

Home > Games > Magic > Magicthegathering.com > Tournaments



Inside Team Your Move Games

Monday, November 25, 2002

Robert Dougherty

Team Your Move Games has been a force on the Pro Tour for a very long time. We've been consistently putting players into Pro Tour Top 8s for years. Several times, through format-breaking decks or sheer play skill, we've put multiple players in the Top 8. Other teams have rivaled or exceeded our strength from time to time, but none have been so successful for so long.



The Your Move Games team has quite a story behind it. There are the secrets to our past successes, our testing methods and what's kept us together as a team. But perhaps the most interesting tale is how an event that threatened to tear the team apart led to two of Magic's biggest names donning the red and black.

My unique role as team sponsor and member has gone a long way to keeping YMG together for so long. In most teams, everyone is looking out for their own best interests. They work with the people who will give them the best shot at a good performance. If that means switching teams, then so be it. There is no one person who is an advocate for the team itself.

In my case, looking out for the well being of the team that represents my stores is very much in my best interests. In the end, I feel it is my responsibility to make sure every one on the team is happy with their role and what the team does for them. That is not to say I'm in charge of the team, or make all the decisions. We make decisions as a group. I've just always "had the team's back". I figure it's the least I can do, considering that they all wear my logo on theirs.

Being sponsored by YMG has never been a big money deal. I give my players some product, more at cost if they needed it, access to cards, and my help with deck design and testing (whether I'm qualified for the event or not).

When I first started sponsoring players, I had a simple rule: you had to be a player at my store to be sponsored. I felt this was the best way to represent my shop. For some store owners, a policy like this would mean they wouldn't have access to much talent, but I was fortunate enough to have a local player base that included Darwin Kastle and David Humpherys, among other talented folks.



A nice side benefit of this "locals only" policy was that the whole team was in the area. We could get together several times a week for face-to-face testing. Many a night, we got together at Your Move Games after closing and played until the wee hours of the morning.

This rule found its exception quickly. Darwin Kastle wanted to work with Justin Gary (who at the time was a student at Dartmouth, 2 hours away). I didn't know Justin, but Darwin assured me that Justin was a great guy and an amazing Magic talent. As I soon learned, both were true.

This completed the core of team YMG: Justin Gary, David Humpherys, Darwin Kastle, and myself. Calling these players the core of the team is not to diminish the role and contributions of the other members (players like Chad Ellis, Chris Senhouse, and Danny Mandel); I'm defining core members as long term members solidly on the gravy train.



This was a wonderful team to be on. Our close proximity and frequent face-to-face testing (with lots of commuting for Justin) made us friends first and teammates second. I think this is how the intense feelings of camaraderie we share came about. It sounds corny, but the Your Move Games team feels like an extended family.

For being masters of Magic tech we were impressively behind the times with real technology. YMG has probably been the least internet-savvy team on the Pro Tour for a long time. While other teams were using Apprentice, we were making proxies with Sharpies. Justin kept trying to get the team on Apprentice so he could join the testing without driving down from New Hampshire, but with the rest of the team able to just

pick up their cards and head to the shop, there was no way.

An integral part of our testing method has always been the mock tournament. A couple weeks into the playtesting, we gather up all the decks we like, or think will be in the environment, and we play them against each other tournament style (best 2 out of 3 with sideboarding).

WHAT IS MAGIC?
CLICK HERE!

PRODUCTS

EYE OF THE BEAST
SHADOWMOOR

MAGIC ONLINE

MAGIC ONLINE
Download MOL III Now!

Top 8 Decklists
Pro Tour - Berlin Qualifier Season

MESSAGE BOARDS

Magic General Forum
magicthegathering.com Forum

RULES

This is an incredible testing tool. It forces people to look at the big picture, not just their "pet" deck. It also gets attention placed on sideboards and sideboarding early in the testing. Too often players will only worry about game one matchups long into the testing. This can lead to the conclusion that a deck that can't sideboard well is stronger than it really is, or vice versa.

The mock tournament results shed light on which decks are not viable, or need major overhauls. This can be a big help in figuring out what the metagame will look like, so the decks that our team will play can develop strategies and sideboarding plans appropriate to beat the field.

Our sheltered little world of primitive testing served us well for years.

Our sheltered little world of primitive testing served us well for years.

