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Timmy Goes to Venice

By [Brian David-Marshall](#)

Learning Curve

Wednesday, March 26, 2003



What happens when you have a format with almost no counterspells and little efficient removal? Timmy runs wild!

This past weekend in Venice, Italy, the competition at the Pro Tour seemed more like it was being played in someone's living room than in a decades-old former casino for a \$250,000 purse. While most of the faces at the top tables were familiar, the decks they were playing were positively unexpected. Every time you turned around someone was telling a tale about attacking with **Akroma**, **Angel of Wrath** on turn five, gaining life with **Starlight Invoker**, or making a **Dragon** with double-digit power and toughness—and those were just the Top 8 decks.



Onslaught Block Constructed seems to be all about bigger being better. Sure, sure... there was an **Astral Slide** deck and three **Goblin** decks in the Top 8 but all of those decks couldn't reach for the fatties in their sideboard fast enough. I heard multiple players comment that if they had it do all over again that they would opt for a mono-red build with **Avarax** and **Rorix Bladewing** maindeck in place of cheap **Goblins**. Let's face it—**Sparksmith** isn't killing any **Dragons** any time soon!

The breakout card for the tournament was **Explosive Vegetation**—it was featured in three different Top 8 decks. In addition to serving as a mana-fixer it teamed up with **Wirewood Elf** to accelerate players into turn four monsters like **Silvos**—with an extra green left over to regenerate—or the much talked about 17/17 **Kilnmouth Dragon**—in a game not won by the **Dragon's** controller no less. That player—**Darwin Kastle**—had even more mana acceleration in the form of **Goblin Clearcutter**.

Exalted Angel seemed positively tiny when her big sister hit the board. **Akroma**, **Angel of Wrath** was a featured player out of the sideboard of the winning deck and there were two—with another in the board—in the fourth-place deck. **Akroma** was such a powerful threat that a number of decks were forced to resort to unusual methods to deal with her when she hit play. The method most players opted for was **Oblation**—I saw more than one Pro Tour veteran turn the card around and read it—certainly not a card anyone predicted would see play at this event.

So will Timmy run roughshod on the Standard (Type 2) environment at you local Friday Night **Magic** tournaments, the Junior Super Series, and upcoming **Regionals** tournaments?

The answer is unlikely.

The reason that players were able to play the cards they did can be attributed to the lack of any good counterspells or hand disruption in the **Onslaught** block. **Complicate** was the closest thing to a real counter available in the format. While Jon Finkel did play with **Complicate** in his deck as a splash of blue in his **Astral Slide** deck there was not much countermagic and—in fact—very few Islands in play the whole weekend. On the other hand, there are more than enough counters running around in Standard including **Counterspell** and **Circular Logic**.

In the Standard format, **Duress** and **Cabal Therapy** will be able to strip **Explosive Vegetation** out of player's hands in the first few turns. **Blackmail** was the only comparable spell but was deemed too inconsistent to disrupt the

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early game. **Chainer's Edict** and **Innocent Blood** also stand in the way of the early monster although **Bird of Paradise** or **Llanowar Elves** can always take one for the team.


There was a major post-*Legions* Standard tournament in Venice that might give you an idea of what to expect in the coming months. It was a Last Chance Qualifier for the Pro Tour the night before the big event. More than 250 players competed through *nine* grueling rounds of Swiss style play to cut to a Top 8 single elimination round. After that round the four remaining players were invited to compete in the Pro Tour only a few hours away! MagicTheGathering.com's own Aaron Forsythe did a breakdown of the decks that saw play and it includes the Top 8 decklists [here](#).

Green-red and blue-green ruled the day but a Beasts deck did make top 8. There was also a Beasts deck in the Top 8 of the Pro Tour. When you add Richard Garfield's undefeated record with a Beasts deck at the [Wizards Invitational](#) to that mix, you have to wonder if that is the deck to beat in the coming months.

If you are one of the many players that complain about counterspells and hand destruction ruining your fun you might want to give *Onslaught* Block Constructed, complete with its Angels, Dragons, Beasts, and Goblins a whirl! Below are the Top 8 lists from the Pro Tour. Extensive coverage of the event can be found on the [Sideboard website](#) featuring familiar writers including Aaron Forsythe, Randy Buehler, Josh Bennett and myself.



Each week I try to cover the basics of this game but next week I will be tackling a topic that is decidedly non-basic (duh... try and guess what that is!) See you around the next Learning Curve!

