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## Some Kid

Brian David-Marshall  
The Week That Was  
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It was only a few months ago that if you found yourself facing Jeff Garza you might have used the term "some kid" to describe your opponent. After this weekend I don't know if there is anyone who can use that term without a subtle shift of emphasis and not a little awe considering what he has accomplished this summer.

After looking like a lock for the Top 8 of the JSS Championships in 2003, Garza had a couple of disastrous final rounds and ended up placing in 31st, which was good for \$1,000 but far shy of what he had expected after he was in seventh place after round seven of the Swiss.

He came back to the JSS Championships in 2004 for his final year of eligibility and looked to finish the job he had started the season before. He piloted his mono-green Tooth and Nail deck to emerge as the top finisher this year after sixteen rounds. Unlike previous years, the tournament was run as a straight Swiss affair with no elimination rounds. Jeff posted a 13-2-1 record and had things locked up a round before the tournament came to an official conclusion. There was a clean break in point totals between first and second as Kyle Goodman had a 13-3-0 record giving him 39 points to Jeff's 40. (By the way, keep an eye out for young Kyle Goodman who posted back to back Top 8s in the Championships!)



Jeff not only shrugged the monkey of last year off of his back but earned a cool \$20,000 in scholarship money for his efforts. He also had to face the prospect of going from tournament champion to 'some kid' at a PTQ. He didn't waste any time. His first major tournament in the big leagues was Grand Prix Orlando. If you scan the final standings you don't need to go very far to find his name. He finished in seventh place losing in the quarterfinals to eventual finalist Michael Kuhman in a Big Red mirror match.

Along the way young Jeff dispatched some big name talent to secure his playoff berth. He took down Craig Krempels and Brock Parker in back to back rounds on his way to qualifying for the Pro Tour right out of the gate. In addition to the \$800 prize for Top 8 he also took home an extra \$700 for being the third highest finishing Amateur in the event. It was an

impressive showing in hindsight but with four amateurs placing in the Top 8 it was easy to overlook his finish. Let us not forget that Osyp winning a tournament can also distract attention away from other happenings.

Cut to [Grand Prix New Jersey](#) this past weekend. Jeff explained his thinking coming into the event, "For GP New Jersey, I had been telling people for about a week before the event that I didn't want to play red again. I like to just follow my intuition going into tournaments; I felt mono red would be strong in a control field in Orlando, and that red would NOT be good in New Jersey. I really don't like playing the most popular deck (Affinity), especially if it's in a big tournament like a GP, so I was pretty sure I'd be playing green going into the tournament."

The tournament shattered the attendance record for North American Grand Prix with a phenomenal 958 players showing up for the last major Block Constructed tournament prior to the 2004 World Championships. Jeff ended up with an edge that almost everyone else in the field did not have—he received counsel from Gabriel Nassif. Nassif is undoubtedly the best constructed deck player in the world and he advised Jeff to play his green-red Tooth and Nail deck with main deck **Electrostatic Bolt**. At first glance it would seem that the Bolts were mainly for the Affinity matchup but they were actually there to dramatically shift the game one numbers against Big Red with **Slith Firewalker**—taking the match up from a huge disadvantage to a slight advantage.

"I had been playing on Magic Online with a mono green Tooth list that was fairly similar to the version I ended up running in New Jersey; green-white Talisman over green-red, two Slaver over the two Awakening, and four Shaman over four E-Bolt. The deck was doing pretty well against Affinity even though it had trouble dealing with guys like disciple and didn't have much early removal. I was boarding 2 Triskelion and **Relic Barriers** and Justices to try and solve this problem, but the affinity matchup still wasn't great. Mono Red also presented a problem; you could have acceleration to try and negate the effects of cards like **Molten Rain**, and that plan worked fine against decks like RG, but mono red is much more burn heavy. If a **Slith Firewalker** deals early damage, it's pretty hard for the Tooth deck to recover."

"At the tourney site, William Jensen told me that Gabriel Nassif also liked a Tooth and Nail deck. Gabriel, a pro I have always admired for his ingenuity in deck building, was kind enough to tell me that he maindecked **Rude**

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RULES

**Awakening and Electrostatic Bolts.** It seemed so obvious, but right when he told me that I knew I'd found the deck to play. To quote my friend Jonathan Morawski when I was asking him what he thought of the E-Bolt: "I'm playing Tooth and Nail. I've been waiting to hear something like that for a while." So just like that, I made the switch to the Tooth and Nail deck."

