

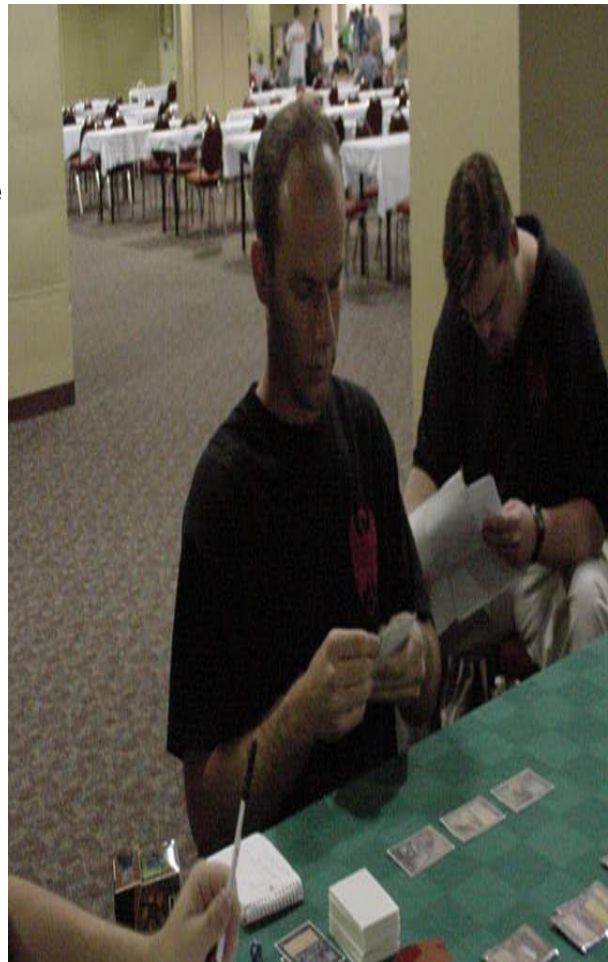
## Week in Review September 28 - October 4

Alex Shvartsman

### Grand Prix-Minneapolis and Farewell to IBC

Approximately 400 players traveled to Minneapolis for the last opportunity to qualify for New Orleans, or simply their last chance to play IBC at a Grand Prix. It is difficult to estimate whether the September 11 tragedy affected the turnout significantly, but tournament organizer Steve Port was satisfied with the numbers he got. Variants of black-white-blue control decks dominated the field, with Domain and red-blue-white strategies approximately tied for second. Craig Wescoe dominated the top of the standings throughout much of the tournament, using some unorthodox cards such as Jilt in his r-w-u deck.

In the end, the deck that hated the metagame the most won - adding Dodecapods to his main deck won more than one game for Dave Humpherys, and eventually helped pave his way to victory. Dodecapod is an extremely potent weapon against discard. So much so, that most b-w-u decks board out their Recoils, Gerrard's Verdict, and Proberegardless of who they are facing in the second game. Humpherys took a chance by playing what could amount to Hill Giants in his deck, and the chance paid off. Of course, he could not have done it without three byes - a card that was excellent against the well-honed decks wielded by pros, Dodecapod could be too much of a liability against weaker players who might have brought red-green or other aggressive decks to the table.



Humpherys is a core member of team Your Move Games. He has a number of impressive tournament finishes such as sharing first prize with teammates Kastle and Dougherty at Pro Tour-Washington, as well as deck design credits, such as an interesting Whale-

Recurring Nightmare variant he navigated to a good finish at PT-Rome. Humpherys defeated Atlanta's Andy Wolf in the finals. Although Wolf does not have the same kind of a resume, he is relatively well known as an "old school" member of pro community, and many of us are quite happy to see him return to the Tour.

Pro players are split in their feelings about the format. Personally, I have volunteered a number of times to dance on IBC's grave, if someone could point me to it. Of course, my opinion of the format is not helped by the fact that it is the only Grand Prix format since my emergence as a Pro player where I failed to earn a money finish. Other pro and PTQ players alike share in my opinion. "The format is extremely luck-intensive," explains Justin Polin, who has won a number of PTQs but failed to qualify for New Orleans. "Pro players have not put in the kind of time many PTQ players did," explains notoriously rogue deck builder Adrian Sullivan. "This format requires much time to understand it. That's why the less-known players are often doing better than the established pros." PTQ player Cole Abernathy agrees. "I have done well throughout the season, playing different decks," he asserts. "I feel better about my game, more confident."

Love IBC or hate it, everyone without exception is looking forward to the season of *Odyssey Limited*, and exploring the new set. Players invested much time on Sunday night practicing, with some very interesting results. What archetypes worked in *Odyssey* draft you ask? Tune in to the coverage of Grand Prix-Vienna and Cape Town to find out.

### **Coming Up: One Busy Weekend**

Folks at the *Sideboard* are going to be very busy this coming weekend. **Magic** Invitational is clearly the premier event of the weekend. Some of the very best players in the world will come together in Cape Town for a three day long exhibition tournament across formats. The rest of us will get a chance to play alongside, competing in Grand Prix-Cape Town that will break in the new format. Few, if any, players from outside of Africa are expected to attend - the trip from East Coast of the United States is over seventeen hours long. This will be the first time a premier event comes to Africa.


