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# Big Events in Southern California

## The Magic Invitational and Pro Tour San Diego



Alex Shvartsman · Week In Review  
Thursday, May 13, 2004

### The Invitational

This is going to be a busy week, with **Magic** Invitational in progress and the Pro Tour starting tomorrow. Sixteen of the game's best or most prolific players gathered at the Electronic Entertainment Expo in Los Angeles, to compete in this year's **Magic** Invitational. This is a second year in a row that this event is taking place on **Magic Online**. Last year we got to play at Wizards of the Coast offices in Seattle – which is cool, but not exactly flashy. This year WOTC managed to select what seems like a perfect venue – computer gaming's largest, most important gaming convention. What's more – it takes place only hours away (by distance) and days away (by time) from the Pro Tour in San Diego! Pros attending the Invitational this year will simply take the bus to San Diego to attend the Pro Tour as well as the Invitational finals.

Invitational always has sixteen players in it and all of them get one chance to play each other. This means fifteen rounds of swiss, cutting to the final match between the two players at the top of the standings. The format changes every three rounds, attempting to test the players in as many aspects of playing **Magic** as possible.

At the time this article is being written, players are six rounds into the tournament, having played the first two formats. First up was pack draft. Instead of opening packs and drafting individual cards, players drafted various booster packs instead! They had all the packs available on **Magic Online** to choose from – starting with *Invasion* and *Seventh Edition*, and all the way through *Darksteel*. Players would then receive the packs they drafted, open them and build a deck out of the cards, sealed deck style. This seems like a really fun format, and is something your local store can easily implement. I know I will be trying to run one of these tournaments at my shop.



Players pursued various strategies throughout the draft. Although many felt that *Apocalypse* has a very high power level, it was not drafted quickly. In fact, Berkowicz was able to snag three of the five *Apocalypse* packs in the draft. My favorite strategy was that pursued by Zvi Mowshowitz. He drafted the slightly weaker *Judgment* packs. Because he had little competition for them, he was able to get four of them! With *Judgment* far skewed toward green, white and blue, he would have a far easier time building a consistent deck out of them.

Player	Pack 1	Pack 2	Pack 3	Pack 4	Pack 5
Lebedowicz	Planeshift	Invasion	Invasion	Judgment	Legions
Wise	Apocalypse	Mirrodon	Mirrodon	Seventh Edition	Seventh Edition

<b>Jorstedt</b>	Scourge	Scourge	Scourge	Darksteel	Seventh Edition
<b>Maher</b>	Invasion	Invasion	Invasion	Seventh Edition	Seventh Edition
<b>Okamoto</b>	Darksteel	Mirrodin	Mirrodin	Darksteel	Eighth Edition
<b>Berkowicz</b>	Apocalypse	Apocalypse	Apocalypse	Judgment	Legions
<b>Thoren</b>	Torment	Torment	Scourge	Darksteel	Legions
<b>Romao</b>	Onslaught	Onslaught	Onslaught	Seventh Edition	Legions
<b>Ooiso</b>	Mirrodin	Mirrodin	Darksteel	Darksteel	Eighth Edition
<b>Gary</b>	Odyssey	Odyssey	Odyssey	Seventh Edition	Eighth Edition
<b>Budde</b>	Planeshift	Onslaught	Onslaught	Scourge	Legions
<b>Mowshowitz</b>	Judgment	Judgment	Judgment	Judgment	Eighth Edition
<b>Kibler</b>	Planeshift	Planeshift	Invasion	Scourge	Eighth Edition
<b>Finkel</b>	Planeshift	Planeshift	Apocalypse	Odyssey	Eighth Edition
<b>Herzog</b>	Torment	Torment	Onslaught	Odyssey	Eighth Edition
<b>Baberowski</b>	Torment	Torment	Odyssey	Apocalypse	Legions

The same strategy would work with *Torment*, except three players – Thoren, Herzog and Baberowski all went after *Torment* packs and ended up splitting them up. Justin Gary drafted mostly *Odyssey* while Bob Maher picked up *Invasion*.

Surprisingly, all base set packs went as really late picks. Although I've never tried this format, intuitively it seems that base set cards should stand up well against most expansion sets.

After three rounds of play, Jorstedt, Maher and Mowshowitz went undefeated. Each of these players remained consistent, drafting at least three of the same pack. Obviously this strategy paid off well. Jon Finkel was the only player without a single win.

Next up was Auction of the People. Over the last few months, Mark Rosewater called upon the [magicthegathering.com](http://magicthegathering.com) readers to submit deck lists. Their two restrictions was first that every card used is available on *Magic Online*, second that all cards within a deck were drawn by the same artist. Only one deck per artist would be used, offering an advantage to the players who went out of their way to build decks based on the work of the less-known or less-popular illustrators.

