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PT SD and the Magic Invitational



Nicolai Herzog dominates the field

Alex Shvartsman · Week In Review
Thursday, May 20, 2004

Pro Tour: San Diego

This Pro Tour began with the ending of an era.

Up until recently, there were several players who competed in every single Pro Tour since the inception of this tournament series. As of Pro Tour: Kobe, this impressive accomplishment belonged only to a single competitor – Darwin Kastle. Unfortunately though, Kastle was not qualified for San Diego. Nevertheless, he traveled to California in order to play in the Last Chance Qualifier, and although he won several rounds, he was unable to make it into the top 4. Thus, this was the first Pro Tour without Darwin, and the event that broke an amazing streak.



As in the past, the tournament took place in one of the halls of the tremendous San Diego Convention Center on Harbor Drive. To give you the idea of the size of this building, the entire Pro Tour hardly took up ten percent of its available space. Located on the edge of the Gaslamp District – the hip area of town with many of its more popular clubs and restaurants – it is quickly becoming a favorite Pro Tour stop for many of us.

During the player registration on Thursday, DCI staff proudly unveiled what might be the coolest technological advancement at a Pro Tour since the invention of DCI Reporter software, the laptop, and sliced bread. They now have the ability to text-message round pairings and results directly to a player's cell phone!

This may sound dorky and irrelevant to some of you, but anyone who's ever participated in a **Magic** tournament with over a hundred competitors knows where I'm coming from on this. Instead of crowding through a horde of players trying to look up their seating assignment, you can just look at your phone and coolly walk over to the play area! There were a few glitches during the early rounds but once the cut had been made after the sixth round the system worked perfectly.

Players got to compete in two pods of *Mirrodin-Mirrodin-Darksteel* booster draft. Those with a 4-2 or better record would make the cut to Friday, then draft their next deck and play one more round Friday night. This system eliminates the awkward four-round pods of the past. A total of 112 competitors made the cut to the second day, of 324 total. It was not a good week for two of the game's greats. Budde and Finkel both failed to advance to day 2, on the heels of their disappointing finish at the Invitational.

When the smoke cleared at the end of the second day, no critic could possibly claim that this is a luck-based format. The Top 8 included three repeats from the *Mirrodin-Mirrodin-Darksteel* Rochester draft Pro Tour held earlier this year in Amsterdam. Nicolai Herzog, Mike Turian and

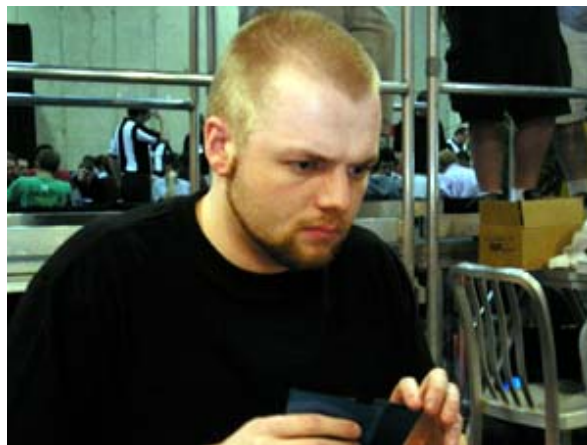
Anton Jonsson were joined by Antoine Ruel (whose brother Olivier made top 8 in Amsterdam!). These four players prevailed over their opponents to all make top 4. Also in this top 8 was Ben Stark (who is having a very good year so far, one of a few successful American players this year now with back to back PT top 8's), Japan's Rookie of the Year Masashi Oiso, Mark Herberholz and rookie Angel Perez del Pozo from Spain.

In the top 8 Herzog drafted an extremely powerful black-red deck, featuring Mirror Golem, Greater Harvester and an arsenal of removal.