Jeff used to be a New Jersey resident and patron of TOGIT but when his family moved to New England he switched allegiances and is now rarely seen without a TJ's Collectibles T-shirt on his back. TJ's is where a young William Jensen got his start and it was Jensen who made the introductions between Garza and Nassif. Jeff took the info and ran with it to a 12-2-1 record with the benefit of only two byes.

"I've never really considered myself to be a TOGIT guy. When I lived in NJ I was never successful or good enough to be on the "team", but not crediting TOGIT at all would be unfair, because I certainly improved rapidly after my move to Jersey. Basically, I won some JSS qualifiers, did well in some PTQs, and lost a whole lot to players who were better than I was. It didn't take long for me to become one of the better players in the tourneys held at the store, but in the big events I'd always run into players like Jon Sonne, and they would always prevent me from doing very well. I certainly learned a lot from watching and losing to players who were so good at magic though, and I feel I left New Jersey significantly better than I entered it; I'd say I was borderline Pro level, but still had some issues with confidence in my abilities and playing under pressure that were holding me back (as evidenced in JSS 2003)."

"Tom Shea, the owner of TJ Collectibles, helped me out in those areas, as did some of the higher level players (mostly by being arrogant and obnoxious and waaay overly confident, but thanks guys). Tom has always been helpful towards me, whether giving me cards, a ride to a tourney, or just a place to test at and draft, so wearing a shirt that promotes the store I play at so often is the least I can do."

Once he made the Top 8 Jeff found himself entering what had to be the most difficult gauntlet in his young career—and it was all Affinity all the time. First up was Adam Horvath, followed by Pro Tour Seattle winner Jeroen Remie. Jeroen handed Jeff one of his only two losses in the Swiss but Jeff got him back when it really counted. His final opponent was not going to be much easier but Jeff managed to take down nine time Grand Prix Top 8 competitor Brian Kibler in two games thanks in part to Kibler mulliganing three times in the two games.



You need a little luck to win any tournament but there is no denying that Jeff has been on a tremendous tear since June and the JSS Championships. It will be exciting to follow his career as he takes the next step up to the Pro level in Columbus. "I really don't expect anything for my first tour yet, I know it's going to be the toughest tourney I've ever played in, but I feel like I can perform well if I understand the format. I've never played much Extended, but I have some friends who are qualified for the tour, as well as some acquaintances on the train who will hopefully be willing to help me out. School is going to be a concern, but pretty much the only Magic I plan on playing is going to be Extended."

He is *some* kid.

## Rookie of the Year Race

While Jeff gears himself up for the new Pro Tour season and his run at the Rookie of the Year race, this year's race took on a new shape with the presence of dozens of European Pros at Grand Prix New Jersey. It is rare to see the likes of Kai Budde, Gabriel Nassif, and Olivier Ruel at a North American GP, but when you look at the summer convention schedule it makes some sense. Next weekend is Gen Con Indy and two weekends after that is the **Magic** World Championships in San Francisco. Three out of four weeks of gaming makes for the perfect European holiday.



Among the European Pros in attendance was Alexandre Peset—one of the front-runners in this year's race for the Rookie crown. Alexandre played a deck similar to Jeff Garza's. Not surprising since he is teammates with Gabriel Nassif on the French National team for Worlds. Alexandre placed in the Top 8 of the GP and earned himself three points toward the Rookie title. This allowed him to pull out of his tie with Japanese player Kazumasa Shiki and gave him a little bit of wiggle room going into Worlds.

There is also a Japanese Grand Prix the weekend before Worlds and both Shiki and Tomohiro Kaji are vying to wrest the lead from Peset so the extra points may prove to be crucial. All three players are qualified for this year's Worlds although Peset has the advantage of being a member of the French National team which can earn him up to another six

points depending on whether or not his team—a clear favorite to do so—can win the Team Challenge.

One person that cannot overtake Peset is Gadiel Szeleifer. His race is over at nineteen points since he is not qualified for Worlds. With up to thirty-two Pro Points awarded it is still anybody's race to win at Worlds. It is even conceivable that a new rookie could go from zero to thirty-two and steal the title away at the last minute.

