

## A champion's testimonial

# Magic Online and Regionals

Michael Dove, Midwest Regional champion

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- **Michael Dove, Midwest Regional champion Archive**

What's up? My name is Mike Dove. I've been playing **Magic** since the tail end of Alpha, which is almost the beginning of time. I used to be good: I, along with former Pro Tour champions Matt Place and Mike Long, was one of the original players of the now-infamous Turbo-**Stasis** deck. The three of us all piloted that deck to the Top 8 at US Nationals in 1996, and I followed up that performance with a Top 32 at Worlds. But then I got really involved in my engineering career in Los Angeles, and I started to drop off the **Magic** map; I didn't have time to playtest like I did in college. At my ninth Pro Tour -- LA '97 I think -- I failed to make Day 2 and my rating dropped enough to not qualify me for the next one, and I never made it back.

Fast-forward 4 1/2 years. I had continued to follow **Magic** and played in numerous tournaments, but I just didn't have the edge I did "back in the day." I wanted to attend Regionals this year and put up a respectable record and have lots of fun, but nobody was playing Type 2 around here.

You see, I moved to Chicago from LA to continue my "real" career and I decided to buy a house out in the 'burbs. Little did I know that all of the good players in Chicago live at least 30 minutes from me, and that's without traffic! The new job gave me more freedom to do things in the afternoon but I couldn't find anyone around me to play with.

Bah, I thought, who needs people to playtest against anyway, there's the Internet, right? Just copy a deck and, poof, you win the tournament? I tried to use that theory at the Illinois State Championships and got shot down rather quickly last fall. I piloted a blue/black/white 'Net-deck deck to a whopping 0-2 drop-to-draft record. I certainly played a lot (reference stack of token cards and five foil **Wastelands** in binder) but most of the people I played with wanted to draft, and with my job and the pursuit of an MBA degree it wasn't feasible to drive to downtown Chicago just to playtest.

Hmm, so what to do to prepare for Regionals? I certainly couldn't make up people to play with, you know, since the DCI is cracking down on that sort of thing. For some reason I don't think that would increase my play skills anyway and it certainly wouldn't be all that fun. I went surfing around the Internet and started to see several reviews of the **Magic** Online Beta test, all relatively positive about the game. I had gotten the invite to try it out but thought that it would resemble Apprentice, which I wasn't very fond of. But the reviews made me curious enough to give it a try.

I downloaded the necessary files and jumped right into the online game. It was such a blast. No need to worry about the opponent cheating or getting stressed out about the opponent stalling, all of that is taken care of by the program. I began by drafting *Odyssey* block almost every night between study sessions for my MBA. I built up a reasonable collection in a few weeks of *Odyssey* and *Torment* but I was lacking almost all of the cards for a good Type 2 deck from *Seventh Edition* and *Invasion* block.

That's where one of the best aspects, in my opinion, of **Magic** Online proved so useful: there's always a bunch of people trading, day or night, for all sorts of stuff. Its like being at a big **Magic** event where you can get onto the loudspeaker and ask if anyone has those **Karplusan Forests** you're looking for. And all from the comfort of your favorite chair.

Within an afternoon of trading I had my first Type 2 test deck for Regionals. I built a deck fashioned after the ever-talked-about "**Frog in a Blender**" (fast red/green) since it was easy to trade for. Into the casual play rooms I went to see if this deck was a lump of coal or a jewel to be treasured...

The deck had some rather godly draws but when you lose to "fun" decks then, at least for me, its time to look for alternate answers. I wanted to play some hybrid combination of the red/green decks I saw on the net and mixed with a local guy's deck that used madness burn and **Grafted Skullcap**. When I got the cards together I played some more in the casual game room and this deck played exactly like I wanted it too, making people complain at me for playing too serious a deck in the casual room, even with the silly **Chatter of the Squirrel**. Most of the cards lend themselves to card advantage of some sort and it was definitely a deck that benefited by having good math skills: know when to target "the head" versus killing off an annoying creature.

### *Tournaments happen around the clock in Magic Online.*

So, anyway, the reason I wanted to write an article for this site was to thank **Magic** Online for preparing me for Regionals. The competition I faced was a lot like the people I found in the 8-man Online tournaments, minus all of the control black and **Braids** decks that were popular there... stupid chattering squirrels, you're not very good versus other red/green decks.

Aside on Regionals: It's always quite a menagerie of players that come out of the woodwork to mingle with us regular tournament-goers for Regionals. Around 540 people signed up for this event and I would have had a great time regardless of whether I did well or not. Try to attend the bigger events in your area if you can; they're always a blast!

Casual aside on squirrels: There's this squirrel nesting in the tree behind my back fence on public property. Every time I go out in my backyard this squirrel chatters like a nut for the entire time I'm out there, sometimes for several hours. Can I legally Bolt this pest or will I get into trouble? Just wondering what type of ruling I would get from the local authorities...

If you're interested in how my matches went at Regionals, you can reference [my report on Brainburst.com](#). Lets just say that I metagamed against **Braids** and black control -- some of the stuff in the deck was not the greatest -- and luck was on my side. The long and short of it was that I won. The main part of the deck played just like it did in the 8-person Online tournaments where I went 13-2 with three tournament wins and two other finals appearances, so take that for whatever it's worth.

So, anyway, thanks Wizards. The Online game is awesome and I attribute my success at Regionals to it. I definitely look forward to my vacation in Florida around Nationals time!

Later,

Michael W. Dove

Not "Squirrel Boy," that was my nickname in junior high, please don't take me there...

## 2002 Midwest Regionals 1st Place: R/G Beats



### Main Deck

60 cards

- |       |                  |   |                         |
|-------|------------------|---|-------------------------|
| 2     | Barbarian Ring   | 1 | Beast Attack            |
| 8     | Forest           | 3 | Call of the Herd        |
| 4     | Karplusan Forest | 3 | Chatter of the Squirrel |
| 3     | Mossfire Valley  | 4 | Fiery Temper            |
| 6     | Mountain         | 3 | Firebolt                |
| <hr/> |                  | 2 | Grafted Skullcap        |
| 23    | lands            | 2 | Roar of the Wurm        |
|       |                  | 4 | Violent Eruption        |

- |   |                   |
|---|-------------------|
| 4 | Basking Rootwalla |
| 3 | Flametongue Kavu  |
| 2 | Grim Lavamancer   |
| 1 | Penumbra Bobcat   |
| 1 | Skizzik           |
| 4 | Wild Mongrel      |

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15 creatures

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22 other spells

#### **Sideboard**

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|---|----------------------|
| 2 | Blurred Mongoose     |
| 3 | Compost              |
| 1 | Engulfing Flames     |
| 1 | Flametongue Kavu     |
| 3 | Hull Breach          |
| 1 | Nantuko Blightcutter |
| 1 | Savage Firecat       |
| 1 | Shivan Wurm          |
| 1 | Spellbane Centaur    |
| 1 | Squirrel Nest        |

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15 sideboard cards



*Decks like this one with weird card ratios are products of many hours of testing.*

Download [Magic Online](#) .dec file