| Nicolai Herzog PTSD Top 8 Draft | | |
|------------------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|
| Main Deck 40 cards | | Sideboard |
| 12 Swamp | 1 Barter in Blood | 1 Disarm |
| 5 Mountain | 2 Terror | 1 Inertia Bubble |
| 17 land | 1 Electrostatic Bolt | 1 Lumengrid Warden |
| 1 Moriok Scavenger | 1 Granite Shard | 1 Chimney Imp |
| 1 Ogre Leadfoot | 1 Talisman of Impulse | 1 Disciple of the Vault |
| 1 Vulshok Berserker | 1 Echoing Decay | 2 Irradiate |
| 1 Iron Myr | 1 Essence Drain | 1 Nim Lasher |
| 1 Leaden Myr | 1 Echoing Ruin | 1 Seething Song |
| 1 Lodestone Myr | 1 Myr Matrix | 1 War Elemental |
| 1 Mirror Golem | 1 Panoptic Mirror | 1 Clockwork Beetle |
| 1 Nim Replica | 11 other spells | 1 Culling Scales |
| 1 Greater Harvester | | 1 Dross Scorpion |
| 1 Grimclaw Bats | | 1 Gilded Lotus |
| 1 Darksteel Gargoyle | | 1 Lifespark Spellbomb |
| 1 Dross Golem | | 1 Tanglebloom |
| 12 creatures | | 1 Drooling Ogre |
| | | 1 Inflammation |
| | | 1 Tears of Rage |
| | | 1 Karstoderm |
| | | 1 Viridian Acolyte |
| | | 1 Death-Mask Duplicant |
| | | 22 sideboard cards |

He swept Ben Stark's red-green deck and went on to face Mike Turian in the semi-finals in the match many predicted would determine the champion of this Pro Tour. Herzog prevailed here definitively as well, winning 3-1. He then went on to sweep Ruel in the finals. Coverage of the event can be found [here](#).

Although Herzog maintains a lower profile than some of his fellow pros, his list of accomplishments is one of the most impressive in the game, even before this weekend. Herzog is now a two-time Pro Tour champion, a two-time European champion and has a total of four PT top 8 finishes. With just a team Pro Tour and Worlds left this season, Herzog is very likely to add another accolade to his list – Pro Player of the Year.



PT SD Champion Nicolai Herzog

Magic Invitational

Playing at the Wizards of the Coast corporate offices last year may have been pretty cool, but it does not begin to compare with the experience that is E3. Electronic Entertainment Expo is the electronic gaming industry's largest trade show, dwarfing in size Origins and Gen Con combined. **Magic Online** attracted considerable publicity by setting up [the Invitational event](#) at one of the booths there and handing out the **Magic** Starter product (with **Magic Online** CD!) to anyone who came over to watch.

Perhaps the coolest moment of the Invitational was when Osyp Lebedowicz and Justin Gary were being interviewed by Playboy TV. I hear they wanted to know whether **Skullclamp** would be banned in Standard.

Bob Maher dominated the tournament with a 14-1 record. His single loss came at the hands of Jin Okamoto during the *Mirrodin* Block Constructed portion of the tournament. Mattias Jorstedt and Zvi Mowshowitz were both contenders for the other slot in the finals. They actually faced each other in the last round, making the contest even more dramatic. Jorstedt's Ravager Affinity deck prevailed over Zvi's Psychatog, and the Swede advanced to the finals with an 11-4 record.



Once the swiss rounds of the Invitational were over, the sixteen players boarded a bus and were transported to San Diego for the Pro Tour. Zvi Mowshowitz was not actually qualified for San Diego, but the DCI decided to continue the tradition of allowing the Invitational players to compete in the next Pro Tour, and he was able to play.

The Invitational finals took place Saturday evening and was played over three formats. Mattias Jorstedt started out strong, with a game-winning **Blessed Reversal** in the Auction of the People section of the finals. Mana problems plagued him in games two and three however, allowing Maher to come back and win the first match. Jorstedt evened the score winning by the *Mirrodin* Block Constructed match. It would all come down to the Online Extended format.

Once again Jorstedt won the first game, and once again Maher was able to make a comeback, winning the second game to tie the score and then finally overcoming the Swede in the final game and becoming the 2004 **Magic** Invitational Champion!

Bob Maher's card will most likely not see print in the way he submitted it:

Asp's Grasp



Sorcery

Target player gets nine poison counters.

Maher has since confirmed that his original submission wasn't intended to be serious. It remains to be seen what interesting card Maher might come up with instead.

Hungarian Nationals

Michael Durham was kind enough to e-mail me the deck lists from the Hungarian Nationals that took place earlier this month. My current favorite archetype – March of the Machines – won the tournament! As I have not seen these around the Internet, I am including the top 8 deck lists here. Thanks, Michael!

