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Prepare for Immediate Impact

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Learning Curve
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I just got back in from [Pro Tour New Orleans](#) where I was providing coverage of the event for the Sideboard. The weekend was chock full of surprising twists and turns and I am not just talking about staggering throughout the French Quarter at night. The format for this tournament was Extended and it was the first such tournament to feature *Mirrodin*. It was also the first major tournament since the last round of Extended bannings - [Frantic Search](#), [Entomb](#) and [Goblin Lackey](#).

When the bannings were first announced the **Magic** community raised its collective eyebrows and wondered where **Tinker** was on that list. The **Tinker** deck was clearly one of the best decks prior to the new format changes I previously mentioned. With three of the other top decks at a disadvantage - [Enchantress](#), [Angry Hermit/Reanimator](#) and [Gob-Vantage](#)-what would keep **Tinker** from dominating the format?



The answer is nothing - yet. There were seven decks with absurdly fast mana and **Tinker** in the Top 8 of Pro Tour New Orleans. The lone hold-out was a [Psychatog](#) deck that fell in the first round of elimination. The seven decks came in a variety of flavors. Three of them were dedicated [Mana Severance/Goblin Charbelcher](#) combo decks, two were blue/red-one with four [Goblin Welders](#), which ultimately won the tournament, one owed a large debt to Bob Maher's Yokohama masters build while the third used an array of the new *Mirrodin* cards including [Chalice of the Void](#).

Decklists: [Top 8 Decks from New Orleans](#)

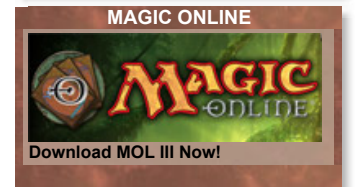
The breakout cards of the tournament were [Mindslaver](#), [Myr Incubator](#) and [Goblin Charbelcher](#). The first two cards are powerful but cumbersome cards that you would not usually expect to see dominate a tournament environment. When I use the term cumbersome I am talking about more than just the casting cost. To discuss [Mindslaver](#) it is not enough to talk about the six mana to cast it. You also have to acknowledge the four mana needed to activate it and the sacrifice of the card itself.

For you to get any use out of your [Mindslaver](#) you need to invest a total of ten mana and sacrifice the [Mindslaver](#). Without ten mana available all at once you would have to make the additional investment of a turn. You had better hope to get some real value for that card - a good return on investment as it were. The later you cast it the less dramatic that advantage is going to be. It was interesting to watch players develop the skill of playing around [Mindslaver](#) as the tournament wore on. The earlier the card was activated the more difficult that skill was to master.

What made the card so powerful this weekend was the dizzying amount of mana that decks were able to generate in the Extended format on the early turns coupled with the ability to put the cards directly into play with **Tinker** as early as turns one or two. This either significantly reduced the investment in the cards or the turns those investments could be made. It is one thing to activate a [Mindslaver](#) on turn seven or eight of a game and another thing entirely to activate it on turn three when your opponent's hand is still full of cards for you to *play* with.

As regular readers of Mark's and Randy's column are undoubtedly aware, R&D associates these steep investments with powerful cards in order to be able to design cards that have new, interesting and powerful functions such as taking your opponent's turn. Interestingly enough, it was common throughout the weekend while a player was under the thrall of a [Mindslaver](#), he would look back at Mark, look despairingly at the [Mindslaver](#) in the graveyard, look back at Mark and ask him if the [Mindslaver](#) was one of his designs. Mark would smile and explain how long it took him to get that card through the approval process.

[Mindslaver](#) was so powerful in the minds of many of the bigger playtesting groups that it completely forced [Phyrexian Processor](#) - long the kill card of choice in **Tinker** decks - either into the sideboard or out of the deck entirely. If you chose to run a Processor in your deck this weekend you ran the risk of being forced to commit suicide while your opponent took your turn for you. You didn't even have to be holding the Processor-a **Tinker** would do just as nicely. Your opponent could force you to **Tinker** away something to find a Processor and when it came into play force you to pay all of your life. Early in the tournament during a **Tinker** mirror match one player was surprised to find his opponent's hand clung to the earlier design that killed its opponents-as opposed to itself-with Processor. The player with the Processors went on to make the Top 8 of the tournament so either he did not play in many mirror matches or the prevailing wisdom was incorrect.



Myr Incubator is even more expensive. It costs you a total of twelve mana and the sacrifice of the card itself to activate it and--unless you have a **Fires of Yavimaya** or similar effect--a turn before your creatures can attack. That does not even account for the high risk investment of removing enough artifacts from your deck to get in a lethal attack in one fell swoop.

Ancient Tomb, **City of Traitors**, **Grim Monolith**, **Voltaic Key**, **Metalworker**, and **Thran Dynamo** were the usual suspects responsible for the blazingly fast mana that fueled these decks. Their kill mechanisms were all over the place. I have already mentioned the **Myr Incubator** which was not pegged by many as a tournament quality card. Another unlikely suspect went on to be the central figure in the winning deck from New Orleans. The deck was called "George W. Bosh" and based on the name I'm sure you can figure out which card I am referring to.



In one game of the semi-finals, Rickard Osterberg led off with an **Ancient Tomb** and a **Lightning Greaves**. On his next turn he played a **Metalworker** which gained haste when it was equipped with the Greaves. He revealed four artifacts to make eight mana and played **Bosh, Iron Golem**. The **Metalworker** passed the Greaves off to Bosh and he attacked for six. His opponent was dead on the next turn with another attack for six and Bosh throwing himself for the final eight points of damage. The same player had emerged from a tenuous position in the previous round with **Lightning Greaves** on a **Platinum Angel**.



