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Hong Kong Regionals and Results

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Swimming With Sharks
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Regionals action is just starting to percolate.

While I was providing coverage of Grand Prix Hong Kong I managed to sneak off with all the deck lists from a 30+ person Regionals Qualifier. The format was Standard—one week after the results from the Last Chance Qualifier in Kobe were posted in my column. I had to have a number of the decks translated by the judging staff so I am only able to bring you the decklists from the Top 8 players who all qualified for their Nationals.

I do have the breakdowns of what each player was running and where they finished. In the Top 8 there were six different players running four copies each of **Skullclamp**. That comes out to a whopping twenty-four of a possible thirty-two. Three of those decks were Goblin Bidding or Clamp Bidding. The conventional thinking has been that Goblin Bidding can't go toe to toe with Ravager Affinity but that was not shown in the results from this tournament.



There were only five Ravager Affinity decks in the field. The highest place by anyone with the deck was tenth by Wong Hiu Ping. The most popular archetype was Clamp Bidding with six different players at the helm of the black-red monstrosity including the first place finisher Ka Ho Lo. **Sparksmith** is key to this deck's success against Affinity. Between them, **Goblin Sharpshooter**, and the Incinerators the Affinity deck can barely keep a Disciple on the table long enough to matter. They also have enough instant speed removal—albeit creature based—to keep the Ravager at bay. They can respond to the counters going on a creature any number of ways. They also have between six and eight cards in the sideboard while the Affinity decks don't have much—yet.



Ka Ho Lo

Clamp Bidding - 1st place Hong Kong Regionals

Main Deck 60 cards	Sideboard
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 4 Bloodstained Mire 3 City of Brass 12 Mountain 3 Swamp <hr/> <p>22 lands</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 4 Gempalm Incinerator 4 Goblin Piledriver 4 Goblin Sharpshooter 4 Goblin Sledder 4 Goblin Warchief 4 Siege-Gang Commander 4 Skirk Prospector 3 Sparksmith <hr/> <p>31 creatures</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3 Patriarch's Bidding 4 Skullclamp <hr/> <p>7 other spells</p> <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3 Electrostatic Bolt 3 Goblin Charbelcher 3 Oblivion Stone 3 Shatter 3 Sulfuric Vortex <hr/> <p>15 sideboard cards</p>

There were three mono-red decks in the field. (Four if you count the third place deck but I have put that under a separate heading.) Two were less than focused—one had sixty-six cards—but Lan Wai Ting took third place with his cocktail of haste creatures and burn. There are a few variations on this deck floating out there including some builds that sport eight land destruction spells. If Lan's deck could get in some early damage—a turn one **Slith Firewalker** attacking alongside **Viashino Sandstalker** on turn two for example—**Shrapnel Blast**, **Blistering Firecat**, and **Pulse of the Forge** could finish the game quickly.

One of the scary things about the mono-red decks is that they will always have consistent mana. Nothing in the deck requires more than three mana to cast and there are no issues of color screw. The same can not be said for

most of the rest of the field. If your mana should not arrive in the correct order—let's not even worry about having enough of it—you will quickly find yourself one burn spell away from dead. Adding four **Stone Rain** and four **Molten Rain** only make matters worse although Lan seemed to do fine without them.

Ka Ho Lo		
Clamp Bidding - 1st place Hong Kong Regionals		
Main Deck		Sideboard
60 cards		
4 Great Furnace	4 Chrome Mox	4 Echoing Ruin
15 Mountain	3 Flamebreak	2 Goblin Charbelcher
19 lands	2 Pulse of the Forge	4 Shatter
4 Blistering Firecat	4 Pyrite Spellbomb	3 Sulfuric Vortex
4 Raging Goblin	4 Shock	1 Threaten
4 Sliith Firewalker	4 Shrapnel Blast	1 Trinisphere
3 Viashino Sandstalker	1 Threaten	15 sideboard cards
15 creatures	4 Volcanic Hammer	
	26 other spells	

I know that I said there were no Affinity decks in the Top 8 but that was not precisely true. When I think of Affinity decks I see 16 artifact lands, **Disciple of the Vault**, **Ornithopter**, etc. Christopher Tong chose to play a deck in Hong Kong that straddled the world between Ravager Affinity and mono-red. He was only running eight artifact lands and twelve Mountains. He also had nineteen artifact creatures out of his twenty-four. His other five were an **Atog**—most likely filling in for the fourth hard-to-get Ravager—and four **Furnace Dragons**.

