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The New Constructed



UK, Brazil, Argentina, and Finnish Nationals plus GP Zurich

Alex Shvartsman · Week In Review
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This is a very exciting week for constructed **Magic** fans. The evil **Skullclamp** is gone, *Fifth Dawn* is legal for tournament play, and there were not one but two major events offering up the latest winning decks in both Standard and Block formats. This week we've got a ton of deck lists and one of the worst Bad Plays I've seen in a while. Enjoy!

U.K Nationals

The [England National Championship](#) was the first major showcase for the new Standard and the results are definitely exciting. First, to no one's surprise, Affinity reared its head yet again. Successful Affinity deck lists look pretty much as though players did nothing but replace **Skullclamp** with **Cranial Plating**. This new artifact is not as versatile as **Skullclamp**, but it still looks quite powerful.



Affinity may be here to stay, but so are its rivals. John Ormerod won the tournament with a Tooth and Nail build very similar to the versions that showed up in Japan and elsewhere prior to players discovering the Elf and Nail variant. Ormerod did not use a single *Fifth Dawn* card but his deck did consider the metagame changes. For example, four **Mindslavers** are there to help combat the new popular archetypes – blue-white control and Ironworks.

John Ormerod		
Main Deck 60 cards		Sideboard
10 Forest	4 Sylvan Scrying	1 Duplicant
4 Urza's Mine	4 Reap And Sow	1 Triskelion
4 Urza's Tower	2 Talisman Of Impulse	2 Vine Trellis
4 Urza's Power Plant	2 Talisman Of Unity	1 Ravenous Baloth
1 Stalking Stones	4 Tooth And Nail	4 Chalice Of The Void
23 land	4 Mindslaver	2 Oxidize
2 Vine Trellis	4 Oblivion Stone	4 Viridian Shaman
2 Darksteel Colossus	2 Oxidize	15 sideboard cards
	26 other spells	

1	Triskelion
1	Duplicant
1	Ravenous Baloth
4	Solemn Simulacrum
<hr/>	
11 creatures	

Speaking of Blue-White control, this archetype is back with a vengeance. It was one of the more popular decks at the tournament and two copies of it made top 8. It remains to be seen whether this archetype is one of the best in the current metagame, or was simply a popular default among players who did not know exactly what to expect from the new cards. The most interesting control deck in top 8 was not Blue-White however. It was a Blue-Red **Obliterate-Darksteel Gargoyle** build navigated by Neil Rigby. Also of note is the lack of any Ironworks decks in the top 8, though a number of them were played in the tournament.

Neil Rigby		
Main Deck	Sideboard	
60 cards		
4 Darksteel Citadel	2 Annul	2 Annul
4 Seat Of The Synod	4 Discombobulate	4 Stifle
6 Mountain	4 Thirst For Knowledge	4 Magma Jet
10 Island	2 Concentrate	3 Oblivion Stone
<hr/>	4 Mana Leak	2 Electrostatic Bolt
24 land	4 Darksteel Ingot	<hr/>
	3 Obliterate	15 sideboard cards
3 Darksteel Gargoyle	2 Condescend	
4 Solemn Simulacrum	4 Pyroclasm	
<hr/>		
7 creatures	29 other spells	

This deck is sporting twelve counterspells – the highest concentration of this type of card seen in a successful deck since **Counterspell** itself left the format. Rigby's plan is simply to counter or burn things long enough to play out a **Darksteel Gargoyle** when he reaches seven mana and then **Obliterate** on the following turn, destroying all permanents except his unkillable 3/3. Rigby defeated the only Goblin deck in the top 8 to earn himself a spot on the English national team. Second place went to Paul Willis (Affinity).

Ormerod's name may not be as familiar to many of the newer players, but the pros know him as one of the best deck builders in the world. Ormerod, Warren Marsh, Ben Ronaldson and Tony Dobson first made a name for themselves when they developed a highly innovative Cocoa Pebbles deck for Pro Tour: Chicago '99.

Cocoa Pebbles		
Pro Tour: Chicago '99		
Main Deck	Sideboard	
60 cards		
4 City of Brass	1 Aura of Silence	1 Abeyance
4 Gemstone Mine	4 Dark Ritual	3 Aura of Silence
3 Peat Bog	4 Demonic Consultation	1 Defense of the Heart
4 Badlands	4 Duress	2 Peacekeeper
3 Phyrexian Tower	3 Enduring Renewal	4 Pyroblast
4 Scrubland	4 Goblin Bombardment	2 Mana Short
<hr/>	1 Mana Vault	2 Wasteland
22 land	3 Mox Diamond	<hr/>
	4 Necropotence	15 sideboard cards
4 Academy Rector		
<hr/>		
	28 other spells	

2 **Phyrexian Walker**
4 **Shield Sphere**

10 creatures

Over the course of the next year and a half, this London-based group established itself as a source of many of the top tournament decks. They've alternatively worked on their own as team Hampton Court Palace (Ben Ronaldson works as a tennis instructor at the palace and lives on palace grounds) or with other high profile pros, including the likes of Zvi Mowshowitz and Kai Budde.

