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# Pro Tour Kobe Recap

## Japan's first Pro Tour champion!



Alex Shvartsman · Week In Review  
Thursday, March 4, 2004

It finally happened. We have the first Japanese Pro Tour champion. In those final minutes of [Pro Tour Kobe](#) the Japanese at last got their Champion, and even at a Japanese Pro Tour no less.



Those who have been waiting for such an event have had to wait for years, and through several near misses. First there was Tsuyoshi Fujita – the first Japanese player to make a Pro Tour top 8, he lost to Zvi Mowshowitz in the finals of Pro Tour: Tokyo during the 2000-2001 season. Since then four more Japanese players made Pro Tour top 8's. Two of them – Masashi Oiso in Yokohama and Jin Okamoto at World Championships in Berlin last year – made it to the finals. Enter Masashiro Kuroda.

Although the name may be virtually unknown to **Magic** fans outside of Japan, Kuroda has an impressive list of accomplishments. He has a total of five Grand Prix top 8 finishes, including a Team Grand Prix win in Nagoya as part of team P.S.2 with rookie of the year Katsuhiko Mori and Masahiko Morita. Kuroda is also well-known for his tendency of going undefeated through the first day of competition in a tournament, and then failing to make top 8. True to that statement, Kuroda went undefeated through eight rounds of swiss in Kobe to end the first day of competition at the top of the standings. Day 2 did not go so well for the Japanese Pro as he played it to a 3-4 record. With so many rounds and so few competitors, a win in the last round would still be enough to secure him a top 8 finish. He swept Eugene Sanchez Mata in the last round and earned himself a top 8 finish and eventually a Pro Tour victory.



Like the Japanese players, Gabriel Nassif was in a struggle to overcome the title of Finalist. The French Pro arrived on the scene in 2001, when he made his first Pro Tour finals as part of team Les Plus Class with Amiel Tenenbaum and Nicolas Olivieri. Nassif made another top 8 in Pro Tour: Venice and another second place finish at Pro Tour: New Orleans this year. Nassif also has a pair of Grand Prix top 8 finishes – including a second place in London! Although Nassif did not earn the title, he walked away with \$20,000 for his trouble, becoming the first French player to break the \$100,000 mark on the Lifetime Pro Tour

winnings list. He becomes the 22nd player overall to earn this much prize money.

## Gabriel Nassif

TwelvePost

Main Deck 60 cards		Sideboard	
16 Forest	4 Oblivion Stone	4 Chalice of the Void	
4 Cloudpost	4 Tooth and Nail	4 Pulse of the Tangle	
3 Stalking Stones	2 Talisman of Unity	4 Tel-Jilad Chosen	
1 Blinkmoth Nexus	2 Mindslaver	1 Platinum Angel	
<hr/>		1 Mindslaver	
24 land	4 Reap and Sow	1 Duplicant	
4 Solemn Simulacrum	4 Sylvan Scrying	<hr/>	
4 Viridian Shaman	4 Oxidize	15 sideboard cards	
1 Darksteel Colossus	24 other spells		
1 Platinum Angel			
1 Leonin Abunas			
1 Duplicant			
<hr/>			
12 creatures			

It is rare for more than one rookie to break into a Pro Tour top 8 these days. In Kobe, three players with no previous career finishes managed to do so. France's Alexandre Peset and Italy's Luigi Sbrozzi and Stefano Fiori earned their first chance at a **Magic** spotlight. It was Italy's finest moment in Pro Tour history as a total of three competitors from that country made it into the top 8. The two rookies were joined by Raffaele Lo Moro. Japan has been good to Lo Moro as his only previous Pro Tour top 8 finish was also there – at the World Championship in Yokohama.

Perhaps the best-known player in this top 8 besides Nassif is Jelger Wiegiersma. The Dutch player previously top 8'ed at Pro Tour: New Orleans in 2001 and has enjoyed six Grand Prix top 8 finishes. Finally, the only American to excel at this Pro Tour was Ben Stark. This is the first Pro Tour top 8 for the up and coming American player. He has earned a pair of top 8 Grand Prix finishes over the course of last year.

Going into this Pro Tour, I would have told you that there were three viable decks. First and foremost there is Affinity. Represented in this top 8 by Stark and Wiegiersma, the Affinity deck plays mostly artifact lands and is all about getting those **Frogmites** and **Myr Enforcers** into play quickly. It is capable of generating card economy very quickly with **Skullclamps** – so quickly in fact, that it can easily keep up with the heavy artifact kill of other tier 1 decks. **Arcbound Ravager** is the most likely kill card. There are many ways to build this deck but the general ideas described above apply to all of them. This is the listing that took Jelger Wiegiersma to the semi-finals:

Main Deck 60 cards		Sideboard	
4 Vault of Whispers	4 Thoughtcast	3 Genesis Chamber	
4 Seat of the Synod	4 Aether Vial	4 Electrostatic Bolt	
4 Darksteel Citadel	4 Skullclamp	3 Terror	
4 Blinkmoth Nexus	2 Chroatic Sphere	1 Furnace Dragon	
2 Great Furnace	1 Talisman of Dominance	2 Glimmervoid	
1 Glimmervoid	<hr/>		
15 other spells		1 Myr Retriever	
<hr/>		1 Great Furnace	
19 land		<hr/>	
4 Disciple of the Vault		15 sideboard cards	
4 Arcbound Ravager			
4 Arcbound Worker			
4 Frogmite			

4 Myr Enforcer  
 3 Ornithopter  
 3 Myr Retriever

26 creatures

The archetype that proved strongest based on this top 8 is mono-red control. Played by 5 of the top 8 players (including the winner), this archetype's staple cards include **Arc Slogger**, **Solemn Simulacrum**, **Fireball** and **Detonate**. The idea here is to sweep every non-land permanent from the board long enough to finish an opponent off with an **Arc Slogger** or a large **Fireball**. An important weapon in this deck's arsenal is **Furnace Dragon** – if that creature enters play it becomes almost impossible for an Affinity player to win.