The Player of the Year race has taken on new found importance since being tied to the end of the year payout. Even a Top 32 performance can represent a thousand dollars as players jockey for a higher year-end finish. There will certainly be a lot at stake for Worlds and we will take a closer look at that race and the front-runners in next week's column.

## Turning up the Vial

One of the many European players attending that Grand Prix was Frank Karsten of the Netherlands. You might know him better as Frank Karsten of Vial Affinity. Karsten finished third at Grand Prix Zurich early this season with his version of Affinity which has become the industry standard. It was the most played deck on Day Two of Grand Prix New Jersey and it put five different players into the Top 8. The deck is so dominant that even when players choose not to play with it they have to prepare to play against it and the rest of the field is all hate for the Affinity player.

I had the opportunity to sit down with the young Dutch player and talk to him about the deck, Dutch **Magic**, and what he thought would be the best decks to play at Worlds.

**BDM:** Tell me a little about yourself and your **Magic** resume.

**FK:** I am a student in the Netherlands doing Management Science and Industrial Engineering. I am twenty years old and have been playing **Magic** for about six years now. I have been playing on the gravy train for about three years now. I have been posting reasonable finishes but never a PT Top 8 or a big GP win. I won money all the time but stayed below the radar.

**BDM:** You certainly are on everyone's radar these days. I have even heard the Vial Affinity listing commonly referred to as Karsten Affinity. How did the deck you played in Zurich come about?

**FK:** I was in a testing group for Pro Tour Kobe and—I think—Zvi Mowshowitz came up with the Vials. At first we were skeptical about them but after testing for a while most of us liked the Vials and we played them. Jelger Wiergesma finished in the Top 8 with the deck—I finished in the forties with it.

I think that the Vial Affinity deck that we had in Kobe was the best deck. Then **Skullclamp** was banned and it shook up some things. GP Zurich was the first major tournament after the banning. When I tried to design a deck for it the first thing I did was obviously take out **Skullclamps**. I played four **Myr Retrievers** at the time but without **Skullclamp** they weren't good anymore. Then I figured that **Aether Vial** wasn't good anymore because I took out the **Myr Retrievers**. With **Skullclamp** you would just cycle through your deck and the Vials would be putting them into play every turn. That wasn't the case anymore and I took them out.

Then I started testing with lots of other cards—**Welding Jar**, **Somber Hoverguards**, whatever—but I didn't like it. Then another dutchie named Julien Nuijten—he came in second place at Dutch Nationals—he is a really good player—fifteen years old I think. He is an up and coming talent. He suggested to me that Vials were still good so I put them back in together with Retrievers and **Atogs**. I played it for a while and really liked the deck and took it to Zurich. During the byes I showed the deck Kai and he laughed at me, "Haha. Vial and Retriever that can't be good!"

And then I suddenly finished third. I think the deck is still really good. I look at the top tables here and I see lots of Vial Affinity decks and at the last American GP Osyp won with it. So I think it is still the best deck.

**BDM:** You mentioned Nuijten and Wiergesma. Are they your regular playtest group?

**FK:** All the dutchies work together. It is a really small country and everyone lives within two hours of one another so testing is really easy. We have a strong testing group and strong drafts to play in. The weekly drafts we play in are like Pro Tour caliber tables. The real core of the group is Jeroen, Jelger, Kamiel and myself because we are on the gravy train. For any given Pro Tour about six other dutchies are qualified so the group is irregular.

**BDM:** How does the national team look this year?

**FK:** The team is really good this year. It is headed up by Jeroen and he is a very good Pro player. The French team might be better since they have three Pro players on it but I think the Dutch team has a really good shot—maybe second place or something like that.

**BDM:** I don't suppose you would be willing to divulge what you are thinking about playing at Worlds in the individual competition?

**FK:** I'm probably going to play Affinity in both Block Constructed and Standard. I don't really feel like testing much and I know the deck inside and out so I can play it well. I think it is still the best deck in both formats.



GP Zurich, '04

**BDM:** You worked with Zvi and some other non-Dutch for Pro Tour Kobe. Any chance of a repeat of that think tank for this upcoming Pro Tour?

