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# Setting the Standard

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Swimming With Sharks  
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Every year **Magic** players get all jazzed about Standard in anticipation of Regionals, Provincials, and Nationals Qualifiers around the globe. This must be quite amusing to the under 16 set since they have had their finger on the pulse of Standard since before the New Year when the Junior Super Series Challenges kicked off for the 2003-2004 season.

Junior Super Series hopefuls are concerned about Standard before anyone is even thinking about Regionals and they will be focused on it right up until the big dance at US Nationals. The Mono-white deck [that Mike Flores wrote about](#) for this site was the product of JSS events and there are events going on all over the country almost every weekend. That deck is somewhat unusual since the JSS players are not known for their innovations. Rather they are often seen as field testing the decks that everyone else is talking about and testing in an actual tournament setting. They tool about the Internet in search of the best decks, glean tech from their professional **Magic** playing friends, and hone them in tournament week after week.



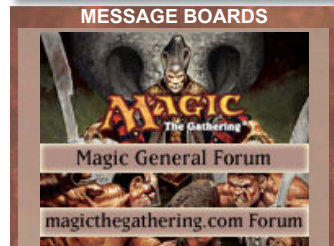
I just go back from [Grand Prix Columbus](#) and boy is my everything tired. I think I got nine hours of sleep from Friday morning to Monday when I sat down in my window seat to fly home. If you haven't already looked at the coverage it was an interesting weekend that saw Mike Turian win the title and a female **Magic** player led the standings at the conclusion of the Swiss round—in fact three of the five women in the tournament advanced to Day Two.

One of the things you won't read about in the coverage is the Junior Super Series Challenge that took place on Sunday. There were forty-odd players and I managed to save the Top 8 decklists from going to the scrap paper pile and they are included below. Interestingly there were no Goblin Bidding decks in the Top 8 which is the first time that has happened out of the three sets of Top 8s I have presented in this column thus far.



The tournament winner was David Geisinger. David played a Ravager-Affinity deck that was packing green for main deck **Naturalizes**. He also had main deck **Genesis Chambers**, a card that has been relegated to the sideboard of Affinity builds other than the combo deck from the Kobe LCQ. For his efforts, David won an invitation to the Junior Super Series, a scholarship worth \$1,000, magic cards for a year, and an additional premium card exclusive to the Top 8 (everyone who signs up gets a premium card just for playing).

David's sideboard was loaded for bear against the mirror with another ten spells at the ready. He was also prepared for Astral Slide and White Control with **Megrim** and **Lightning Rift**. The **Megrim** causes a cycling opponent to take two every time they discard a card to cycle. Pretty potent against Slide decks and also quite powerful against an opponent digging for lands with the **Eternal Dragon**. He even had the maindeck **Naturalizes** which were good against both Affinity and Slide.



RGB Ravager Affinity, David Geisinger - Winner		
Junior Super Series Challenge, GP: Columbus		
Main Deck		Sideboard
60 cards		
2 Blinkmoth Nexus	2 Genesis Chamber	4 Electrostatic Bolt
2 Darksteel Citadel	4 Naturalize	2 Lightning Rift
3 Glimmervoid	3 Pyrite Spellbomb	3 Megrim
4 Great Furnace	4 Shrapnel Blast	4 Oxidize
3 Tree of Tales	4 Skullclamp	2 Shatter
4 Vault of Whispers	2 Tooth of Chiss-Goria	
18 lands	19 other spells	15 sideboard cards
4 Arcbound Ravager		
4 Arcbound Worker		

4 Disciple of the Vault  
 4 Frogmite  
 4 Myr Enforcer  
 3 Ornithopter

23 creatures

David defeated Alex Purdy in the finals. Alex was also playing Ravager Affinity with green—this time for **Oxidize** and four **Naturalize** in the sideboard. He also ran blue mana to support four copies of **Thoughtcast**. To help smooth out the mana he had four copies of **Chromatic Sphere** and had no room for the indestructible **Darksteel Citadel**. For his efforts, Alex also won an invitation to the Super Series but no scholarship. He also won a box of boosters and a second premium card.

### RGBU Ravager Affinity, Alex Purdy - Finalist

Junior Super Series Challenge, GP: Columbus



#### Main Deck 60 cards

3 Glimmervoid  
 4 Great Furnace  
 4 Seat of the Synod  
 4 Tree of Tales  
 3 Vault of Whispers

18 lands

4 Arcbound Ravager  
 4 Arcbound Worker  
 4 Disciple of the Vault  
 4 Frogmite  
 4 Myr Enforcer  
 3 Ornithopter

23 creatures

4 Chromatic Sphere  
 3 Oxidize  
 2 Shrapnel Blast  
 4 Skullclamp  
 4 Thoughtcast  
 2 Welding Jar

19 other spells

#### Sideboard

4 Electrostatic Bolt  
 4 Naturalize  
 1 Oxidize  
 4 Pyrite Spellbomb  
 1 Shrapnel Blast  
 1 Welding Jar

15 sideboard cards

Over the past few weeks there has been a lot of chatter by the **Magic** writing community about **Tooth and Nail** decks similar to what Gabriel Nassif used in Kobe. His deck was called TwelvePost for the **Cloudposts** and the eight ways to fetch them but in Standard there are a variety of multiple-mana producing lands at your disposal including the Urza Lands and **Temple of the False God**.