## Kuroda Masashiro

Anan Go Deck

### Main Deck 60 cards

16 Mountain  
 4 Darksteel Citadel  
 4 Blinkmoth Nexus  
 24 land  
 4 Solemn Simulacrum  
 4 Arc Slogger

8 creatures

4 Electrostatic Bolt  
 4 Shrapnel Blast  
 4 Barbed Lightning  
 4 Damping Matrix  
 4 Pulse of the Forge  
 4 Fireball  
 4 Detonate

28 other spells

### Sideboard

4 Molten Rain  
 4 Echoing Ruin  
 2 Talisman of Indulgence  
 2 Talisman of Impulse  
 3 Furnace Dragon

15 sideboard cards

Then there is one that "got away" – mono-green control has been a major force at Pro Tour: Kobe even if no copies of the deck made top 8. Kuroda faced such a deck in Round 16, playing for a shot at the Top 8 against Spain's E.S. Mata. This archetype combines green's best creatures (such as **Troll Ascetic** or **Pulse of the Tangle**) with what green does best in this set – artifact removal. **Viridian Zealot**, **Oxidize**, **Glissa**, **Molder Slug** – there are plenty of options available.

## Eugene Sanchez Mata

Pro Tour Kobe

### Main Deck 60 cards

21 Forest  
 4 Blinkmoth Nexus

25 land

4 Viridian Shaman  
 4 Viridian Zealot  
 4 Tel-Jilad Chosen  
 4 Molder Slug  
 4 Fangren Firstborn  
 4 Troll Ascetic  
 3 Glissa Sunseeker

27 creatures

4 Oxidize  
 4 Pulse of the Tangle

8 other spells

### Sideboard

0 sideboard cards

As I wrote above, going into the Pro Tour I would have told you there were *three* major archetypes. It turns out that there are in fact four. As usual, French players went after the deck that can put the largest creatures into play, and fast. Nassif's deck (nicknamed "TwelvePost")

relies on [Sylvan Scrying](#) and [Reap and Sow](#) for [Cloudposts](#) to generate mana quickly, then uses [Tooth and Nail](#) to drop giant monsters such as [Darksteel Colossus](#) or a trump like [Platinum Angel](#) into play. Having not playtested the deck I cannot say whether it is better than the abovementioned archetype, but this tournament's results certainly suggest that it can stand on equal footing with them, and the French players certainly deserve credit for coming up with something everyone else seems to have missed.

In next week's column I will talk more about the PT Kobe results and their implications for the Player of the Year race.

## Magic Trivia

Last week's question:

*Who was the first pro player to be hired by Wizards of the Coast?*

If you read most articles on this site, this should have been an easy one. The answer is Matt Hyra, best known for coming up with and pushing through the idea of the Paris Mulligan. For more details on this, please read [Mark Rosewater's article](#) from last week.

New question:

*Who is the only Wizards of the Coast employee to qualify for and play on the Pro Tour after leaving the company?*

(Please do not e-mail me the answers. The correct answer will be posted in next week's column.)

## Bad Play of the Week

Courtesy of Scott Harris

"I was recently playing in a tournament where [Darksteel](#) had just become legal and I was trying out a G/W lifegain deck I threw together. My opponent was playing [Astral Slide](#). The game had been going on for quite some time; he couldn't finish me off due to all my lifegain but I had basically no way of killing him. Thanks to my [Well of Lost Dreams](#) I had drawn through my entire deck and was down to just five cards in my library. My opponent had out 2 [Astral Slides](#) and [Exalted Angel](#) and an [Eternal Dragon](#). In addition he had 2 Dragons in his hand that I knew of, so he could slide out anything he wanted at any time, and was at 20 life. I had a ton of lands in play, one [Sunbeam Spellbomb](#), 2 [Ravenous Baloths](#) and 2 [Ageless Entities](#). Knowing the slide would remove all my tokens I didn't bother doing anything and ended my turn.

At this point my opponent, for no reason I can fathom, cycled a [Decree of Justice](#) and tapped all his mana to create 5 soldier tokens. He also targeted both of my Baloths with the slide. In response I saced both Baloths, activated the Spellbomb and cast [Nourish](#). With both Entities now at 23/23 I cast [Grab the Reins](#) and flung one into my opponent for lethal damage.

In addition, due to the extreme length of the game we were called for time before completing the second game and I won the match by the score of 1-0.

Needless to say my opponent and everyone watching was very confused as to why he decided to make this play."

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Please e-mail me any **Magic** news, stories, tournament results, or anything else you think should appear in this column. You can contact me by sending an e-mail to [ashv@kingsgames.com](mailto:ashv@kingsgames.com).

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