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Gob-volution

Brian David-Marshall
Swimming With Sharks
Wednesday, July 21, 2004



I have been thinking about Goblins quite a bit lately. For years, Goblins were a popular deck archetype despite the fact that they had little impact on the tournament scene. Goblins were often of the Balloon Brigade variety and the occasional Goblin King deck would show up but for the most part the deck was not a feared part of the competitive landscape. In fact while playing in a tournament you probably rooted for your opponent to open against you with a Mountain and a Goblin.

Slowly, more competitive goblin cards were added to the tournament mix with each block and it has grown into one of the most dominant archetypes over the past year or so. What with it being red week and all, I figured this would be an excellent opportunity to take a week off from the current metagame and look back at the Year in Goblins.

Around this time last year I jetted off to my first solo gig as a coverage reporter—in Thailand no less. Set against the opening weeks of the *Onslaught* Block Constructed season, [Grand Prix: Thailand](#) was perversely Standard. Feeling that the format had been thoroughly explored at the various Regional and National tournaments around the world, I was resigned to a stagnant metagame without any surprising developments—how wrong I was! As it turned out, Grand Prix: Bangkok was the site of the evolution of one of the game's oldest deck types from a popular casual deck into one of the most feared tournament decks over the past year.



Tsuoyoshi Fujita shocked the world with his win on the back of a powerful new deck that is today one of the pillars of the Standard metagame. Goblin Bidding may be common place at your local Friday Night **Magic** tournament but this time last year it was quite a surprise when Tsuoyoshi Fujita, Osamu Fujita, and Tsutomu Yamada all finished in the Top 8 of the Grand Prix with the deck. It sent shock waves throughout the **Magic** community that came crashing against the shores of the **Magic** World Championships in Berlin later that year.

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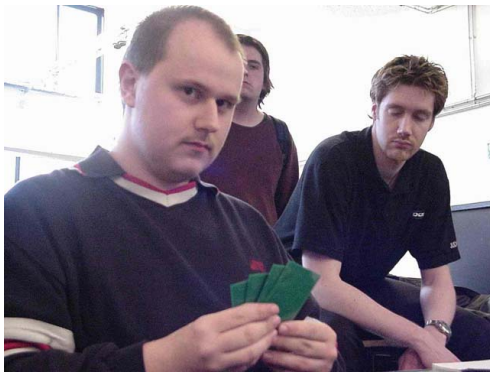
RULES

Tsuoyoshi Fujita

Goblin Bidding - Grand Prix Bangkok (Champion)

Main Deck 60 cards	Sideboard
4 Bloodstained Mire	1 Coffin Purge
12 Mountain	2 Flaring Pain
1 Shadowblood Ridge	1 Gempalm Incinerator
4 Sulfurous Springs	1 Patriarch's Bidding
2 Swamp	1 Shadowblood Ridge
	1 Siege-Gang Commander
23 lands	3 Smother
	1 Stabilizer
1 Gempalm Incinerator	4 Sulfuric Vortex
4 Goblin Matron	
4 Goblin Piledriver	15 sideboard cards
3 Goblin Sharpshooter	
4 Goblin Sledder	
4 Goblin Warchief	
2 Siege-Gang Commander	
4 Skirk Prospector	
4 Sparksmith	
30 creatures	

Before we get to the World Championships in Berlin we need to travel back in time a week and over to the European Championships in England. That tournament was actually the debut of the deck we would come to know as Goblin Bidding.



Wolfgang Eder, GP Antwerp '02

Wolfgang Eder finished just under the radar in thirteenth place of that tournament with a deck he had dubbed "Topdeck Goblins". While he finished under the radar he did not finish beneath the notice of the Japanese team and they quickly adapted his deck for the Grand Prix.

Eder's deck was originally designed by his uncle to use against Wolfgang in their regular bouts of casual play. The initial list had **Oversold Cemetery** as its chief method of goblin recursion. When Wolfgang attempted to play the deck in tournament he found the enchantment to be a little too slow and switched over to the sorcerous **Patriarch's Bidding**. This turned out to be just the thing the deck needed since the dominant deck at that point was **Mirari's Wake** and the ability to dump a board full of hasty goblins back into play after a Wrath was just what the control-ish metagame was looking for.