Christopher was well prepared for Affinity and Clamp Bidding with four copies of **Shatter** main deck. He also had four copies of **Skullclamp** to tear through his deck. It is a very interesting—if somewhat non-intuitive—build and it will be exciting to watch and see if this deck has some potential outside of the boundaries of Hong Kong. Like the **Genesis Chamber** deck from two weeks ago it is definitely getting proxied up and tested.

Christopher Tong		
Anti-Affinity Affinity - 3rd Place Hong Kong Regionals		
Main Deck		Sideboard
60 cards		
4 Darksteel Citadel	4 Pyrite Spellbomb	4 Flamebreak
4 Great Furnace	4 Shatter	1 Gempalm Incinerator
12 Mountain	4 Shrapnel Blast	4 Sliith Firewalker
20 lands	4 Skullclamp	3 Sulfuric Vortex
	16 other spells	3 Threaten
3 Arcbound Ravager		15 sideboard cards
4 Arcbound Stinger		
4 Arcbound Worker		
1 Atog		
4 Frogmite		
4 Furnace Dragon		
4 Myr Enforcer		
24 creatures		

Fourth place featured a deck close to my heart—or a deck close to a deck that is close to my heart. I wrote about **Moldy Hermit** in preparation for last year's State Championships. The deck has caught on in a number of different builds. Recently it has been dismissed by many pundits in the post **Darksteel** metagame because of **Skullclamp** and the blazing speed of the top decks.

Andrew Heung's version held the ground with **Troll Ascetic** and **Vine Trellis** until the big guns could arrive. **Molder Slug**, **Arc-Slogger** and **Ravenous Baloth** all work in beastly concert with **Contested Cliffs** to keep the board clear of creatures. He also kept the twelve land destruction spells while adding three **Oxidize**. He tried to squeeze it all in but his deck came in at a zipper popping sixty one cards.

I recommend sixty and at least a little playtesting to see if this truck has any gas left in its tank for your local regionals. I'll confess that I have kept this deck built in some form or another and have been pleasantly surprised with my results.

Andrew Heung	
Moldy Hermit - 4th Place Hong Regionals	
Main Deck	Sideboard
61 cards	

4 City of Brass	4 Creeping Mold	4 Detonate
3 Contested Cliffs	3 Oxidize	1 Oxidize
8 Forest	4 Plow Under	2 Stabilizer
5 Mountain	4 Stone Rain	3 Starstorm
4 Wooded Foothills		3 Two-Headed Dragon
	15 other spells	2 Wing Snare
24 lands		15 sideboard cards
3 Arc-Slogger		
4 Birds of Paradise		
4 Molder Slug		
4 Ravenous Baloth		
3 Troll Ascetic		
4 Vine Trellis		
22 creatures		

Kim Wai Au placed second highest in the tournament among players choosing to use **Skullclamps** and **Patriarch's Biddings**. His version included **Goblin Goon** and **Dark Banishings**. Although the Banishings are a little more expensive than **Terror** they do take out **Myr Enforcers** along with **Arc-Sloggers** and the like.

Main Deck 60 cards		Sideboard
4 Bloodstained Mire	2 Dark Banishing	2 Dark Banishing
4 City of Brass	3 Patriarch's Bidding	4 Echoing Ruin
1 Grand Coliseum	4 Skullclamp	4 Flashfires
11 Mountain	9 other spells	1 Gempalm Incinerator
3 Swamp		1 Goblin Goon
23 lands		1 Goblin Sharpshooter
		1 Patriarch's Bidding
		1 Sparksmith
3 Gempalm Incinerator		15 sideboard cards
1 Goblin Goon		
4 Goblin Piledriver		
3 Goblin Sharpshooter		
3 Goblin Sledder		
4 Goblin Warchief		
4 Siege-Gang Commander		
4 Skirk Prospector		
2 Sparksmith		
28 creatures		

Huen Long Kwan definitely had the most original deck in the Top 8. When *Darksteel* was first released who among you didn't imagine a deck that used **Soul Foundry** and **Chittering Rats**? Well, Huen decided to run with his imagination and was rewarded with a sixth place finish and a spot at Nationals. Huen's deck was the only one of its kind in the tournament.

