

Duelists' Companion Recap

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***Magic: The Gathering* First World Championship**

Last month, 512 **Magic** players from around the world journeyed to Milwaukee, Wisconsin with one common goal: each of them hoped to become the first-ever *Magic: The Gathering* World Champion. The Championship was the largest Duelists' Convocation tournament ever held, with eight different heats of 64 players each over a two-day period. The competition thinned to the final 64, as eight winners from each heat assembled at 8:00 a.m. on the final day of GenCon to see who would be crowned the world's best.

The duels were fierce and no competitor took any lead for granted. The 64 were halved to 32, and the 32 became 16. Shuffling became harder as the cards soaked up the sweat. The 16 were trimmed to eight, and finally became four. Living up to its billing as the World Championship, the semi-finals brought together two players from France, as well as one from Belgium and one from the U.S.

The American, 25-year-old Zak Dolan, was the first to be declared a finalist when he defeated the semifinalist from Belgium, Dominic Symens, 28, in a 2-0 match. Zak had traveled from his hometown of Rolla, Missouri to be at the finals. He barely made it in a car that lost first, fourth, and reverse gear on the trip, and he discovered on his arrival that the only vacancy in town was in his car.



The second semi-finals match was much closer as the two French players, Bertrand Lestre e, 23, and Cyrille DeFoucand, 20, fought a tight 2-1 match. The victor was Bertrand, who had come to the finals as the French National Champion. He was unaccustomed to American players and the Convocation tournament system, and had to adapt quickly. When he wasn't playing friendly pick-up games, Bertrand was busy trading for his entire tournament deck.

Steve Bishop, director of the Duelists' Convocation, called a short recess to allow the two players a few moments to collect their thoughts. Zak and Bertrand each went off on their own as a growing audience assembled for the upcoming match.

First Duel

Steve called for the finalists with his trademark "Okay guys!" and the duel began. Zak won the right to go first by outrolling Bertrand 4 to 3 on a 10-sided die. Zak started strong on his first turn playing a [Savannah](#), which he used to cast an [Ivory Tower](#). Bertrand, though, took the early offensive and dropped a [Mox Emerald](#), a [Mox Sapphire](#), and a [Taiga](#). He used these to cast a [Chain Lightning](#) on Zak and to bring out a [Sylvan Library](#). Zak offset all but one point of the damage on his turn with his [Ivory Tower](#), and then played a [Tropical Island](#) opting to cast nothing. The crowd watched intently as Bertrand began what was going to be his very methodical use of the [Sylvan Library](#). Always careful to examine each of his three choices, Bertrand never rushed himself. Whether this was a tactical or psychological decision, only Bertrand would know.



Bertrand's decision-making may have been drawn out, but his execution was always quick and efficient. Continuing his aggressive game, he hit Zak with another [Chain Lightning](#) and summoned a [Whirling Dervish](#) (1/1). Once again, Zak offset two of the damage with the [Ivory Tower](#), bringing him up to 18 life. Zak needed to slow Bertrand down, and responded with a [Savannah](#) and [Mox Emerald](#). He used them, along with his other [Savannah](#), to cast [Kismet](#). For his next turn, Bertrand continued amassing his forces, dropping a [Mishra's Factory](#) (2/2 when activated) and summoning a [Birds of Paradise](#) (0/1). Both came into play tapped because of Zak's [Kismet](#). Bertrand then attached with his [Whirling Dervish](#), doing 1 point of damage. The Dervish gained a +1/+1 counter for hitting Zak and became a 2/2 creature. Deep in thought, Zak did nothing his next turn except draw a card. Was he trying to build his hand for the [Ivory Tower](#), or was he hiding the fact that he had no spells to cast?