Wolfgang Eder		Topdeck Goblins - European Championships (13th Place)	
Main Deck 60 cards		Sideboard	
4 Bloodstained Mire 9 Mountain 2 Shadowblood Ridge 4 Sulfurous Springs 3 Swamp <hr/> 22 lands 4 Gempalm Incinerator 2 Goblin Goon 4 Goblin Grappler 4 Goblin Piledriver 3 Goblin Sledder 4 Goblin Taskmaster 4 Goblin Warchief 1 Raging Goblin 1 Siege-Gang Commander 3 Skirk Marauder 4 Sparksmith <hr/> 34 creatures	4 Patriarch's Bidding 4 other spells	4 Duress 2 Engineered Plague 2 Goblin Sharpshooter 2 Smother 4 Sulfuric Vortex 1 Threaten <hr/> 15 sideboard cards	

You can see by comparing the two lists that the Japanese made some important additions—specifically adding **Goblins Sharpshooters** and the dreaded **Skirk Prospectors** that had been only seen in Pro Tour Venice Block Constructed Goblin decks to that point. The Japanese were very aware of the interactions between the Prospector and other goblins due to an Extended deck they were developing and the addition was an obvious one for them. The modifications they made will continue to be a part of the Goblin deck in Standard until *Champions of Kamigawa* forces those cards out of Standard.

The reason the Japanese were so keenly aware of goblin interactions at the time was due to the deck they were developing for the Extended portion of that year's Worlds. We will get to Berlin soon but first lets backtrack a little further to the Extended PTQ season for Pro Tour Venice. Former Wizards employee Mons Johnson won a PTQ with a deck that abused **Goblin Lackey**, **Goblin Matron**, **Goblin Ringleader**, and **Goblin Recruiter**. For those that aren't aware, Richard Garfield named the Alpha card **Mons's Goblin Raiders** after him (he REALLY likes the goblins!), and he's actually now back working at Wizards of the Coast.



Mons Johnson		Circus - PTQ for Venice (Winner)	
Main Deck 60 cards		Sideboard	
4 Bloodstained Mire 6 Mountain	2 Goblin Bombardment 4 Seal of Fire	2 Cabal Therapy 1 Coffin Purge	

3 Rishadan Port	4 Terminate	2 Dralnu's Crusade
1 Shadowblood Ridge	10 other spells	2 Duress
4 Sulfurous Springs		1 Goblin Matron
2 Swamp		1 Goblin Sharpshooter
4 Wasteland		2 Lava Dart
		2 Perish
		1 Planar Void
		1 Spellshock
24 lands		15 sideboard cards
4 Goblin Lackey		
4 Goblin Piledriver		
4 Goblin Recruiter		
3 Goblin Ringleader		
1 Goblin Sharpshooter		
2 Grim Lavamancer		
4 Mogg Fanatic		
2 Mogg Flunkies		
1 Mogg Raider		
1 Sparksmith		
26 creatures		

The deck marked the convergence of several different “cute” goblin cards that had been printed over the years. **Goblin Lackey** was widely accepted as a tournament worthy card but **Goblin Matron**, **Goblin Recruiter**, and **Goblin Ringleader** had been consigned to **Magic** played over the kitchen table as opposed to a Top 8 table. The deck is a card advantage machine that sets up with **Goblin Matron** for **Goblin Recruiter**. The Recruiter sets up the top of the library with staggered sections of **Goblin Ringleaders** and four goblins so that the deck draws fistfuls of cards each turn—what Mons referred to in his tournament report as “Goblin or Fiction”. The card advantage of the deck allowed him to fight his way through a field of Oath, Rock, and Reanimator although he never revealed what decks he faced in his quasi-tournament report.

Mons had played a Red-white version during the previous PTQ season but without a win to validate his list the powerful interactions he found between the cards remained his little secret until the following year. Even with his PTQ win a year later the deck remained largely ignored. Earlier in the article, when I mentioned that the Japanese were working on a decklist for Worlds, this was the deck that they had on their workshop table.

The Shop Fireball gang--the same crew that just finished second at [Pro Tour Seattle](#)--was hard at work in the months leading up to Worlds honing the deck for the Extended portion of the tournament. They had always been drawn to the gears and pistons of Mons's deck but with the release of **Scourge** and the introduction of **Goblin Warchief** and **Siege-Gang Commander** they were able to soup it up into a high performance engine that was more combo deck than creature deck.