I am hard pressed to remember a constructed format where a new set has had such a profound impact on a high level tournament. **Chrome Mox** seemed absurdly powerful in both combo decks and beatdown decks. In addition to some of the cards mentioned above there was a respectable if not dominating performance from **Isochron Scepter** decks. **Chalice of the Void** made its presence known as did **Thirst for Knowledge** and **Pentavus**—the last two in the tournament winning deck.

The most intriguing though was **Goblin Charbelcher**. The Charbelcher was an integral part of two different types of combo decks. The first was a goblin deck that would set the top of its deck up with **Goblin Recruiter** and then kill with the Belcher. To speed up its mana it used **Seething Song**. The other had no goblins in sight and set up its skill with **Mana Severance**. Two mildly different versions of this deck took three of the Top 8 spots of the tournament. These decks accelerated to the combo with the fast mana and **Tinker** that the other decks used and had additional tutoring in the form of **Vampiric Tutor** and/or **Mystical Tutor**.

It will be interesting to see how the DCI responds to the dominating performances of the cards common to seven of the Top 8 decks—**Tinker**, **Grim Monolith**, **Ancient Tomb**, etc. In just a few weeks the next constructed PTQ season will be underway and the format is Extended. How will that tournament environment react to the information that is contained in the results from New Orleans. At least one player suggested that the success of the **Tinker** decks was in some part the result of most of the field not preparing for it sufficiently either in their maindecks or sideboards.



The ninth place deck at Pro Tour New Orleans was extraordinarily different from the rest of the decks near the top and just missed the Top 8 on tiebreakers. Dan Cato played a modern variant of Red Deck Wins with **Sliith Firewalkers** where **Mogg Fanatics** have normally resided. Also in the Top 16 were Goblins, **Isochron Scepter**-Oath and a Reanimator deck among others. There was much more variety and decks armed from their sideboard - all of which should make interesting choices for the PTQs.

Some Interesting Decks From PT New Orleans

Pro Tour New Orleans: Red Deck Wins		
Dan Cato		
Main Deck	Sideboard	
60 cards		
4 Bloodstained Mire	4 Cursed Scroll	3 Ensnaring Bridge
8 Mountain	4 Firebolt	3 Lava Dart
4 Rishadan Port	4 Seal of Fire	4 Pillage

4 Wasteland
4 Wooded Foothills

24 lands

4 Blistering Firecat
4 Grim Lavamancer
4 Jackal Pup
4 Slith Firewalker

16 creatures

4 Tangle Wire
4 Volcanic Hammer

20 other spells

2 Rack and Ruin
3 Stone Rain

15 sideboard cards

Pro Tour New Orleans: Gobvantage

Akira Asahara



Main Deck 60 cards

4 Ancient Tomb
17 Mountain

21 lands

2 Gempalm Incinerator
4 Goblin Matron
4 Goblin Piledriver
4 Goblin Recruiter
3 Goblin Ringleader
1 Goblin Sharpshooter
4 Goblin Warchief
2 Siege-Gang Commander
3 Skirk Prospector

27 creatures

4 Chrome Mox
4 Goblin Charbelcher
4 Seething Song

12 other spells

Sideboard

4 Goblin Goon
1 Goblin Replica
1 Goblin Sharpshooter
3 Oblivion Stone
4 Rack and Ruin
2 Shattering Pulse

15 sideboard cards

Pro Tour New Orleans: Scepter Oath

Gabe Walls



Main Deck 60 cards

1 Flooded Strand
2 Forest
5 Island
1 Mountain
2 Shivan Reef
4 Treetop Village
2 Wooded Foothills
4 Yavimaya Coast

21 lands

2 Cognivore

2 creatures

4 Brainstorm
4 Chrome Mox
4 Counterspell
3 Cunning Wish
2 Fact or Fiction
4 Fire/Ice
1 Forbid
4 Isochron Scepter
2 Krosan Reclamation
2 Mana Leak
3 Moment's Peace
4 Oath of Druids

37 other spells

Sideboard

4 Chill
2 Dust Bowl
1 Fact or Fiction
1 Hunting Pack
1 Illusion/Reality
3 Naturalize
1 Rack and Ruin
1 Shattering Pulse
1 Teferi's Response

15 sideboard cards

Pro Tour New Orleans: Angry Hermit

Tomohiro Kaji



Main Deck 60 cards

2 Ancient Tomb
4 City of Brass
4 City of Traitors
4 Llanowar Wastes
4 Underground River
4 Vault of Whispers
1 Yavimaya Coast

4 Buried Alive
1 Cabal Therapy
4 Corpse Dance
1 Dragon Breath
4 Duress
2 Exhume
1 Krosan Reclamation

Sideboard

1 Arcane Laboratory
1 Cabal Therapy
1 Coffin Purge
1 Crippling Fatigue
3 Defense Grid
1 Krosan Reclamation
1 Naturalize

23 lands	4 Mox Diamond	4 Propaganda
4 Hermit Druid	2 Mystical Tutor	1 Ray of Revelation
3 Krosan Cloudscraper	1 Reanimate	1 Woodripper
2 Sutured Ghoul	4 Vampiric Tutor	15 sideboard cards
9 creatures	28 other spells	

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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, the publishing house that is releasing Michael J. Flores: Deckade.



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