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The "Cheese" Stands Alone

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So here we are, halfway through my journey into each realm of **Magic: The Gathering**. To recap, we've taken a look at the best black sets of all time ([week 3](#)), the races of blue ([week 6](#)), and green fatties ([week 7](#)). Since this column pertains to white, that leaves us with red (next week), and then gold cards, lands, and artifacts. I've been experimenting with different writing styles (as you may have noticed especially last week), so please feel free to drop me a line at uncommonknowledge@wizards.com and let me know what you like or don't like about my column. All emails will be answered, and all comments are always appreciated.

When I discussed alternate win and loss conditions in **Magic**, several sharp-eyed readers asked me why I didn't include **The Cheese Stands Alone** from *Unglued*. The answer, simply enough, is that usually I take looks at cards that were released in "tournament legal" expansions only. While I do realize this is an arbitrary distinction, I find it's a good line to draw. This in no way trivializes *Portal*, *Starter*, *Unglued*, or any other **Magic: The Gathering** expansions that don't fit the regular release schedule. In fact, at some point down the road I'm going to take a look at cards in non-tournament legal editions that are worth taking a glance at (and there are a few), because Wizards has this sneaky habit of slowly introducing cards from *Portal* into the base sets.

Oh, but let's not discuss *Unglued* here, since you may have noticed that at MagicTheGathering.com it's hoser week. So, for those who are sensitive to the color of light, purity, angels, military efficiency, *Wrath-of-Godding/Swords-to-Plowsharing/Armageddoning* goodness, here's a warning:

TURN BACK NOW! GO READ JAY'S OR ANTHONY'S COLUMNS AGAIN!

HOSING THE METAGAME

Way, way, way back in the day, I won the first public Pro Tour qualifier ever. The format was modified Type 2, where your deck and sideboard had to contain a minimum of five cards from each legal expansion (which at the time were *4th Edition*, *Ice Age*, *Fallen Empires*, *Homelands*, and *Chronicles*). The tournament took place a couple of week after Pro Tour – New York (the original one) at Neutral Ground. The big buzz at the time came from decks which abused **Land Tax** and **Sylvan Library** to continually thin your deck of lands, combined with shuffling your deck to take full advantage of seeing new cards each turn with the Library. My attention was drawn elsewhere, to the **Necropotence** decks that the California players had run at the Pro Tour. I didn't have any deck lists, but I gathered enough information to cobble together my own version.

Still, **Land Tax** seemed to be a problem. Although **Necropotence** decks could come out blazing with protection-from-white creatures (such as **Knight of Stromgald** and **Order of the Ebon Hand**) combined with **Hymn to Tourach**, **Hypnotic Specter**, and **Strip Mine**, **Land Tax** allowed the white player to fill his hand to help cushion the blow against discard. To make matters worse, the California players had played **Icequake**, which just allowed the white player to **Land Tax** more freely, since they would have a reduced on-board land count. That's when inspiration (or luck!) hit: I decided that since most New York players were intent on running **Land Tax** based decks, I'd go all out to beat that deck alone. I took out the **Icequakes** from the deck, and started two main deck **Glooms** (with two more in the sideboard).



Land Tax isn't quite so efficient when it costs 4 mana.

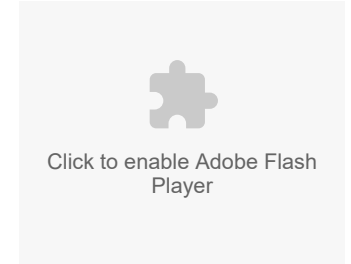
PTQ Los Angeles 1 Winner

Ben Bleiweiss

Main Deck		Sideboard
20 Swamp	3 Necropotence	2 Aeolipile
4 Strip Mine	4 Hymn to Tourach	3 Serrated Arrows
4 Mishra's Factory	4 Dark Ritual	1 Nevinyrral's Disk
	3 Nevinyrral's Disk	1 Feldon's Cane
4 Hypnotic Specter	2 Drain Life	2 Gloom
2 Sengir Vampire	2 Demonic Consultation	2 Apocalypse Chime
2 Order of the Ebon Hand	2 Gloom	2 Jalum Tome
2 Knight of Stromgald		2 Tormod's Crypt



PRO TOUR-VALENCIA



Update on Rain Delay



MESSAGE BOARDS



RULES



- 1 Zuran Orb
- 1 Ivory Tower

Nine rounds and seven Land Tax-based decks later, I was qualified for the first Pro Tour – Los Angeles. First turn **Dark Ritual + Gloom** proved extraordinarily powerful against any white deck, preventing them from casting **Swords to Plowshares**, **Balance**, **Land Tax**, **Wrath of God**, or **Disenchant** before the game was already over.