Jin Okamoto, Tsuyoshi Ikeda, and Itaru Ishida, PT Seattle '04

By the time that Worlds rolled around, the Goblin Bidding deck was widely known. Fujita's list had finally been attributed to Eder who had been overlooked in the initial hoopla over the deck and everyone had their own version that they felt was the best. Seth Burn had been hyping up his Red Army version (more on that later), there were arguments over the correct number of **Patriarch's Biddings**, and the goblin mix of the deck varied as widely as regional chili recipes.


The [most interesting version](#) was the one played by the French team in the Standard portion of the event. Sylvain Lauriol played a build that touched blue for **Read the Runes**. He was one of six players to go undefeated in the Standard portion of the event and was the only one of those six not playing a Mirari's Wake deck.

Sylvain Lauriol		
Goblin Bidding - 2003 Magic World Championships (6-0 in Standard)		
Main Deck		Sideboard
60 cards		
4 Bloodstained Mire	1 Firebolt	3 Cabal Therapy
4 City of Brass	1 Lava Dart	3 Coffin Purge
1 Island	3 Patriarch's Bidding	1 Ensnaring Bridge
8 Mountain	3 Read the Runes	2 Flaring Pain
2 Polluted Delta	8 other spells	1 Read the Runes
2 Shadowblood Ridge		2 Slay
2 Swamp		3 Smother
23 lands		15 sideboard cards
3 Gempalm Incinerator		
4 Goblin Piledriver		

- 3 Goblin Sharpshooter
- 4 Goblin Sledder
- 4 Goblin Warchief
- 3 Siege-Gang Commander
- 4 Skirk Prospector
- 4 Sparksmith

29 creatures

Sylvain's decklist was largely overlooked after Day One. Despite his 6-0 start he failed to advance to the Top 8 and most of the attention paid to Goblin Bidding decks went in the direction of Wolfgang Eder. Eder finally stepped into the spotlight with the deck when he made [the Top 8](#) before falling to Dave Humphereys and his blue-green Madness deck. (Personally, I would love to see a set of theme weeks based on color combinations—blue-green week in particular!) It also immortalized his collaboration with his uncle as part of the gold-bordered [2003 set of World Championship decks](#).

Wolfgang Eder		
Goblin-Bidding - 2003 Magic World Championships (Top 8)		
Main Deck	Sideboard	
60 cards		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 4 Bloodstained Mire 1 City of Brass 10 Mountain 3 Shadowblood Ridge 4 Swamp <hr/> 22 lands	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3 Patriarch's Bidding 3 Smother <hr/> 6 other spells	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2 Cabal Therapy 2 Dark Banishing 2 Flaring Pain 1 Smother 4 Starstorm 4 Sulfuric Vortex <hr/> 15 sideboard cards
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3 Gempalm Incinerator 1 Goblin Grappler 4 Goblin Piledriver 2 Goblin Sharpshooter 4 Goblin Sledder 3 Goblin Taskmaster 4 Goblin Warchief 4 Siege-Gang Commander 3 Skirk Prospector 4 Sparksmith <hr/> 32 creatures		

But the real Goblin story to evolve from Worlds was the secret Japanese deck for the Extended portion that was quickly dubbed [Gob-Vantage](#). It was played by the Shop Fireball crew and there was not a losing record to be found among them. Okamoto played the deck to a 4-1-1 record but both Jin's loss and his draw were intentional. He drew his way into the Top 8 and conceded to allow Dave Humphereys to also make Top 8. While it was surprising to see [Patriarch's Bidding](#) in a Goblin deck just a month or so back it was even more shocking to see [Rites of Initiation](#) and [Goblin Assassin](#). The Assassin was there to deal with Akroma and [Silver Knight](#) out of the sideboard. With a [Siege-Gang Commander](#) giving you plenty of goblins to toss away until you win the flip it was an inspired choice.