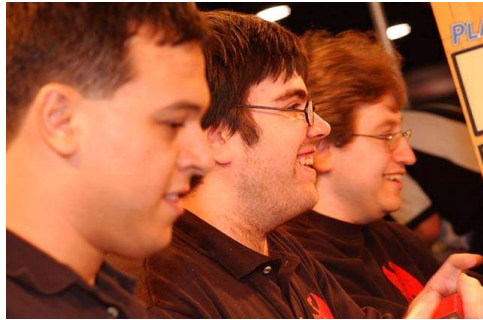
But all good things must come to an end. Recent developments have changed the face of YMG. This change has shaken up our membership and brought our testing into the computer age. The seed of this change was planted years ago, with the Team Pro Tour.

When Wizards of the Coast put together the Team Pro Tour format, they needed the teams to be an odd number, so they would have a clear winner each round. Naturally, they settled on the smallest odd group: three. Three, not four. The formation of the Team Limited team "Your Move Games" (David Humpherys, Darwin Kastle, and Robert Dougherty) left Justin Gary out in the cold.

It was a matter of proximity. Dave, Darwin and I all lived within walking distance of each other, making practice easy to arrange. This paid off in a big way with our win at PT-DC and string of GP Top 4s.

Justin's high profile landed him skilled teammates: Mike Long and Brian Schnieder (though Darwin was none to happy about Justin playing with Long, his arch nemesis). They played under the team name Tongo Nation and finished a respectable ninth place.

The following year, Justin paired up with Magic powerhouses David Williams and Bob Maher to form team "The Fix". They kicked butt in sealed deck, but this group just didn't have the team draft synergy going on. The only match they won on Day 2 came when a member of the opposing team spilled a drink (which was banned in the tournament area) and they got a critical game loss.



Finally, Justin found a little team magic for the third Team PT with Illuminati (Zvi Mowshowitz and Alex Shvartsman). They made the Top 4, and Justin finally had a team he was happy with. These three have been playing together ever since.

The rest of YMG couldn't be happier for Justin. He had a breakthrough performance with a couple of really great guys. Their team-up meant Your Move Games had close relations with Zvi and Alex during the Team PT season, but the rest of the year, they had their own teams.

Then came the event that forced a change. Dave finished his MIT doctoral program (check out the big brain on Humpherys). David Humpherys Ph.D. had finished with school in Boston and was headed home to California. No more Hump swinging by the store for after hours testing. An era had ended.

With Humpherys out west, YMG had to get with the program and do some online testing like the rest of the world. My fear was, with the rest of us still back in Boston (even Justin is living in Boston now), we would slip into our old "face-to-face testing only" ways, leaving the Hump with no one to test with. We'd lose him for sure. Something had to be done. You can't just let one of the greatest minds in Magic walk out the door.

Coincidentally, Zvi's and Alex's own team situations had also fallen apart. Justin, who kept in regular contact with them, informed us his Limited teammates were looking for a new home.

Suddenly, a potential disaster had been replaced with a win/win/win scenario. First of all, Zvi and Alex were familiar with online testing, so bringing them onboard would ensure at least a component of our team tested online. This would make Humpherys happy. Secondly, it was a chance to bring Justin home in the Team Limited sense. His team partners would be able to test with us all year long. No longer would he be the lone YMG shirt on his team. Lastly, it was an opportunity to bring **Zvi Mowshowitz** and **Alex Shvartsman** into the family!

Everyone was very excited about the potential of this new Your Move Games team. Our roster certainly looked impressive with six of our members being in the list of top 25 money winners of all time. We were, however messing with a good thing. What's the expression? "If it ain't broke, don't fix it."

I must admit, I was a bit nervous. As it turns out, I had nothing to worry about.

In our transitional period, we had a strong performance at Worlds (highlighted by Dave's 4th place finish). Then came Pro Tour-Houston...

Houston was our first real opportunity for the new team to test together. It wasn't flawless, but thanks to hard work by the whole team (including, but not limited to, Chris Senhouse, Joel Frank, Tom Guevin, Peter Guevin and Danny Mandel), we had a very good understanding of the metagame. We had versions of and tested all the big decks (with the exception of that secret tech deck Angry Ghoul). Every one of our decks was well-tuned for the environment. Even the last-minute version on Benzo Humpherys and I played benefited immensely from the teams efforts. Without the understanding of the metagame the team's work gave us, there is no way such a successful deck could have been tuned effectively so late in the game. As always, some of us were luckier than others that weekend, but when the dust settled, YMG was holding the first, second and third place trophies!



[About Us](#) | [Jobs](#) | [New to the Game?](#) | [Find a Store](#) | [Press](#) | [Help](#)

© 1995-2008 Wizards of the Coast, Inc., a subsidiary of Hasbro, Inc. All Rights Reserved.

[Terms of Use](#) - [Privacy Statement](#)