**FK:** That was a mixed bag team, some English, some dutchies, some YMG. I think that team might even still exist but I don't really care because looking for new decks for Worlds doesn't really matter that much. Formats are all old and everyone knows about the decks. I don't think new decks or new real tech will evolve. So what you get from playtesting now is seeing which deck you are comfortable with and which deck you like to play. And I already know I like Affinity so I don't care that much about testing new decks.

**BDM:** There is so much hate out there for the Affinity decks. What do you say to everyone who claims to have the perfect foil deck for Affinity?

**FK:** I don't believe them. You might get a deck that beats affinity 50% of the time. Maybe red-green if tuned perfectly against affinity but still I think that is the best you can get. If played well, regular hate can't really stop it. All the red-green deck does is trade one for one and the affinity deck is just faster and those decks can't keep up.

**BDM:** How do you cope with all the mirror matches? Isn't a 50/50 matchup all you can hope for in the mirror?

**FK:** There are lots of sideboarding strategies. The most common one is to sideboard green for **Viridian Shaman** and **Oxidize**. I think it is the best strategy.

**BDM:** Really? Why is **Oxidize** and Shaman better than **Electrostatic Bolt** and **Shatter**?



GP London '03

**FK:** First of all **Relic Barrier** is better than **Shatter**. Second, it doesn't matter for the mana base. You have just as many green sources as red sources. Plus you can use the Vials to bring out the Shamans and I think Shaman is just a better card than **Shatter** because it has a 2/2 creature attached to it. Often the mirror matches are kind of long games and the extra 2/2 can matter quite a bit. I like **Oxidize** better than the Bolt because **Oxidize** kills everything the Bolt kills plus more—like lands. You can also sideboard the Shamans against control decks that have random artifacts. You don't want **Shatter** against that type of deck but Shaman is fine.

**BDM:** You have had a very successful **Magic** career and won a nice sum of money. Still you don't have an appearance on Sunday for your resume. I don't think people realize how hard it is to make it all the way through to Sunday. What is it going to take for you to add a Top 8 to your already impressive resume?

**FK:** I finished 10th in PT San Diego and I finished fifth in last year's PT Boston—the team PT. I still feel as though I am on top of my game. It takes some talent, lots of experience, and time to playtest for the new formats. I am still happy with my chances to Top 8 any Pro Tour I attend.

**BDM:** Thanks for your time Frank and good luck at this year's World Championships.

## Spotlight on German and Belgium PTQ results

While the largest North American Grand Prix was taking place in New Jersey the largest constructed PTQ ever to be held in Germany was also taking place. Level three judge Justus Rönnau sent me the results for that event and the tournament held in Belgium that same weekend.



First up was the 137 player event that was held in Bremen, Germany. It was a two-slot qualifier, which came as a surprise to me. I didn't know they still ran any multiple slot QTs other than Grand Prix tournaments. Apparently all the German tournaments are two-slot and the two players did not play out the finals after a grueling eight rounds of Swiss and two rounds of elimination.

### Qualified:

Jim Herold - Big Red  
Bodo Rösner - U/B Cloud

### Semis:

Patrick Lutz - Vial Affinity  
Marc Schneider - Big Red

### Quarters:

Norman Huebner - Big Red  
Andreas Schraut - Vial Affinity  
Markus Reisner - T&N  
Jasmin Kuhl - Affinity

The top looks pretty much like staple decks except for Rösner's deck, which was a Blue-Black Death Cloud concoction. While it is not an uncommon archetype it has not taken too many Top 8 berths much less qualified a player. The other qualified player was triple Grand Prix Champion Jim Herold who had more or less retired from **Magic**. He returned when he found out—in the words of Justus Rönnau, "Life without **Magic** might be cheaper, but it is not half as much fun as with **Magic** :)"

**Bodo Rösner**



Black Blue Cloud - Winner PTQ Bremen, Germany		
Main Deck		Sideboard
60 cards		
4 Blinkmoth Nexus	4 Condescend	3 Annul
8 Island	4 Damping Matrix	3 Barter in Blood
3 Mirrodin's Core	4 Darksteel Ingot	2 Greater Harvester
1 Stalking Stones	4 Death Cloud	3 Last Word
8 Swamp	4 Echoing Decay	1 March of the Machines
24 lands	2 March of the Machines	3 Terror
	2 Promise of Power	
	4 Thirst for Knowledge	15 sideboard cards
4 Solemn Simulacrum	4 Wayfarer's Bauble	
4 creatures	32 other spells	