In the meantime, European players will be in Vienna, also playing the new format. Although the competition is expected to be tougher than at GP Capetown, it is still a very appealing tournament- with Grand Prix staples such as Kai Budde, Chris Benafel, and the Ruel brothers off in Africa, there is less top-level competition standing between you and the prize.

Zvi Mowshowitz and Ryan Fuller will not be attending the Invitational. Mowshowitz is ill and will be forced to miss several events to stay in bed. His invitation passed down to friend and teammate Scott Johns. Johns has been helping Mowshowitz practice for the event, so he will likely play the decks they worked on together. Thus, Mowshowitz will be present for the tournament in spirit, but will have to wait at least one more year to redeem finishing last at the Invitational in Sydney. Fuller has expressed doubts about going as far back as Grand Prix-Moscow. However, as the Invitational came closer, he was more and more excited about going. Until recently, there was no doubt he would attend. According to the statement posted on The Sideboard earlier this week, Fuller felt uncomfortable with being invited via the Top Pro Point Finisher from Europe slot, since he is now back in Canada (Fuller lived in The Netherlands for nearly a year). As with Mowshowitz, his spot is passed down to a friend and occasional playtest partner Olivier Ruel. Now both Antoine and Olivier Ruel are invited, a first time siblings have ever attended an Invitational.

## Magic Trivia

Last week's question:

*What card did Finkel originally submit at the **Magic** Invitational in Sydney?*

Wrath of Leknif. For , and untapped up to four vetoed the card as far too some more, and eventually prototype of what became For complete story, told by the latest issue of



it destroyed all creatures lands. R&D immediately broken. Finkel thought came up with a Shadowmage Infiltrator. Finkel himself, check out printed *Sideboard*.

New Question

*What two cards were German Revised edition,*

*misprinted in the and in what way?*

Please do not email answer will be posted in the

answers to me. Correct next column.

## Play of the Week

Brian Davis played his way to the Top 4 of GP Minneapolis with a "Sunny-D" version of Domain, designed by Adrian Sullivan. "Sunny-D" refers to the Sunscape Familiars, which are the key part of the deck. Why are they so important? Consider the following play Davis managed to pull off during the tournament and you might agree.

Time was just called, and Davis was facing an almost inevitable draw. He had nine lands in play, nothing much in his hand, and all of his win conditions in the graveyard. It did not look much better for his opponent, who just tapped out to win a counter war over Vindicate that took out a Sabertooth Nishoba. Davis was at about fifteen life with his opponent at eighteen. His only non-land permanents in play - three Sunscape Familiars.

At the first of the extra turns, Davis drew Allied Strategies. He cast it for two mana, and all of a sudden began to count his lands furiously. He played the following cards during the turn:

Allied Strategies

Restock, targeting Spiritmonger and Sabertooth Nishoba

Harrow

Chromatic Sphere

Spiritmonger

Sabertooth Nishoba

Suddenly, he had two powerful creatures in play, and enough to win over the course of his remaining two turns. Davis's opponent had the answer however, he cast Desolation Angel with kicker, destroying all lands and making sure that neither player would have time to cast anything else of relevance before the game would end. The Angel traded in combat with Nishoba, leaving Davis with just the Spiritmonger, and a turn short of victory. Even though Davis did not win the game, the monstrous play his three Familiars helped fuel is impressive enough to make the column.

### **Bad Play of the Week**

Brian Davis was facing Craig Wescoe in the Top 8 of the Grand Prix. Wescoe was the one who supplied Davis with the monoblack Necro deck that earned the younger player a second place finish in Pro Tour-Chicago and ultimately

the 1999-2000 season Rookie of the Year title. The two had somewhat of a falling out when Davis ended up choosing different teammates for the Team Pro Tour that year, but they have patched it up since then. Little did they know, they were about to play one of the least impressive matches in Grand Prix Top 8 history.

Wescoc was at significant disadvantage in the matchup. His u-w-r deck had few ways of dealing with Domain. Even so, he pulled out game 1, and Davis came back to win game 2. In the final game, Wescoc managed to reduce Davis's life total down to two, and destroy some of his lands, leaving Davis with only three land types. Despite that, Davis slowly regained control of the game and was now attacking Wescoc with his large monsters. Down to only a few life points himself, Wescoc had one last draw step remaining to find a burn spell.

Wescoc had six lands in play. His hand consisted of Shivan Reef and Gainsay. He knocked on top of his deck and drew... Fire/Ice! All of a sudden, a lost game turned into a win. All he had to do was play a land and throw two points of damage at Davis. Instead, Wescoc just cast Fire.

Davis, like most Domain players, relied on Evasive Action as the only counterspell in his deck. He cast an Action, to counter Fire. Wescoc used Gainsay to counter the Action. Davis used his last remaining Action to counter Fire again. Had Wescoc played out his land first, he would now have three mana to pay for Evasive Action, have Fire resolve, and advance to the semifinals. Instead, jumping the gun cost him an important match and several hundred dollars in prize money.



To be fair to Wescoc, game 3 should have never happened at all. Davis lost game one to blatantly miscounting the amount of damage his opponent could deal over the next two turns, and casting Sabertooth Nishoba instead of a Rakavolver with kicker. Alas, Davis eventually won the battle of blunders, by not committing a game-breaking mistake in game 2.

Got an interesting news story, comment, play of the week, or **Magic** trivia to report? Please e-mail me at [ashv80@hotmail.com](mailto:ashv80@hotmail.com).