Best known as a deck builder, Ormerod also has a very impressive list of professional accomplishments. He earned top 8 finishes in PT Mainz and '01 Worlds, as well as a second place at GP Manchester. He has also made top 8 in European Championships. With Ormerod at the helm of the U.K National team, they will be a force to be reckoned with in San Francisco in September.

GP Zurich

[This tournament](#) served up a curve ball as its top 8 features only one familiar name – Frank Karsten placed fourth with Affinity. While this top 8 lacked star power, it did not lack talent or creativity, showing off some pretty interesting decks.

Just as it happened at the side events of U.S. Nationals, green control was proving itself to be a very viable, powerful archetype. There were a number of different builds, but the general idea of combining some of the format's best creatures with high quality artifact removal seemed to do the trick. Four green decks made top 8, one of them splashing a touch of blue for **Echoing Truths** and another playing blue heavily (more on that later).



Manuel Bucher, Champion GP Zurich '04

Affinity was represented by two decks. A blue-red control deck (basically Red control with some countermagic, **March of the Machines** and the Thirsts) made an appearance, and a **Cloudpost** version of Tooth and Nail played by Swiss rookie Manuel Bucher won the tournament.

What I really want to talk about, however, is the deck that took second place.

Italy's Matteo Cirigliano may have broken the format. He built a deck that is completely different from anything else I've seen in this format, a deck that looks deceptively simple, but a deck that seems to just dominate the format. He went undefeated through eleven rounds of Swiss (he had 2 byes) and intentionally drew in the final round, entering top 8 as first seed, and only mana problems kept him from winning in the finals (he already won the same matchup in the swiss rounds).

Matteo Cirigliano

Main Deck 60 cards

12 **Forest**
12 **Island**

24 land

4 **Solemn Simulacrum**
4 **Viridian Shaman**

3 **Annul**
4 **Oxidize**
4 **Thirst for Knowledge**
4 **Echoing Truth**
4 **Condescend**
3 **Crystal Shard**

Sideboard

4 **Troll Astetic**
4 **Last Word**
1 **Annul**
2 **Duplicant**
4 **Tel-Jilad Justice**

15 sideboard cards

4 Eternal Witness	22 other spells
2 Triskelion	
<hr/>	
14 creatures	

This Blue-Green deck is capable of infinite recursion via **Eternal Witness** and **Crystal Shard**. Being able to keep re-playing **Viridian Shaman** wins many matchups on its own. **Triskelion** and **Solemn Simulacrum** are very effective as well. Lack of maindeck **Duplicant** is surprising, but it appears in the sideboard. Cirigliano definitely deserves the credit for coming up with the most innovative constructed strategy so far this year.

Brazil Nationals

Although not as interesting strategically due to their Nationals taking place before *Fifth Dawn* became legal, it is worth mentioning the results of a championship from a country that already produced one world champion!

The most interesting thing about this tournament was a total lack of **Skullclamps** in the top 8! Finalist Elton M. Fior explains: "The field generated so much hate against the top decks, that not a single Affinity or Goblins made it through. Nick Ng, for example, opened the first day 6-0, but wasn't able to go better than 2-4 playing Affinity and was out of the top 8." Instead, the top 8 was comprised of 3 red control decks, 2 GW control decks, 2 UW control decks and one Urzatron Elf and Nail.

Oswaldo Barbosa		
Brazil National Championship - 1st		
Main Deck 60 cards		Sideboard
4 Wooded Foothills	4 Sylvan Scrying	4 Naturalize
1 Mountain	4 Reap and Sow	4 Oxidize
1 Shivan Oasis	4 Tooth and Nail	2 Molder Slug
6 Forest	4 Pyroclasm	2 Sundering Titan
4 Urza's Tower	3 Oblivion Stone	1 Duplicant
4 Urza's Power Plant	2 Fireball	1 Leonin Abunas
3 Urza's Mine	3 Mindslaver	1 Platinum Angel
<hr/>		
23 land	24 other spells	15 sideboard cards
4 Vine Trellis		
4 Solemn Simulacrum		
2 Darksteel Colossus		
1 Akroma, Angel of Wrath		
1 Bosh, Iron Golem		
1 Duplicant		
<hr/>		
13 creatures		

Elton M Fior		
Brazil National Championship - 2nd		
Main Deck 60 cards		Sideboard
10 Mountain	4 Pulse of the Forge	4 Detonate
4 Darksteel Citadel	4 Shrapnel Blast	4 Echoing Ruin
4 Great Furnace	4 Electrostatic Bolt	4 Molten Rain
4 Blinkmoth Nexus	4 Seething Song	3 Oblivion Stone
	3 Pyroclasm	

22 land	3 Chrome Mox	15 sideboard cards
4 Furnace Dragon	2 Talisman of Indulgence	
4 Arc-Slogger	2 Talisman of Impulse	
4 Solemn Simulacrum	26 other spells	
12 creatures		

Brazil's national team is led by Barbosa, for whom this is a first major career finish, but it also includes Fior (who placed fifth and ninth over the last two years and now finally qualified for Worlds) and Sergio Fialho, who is the finalist of GP Sao Paulo.