There was also a one slot event in Leuven, Belgium and the Top 8 broke down as follows (sorry, no decklists that I could find):

**Winner:** Fried Meulders - Vial Affinity

**Finalist:** Roy Huts - Affinity

**Semifinals:**

Simon Goertzen - Vial Affinity

Johnny Niemeyer - Red-Green

**Quarterfinals:**

Johann Kennes - T&N

Yves Goeleven - Mono-U March

Harald Stein - T&N

Nick Claes - Red-Green

Thanks for the info Justus! Here are the results from the North American PTQs that were held this past weekend. If you don't see your result here then you should nudge your tournament organizer to get the info in to Wizards in a timely fashion.

Event City	Event Date	Event TO	Attendance
Columbus (GP Trial)	8/14/2004	Mike Guptil	17
Finish: 1. Ryan Bauer; 2. Ben Morgan; 3. Chris Mondon ; 4. Samuel Stoddard; 5. Adam Schisler; 6. Justin Schisler ; 7. Daniel Mathias; 8. Dylan Brown			
Mobile (GP Trial)	8/14/2004	Kevin Dolbeare	18
Finish: 1. Chaney Luke Harrison			
Lincoln (GP Trial)	8/14/2004	Merlin Hayes	20
Finish: 1. Burt Hamernick; 2. Russel Cowan; 3. Jeff Hans; 4. Chad Meyer; 5. Skylin Thompson; 6. John Wheat; 7. Justin Klein; 8. Nick Allmaker			
Duluth (GP Trial)	8/14/2004	Anthony Edwards	
Finish: 1. Andrew Wolf; 2. Zach Parker; 3. Casey Hogan; 4. Jesse Kilgore; 5. Jaime Salvat; 6. Clint McGill; 7. Joshua Bradford; 8. John McGuire			
Calgary	8/14/2004	Jason Ness	68
Finish: 1. Taylor Putnam; 2. Douglas Potter; 3. Forrest Evans; 4. Dustin Jensen; 5. Roman Iwaskiw; 6. Steve Ross; 7. Matthew Bolding; 8. Alan Elms			
Las Vegas	8/14/2004	Karl Batdorff	70
Finish: 1. Joe Lossett; 2. Donovan Lozada; 3. Josh Wiitanen; 4. William Peterson; 5. Phillip LaPointe; 6. Steven Scamorza; 7. Roy Thevenot; 8. Jack Garrett			
Vancouver	8/14/2004	John Wong	85
Finish: 1. Dylan Lerch; 2. Eddie Liang; 3. Jason Adams; 4. Kellan Johnson; 5. Nikolai Decker; 6. Mark Douglas; 7. Adrian Wong; 8. Jeff Fung			
New Orleans	8/14/2004	Tim Weissman	92
Finish: 1. Michael Brodt; 2. Joshua Barrett; 3. Jason Tate; 4. Henry Reigle; 5. Gregg Maucele; 6. William Sterling Thompson; 7. Derek LeJeune; 8. John Freitas			
Denver	8/14/2004	Eric Smith	114
Finish: 1. Gabriel Z. Willmon			
Cleveland	8/15/2004	David Harbarger	164
Finish: 1. Thomas Wood; 2. Steve Schneider; 3. Michael Aten; 4. Shawn Houtsinger; 5. Ryan Mattis; 6. Paul Breedlove; 7. Martin Porter; 8. Ronald Waclawski			

## Play of the Week

Josh Rider was playing his Blue-Red Cheesequake deck against Paul Russell with Big Red during the Grand Prix. It was game three and Josh had tossed away game two when

he failed to **Condescend** a **Shrapnel Blast** that took out his **Arc-Slogger**. He had three mana open and Russell had tapped out.

In game three he was on the play and had three Mountains on turn three. He tapped three mana and cast **Seething Song**, presumably to cast **Arc-Slogger**. He looked over at Russell's board, which was Mountain, **Darksteel Citadel**, and a Talisman. He did some quick math and flicked two more **Seething Songs** on top of the first one for a whopping nine mana and paid full price for a **Furnace Dragon**, removing two of Russell's three mana sources from the game.

Next week: We'll meet the winner of the Vintage Championships from GenCon Indy.



Josh Rider, GP London '03

*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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