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Zak Dolan's Worlds Diary



Zak Dolan · Magic Arcana
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I wrote this commentary on the first World Championships in 1996, when it was still fresh in my mind. It's fun to look back on the tournament and see all that has changed from the early days. I've since retired from playing Magic: The Gathering professionally, and now only rarely play -- Sometimes with my one remaining deck, an oversized 6" x 9" deck of promo cards, or sometimes by borrowing a deck from Wizards R&D member Matt Place. I look back fondly on Magic's earliest days, and I hope you'll enjoy this trip back in time as well.

The 1994 World Championships

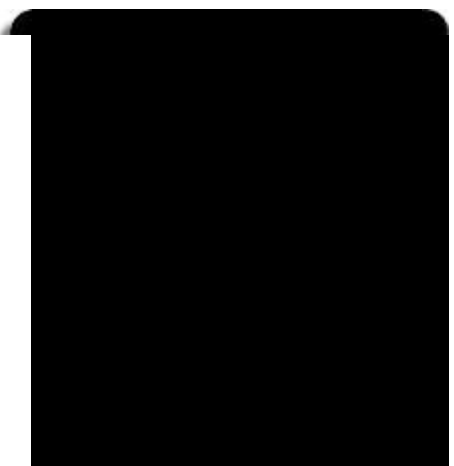
"What a long, strange trip it's been."

Getting to Gen Con for the World Championships was an adventure in itself. I was in Ann Arbor, Mich., at the time, so I decided to drive my 1988 Toyota MR2. About halfway there, I lost second, fourth, and reverse gears. I was worried that it was something major and that I would have to have the transmission replaced. Visions of a \$1,500 repair bill danced in my head. Fortunately, I found a repair shop that was open and I managed to get it fixed on the spot. It turns out that it was just a clip and not anything major.

When I got there, I didn't have a place to stay. I tried a whole bunch of motels, but anything within 15 miles was booked completely full. So I ended up sleeping in my car. For those of you who know how big an MR2 is, you can appreciate the difficulty of this situation. I also didn't have an alarm, so I had to count on the sun to wake me up in time for the tournaments each morning. I was very lucky that I didn't miss any of the rounds.

The format for the tournament was single elimination. There were four qualifier tournaments of 128 people each (total of 512 slots), with the top 16 people advancing to the World Championships, for the round of 64. This was nice, since it meant that you could change your deck between the qualifier and the championships. If you found something that didn't work, you could fix it instead of having to play with a flawed deck. This suited my style well, since I liked to continually tune and improve my deck.

I tried **Steal Artifact** in the qualifier rounds at Gen Con and remember one game where it worked very well. My opponent brought out an early **Juggernaut** and I played **Control Magic**. Then, he played a **Clockwork Beast** and I played **Steal Artifact**. He was extremely disgusted that I used **Steal Artifact** to kill him. He couldn't believe that I had won with such a sorry card. I ended up taking it out of my deck before the Championships, since I found that generally there weren't enough people playing enough good artifacts to make it worth including. It was rather fortunate that the four qualifier tournaments were considered separate tournaments, since that meant that you could change your deck before the round of 64. As a result, I was able to dump a lot of garbage cards and replace them with good ones. Unfortunately, I also



dumped a good card, **Balance**, in this reshuffling. We now know that's a powerful card and worth playing, but I listened to bad advice and removed it at the time. That's the main card I regretted not having in the deck.

Playing at Gen Con before the big tournament, I played in a four-player game where one of the players brought out a bunch of large creatures rather quickly with a **Eureka**. That convinced me that I needed a second **Meekstone**. Later, I was having fun winning a three-player free-for-all when one of the players mentioned that he was only losing because he wasn't playing his best deck. "Oh?" I asked innocently. He said that **Time Elemental** was totally awesome and that it would stomp my deck or any other deck that he played. I asked what was in his deck and I had him write it down for me. It was something like this:

Karakas	Old Man of the Sea (4)	Diamond Valley (4)
Island of Wak-Wak (2)	Mahamoti Djinn (2)	Control Magic (4)
Time Elemental (3)	Clone (2)	Vesuvan Doppelganger
Feldon's Cane	Timetwister	Ancestral Recall
Time Walk	Counterspell (4)	Power Sink (3)
Flash Counter or Remove Soul	Strip Mine	



Plus some mana, of course, which he couldn't remember exactly off the top of his head. Apparently, it stomped the heck out of all of his friends. He was sure that he was going to win. I thought it was going to be interesting to see how far he got in the tournament. I think that he made it to the round of 64 before being knocked out. He did give me some good advice, though - he suggested that I try out a **Time Elemental** and a **Recall**, since he thought that they'd fit well with my deck. Each of them won me at least one game the next day. Since he was so helpful, I made sure to go over to the table he was playing at and let him know that I was still in the tournament after each round. That was kind of fun.