Magic players tend to be highly passionate about certain cards and colors. Specific strategies and themes mesh or clash with or against people's personalities, which causes emotions to run high at times. The idea of running a color hoser main deck was definitely considered cheese (meaning it was a strategy that tasted like a dairy byproduct), but I guess that by the end of that day, The Cheese Stands Alone.

OTHER MAIN DECK ANTI-WHITE TECH

White has access to what is considered one of the best (if not the best) single-target removal spells ever, **Swords to Plowshares**. Although it has the minor drawback of giving your opponent life, it costs only one mana to cast (so it can be cast early and splashed easily), and can be used on your own creatures to gain life in a pinch. Since **Swords** was such a good foil for creature-based decks, people started main-decking silver bullet creatures (summon spells designed to specifically prevent **Swords to Plowshares**) such as **Knight of Stromgald**, **Ihsan's Shade**, and **Wildfire Emissary**.



Years later, Rebel decks began to dominate both *Masques* block constructed and Type 2. Players once again started main-decking solutions to deal with a white deck, but this time with the goal of not keeping their own creatures around, but stemming the tide of a mounting rebel force. **Rebel Informer** and **Voice of Truth** became popular (although **Voice of Truth** fell out of favor with the advent of **Voice of All in Planeshift**), with the former removing the recruited rebels, and the latter providing an untouchable defense against a white horde. Even more damaging to white deck was **Massacre**, which even without it's "free" aspect (against an opponent playing with Plains) was capable of wiping a board clean.

REAL HATE LIVES IN THE 'BOARD

A match of **Magic** usually consists of best two out of three games, and so while all this main deck white hate definitely helps to win games against white decks, it's the 15-card sideboard that gives anti-white the time to shine. These spells fall into three categories: silver bullets (spells which are designed to specifically take out one specific spell/strategy), board sweepers (spells which hose en-masse), and board lockers (permanents which prevent the opponent from carrying out their strategy in the first place).

Around the time of *Ice Age*, red and black (the primary colors that hose white, due to their enemy nature) could simply not deal with **Circles of Protection** outside of **Nevinyrral's Disk**. R&D came up with not one but two ways for these enchantments to be dealt with. The first, **Anarchy**, fits under the board sweeper category. While it gave red an answer to **Circles**, this monster of a spell basically decimated an opponent's board, killing all **White Knights**, **Serra Angels**, **Land Taxes**, and **Savannah Lions**. On the other end of the table, you had the enchantment **Ghostly Flame**, which also gave red/black a workaround for **Circles**, but with a much narrower focus (it didn't proactively do anything like **Anarchy**, but instead worked in synergy with your other spells), putting it firmly in the board locker position.

Attacking white's non-land permanents has proven a much stronger strategy than attacking their lands through hosers. **Flashfires** and **Stench of Evil** never really had the punch of **Dystopia** or **Dread of Night**, for a few reasons. One of the most popular white deck archetypes is White Weenie, which packs a ton of mana-efficient one- and two-casting-cost creatures (ranging from **Icatian Javelineers** to **Soltari Priest**), which can easily recover from mass-land destruction. On top of this, often they will be running mass-land destruction themselves (such as the ever-popular **Armageddon**), which can be cast just as quickly (if not sooner) than **Flashfires**! On the other hand, **Dread of Night** provides a board-locking non-targeted (important for getting around the pro-black creatures white plays) permanent solution to white creatures, much in the way the now-defunct **Gloom** shut down spells ever leaving the hand.