If you have the top 8 deck lists from your country's Nationals and would like to see them (or some coverage of the Nationals) in this column, please drop me an e-mail.

| Liptak, Karoly | | |
|------------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------|
| Winner - Hungarian Nationals | | |
| Main Deck | Sideboard | |
| 60 cards | | |
| 4 Coastal Tower | 4 March of the Machines | 4 Silver Knight |
| 4 Flooded Strand | 4 Wrath of God | 3 Worship |

| | | |
|-------------------|------------------------|--------------------|
| 3 Secluded Steppe | 2 Pulse of the Fields | 3 Disenchant |
| 1 Lonely Sandbar | 4 Mana Leak | 4 Purge |
| 4 Island | 4 Talisman of Progress | 1 Rewind |
| 7 Plains | 2 Mycosynth Lattice | |
| | 4 Darksteel Ingot | 15 sideboard cards |
| 23 land | 2 Future Sight | |
| | 4 Thirst for Knowledge | |
| 0 creatures | 4 Echoing Truth | |
| | 3 Damping Matrix | |
| | 37 other spells | |

| Balogh, Andras | | |
|-------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| Hungarian Nationals | | |
| Main Deck | | Sideboard |
| 60 cards | | |
| 4 Glimmervoid | 3 Pyrite Spellbomb | 2 Mana Leak |
| 4 Great Furnace | 4 Shrapnel Blast | 4 Furnace Dragon |
| 4 Vault of Whispers | 3 Welding Jar | 4 Seething Song |
| 2 Blinkmoth Nexus | 4 Thoughtcast | 2 Shatter |
| 4 Seat of the Synod | 2 Mana Leak | 3 Pyroclasm |
| | 4 Skullclamp | 15 sideboard cards |
| 18 land | 20 other spells | |
| 4 Arcbound Worker | | |
| 4 Arcbound Ravager | | |
| 2 Ornithopter | | |
| 4 Disciple of the Vault | | |
| 4 Myr Enforcer | | |
| 4 Frogmite | | |
| 22 creatures | | |

| Papp, Gabor | | |
|---------------------------|------------------|----------------------|
| Hungarian Nationals | | |
| Main Deck | | Sideboard |
| 60 cards | | |
| 4 Wooded Foothills | 4 Cloudpost | 3 Naturalize |
| 4 Temple of the False God | 4 Pyroclasm | 3 Viridian Shaman |
| 1 Mountain | 4 Oblivion Stone | 2 Duplicant |
| 9 Forest | 4 Tooth and Nail | 1 Darksteel Colossus |
| 1 Tranquil Thicket | 4 Oxidize | 2 Sylvan Scrying |
| | 4 Rampant Growth | 1 Symbiotic Wurm |
| 19 land | 3 Mindslaver | 1 Mindslaver |
| 4 Ravenous Baloth | 4 Reap and Sow | 1 Goblin Pyromancer |
| 4 Vine Trellis | 31 other spells | 14 sideboard cards |
| 1 Darksteel Colossus | | |
| 1 Viridian Shaman | | |
| 10 creatures | | |

| Kocsis, Gabor | | |
|---------------------|--|--|
| Hungarian Nationals | | |

| Main Deck 60 cards | | Sideboard |
|-------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| 4 Great Furnace | 4 Skullclamp | 4 Seething Song |
| 4 Seat of the Synod | 4 Thoughtcast | 4 Furnace Dragon |
| 4 Vault of Whispers | 4 Shrapnel Blast | 3 Mana Leak |
| 3 Glimmervoid | 4 Welding Jar | 2 Pyroclasm |
| 2 Darksteel Citadel | 3 Pyrite Spellbomb | 2 Scrabbling Claws |
| 17 land | 19 other spells | 15 sideboard cards |
| 4 Arcbound Worker | | |
| 4 Arcbound Ravager | | |
| 4 Ornithopter | | |
| 4 Disciple of the Vault | | |
| 4 Frogmite | | |
| 4 Myr Enforcer | | |
| 24 creatures | | |

| Hosszu, Ervin Hungarian Nationals | | |
|--------------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------------|
| Main Deck 60 cards | | Sideboard |
| 8 Plains | 4 Wrath of God | 1 Akroma's Vengeance |
| 7 Mountain | 4 Lightning Rift | 2 Detonate |
| 4 Forgotten Cave | 3 Decree of Justice | 3 Scrabbling Claws |
| 4 Secluded Steppe | 3 Starstorm | 4 Shatter |
| 2 Temple of the False God | 3 Damping Matrix | 2 Circle of Protection: Red |
| 1 Mirrodin's Core | 3 Astral Slide | 2 Wipe Clean |
| 26 land | 3 Spark Spray | 1 Starstorm |
| 4 Eternal Dragon | 2 Akroma's Vengeance | 15 sideboard cards |
| 3 Exalted Angel | 2 Pulse of the Fields | |
| 7 creatures | 27 other spells | |