Special thanks to Elton M. Fior for providing most of this information, and congratulations to him on his excellent performance!

Argentine National Championship

Like in Brazil, the popular decks had a tough time winning in Argentina. There were no Goblins or Affinity in the top 8 there either, and only two of the decks featured **Skullclamp**. The national team consists of champion Mauro Kina, Lucas Ramirez and Matias Bollati. Kina apparently won with a U/W Proteus Staff deck, defeating Ponza in the finals. Bollati made the team with U/W Control.

Mauro Kina		
Argentine National Championship		
Main Deck		Sideboard
60 cards		
7 Plains	3 Rewind	3 Circle of Protection: Red
5 Island	4 Mana Leak	2 Eternal Dragon
2 Seat of the Synod	2 Annul	4 Exalted Angel
2 Ancient Den	4 Raise the Alarm	3 Akroma's Vengeance
4 Flooded Strand	4 Wrath of God	1 Rewind
1 Mirrodin's Core	4 Proteus Staff	1 Bribery
1 Coastal Tower	4 Thirst for Knowledge	1 March of the Machines
4 Blinkmoth Nexus	3 Decree of Justice	
1 Temple of the False God	1 Pulse of the Fields	15 sideboard cards
27 land	2 Chrome Mox	
2 Darksteel Colossus	31 other spells	
2 creatures		

Raise the Alarm is an interesting choice for this deck. It is a good answer to Goblins, able to stave off some early damage, but it is also food for **Proteus Staff** (along with **Decree of Justice** tokens), an activation of which is guaranteed to put a Colossus into play.

Special thanks to Adrian of the Argentinean **Magic** site themagictutor.com.

Finnish Nationals

Courtesy of Johanna Knuutinen:

"The Finnish Champion 2004 is Jussi "Mozzie" Timonen!

84 of the invited 96 players showed up for this event. Notably absent were Tomi Walamies (who did show up later to write match reports and present the trophy to



Tomi Walamies - PT Venice '03

Timonen), champion of the past three years, and several other veteran players including Tommi Hovi, and Arho Toikka from last year's national team.

This year's team consists of Jussi Timonen, Max Lehtinen and Andrei Häyrynen.

Jussi Timonen is perhaps best known for being "Mozzie" on *Magic Online* ("Mozzam", however, is a completely different person). Before *Magic Online* he was a casual player, but in recent years he has done quite well in local events. He won a last chance qualifier for Nationals 2003, but chose to

judge instead of playing. Worlds will be his first Pro event.

Decklists can be found here: <http://mtg.bore.org/article2.php?id=29>

Standings, match coverage (more will be added later), other information: <http://mtg.bore.org/article2.php?id=22>

No Ravagers in the top 8. Here is a deck breakdown for the whole event:

Goblins 19
Ravager 16
U/W Control 9
Tooth & Nail 8
B/G 5
R/G Beasts 5
Elf & Nail 5
Big Red 4
Slide 3
Retract.dec 3
Elves 2
Other 5"

U.S. Nationals Bad Plays

Courtesy of Jordan Murari:

"The first bad play I witnessed was during one of the Standard Grinders

This was the second game and 2 Affinity Decks were facing off, the winner of the match got a spot in Nats the next day. Well Josh Lytle was up a game and had a 7/7 **Skullclamped** Ravager in play, he attacked put his opponent to 7, cast a **Frogmite** and passed the turn. Josh was at 8 life. His opponent had 1 **Vault of Whispers**, 2 **Great Furnace**, 2 **Darksteel Citadel** in play. Well, his opponent draws his card for the turn and then says "You have me" drops his hand on the table revealing the double **Shrapnel Blast** in hand and signs the match slip...ummm....good game?

The second bad play comes from Round 2 of the Standard portion of Nationals on Day 1. I was playing against R/G Beasts. I played Elf & Nail. I had a pretty good board position with a **Vine Trellis** and 3 Elves in play. Intending to storm in for a ton of damage next turn I dropped a **Kamahl, Fist of Krosa** and passed the turn. My opponent had 7 mana open including a **Contested Cliffs**. On his turn my opponent played a **Hunted Wumpus**, and I put **Duplicant** into play off its ability. My opponent Cliffs Kamahl with the **Duplicant** on the stack and since I'm tapped out killed him, then I imprinted the Wumpus and had a 6/6 beatstick to ride to victory game 1.

So we started playing Game 2. My opponent used **Rampant Growth** to accelerate his mana and on his third

turn played...ANOTHER HUNTED WUMPUS!! So I casually dropped the **Darksteel Colossus** in my hand into play and I now had a huge monster before my third turn. Well I beat my opponent quite handily when he helped me put my best creature into play quite early."

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