Bertrand likewise cast no spells on his turn, opting instead to attack with his [Whirling Dervish](#) and [Mishra's Factory](#) to do 4 points of damage. The Dervish gained another +1/+1 counter to become 3/3. Zak was healed slightly by the [Ivory Tower](#), bringing him up to 14 life. In a defensive move, he cast Swords to Plowshares on Bertrand's Dervish. Bertrand responded on his turn by simply attacking again with his [Mishra's Factory](#) to do 2 more points of damage. Zak could do nothing on his turn except heal for 1 with his [Ivory Tower](#). More and more, Zak just wasn't getting the cards that he needed.

Bertrand kept up the offensive by attacking Zak with the [Mishra's Factory](#) for 2 points of damage and hitting him with yet another [Chain Lightning](#). Zak healed for 2 with the [Ivory Tower](#) bringing him up to 10 life. Then, after dropping both a [Mox Pearl](#) and a [Mox Sapphire](#), Zak surprised the audience by

casting no spells. Not wishing to wait for Zak's reversal of fortune, Bertrand attacked with the [Mishra's Factory](#) for a fourth time, doing another 2 points of damage. Zak healed the 2 points with the [Ivory Tower](#), but his sigh spoke volumes. Bertrand started his turn by summoning a [Kird Ape](#). Not wanting another attacker, Zak countered it with a [Mana Drain](#). He regretted his decision seconds later as Bertrand pulled two cards from his hand: a [Channel](#) and a [Fireball](#). Everyone knew the duel was over when Bertrand showed a small smirk and said, "How much life do you have left?"

Second Duel

Zak fiddled with his sideboard during the break. After several minutes of debate, he chose to exchange a [Disenchant](#), [Kismet](#), and [Swords to Plowshares](#) from his deck for a [Circle of Protection: Red](#), [Power Sink](#), and [Reverse Damage](#). Happy with the outcome of the first duel, Bertrand opted to leave his deck unchanged. Zak, having lost the last duel, went first. With another good first draw, he played a [Library of Alexandria](#), which he tapped to draw a card, and a [Mox Emerald](#). Keeping the aggressive strategy that had worked so well, Bertrand used his first turn to drop a [Mishra's Factory](#). This time, though, Zak also had cards to play. First, Zak dropped a [Strip Mine](#) and then summoned a [Birds of Paradise](#). He then ended his turn by tapping his Library to draw another card. For the first time, a smile came to his face.

Bertrand started his next turn by dropping a [Bayou](#) and using it with [Mishra's Factory](#) to cast a [Demonic Tutor](#). The audience was filled with whispers and Bertrand made his very calculated search. The suspense was mercifully cut short after several minutes as Bertrand used his new acquisition, a [Black Lotus](#), to cast a [Mind Twist](#) (of 2). Zak lost a [Tundra](#) and a [Winter Orb](#) from his hand, and did nothing on his turn except draw a card.

Bertrand played a [Mox Sapphire](#) and a [Taiga](#) on his turn, cast a [Sylvan Library](#), and summoned a [Kird Ape](#) (2/3 due to the [Bayou](#) and [Taiga](#)). Zak responded by playing a [Tropical Island](#), which he used with other mana to cast [Control Magic](#) on the [Kird Ape](#). Relieved to have an attacker for the first time, Zak ended his turn by tapping his Library to draw a card. Bertrand clearly was unhappy with the prospect of facing his own Ape, so he did what any good wizard might do when his creation has turned against him -- he zapped it with a [Lightning Bolt](#). Then, as a substitute for the Ape, Bertrand summoned the [Argothian Pixies](#) (2/1).