One of the players that I beat in the tournament had a friend watching. Together they bemoaned the fact that I was playing a deck that was very similar to a deck used by a friend of theirs. "Oh no! He's playing Don's deck!" I thought that it was funny that they had a friend with a very similar deck. They both thought that my opponent was dead for sure after seeing what I was playing. Afterwards, it was like, "Yeah, well, what did you expect? Of course you lost. He (meaning me) was playing Don's deck." I guess that just goes to show that people in different parts of the world can think up similar decks and that no one person can claim to be the first to think up a deck design.

Another player that I talked to just before the round of 32 was bragging about how his deck was unbeatable and how I might as well just resign now. I asked what was in his deck and he wouldn't say. He wouldn't even hint at it. I looked for him after the round was over, and I didn't see him anywhere. He didn't even make it to the next round. To this day, I still don't know what was in his deck that he was so sure was going to win it all.

About the time that it was down to only 32 players, my opponent asked to shuffle my deck. I said sure, but I asked him why. He said that he had seen some people cheating earlier in the tournament, some of whom he suspected had tried to cheat against him, and he wanted to be sure. He started to deal my cards into piles. I thought that I might as well do the same with his. You know, just to make sure. I felt naive for not shuffling my opponent's decks, since I had just foolishly trusted that nobody would be cheating. Talk about going from a small town to the big city in a hurry. From that point on, I dealt my opponent's cards into piles before each match, to make sure that they were properly randomized. Naturally, my opponents did the same.

When it got down to the round of 8, Mr. Khalsa, of Khalsa-Brain games, came up to me and gave me a Spellground, one of the neat cloths used to play cards on. He said that he wanted me to have it and that he wanted me to win, since I was the only one playing a "cool" deck.

Apparently, everyone else still left in the tournament was playing a four-of-everything-quick-kill-but-repetitive-and-boring-deck, which was quite a contrast to my drag-the-game-out-and-torture-you-for-a-long-time-with-unique-cards-deck. I was quite happy with this gift, since I had been planning on buying one anyway. After the tournament, I had a lot of the artists and Wizards of the Coast employees sign the mat. I still play on it today.

Another person in the crowd observed the type of decks that were generally in play at the time and stated that nobody would ever win a Magic tournament unless their deck could consistently kill in three to five turns. I wanted very much to argue that this was not the case, however, I was busy winning a tournament with a "slow" deck.

The whole time we were playing, I was hoping that I wouldn't draw Bertrand in the pairings. He was known as the man to beat for the tournament, since the French players were rolling over everyone like a freight train over a tin can. Since he was the French National Champion, people were sure that he was the best of the European players. Rumors started spreading about his deck. People knew that he was playing **Channel/Fireball**. People also knew that he was playing **Chaos Orb**. He was said to be able to make the **Chaos Orb** land exactly where he wanted it every single time. It was rumored that he had killed four people in a row on the first turn, using **Channel/Fireball**. I didn't want to find out if these rumors were true.

I normally didn't play **Chaos Orb**, since I didn't think that it was very sporting (the same with **Channel**) but after the qualifier tournament at Gen Con, I decided that if he was going to have one in his deck, I wanted to have one, too. That would show him! See how he likes a taste of his own medicine!



So I put one in my sideboard after the qualifiers, in order to prepare for the round of 64. It actually came in most useful in the semifinals, when Dominic asked if I played **Chaos Orb** and I said that I had one in my sideboard. He said that he had one in his sideboard, as well, but that he didn't like it, and that if I agreed not to play mine, he wouldn't play his. He explained to me that he kept one in his sideboard to use against Bertrand. I had a good laugh about that. I told him that mine was in the sideboard for the same reason, and we both laughed.

It didn't hurt their reputation that the French (and Belgian) players had played a lot of ante games with the Americans the night before and won a bunch of good cards from them -- lots of Moxes and **Black Lotuses**. I can imagine what that was like. Picture losing on turn three and hearing the reply, in a slight French accent, "So, I won your Beta **Black Lotus**. It was probably just luck. Would you like to play again, double or nothing? I tell you what, just to make it interesting, perhaps we add a Mox also?"

The first player that I played in the first game of the qualifiers almost beat me. He showed up again during the finals and was quick to point out to the spectators that I was the one who he had to play first round. I felt kind of sorry for him, since he had a really good deck but had the misfortune to get a bad draw against me in the third and final game of our match. Who knows how far he might have gone otherwise.