DJ Kastner lost to eventual winner Geisinger in the semi-finals with one of these decks. He was running Vine Trellis for additional mana acceleration and opted for Urzatron lands over **Cloudposts** and Temples. There were three such decks in the Top 8 and it may be emerging as one of the decks you need to prepare to play with/against at Regionals.

### Tooth and Nail, DJ Kastner - Semifinalist

Junior Super Series Challenge, GP: Columbus



#### Main Deck 60 cards

8 Forest  
 1 Stalking Stones  
 1 Tranquil Thicket  
 4 Urza's Mine  
 4 Urza's Power Plant  
 4 Urza's Tower

22 lands

1 Akroma, Angel of Wrath  
 1 Darksteel Colossus  
 1 Duplicant  
 1 Leonin Abunas  
 1 Platinum Angel  
 4 Solemn Simulacrum  
 4 Vine Trellis  
 2 Viridian Shaman

15 creatures

3 Mindslaver  
 1 Naturalize  
 4 Oblivion Stone  
 3 Oxidize  
 4 Reap and Sow  
 4 Sylvan Scrying  
 4 Tooth and Nail

23 other spells

#### Sideboard

3 Culling Scales  
 1 Duplicant  
 1 Mindslaver  
 3 Naturalize  
 1 Oxidize  
 3 Scrabbling Claws  
 3 Stabilizer

15 sideboard cards

Dylan Brown rounded out the Top 4 with the third Ravager deck out of the bunch. Dylan's was the only one of the three to not include green or a maindeck method of dispatching enemy artifacts. He had **Shatter** in his sideboard over the green of the other decks. There is plenty of good red artifact removal to run but the reason decks are choosing green seems to be in order to support the more flexible **Naturalize**. Limiting yourself to red leaves you fumbling about in your toolbox for an answer to an **Oversold Cemetery**, **Worship**, **Astral Slide** or any other unexpected enchantments.

**Smother** is an interesting sideboard choice that can be good in a number of match-ups including the mirror. **Scrabbling Claws** has a role against Goblin Bidding, Cemetery decks, and any deck with **Eternal Dragon**. It's nice when your sideboard can multi-task against different decks.

RUB Ravager Affinity, Dylan Brown - Semifinalist		
Junior Super Series Challenge, GP: Columbus		
Main Deck		Sideboard
60 cards		
4 Darksteel Citadel	4 Pyrite Spellbomb	3 Mana Leak
1 Glimmervoid	4 Shrapnel Blast	4 Scrabbling Claws
4 Great Furnace	4 Skullclamp	4 Shatter
4 Seat of the Synod	3 Talisman of Indulgence	4 Smother
4 Vault of Whispers	4 Thoughtcast	
17 lands	19 other spells	15 sideboard cards
4 Arcbound Ravager		
4 Arcbound Worker		
4 Disciple of the Vault		
4 Frogmite		
4 Myr Enforcer		
4 Ornithopter		
24 creatures		

With the Top 4 behind us we also leave the land of Affinity. Chris Kneale was defeated by David Geisinger in the first round of elimination. He was playing a deck he called Wooty McBooty on his deck sheet. It bore a strong resemblance to the deck Kuroda used to win Pro Tour Kobe but it touched green for **Oxidize**. There were actually more **Oxidizes** in this Top 8 than there were **Skullclamps**. There were actually more copies of **Solemn Simulacrum** as well—more on that shortly.

Big Red (little green), Chris Kneale - Quarterfinalist		
Junior Super Series Challenge, GP: Columbus		
Main Deck		Sideboard
61 cards		
4 Blinkmoth Nexus	3 Damping Matrix	4 Naturalize
2 Forest	4 Electrostatic Bolt	2 Oblivion Stone
4 Great Furnace	4 Oxidize	3 Scrabbling Claws
8 Mountain	4 Pulse of the Forge	3 Slice and Dice
4 Wooded Foothills	4 Pyrite Spellbomb	3 Stabilizer
22 lands	4 Shrapnel Blast	
	4 Starstorm	15 sideboard cards
	4 Talisman of Progress	
4 Arc-Slogger	31 other spells	
4 Solemn Simulacrum		
8 creatures		

I took some heat in the forums after my Hong Kong article for dismissing **Astral Slide** as a viable deck for Regionals. While I didn't actually dismiss the deck itself—I merely stated that based on the Hong Kong results it looked like the deck's prospects were not promising. It seems that in every Top 8 from other events there has been one **Astral Slide** deck advancing to the elimination rounds. Plus, [there was an article about the deck](#) on this very site by the deck's most vocal advocate Gabe Walls.

