Zvi's monoblue deck.



So my first Invitational ended with a 9-6 record, enough for 4th place, a result I am happy with. I hope to make this year's Invitational on pro points or on some votes. We'll see how it goes.

Props

To all Invitational competitors for being good sports

Mark Rosewater for creating this great tournament

Ryan Fuller for being a great friend, playtester, **Magic** player and for being Dutch

Chris Benafel, the best teammate in the world

Alpha BetaUnlimited.Com for being a great sponsor.