Jin Okamoto		
Gob-Vantage - 2003 World Championships (4-1-1 Extended Portion)		
Main Deck	Sideboard	
60 cards		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2 Ancient Tomb 1 City of Traitors 20 Mountain <hr/> 23 lands	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3 Rites of Initiation <hr/> 3 other spells	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Gempalm Incinerator 1 Goblin Assassin 1 Goblin Sharpshooter 4 Pillage 4 Pyrostatic Pillar 4 Seal of Fire <hr/> 15 sideboard cards
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3 Gempalm Incinerator 4 Goblin Lackey 3 Goblin Matron 4 Goblin Piledriver 4 Goblin Recruiter 3 Goblin Ringleader 3 Goblin Warchief 4 Mogg Fanatic 2 Siege-Gang Commander 3 Skirk Prospector 1 Sparksmith 		

The deck was a phenomenal powerhouse and put the Japanese on the map as cutting edge deck designers. It also led to the banning of **Goblin Recruiter** and **Goblin Lackey** in Extended. The deck was capable of dumping scads of goblins into play each turn and **I was witness** to one match between Jin and eventual World Champion Daniel Zink that made me appreciate the power of the deck. Zink was playing Reanimator and got out a turn two **Verdant Force**... and that *still* was not fast enough to deal with Jin's draw.



Although Wake ruled the day on Sunday, it was the beginning of a long year of goblin decks that probably won't end until Warchief, Siege-Gang, and Bidding go the way of **Wild Mongrel**, **Rootwalla**, and **Circular Logic**. The next event out of the gate for the deck was Grand Prix: Atlanta which Zvi attempted to storm with the Red Army. This was a version of Goblin Bidding that Seth Burn had been hawking since before Worlds. He attempted to get Jon Finkel to play it for that event and ran the deck himself but it did not receive major attention until Zvi (who is notorious for hating goblin decks) made the Top 8 of the Grand Prix with it. Rather than run the **Patriarch's Biddings** in the main deck he chose to sideboard them and have them within reach of a **Burning Wish**.

Zvi Mowshowitz

The Red Army - Grand Prix Atlanta (Top 8)



Main Deck 60 cards

- 4 Bloodstained Mire
- 2 City of Brass
- 11 Mountain
- 4 Shadowblood Ridge
- 2 Swamp

23 lands

- 4 Gempalm Incinerator
- 1 Goblin Grappler
- 4 Goblin Piledriver
- 4 Goblin Sharpshooter
- 4 Goblin Sledder
- 4 Goblin Warchief
- 4 Siege-Gang Commander
- 4 Skirk Prospector
- 2 Sparksmith

31 creatures

- 4 Burning Wish
- 2 Cabal Therapy

6 other spells

Sideboard

- 2 Cabal Therapy
- 1 Chainer's Edict
- 1 Decompose
- 1 Firebolt
- 3 Flaring Pain
- 2 Hammer of Bogardan
- 3 Patriarch's Bidding
- 1 Sparksmith
- 1 Tendrils of Agony

15 sideboard cards

Once the **Burning Wish** went away the Biddings found their way back into the main deck and things settled back to normal—until **Skullclamp** came along. **Skullclamp** powered up the Bidding deck and it ran roughshod over the Friday Night **Magic** scene and won its share of JSS events while waiting for a major tournament to roll around. Seth Burn piloted a version of the deck complete with **Skullclamp** to a Top 8 finish at the Northeast Regionals and it was one of the most popular decks for that weekend right after Affinity.

Seth Burn

Goblin Bidding - Northeast Regionals (Sixth Place)



Main Deck 60 cards

- 4 Bloodstained Mire
- 4 City of Brass
- 12 Mountain
- 4 Swamp

24 lands

- 3 Gempalm Incinerator
- 4 Goblin Piledriver
- 4 Goblin Sharpshooter
- 4 Goblin Sledder
- 4 Goblin Warchief
- 4 Siege-Gang Commander

- 3 Patriarch's Bidding
- 3 Skullclamp

6 other spells

Sideboard

- 2 Dwarven Blastminer
- 3 Echoing Ruin
- 4 Electrostatic Bolt
- 1 Gempalm Incinerator
- 4 Molten Rain
- 1 Sparksmith

15 sideboard cards

4 Skirk Prospector
3 Sparksmith

30 creatures

As other regional events took place around the World the deck shifted back to a more traditional Goblin build without the **Skullclamps** or Biddings. **Skullclamp** was doing such a good job of keeping the Wrath decks in check that the Biddings were not needed and there was so much hatred for artifacts that the Clamps almost became a liability. Dan Paskins set the Goblin community on its collective ear when he ran the following mono-red deck to a high finish.