| Kornis, Tamas Hungarian Nationals | | |
|--------------------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| Main Deck 60 cards | | Sideboard |
| 4 Great Furnace | 4 Chrome Mox | 4 Shatter |
| 2 Stalking Stones | 4 Flamebreak | 4 Electrostatic Bolt |
| 13 Mountain | 4 Fireball | 3 Detonate |
| 19 land | 4 Shrapnel Blast | 1 Echoing Ruin |
| 4 Slith Firewalker | 4 Stone Rain | 3 Culling Scales |
| 4 Arc-Slogger | 4 Molten Rain | 15 sideboard cards |
| 8 creatures | 4 Demolish | |
| | 3 Echoing Ruin | |
| | 2 Goblin Charbelcher | |
| | 33 other spells | |

Tokoli, Zsolt

Hungarian Nationals

Main Deck 60 cards

4 Coastal Tower
4 Flooded Strand
4 Island
7 Plains
2 Secluded Steppe
2 Lonely Sandbar

23 land

0 creatures

2 Mycosynth Lattice
2 Future Sight
4 Talisman of Progress
4 Mana Leak
4 Wrath of God
4 Darksteel Ingot
3 Damping Matrix
4 Echoing Truth
4 March of the Machines
2 Pulse of the Fields
4 Thirst for Knowledge

37 other spells

Sideboard

4 Silver Knight
3 Worship
4 Discombobulate
4 Purge

15 sideboard cards

Gardos, Gergely

Hungarian Nationals

Main Deck 60 cards

3 Forgotten Cave
4 Great Furnace
4 Darksteel Citadel
2 Stalking Stones
10 Mountain

23 land

3 Furnace Dragon
4 Arc-Slogger
4 Solemn Simulacrum
1 Rorix Bladewing

12 creatures

2 Talisman of Indulgence
2 Talisman of Impulse
3 Culling Scales
4 Damping Matrix
3 Shatter
3 Detonate
4 Electrostatic Bolt
4 Fireball

25 other spells

Sideboard

3 Dwarven Blastminer
4 Pyroclasm
4 Avarax
2 Oblivion Stone
1 Flamebreak
1 Furnace Dragon

15 sideboard cards

Magic Trivia

Last week's question:

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

It was a foil **Balduvian Horde**. Players were given one for each side event they joined.

New question:

*What is the name of the **Magic** expansion set due to be released after Fifth Dawn?*

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

Play Of The Week

This may be the first time that I am posting both Play of the Week and Bad Play of the Week submitted by the same player. But the plays are good, so with special thanks and courtesy of Per Karrman, here we go:

Play of the week:

I was at the end of a long, tight game where I had been under pressure most of the game. I was at two life, my opponent at ten.

My opponent had a **Tangle Golem** with three +1/+1 counters on it (making it an 8/7) that it had acquired earlier in the game, an active **Nuisance Engine** and a **Granite Shard** that slowly had been whittling away on my life points. Holding the fort on my side was a measly 2/2 vanilla **Elf Replica** ... but I also had **Test of Faith** as well as **Grab the Reins** in hand with the mana to cast both in the same turn.

My opponent apparently couldn't wait and ping me to death, so he attacked with the golem. I couldn't just steal the golem and fling it at him and attack for the win with my Replica as the nuisance engine would provide him with a blocker, so I blocked with my replica ... put damage on the stack ... and played **Test of Faith** targeting his **Tangle Golem**! It then got two extra +1/+1 counters, making it a 10/9 creature, which I promptly stole with the grab and flung it to his head, winning the game.



Bad play of the week;

Again, I was under heavy pressure as my deck was providing me with far more lands than is usually healthy - I was to change my feelings on that as you will see. I was at three life, my opponent at twenty. I only had one card (my tenth land) left in hand. The last couple of turns I had been in chump-blocking mode as three huge creatures attacked me every turn, and every effort to get rid of any of them had been met by some combat trick to foil my efforts. He had just attacked and cleared away my last blocker in his attack phase, went into his second main phase ... and made the bad play of the week.

He played **Wall of Blood** and said "Go".

He shouldn't have any use of, or reason to play the wall, as he was at twenty life points with an overwhelming board position.

Naturally he was punished to the maximum, as I went into my turn, drew my card, played my tenth land ... and tapped six lands to cast the **Mindslaver** that I top-decked ... after which I activated the **Mindslaver** to steal his turn.

In his turn I then activated his wall 20 times to win the game - I (almost) felt sorry for him ;-)



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