He had only sixteen creatures to support his **Skullclamps**—if you don't count Foundry. Death Cloud showed up in a handful of the decks but this was the only one that was not mono-black. **Cabal Archon** seems a little odd in this build and it is possible that it was a translation error. The other card that is almost certainly an error in translation is the **Krark's Thumb** in the board. The only two scenarios I can imagine is that it was just tossed in as a fifteenth card. As for the final possibility, I remember my friend Eric Arezzo playing with a single **Sword of the Chosen** in his sideboard of an Academy Deck at some high level tournament. The sole purpose was to confound readers if his deck was posted among the Top 8 finishers. If it is the third reason then I say, "Bravo Huen!"

Main Deck 60 cards		Sideboard
4 Bloodstained Mire	3 Death Cloud	2 Bottle Gnomes
4 Mountain	3 Echoing Decay	1 Echoing Decay
16 Swamp	2 Oblivion Stone	4 Echoing Ruin
24 lands	4 Shatter	4 Infest
	4 Skullclamp	1 Krark's Thumb
	4 Soul Foundry	3 Terror
4 Cabal Archon	20 other spells	15 sideboard cards
4 Chittering Rats		

4 Ravenous Rats
4 Solemn Simulacrum

16 creatures

One of the decks that has been bandied about quite a bit is a black-green Oversold Cemetery deck with **Skullclamp**. The powerful equipment allows you to stock your graveyard to fuel the titular enchantment and the card drawing allows you find an array of utility critters. One of the staple cards of those decklists is the **Wirewood Herald** which provides a tutor effect for **Viridian Shaman**, **Zealot**, or **Caller of the Claw**. Vicky Fu forwent that route and managed a seventh place finish.

Headhunter is somewhat surprising. The card was coming into its own prior to the *Darksteel* release. Against slower control decks the **Headhunter** was a serious threat. Post-*Darksteel* the plethora of goblins, **Arcbound Workers**, **Ornithopters**, and **Frogmites** would seem to form an impenetrable wedge for the cleric to hunt heads through. It is hard to argue with success but I think I would have probably reversed the positions in maindeck and sideboard between the **Headhunter** and the **Viridian Shamans**.

Main Deck 60 cards		Sideboard
3 City of Brass	3 Death Cloud	4 Infest
12 Forest	4 Oversold Cemetery	4 Oxidize
8 Swamp	4 Skullclamp	3 Viridian Shaman
23 lands	11 other spells	4 Withered Wretch
4 Birds of Paradise		15 sideboard cards
4 Headhunter		
3 Nekrataal		
4 Ravenous Baloth		
4 Ravenous Rats		
4 Twisted Abomination		
3 Viridian Zealot		
26 creatures		

The final Top 8 competitor was Chun-Hang Lam with the third Clamp Bidding deck. The distinguishing characteristic of his build is the inclusion of maindeck **Detonates**.

Main Deck 60 cards		Sideboard
4 Bloodstained Mire	2 Detonate	2 Detonate
3 City of Brass	3 Patriarch's Bidding	4 Echoing Ruin
12 Mountain	4 Skullclamp	2 Electrostatic Bolt
4 Swamp	9 other spells	1 Gempalm Incinerator
23 lands		1 Patriarch's Bidding
2 Gempalm Incinerator		1 Sparksmith
4 Goblin Piledriver		4 Terror
4 Goblin Sharpshooter		15 sideboard cards
4 Goblin Sledder		
4 Goblin Warchief		
4 Siege-Gang Commander		
4 Skirk Prospector		
2 Sparksmith		
28 creatures		

Here is the complete breakdown of the deck archetypes that were played in the tournament.

Clamp Bidding - Six players

With three decks making the Top 8 it was also the most successful archetype in the tournament. There was some minor variation from deck to deck—**Detonates**, **Terrors**, **Electrostatic Bolts**, even **Scrabbling Claws**—but one thing

was constant. Each of the decks had four copies of **Skullclamp** and three or more copies of **Patriarch's Bidding** along with the four-of goblins.

This is definitely one of the top decks and should be something you are either prepared to play with or against. Build a fairly standard copy and add it to your playtest gauntlet. If you don't have experience with or against this deck you could be in for a short Saturday at your local regionals.