Osyp Lebedowicz – Winner		
Astral Slide 		
Main Deck 60 cards		Sideboard
4 Forgotten Cave	4 Akroma's Blessing	2 Akroma, Angel of Wrath
9 Mountains	4 Akroma's Vengeance	4 Avarax
10 Plains	4 Astral Slide	3 Demystify
4 Secluded Steppe	4 Lightning Rift	3 Disciple of Grace
27 lands	3 Renewed Faith	2 Gempalm Incinerator
	4 Starstorm	1 Oblation
	23 other spells	15 sideboard cards
2 Daru Sanctifier		
4 Exalted Angel		
2 Gempalm Incinerator		
2 Jareth, Leonine Titan		
10 creatures		
Tomi Walamies – Finalist		
Goblins 		
Main Deck 60 cards		Sideboard
4 Forgotten Cave	4 Shock	1 Menacing Ogre
4 Goblin Burrows	4 other spells	2 Rorix Bladewing
18 Mountain		4 Skirk Fire Marshal
26 lands		4 Starstorm
		4 Thoughtbound Primoc
		15 sideboard cards
4 Clickslither		
4 Gempalm Incinerator		
4 Goblin Goon		
4 Goblin Piledriver		
4 Goblin Sledder		
2 Menacing Ogre		
4 Skirk Prospector		
4 Sparksmith		
30 creatures		
Jordan Berkowitz – Semifinalist		
		

Beasts

Main Deck

60 cards

4 Contested Cliffs
6 Forest
3 Forgotten Cave
5 Mountain
4 Tranquil Thicket
4 Wood Foothills

26 lands

4 Avarax
2 Barkhide Mauler
4 Canopy Crawler
4 Krosan Tusker
4 Ravenous Baloth
4 Tephraerm
4 Thoughtbound Primoc
4 Wirewood Elf

30 creatures

4 Shock
4 other spells

Sideboard

4 Broodhatch Nantuko
4 Gempalm Incinerator
4 Naturalize
3 Wirewood Savage

15 sideboard cards

William Jensen – Semifinalist

Green-White Vegetation



Main Deck

60 cards

7 Forest
7 Plains
4 Secluded Steppe
4 Tranquil thicket
4 Windswept Heath

26 lands

2 Akroma, Angel of Wrath
2 Daru Sanctifier
4 Exalted Angel
4 Ravenous Baloth
3 Silvos, Rogue Elemental
4 Wall of Mulch
3 Windborn Muse
4 Wirewood Elf

26 creatures

4 Akroma's Vengeance
4 Explosive Vegetation
8 other spells

Sideboard

1 Akroma, Angel of Wrath
4 Broodhatch Nantuko
3 Demystify
2 Gigapede
2 Oblation
3 Pacifism

15 sideboard cards

Gabriel Nassif – Top 8

Goblins



Main Deck

60 cards

2 Forest
18 Mountain
4 Wooded Foothills

24 lands

3 Clickslither
3 Gempalm Incinerator
4 Goblin Goon
3 Goblin Grappler
4 Goblin Piledriver
4 Goblin Prospector
4 Goblin Sledder
2 Menacing Ogre
2 Rorix Bladewing
4 Sparksmith

33 creatures

3 Threaten
3 other spells

Sideboard

3 Avarax
1 Blistering Firecat
4 Broodhatch Nantuko
1 Gempalm Incinerator
2 Gratuitous Violence
1 Nantuko Vigilante
3 Shock

15 sideboard cards

Darwin Kastle – Top 8

The Claw



Main Deck

60 cards

2 Contested Cliffs
11 Forest
8 Mountain
4 Wooded Foothills

25 lands

4 Goblin Clearcutter
4 Imperial Hellkite
4 Kilnmouth Dragon
4 Krosan Tusker
4 Ravenous Baloth
3 Rorix Bladewing
4 Wirewood Elf

27 creatures

4 Explosive Vegetation
4 Starstorm

8 other spells

Sideboard

2 Insurrection
4 Naturalize
4 Shock
4 Silkflash Spider
1 Slice and Dice

15 sideboard cards

Akihiro Kashima – Top 8

Three-Color Vegetation



Main Deck

60 cards

2 Barren Moor
4 Forest
4 Grand Coliseum
3 Plains
6 Swamp
3 Tranquil Thicket
4 Windswept Heath

26 lands

2 Akroma, Angel of Wrath
3 Daru Sanctifier
4 Exalted Angel
4 Krosan Tusker
1 Silvos, Rogue Elemental
1 Skintinner
2 Starlight Invoker
3 Undead Gladiator
3 Withered Wretch

23 creatures

4 Akroma's Vengeance
3 Cruel Revival
4 Explosive Vegetation

11 other spells

Sideboard

3 Demystify
2 Infest
3 Ravenous Baloth
1 Skintinner
4 Smother
1 Unholy Grotto
1 Withered Wretch

15 sideboard cards

Mattias Jorstedt – Top 8

Goblins



Main Deck

60 cards

3 Forgotten Cave
4 Goblin Burrows
18 Mountain

25 lands

4 Clickslither
4 Gempalm Incinerator
4 Goblin Goon
4 Goblin Grappler
4 Goblin Piledriver
4 Goblin Sledder
4 Sparksmith
3 Thoughtbound Primoc

31 creatures

4 Shock
4 other spells

Sideboard

3 Avarax
1 Forgotten Cave
2 Rorix Bladewing
4 Skirk Fire Marshall
4 Starstorm
1 Thoughtbound Primoc

15 sideboard cards

Brian David-Marshall has been involved in **Magic** since 1994 when he was violently shaken by someone searching for the game. He has organized tournaments, run a store, and is currently the Pro Tour Historian. His latest venture is Top8Magic.com, the publishing house that is releasing Michael J. Flores: Deckade.



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