This Top 8 was no different, with Jon Swearingen taking piloting a version that looked like a land-light version of the deck Walls put forth in his column with **Pyroclasm**s where **Starstorms** and **Slice and Dice** ought to be. Slide is certainly going to be a factor at Regionals—you



Don't count these out just yet...

heard it here twenty-first! It will not be a surprise though and many decks will be packing Naturalize over Oxidize to be doubly prepared for multiple archetypes.

Astral Slide, Jon Swearingen - Quarterfinalist		
Junior Super Series Challenge, GP: Columbus		
Main Deck		Sideboard
60 cards		
4 Forgotten Cave	2 Akroma's Vengeance	2 Circle of Protection: Red
8 Mountain	3 Astral Slide	2 Decree of Justice
9 Plains	3 Damping Matrix	2 Obliterate
4 Secluded Steppe	4 Lightning Rift	2 Pulse of the Fields
25 lands	4 Pyroclasm	4 Shatter
	4 Renewed Faith	3 Wipe Clean
4 Eternal Dragon	3 Spark Spray	15 sideboard cards
4 Exalted Angel	4 Wrath of God	
8 creatures	27 other spells	

The two remaining decks were Tooth and Nail decks with Solemn Simulacrums. Between the three Nail decks and the Big Red there were sixteen copies of the invitational card compared to twelve Skullclamps. I was surprised by this but it is worth noting that all three decks with Skullclamp made it to the round of four.

Chase Pascaasio's deck looked very similar to one posted by Antonino DeRosa on Star City Games last week. The key similarities being four copies of Fireball and the unusual Clockwork Dragon. De Rosa's deck also sported the Affinity smashing Molder Slug as a Tooth and Nail 'tutor' target. As this deck continues to be played I expect the creature suite to become increasingly specialized to deal with different decks.

Antonino chooses not to rely on the Urzatron lands in his version preferring a combination of Cloudposts and Temple of the False Gods. Chase's deck had the Urzatron set and Cloudposts. Chase's deck was also not able to put a Platinum Angel into play with Abunas as backup since he chose not to include the guardian angel in his deck. The final Top 8 competitor Kyle Boggemes did fit in the combo and both decks are included below.

Tooth and Nail, Chase Pascasio - Quarterfinalist		
Junior Super Series Challenge, GP: Columbus		
Main Deck		Sideboard
60 cards		
4 Cloudpost	4 Fireball	1 Clockwork Dragon
4 Forest	4 Oblivion Stone	1 Duplicant
3 Mountain	1 Pyroclasm	3 Flashfires
4 Urza's Mine	4 Reap and Sow	1 Gilded Lotus
4 Urza's Power Plant	4 Sylvan Scrying	2 Mindslaver
4 Urza's Tower	4 Talisman of Impulse	2 Naturalize
3 Wooded Foothills	4 Tooth and Nail	1 Obliterate
26 lands	25 other spells	3 Pyroclasm
		1 Viridian Shaman
1 Bosh, Iron Golem		15 sideboard cards
1 Clockwork Dragon		
2 Darksteel Colossus		
1 Platinum Angel		
4 Solemn Simulacrum		
9 creatures		

Tooth and Nail, Kyle Boggemes - Quarterfinalist		
Junior Super Series Challenge, GP: Columbus		
Main Deck		Sideboard
60 cards		
10 Forest	3 Mindslaver	3 Culling Scales
1 Stalking Stones	4 Oblivion Stone	1 Duplicant
4 Urza's Mine	3 Oxidize	3 Naturalize
4 Urza's Power Plant	4 Reap and Sow	1 Oxidize
4 Urza's Tower	4 Sylvan Scrying	3 Scrabbling Claws
23 lands	4 Talisman of Unity	2 Stabilizer
	4 Tooth and Nail	1 Symbiotic Wurm
		1 Viridian Shaman

	26 other spells	15 sideboard cards
1 Akroma, Angel of Wrath		
1 Darksteel Colossus		
1 Duplicant		
1 Leonin Abunas		
1 Platinum Angel		
4 Solemn Simulacrum		
2 Viridian Shaman		
<hr/>		
11 creatures		

So there you have the JSS Challenge Top 8 decklists. Don't dismiss them because they were played by kids. Who plays more **Magic** than kids? If you think they don't take it seriously then you may have overlooked the \$1,000 first prize for each Challenge. I'm not suggesting that every player in the tournament is a world beater but the kids in the Top 8 are tomorrow's PTQ players and beyond that the day later.

I was expecting to return to the Team Sealed Deck pool this week but decided to put it off for seven days leading into the opening weekend of the Team PTQ season—the opening of the season for me anyway with a PTQ on the 10th in Philadelphia. It is actually a pretty tough pool of cards to work with and with the Grand Prix I didn't have the time to really dwell on them they way I would like.

You can go back and look at the cards in [last week's column](#). For those of you looking for more card pools to practice with, each Day One feature match from Grand Prix Columbus contains the Sealed Deck card pool—main deck and sideboard—for each player. If you combine the cards you will get the same thing you would get in a Team Sealed card pool that you can pore over with your friends for free construction practice.

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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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