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# Core Set at Worlds

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Learning Curve

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Today begins the 2003 **Magic: The Gathering** World Championships. It is the culmination of both the current Pro Tour season and a series of qualifying events that began with Regionals and continued on to the various National Championships around the world.

The eyes of the world will be on Berlin (the host city for the event) for a variety of reasons. In addition to the normal coverage provided on the [Sideboard](#) by myself and fellow [Magicthegathering.com](#) contributors Randy Buehler, Josh Bennett, and Toby Wachter there will be *live* streaming video of the Top 8 matches on Sunday. It is an exciting step forward in online event coverage. In addition to watching the best players in the world duke it out for the title of World Champion, you can listen to Randy's live play by play commentary.

While that is an exciting development, even more exciting to me is the fact that Wizards has made an exception to their tournament policy to allow the use of Core Set (*Eighth Edition*) in the constructed portions of the event. Normally, the floor rules would not allow the inclusion of the cards until September 1st, but to continue the 10th Anniversary celebration that got underway last weekend and to shake up an established environment, they made an exception.

Two constructed formats—Standard and Extended—and the world's best players can only result in one thing—new decks. Actually, not just new decks. A handful of Standard decks are relegated to the scrapheap (*Opposition* anyone?), a few may be dented beyond repair (*Tog*) while others new decks roll off the assembly line with that new deck smell. It is sure to be an exciting weekend.

## Extended and 8E

The outgoing cards in *Eighth Edition* have no effect on the Extended format since that set remains a part of the card pool. There are only a handful of cards that are new to the base set that weren't previously available in the format, including *Underworld Dreams*, *Nekrataal*, and *Blood Moon*. But the two most notable cards are *Merchant Scroll* and *Savannah Lions*.

With deck designers all over the world fiendishly stroking their chin and chortling manically over *Mind's Desire* it is impossible for me to imagine that the Scroll will not see play in any *Mind's Desire* decks that may surface this weekend in Berlin. *Savannah Lions* is more questionable. The White Weenie deck has always had its devout followers and the inclusion of the archetype's original inspiration in the Core Set should drive at least a few players to go to Worlds with it in tow.

## Standard and 8E

In Standard, the rotation of the Core Set will force people to sift through the previous two blocks for interesting cards that will fuel interactions that were not possible prior to the release of *Eighth*. One such card is *Symbiotic Elf*. If there are any black-green *Oversold Cemetery* decks sporting the freshly reprinted *Phyrexian Plaguelord*, the unlikely Elf may find a home in sideboards at the very least. In addition to having synergy with multiple cards in the deck like *Plaguelord*, *Braids*, and *Oversold Cemetery*, it is a reasonable option against horde decks like *Goblins*.

Another card I have been toying with for the new Standard is *Riptide Mangler*. The Mangler is one of very few cards that provides a continual source of targeting for *Cowardice*. *Whipgrass Entangler* also provides continual targeting the white in its activation cost may make it too mana intensive to be effective.

One of the decks that was impacted by the base set rotation is the *Psychatog* deck. Not only did the deck lose *Counterspell* but it lost crucial sideboard cards with no suitable replacements in sight. *Mana Leak* has been an effective piece of countermagic whenever it has been available but how can Tog win without being able to *Cunning Wish* for *Mana Short*? The deck relied on *Mana Short*—or the fight over *Mana Short*—to allow an *Upheaval* to resolve. On top of that it no longer has *Duress* for its post-sideboard games against other control decks.



With key tools missing and its enemies picking up powerful sideboard options such as **Choke** and **Boil** I expect Tog to be a non-factor at Worlds this weekend without some significant changes to the wazy the deck functions. I could see the deck reverting to an older build that relied more on library manipulation cards like **Predict** and **Mental Note** along with bounce spells like **Aether Burst** to clear the way.

The deck I most anxious to see post-*Eighth Edition* is Goblin Bidding. Japanese **Magic** standout Tsuyoshi Fujita built this deck and it took him and two friends into the Top 8 of [GP Bangkok](#). Fujita went on to win the event but claimed the deck would not survive the rotation due to the least likeliest of cards leaving the Standard format—**Goblin Matron**.

The Matron was the backbone of the deck fulfilling multiple jobs in the deck. It could tutor out the powerful **Siege-Gang Commander** or it could search for a chain of copies of itself that culminated in a hasty **Goblin Piledriver** when backed up by the **Goblin Warchief**. More often than not it would search for the **Gempalm Incinerator** and remove obstacles in the way of an attack step while generating devastating card advantage.

There was another Goblin Bidding deck at European Championships prior to GP Bangkok and its pilot, Wolfgang Eder, managed a high finish with it. The deck does nto seem as explosively powerful as Fujita's but it did have some success without the only lately lamented **Goblin Matron**.



Topdeck Goblins		
Wolfgang Eder		
Main Deck		Sideboard
60 cards		
4 Bloodstained Mire	4 Patriarch's Bidding	4 Duress
9 Mountain	4 other spells	2 Engineered Plague
2 Shadowblood Ridge		2 Goblin Sharpshooter
4 Sulfurous Springs		2 Smother
3 Swamp		4 Sulfuric Vortex
22 lands		1 Threaten
		15 sideboard cards
4 Gempalm Incinerator		
2 Goblin Goon		
4 Goblin Grappler		
4 Goblin Piledriver		
3 Goblin Sledder		
4 Goblin Taskmaster		
4 Goblin Warchief		
1 Raging Goblin		
1 Siege-Gang Commander		
3 Skirk Marauder		
4 Sparksmith		
34 creatures		

It will be one of the many stories to follow in the coverage all weekend along with how blue-green Madness and red-green Beatdown adjust to the new card pool. While blue-green loses very little—the occasionally-played **Counterspell** and **Merfolk Looter**—it should be able to compensate for their absence. Red-green—the deck that qualified the US National Champion—on the other hand has to contend with the loss of **Llanowar Elves** and **Karplusan Forest**. I don't think that **Shivan Oasis** is going to cut the mustard here and I am anxious to see how members of the inevitable red-green contingent of the tournament cope with the open spots in the deck.

The coverage is not just about decks either. You can follow your favorite players, root for your home country, follow a Rochester Draft in exacting detail or even get a leg up on the Boston Pro Tour with coverage of the Nationals team event. There will be decklists and feature matches all weekend and don't forget the live coverage on Sunday!

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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](http://Top8Magic.com), the publishing house that is releasing Michael J. Flores: Deckade.



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