Through it all, Zak remained very calm. He had the look of a man who had drawn the card he needed. Taking his time, Zak tapped his Library to draw a card, played a [Savannah](#), and then very casually summoned his own creature, a [Serra Angel](#)(4/4). Zak's smile was cut short as Bertrand, wanting the Serra even less than the controlled [Kird Ape](#), dropped a [Tropical Island](#) and [Psionic Blasted](#) the Angel (doing 2 points of damage to himself in the process). Then, after activating his [Mishra's Factory](#), Bertrand attacked with the Factory and the Pixies to do 4 points of damage. The audience grew eerily silent as Zak took a long time staring at his cards. Finally, with what seemed like renewed vigor, Zak began his turn. He [Strip Mined](#) Bertrand's [Mishra's Factory](#), tapped his Library to draw a card, and summoned a [Time Elemental](#) (0/2). It was clear to all that Zak had started his comeback. Bertrand chose to do nothing other than attack again with his Pixies, bringing Zak down to 14 life. Zak appeared unconcerned. After tapping his Library to draw a card, Zak started throwing down spell after spell. First cast was [Time Walk](#), then came the [Howling Mine](#), then [Meekstone](#), and finally, starting his second turn, [Icy Manipulator](#). Before saying "done," Zak played a [Savannah](#), and tapped the [Icy Manipulator](#) to tap the [Howling Mine](#) (Zak repeated this action for the remainder of the game and Bertrand never received a second card.)

For his next turn, Bertrand drew a card, dropped a [Mishra's Factory](#), and attacked again with the Pixies for 2. Zak tapped his library to draw a card, played a [Tropical Island](#), used the [Time Elemental](#) to make Bertrand put the [Mishra's Factory](#) back in his hand, and cast [Swords to Plowshares](#) on the Pixies, bringing Bertrand back up to 20 life. Bertrand replayed the [Mishra's Factory](#) and summoned a new [Kird Ape](#). Zak tapped his Library to draw a card, bringing a relieved, yet cautious, reaction. Then, after playing a [Tropical Island](#), he summoned a [Serra Angel](#). In a scene of déjà vu, Bertrand greeted the Serra with a [Psionic Blast](#). This time, however, Zak was prepared with a Power Sink and the Blast was never completed.

On the following turn, Bertrand drew his three cards (thanks to the [Sylvan Library](#)), but could only shake his head as he looked at his hand. Finally, Bertrand summoned a [Birds of Paradise](#). On the offensive for the first time in the match, Zak cast a [Sol Ring](#), tapped his Library to draw a card, and summoned a [Vesuvan Doppelganger](#) to copy the [Serra Angel](#). Zak then attacked with the Serra, forcing Bertrand to sacrifice his newly acquired Birds. Then, as a last gesture, Zak used his [Time Elemental](#) to unsummon Bertrand's [Sylvan Library](#).

Once again, Bertrand had clearly not gotten what he needed. He was only able to play a [Mox Jet](#) and recast the [Sylvan Library](#). After his customary tapping of the Library, Zak played the [fourth Tropical Island](#) and began looking through his discard pile. He smiled despite the fact that Bertrand was still at 20 life, and everyone watching knew the duel had just drawn to a close. Bertrand's demise was mercifully quick as Zak cast [Recall](#), exchanging a [Black Vise](#) and [Timetwister](#) in his hand for a [Serra Angel](#) and a [Time Walk](#) (both of which he cast immediately). The Serra and Doppelganger hit for 8, and then along with the second Serra, the trio hit for the final 12 on the extra turn. The match now stood at one to one. The World's Championship rested on a single duel!

Third Duel



The final break seemed like an eternity as no one dared to move or stretch for fear of losing a clear view of the final duel. Zak and Bertrand were both glued to their sideboards, trying to decide just what cards might make the difference. In the end, Zak swapped two [Meekstones](#) for a [Disenchant](#) and a [Karma](#), while Bertrand exchanged a [Control Magic](#) for a [Serendib Efreet](#). Bertrand, as the loser of the second duel, went first. He played a [Mox Sapphire](#) and a [Volcanic Island](#). Zak's luck on the first draw not only continued, but got better as he played a [Library of Alexandria](#). He then used the Library to bring out an [Ivory Tower](#). Noticeably upset at Zak's fortune, Bertrand refocused his energies. The duel wasn't over quite yet.