To expand, this is why non-targeted white hosers have always performed better than targeted ones. **Massacre** will kill a **White Knight**, while **Execute** or **Soul Rend** will not. Red direct damage often proves futile against a **Warrior en-Kor** or a creature enchanted with **Empyrial Armor**, so **Anarchy** provides the punch that **Lightning Dart** or **Shauku's Minion** can't hope to achieve.

Next week: 🌐

Ben's Resource Guide To Annihilating White

Protection from White Creatures and Enchantments			
<i>Alpha</i>	Black Knight White Ward	<i>Visions</i>	Righteous War
<i>Legends</i>	Mountain Yeti Wall of Putrid Flesh	<i>Urza's Legacy</i>	Defender of Chaos Eviscerator
<i>The Dark</i>	Goblin Wizard	<i>Nemesis</i>	Voice of Truth
<i>Fallen Empires</i>	Order of the Ebon Hand	<i>Prophecy</i>	Bog Elemental
<i>Ice Age</i>	Knight of Stromgald	<i>Invasion</i>	Crypt Angel Marauding Knight Shivan Zombie
<i>Homelands</i>	Ihsan's Shade	<i>Torment</i>	Grotesque Hybrid Hell-Bent Raider Strength of Lunacy
<i>Mirage</i>	Wildfire Emissary		
Card That Affect White Spells			
<i>Alpha</i>	Gloom	<i>Tempest</i>	Havoc
<i>Ice Age</i>	Stromgald Cabal	<i>Urza's Saga</i>	Yawgmoth's Edict
<i>Homelands</i>	Irini Sengir	<i>Mercadian Masques</i>	Putrefaction
Cards That Prevent Damage from White Sources			
<i>Alpha</i>	Circle of Protection: White	<i>Odyssey</i>	Sphere of Truth
<i>Urza's Saga</i>	Rune of Protection: White		
Plainswalkers Ahoy!			
<i>Legends</i>	Righteous Avengers	<i>Odyssey</i>	Graceful Antelope
<i>Homelands</i>	Aysen Highway		
Cards That Destroy Plains			
<i>Alpha</i>	Flashfires	<i>Ice Age</i>	Stench of Evil
<i>Legends</i>	Quarum Trench Gnomes	<i>Visions</i>	Desolation
<i>Fallen Empires</i>	Raiding Party		
Cards That Affect White Permanents			
<i>The Dark</i>	Martyr's Cry	<i>Urza's Saga</i>	Disorder
<i>Ice Age</i>	Anarchy	<i>Nemesis</i>	Massacre
<i>Homelands</i>	Evaporate	<i>Invasion</i>	Lightning Dart
<i>Alliances</i>	Dystopia Omen of Fire	<i>Odyssey</i>	Execute
<i>Mirage</i>	Cinder Cloud Reign of Chaos Reign of Terror Soul Rend	<i>Torment</i>	Coral Net
<i>Tempest</i>	Dread of Night		
Creatures That Have Anti-White Abilities			
<i>Legends</i>	Abomination Beasts of Bogardan	<i>Mercadian Masques</i>	Kyren Legate
<i>The Dark</i>	Nameless Race	<i>Prophecy</i>	Rebel Informer
<i>Homelands</i>	Ghost Hounds	<i>Invasion</i>	Phyrexian Slayer
<i>Mirage</i>	Shauku's Minion	<i>Planeshift</i>	Phyrexian Bloodstock
<i>Tempest</i>	Dauthi Horror	<i>Torment</i>	Possessed Nomad Slithery Stalker
<i>Urza's Saga</i>	Western Paladin		
The Last Few Random White Hosers			
<i>Legends</i>	Jovial Evil	<i>Mercadian Masques</i>	Magistrate's Veto
<i>The Dark</i>	Inquisition	<i>Torment</i>	Flash of Defiance
<i>Ice Age</i>	Ghostly Flame		

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Ben Bleiweiss has written about his obsession with **Magic: The Gathering** for over a decade. He's travelled the world because of **Magic**, both as a player and a writer. When not spending time playing **Magic**, writing about **Magic**, or thinking about **Magic**, Ben is employed by StarCityGames.com, where he works with **Magic** cards all day long. He lives with his wife in Virginia, and they sleep comfortably at night under their Orgg down comforter.



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