Ravager Affinity - Five players

I am making a distinction between this archetype and the deck that made Top 8. For the most part I am referring to decks that run twelve to sixteen artifact lands and also feature **Disciple of the Vault**. The highest place any of these decks posted was tenth.

It could be just an aberration that kept these decks from floating to the top or it could be that **Sparks** gives the Goblin decks the edge they needed in game one. The fact that just about every deck seems to have eight anti-artifact spells doesn't help either.

With Ravagers going for astronomical prices I wouldn't expect to see this deck not get played. Nobody pays that much for their rares and leaves them on the bench. The deck may need some tweaking but it is still a powerhouse that you should expect to face at Regionals.



Mono-black Control - five players

This was a pretty broad category that encompassed everything from the Soul Foundry deck in the Top 8 to a deck that touched blue for **March of the Machines** out of its sideboard. The one thing they all had in common was **Death Cloud**. (Yes, I realize that the Soul Foundry deck was touching red for artifact removal. Let's call them NMBC for Nearly Mono Black Control.)



Red Deck Wins or Mono-Red - three players

Lau Wai Ting led this pack with his Top 8 finish. If you are considering playtesting with this deck look into the possibility of adding the four **Stone Rains** and **Molten Rains**. Versions sporting the eight land destruction spells have done fairly well on the JSS circuit and it would probably be worth your time to be at least prepared to face it.

Green-Red Land Destruction - three players

Andrew Heung put up the best numbers out of the three players but his version was a swollen sixty-one card list. **Creeping Mold** and **Plow Under** have proven to be too slow in my recent testing. There is no shortage of cards that fill that breach by Regionals. Even if the deck is not the best choice for Regionals—and that is not clear yet—it is a very popular deck and should make up a reasonable chunk of the field.

Astral Slide - two players

Both decks looked pretty much like textbook Slide decks although one of them had main deck **Damping Matrix**. That deck was piloted to a Top 16 finish by Yu Chi Chong. His record was only 3-3 which is not terribly encouraging for this once dominating deck archetype.

Equip-White Weenie - two players

The highest place finish for this deck was eighteenth by Hok Pun Yu. Both versions sported slightly different builds with **Leonin Shikari** and **Skullclamp** square in the middle. Another card they both had in common was **Razor Golem**--almost always a three drop in this deck. Shockingly the deck is just too slow to run with Goblins and Affinity. That won't stop people from playing it though.

Anti-Affinity - one player

Christopher Tong's deck managed to qualify him for Nationals. The idea of playing with artifacts and **Furnace Dragon** should not seem too odd since many of the Big Red decks from Kobe employed that strategy to combat Affinity.

Clamp Cemetery - one player

Vicky Fu's deck (above) also sported **Death Cloud** but with twelve Forests there was no way it was getting tossed in with MBC decks. Of all the decks that made the Top 8 this is the concept that I am most intrigued by. I don't know if I would play with this build but I will certainly start out with something similar this week during playtesting.

Mono-White Control - one player

Alex Au ran his mono-white Urzatron deck to a 1-1-2 record in four rounds. I can only manage half the decklist so I can only assume he ran **Weathered Wayfarers** to smooth out his Towers, Mines, and Power Plants. Mike Flores posted an article on this site about a **Cloudpost** powered version that many have proclaimed dead post *Darksteel*. Despite those proclamations there is still a bit of race in that horse. I know of at least one JSS event where the deck Mike wrote about posted a high finish. Keep an eye out for these decks hovering just below the radar.

Miscellaneous - four players

Black-White Control, Blue-Green Molder Slug, and White-Blue Control all pooled near the bottom of the standings with one player at the helm of each deck type. Beneath them all was a Darksteel Reactor/Dismantle deck that did not manage a single win match win over all six rounds of play! Maybe he just built it wrong...

I am going to kick off my actual playtesting for Regionals this week. I recommend you begin doing the same sometime soon. There is plenty of information out there and it will just continue to stockpile each week as results trickle in from around the world. In the meantime I will try to keep you up to date on what is happening on the tournament scene as your Regionals looms ever closer.

If you know of any significant Standard tournaments that have occurred in your parts and want to share the results or decklists please send them to me using the e-mail link at the bottom of the article.

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