On his turn, Bertrand played a [Taiga](#). Zak then got 2 life from the [Ivory Tower](#), drew a card, tapped his Library to draw another card, and played a [Strip Mine](#) that he immediately used to destroy Bertrand's [Taiga](#). Obviously frustrated by a lack of choices, Bertrand could only play a [Bayou](#). Zak followed by getting 3 life from the [Ivory Tower](#) and playing a [Tundra](#). Then, during Bertrand's upkeep, Zak tapped his Library to draw another card. When it came time for Bertrand to draw a card, he smiled for the first time in the whole duel. He then dropped a Bayou, and used it with the other Bayou to summon a [Whirling Dervish](#) (1/1). Zak got 4 life from the [Ivory Tower](#), bringing him up to 29, but cast no spells. He discarded [Armageddon](#) and [Timetwister](#). Then, as before, Zak tapped his [Library of Alexandria](#) during Bertrand's upkeep.

Bertrand played a [City of Brass](#), summoned a [Kird Ape](#) (2/3 because of the [Bayous](#) in play) and attacked for a point of damage with his [Whirling Dervish](#), making it a 2/2 creature. Zak continued escalating his life total with the [Ivory Tower](#), bringing him up to 32 life. He then played a [Tropical Island](#), tapped his Library to draw a card, and finally summoned the [Old Man of the Sea](#). Bertrand, not particularly caring to see the Old Man, blasted him on sight with a [Lightning Bolt](#). He suffered 1 point of damage in the process, having used the [City of Brass](#) to cast the [Lightning Bolt](#). Then, trying to keep on the offensive, Bertrand played a [Tropical Island](#), and attacked with both his [Whirling Dervish](#) and [Kird Ape](#) to do 4 points of damage. Flush with life, Zak took the attack in stride.



On his turn, Zak then tapped his Library to draw a card, got 4 life from the [Ivory Tower](#), played a [Savannah](#), and cast [Karma](#). Because Bertrand had two [Bayous](#), he suffered from [Karma](#) during his upkeep, but went on to summon the Birds of Paradise and attacked with his Dervish and [Kird Ape](#) for 5 points of damage. The Dervish became a 4/4 creature. Unphased, Zak calmly tapped his Library for another card, got 4 life from his [Ivory Tower](#), and cast [Wrath of God](#) to kill Bertrand's [Whirling Dervish](#), [Kird Ape](#), and [Birds of Paradise](#). He then discarded a [Howling Mine](#). The crowd was so silent you could hear Bertrand's heart skip a few beats.

Down to 15 after [Karma](#), Bertrand tried to keep up the fight, but could only play a [Tropical Island](#). Zak then tapped the Library, got 4 life from the [Ivory Tower](#) (bringing him to 35 life), played a [Savannah](#), and cast [Disenchant](#) on Bertrand's [Mox Sapphire](#). Bertrand suffered 2 more points of damage from [Karma](#), and then attempted to summon the [Argothian Pixies](#). This move was promptly [Mana Drained](#) by Zak, and Bertrand could only shake his head. Zak got 2 life from his [Ivory Tower](#), tapped his Library for a card, and played [Savannah](#). Then, not able to cast a spell, Zak suffered two points of mana burn from the unused mana which [Mana Drain](#) had put in his pool.



Not yet ready to give up the fight, Bertrand took the 2 damage from [Karma](#) and cast a [Chain Lightning](#) on Zak. But things just weren't going Bertrand's way. Zak was able to not only [Power Sink](#) the spell but force Bertrand to tap his [City of Brass](#) in the process. On his turn, Zak got 2 life from the [Ivory Tower](#) (bringing him to 37 life), tapped his Library to draw a card, played a [Tundra](#), and then cast [Regrowth](#) to recover [Power Sink](#). Zak then ended his turn by casting [Stasis](#). Tapped out with only 10 life remaining, Bertrand conceded the match. Zak won the duel and match and became the first *Magic: The Gathering* World Champion.

transcribed by Mark Rosewater & Chris Page and written by Mark Rosewater

Look for more information on both Zak and Bertrand (and their decks) in Duelist #3.