Dan Paskins		
...A Red deck - Bath Regionals (5th place)		
Main Deck 60 cards		Sideboard
4 Blinkmoth Nexus	4 Chrome Mox	2 Electrostatic Bolt
4 Great Furnace	4 Shrapnel Blast	2 Furnace Dragon
12 Mountain	4 Skullclamp	4 Molten Rain
20 lands	12 other spells	4 Shatter
		3 Sparksmith
		15 sideboard cards
3 Clickslither		
4 Goblin Piledriver		
4 Goblin Sharpshooter		
4 Goblin Sledder		
4 Goblin Warchief		
4 Siege-Gang Commander		
4 Skirk Prospector		
1 Sparksmith		
28 creatures		

Once Dan demonstrated that you did not necessarily need **Skullclamp** and Bidding to win with the deck there was a collective shift toward his build without black mana. And almost as quickly it shifted again to accommodate green mana to join in the growing hatred toward all things artifact. Tsuyoshi Fujita led the charge with his Japanese Nationals winning deck.

Fujita Tsuyoshi		
Go Anan Deck - Japanese Nationals (Champion)		
Main Deck 60 cards		Sideboard
3 City of Brass	4 Electrostatic Bolt	4 Naturalize
4 Forest	4 Oxidize	4 Skullclamp
12 Mountain	8 other spells	4 Starstorm
4 Wooded Foothills		3 Viridian Shaman
23 lands		15 sideboard cards
3 Clickslither		
3 Goblin Goon		
4 Goblin Sharpshooter		
4 Goblin Sledder		
4 Goblin Warchief		
4 Siege-Gang Commander		
3 Skirk Prospector		
4 Sparksmith		
29 creatures		

Of course, once **Skullclamp** was banned everything had to change again. This past weekend the [French Nationals](#) were won by Olivier Ruel with the following deck.

Olivier Ruel		
Goblin Bidding - French Nationals (Champion)		
Main Deck 60 cards		Sideboard
4 Bloodstained Mire	4 Electrostatic Bolt	1 Detonate

3 City of Brass	2 Patriarch's Bidding	4 Dwarven Blastminer
13 Mountain		2 Patriarch's Bidding
3 Swamp	6 other spells	2 Shatter
23 lands		3 Sulfuric Vortex
		12 sideboard cards
<hr/> 3 Clickslither 4 Goblin Piledriver 4 Goblin Sharpshooter 4 Goblin Sledder 4 Goblin Warchief 4 Siege-Gang Commander 4 Skirk Prospector 4 Sparksmith		
31 creatures		

Joining him on the National team is Alexander Peset playing this...

Alexandre Peset		
Goblin Bidding - French Nationals (Top 3)		
Main Deck	Sideboard	
60 cards		
3 Bloodstained Mire	1 Echoing Truth	4 Electrostatic Bolt
4 City of Brass	3 Patriarch's Bidding	2 Granulate
1 Island	3 Read the Runes	4 Molten Rain
9 Mountain	7 other spells	4 Stone Rain
3 Polluted Delta		1 Sword of Fire and Ice
3 Swamp		15 sideboard cards
23 lands		
<hr/> 4 Gempalm Incinerator 4 Goblin Piledriver 4 Goblin Sharpshooter 3 Goblin Sledder 4 Goblin Warchief 4 Siege-Gang Commander 4 Skirk Prospector 3 Sparksmith		
30 creatures		

Obviously Goblins will still be a player in the metagame come Worlds but first it has to make a pit stop in Malaysia. I expect all of the Japanese pros to be in attendance at the Standard format Grand Prix this weekend including Tsuyoshi Fujita. Will they influence the tournament environment like they did in Thailand last year and [Japanese Nationals](#) a few months ago? I expect to see some interesting decks in this format's waning days and there is little doubt that the Japanese players will be at the helm. As Seth Burn said to me earlier today, "All decks go to Japan and become better."

Next week: I'll share my PTQ experience and return to the present day with more *Mirrodin* Block Constructed decklists! Look for my coverage from Grand Prix Kuala Lumpur this weekend (featuring blog-based coverage!) and for additional coverage from Grand Prix Orlando.



'04 French National Team

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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