Seventeen decks were chosen. Players would bid starting life points and number of cards in hand to determine who ended up with which deck. Only a pair of people went down to five cards in their bidding – Herzog and Baberowski discovered that they paid too much as both of them ended up going 1-2 with their decks. On the other hand, paying too little may not work either – Budde had no challengers for his deck, getting it at 7-20 but could not win a match with it.

Bob Maher and Jin Okamoto went undefeated with their decks. Maher was considered the big winner as players felt in retrospect that the deck he played was much better than they originally felt it was. Maher managed to get his Heather Hudson deck at 7 cards and 17 life, paying very little for the privilege of playing it.

And so at the end of the first day we find Bob Maher as the only undefeated player at 6-0, with no players at 5-1. Surprisingly we find the game's two best players – Kai Budde and Jon Finkel – at the bottom of the standings, tied at 1-5.

Still coming up are three more formats – *Eighth Edition* Rochester Draft, *Mirrodin* Block Constructed, and Online Extended (all sets from *Seventh Edition* and *Invasion* to *Darksteel*).

*Magic Online* may lack versatility to support truly wacky formats that Mark Rosewater entertained us with in the past, but it makes up for that in a huge way with an ability for fans to actually watch the games in progress rather than just rely on the reporting by journalists.

## Coming Up: Pro Tour San Diego

Pro Tour returns to San Diego once more. The format this time will be *Mirrodin-Mirrodin-Darksteel* booster draft. Top 8 matches will be available live through the streaming technology this Sunday. Be sure to check Week in Review (this column!) the week after the Pro Tour to see the video archives.

## March of the Machines

I got a lot of e-mails regarding the March of the Machines deck I posted in last week's column. Many players were interested in the deck and one even wrote in to thank me as he used my list to qualify for his country's Nationals!

First of all, while I took a close look at U.S. Regionals last week, I failed to notice that March decks actually showed up in Canadian Regionals. Jason Patterson qualified for Nationals with the following list:

Jason Patterson Canadian Regionals		
Main Deck 60 cards		Sideboard
4 Flooded Strand	4 March of the Machines	3 Sacred Ground
4 Mirrodin's Core	4 Mycosynth Lattice	4 Pyroclasm
4 Grand Coliseum	4 Darksteel Ingot	4 Rewind
5 Plains	3 Darksteel Pendant	4 Circle of Protection: Red
6 Island	4 Talisman of Progress	
23 land	4 Wrath of God	15 sideboard cards
0 creatures	2 Future Sight	
	4 Thirst for Knowledge	
	4 Echoing Truth	
	4 Mana Leak	
	37 other spells	

The winner of the same Regional, William Ma played a blue-white control deck, but had four March of the Machines in his sideboard. I also hear that Satoshi Nakamura played a March deck in his Regional, finishing just shy of qualifying for Japanese nationals.

## Magic Trivia

Last week's question:

*Who was the first player to win multiple Pro Tours?*

Long before anyone heard of Kai Budde, Finland's Tommi Hovi won two Pro Tours. It was quite a while before his record was finally matched, and another while until it was broken.

New question:

*What promotional card was given out at the World Championship in Yokohama, Japan?*

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

## Play of the Week

Courtesy of Jan Rueß

"This happened in the finals of an online draft:

My opponent played first and had a very impressive first 4 turns:

turn1: **Bonesplitter**

turn2: Myr

turn3: **Arcbound Crusher**

turn4: Myr, **Tangle Golem**, Crusher attacks for 4 (it had gotten a counter from my Talisman)

However when my opponent saw my turn 4 play he conceded on his next turn. My plays were these:

turn2: Myr

turn3: Talisman, [Krark-Clan Stoker](#)

turn4: GRAB THE REINS WITH ENTWINE (sacking the talisman with the Stoker): I took the Crusher and sacked it to kill the Golem, I then put the 4 counters on my Myr and attacked for 5!

Pretty impressive for a limited game, huh?"

## Bad Play of the Week

Courtesy of Jon Bartlett:

"I know that most people don't write these about themselves, but I have to.

I was playing at Regionals and I was doing well with my Mono-White Control deck. I had beaten Ravager Affinity twice and had lost only to a mono-red Goblins. I came up against a Goblin Bidding deck and was doing well having cleared the board (including 2 exalted angels of mine) with a Wrath. Next turn, my opponent throws down a second swamp and Bidding bringing back 2 [Goblin Piledrivers](#), a [Skirk Prospector](#) and a Warchief. I was at a measly 8 life and so I scooped, realizing later that I had 2 [Exalted Angels](#) that I could have revived and used as blockers and stayed alive another few turns! Next time, I should read the fine print on the card!!"

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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 at kingsgames dot com.

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