Semifinal Matches

Zak Dolan (USA) beat Dominic Symens (Belgium) 2-0

Bertrand Lestree (France) beat Cyrille DeFoucand (France) 2-1

In the semifinals, I got to play one of the European players for the first time. At that point, I was the only American left in the tournament, which was kind of exciting since that made me the local favorite. Once again, I got lucky and didn't draw Bertrand for my pairing. Instead, I got Dominic, the Belgian player. Apparently, the fourth European player had to play one of his countrymen earlier in the tournament and had been eliminated.

Dominic got off to a great start in the game -- something like land, Mox, **Dark Ritual**, **Juzam Djinn**. That Juzam did its usual 20-some points of damage that game, however, not in the usual fashion. Instead, it did five to me, and about fifteen to Dominic, since my reply to his first turn was land, **Meekstone**. Later in the game, I got out a **Time Elemental**. Dominic kept jokingly suggesting that perhaps I would like to put his Juzam back into his hand. For the whole game, that was the only thing that was doing damage to him. Eventually, he resigned. He was a very good sport about the whole thing, though.

The second game against Dominic resulted in heavy sideboarding on his part. He must have switched in at least nine cards. He was prepared for just such a deck as mine, apparently. We played the second game and I kept his mana completely tied down with a **Winter Orb**, **Kismet**, and a few other cards, so that he never got more than two mana at any point. He resigned when it became obvious that his position was hopeless. After the game, he showed me his hand and we both got to chuckle a little bit. His entire sideboard was in his hand -- something like **Gloom**, **Gloom**, **Flashfires**, **Flashfires**, **Tsunami**, **Tsunami**, **Tsunami** -- and he never got the opportunity to cast any of them, since I kept him limited to no more than two mana the whole game. Any one of those would have devastated me. Lucky he couldn't cast any of them.

Bertrand wasn't quite finished with his game -- they were tied at one game apiece and starting the final game. I heard groans from the audience. Apparently, his opponent had drawn a **Diamond Valley** as his only land. That was the exact start that I had been worried about during deck construction and my reason for relegating **Diamond Valley** to the sideboard. It looks as if not playing it in the main deck was a wise move, since the same thing could just as easily have happened to me had I been playing **Diamond Valley** standard.

Bertrand didn't take too long to finish him off. As we were about to sit down to play, Bertrand asked Dominic, in French, about my deck. Dominic's reply was "Le mieux.." At the time, neither of them knew that I could speak French, so they didn't know that I could tell that Dominic had just told Bertrand that my deck was "The best." That was quite a thrill for me -- to hear my deck described in that manner.

Even though I knew that Bertrand was playing "**Channel/Fireball**" strategy, I didn't sideboard against him the first game. Pre-sideboarding was allowed at the time, since the Duelist Convocation did not prevent it yet. Bertrand asked that I follow the French tradition of not sideboarding before the first game of the match. This was a wise move, since it was widely known that he was playing **Channel/Fireball**. I agreed not to do so, provided that he wouldn't, as well. This is what we were playing:

Bertrand Lestree's Deck		
Finalist - World Championships #1		
Main Deck		Sideboard
60 cards		
2 City of Brass	4 Fireball	1 City in a Bottle
4 Taiga	4 Lightning Bolt	1 Control Magic
2 Bayou	4 Chain Lightning	3 Disintegrate
4 Tropical Island	1 Channel	1 Flashfires
4 Mishra's Factory	1 Ancestral Recall	1 Forcefield
4 Volcanic Island	1 Time Walk	2 Lifeforce
20 land	1 Regrowth	4 Serendib Efreet
	1 Control Magic	2 Tsunami
	1 Demonic Tutor	15 sideboard cards
3 Argothian Pixies	1 Mox Emerald	
4 Kird Ape	1 Mox Jet	
3 Birds of Paradise	1 Mox Ruby	
2 Whirling Dervish	1 Black Lotus	
12 creatures	1 Chaos Orb	
	1 Icy Manipulator	
	2 Psionic Blast	
	1 Mind Twist	
	1 Mox Sapphire	
	28 other spells	

Zak Dolan's Deck

Winner - World Championships #1

Main Deck 60 cards		Sideboard
1 Library of Alexandria	1 Ancestral Recall	1 Chaos Orb
4 Savannah	1 Control Magic	1 Circle of Protection: Red
4 Tropical Island	1 Mana Drain	1 Copy Artifact
4 Tundra	1 Recall	1 Diamond Valley
2 Strip Mine	1 Siren's Call	1 In the Eye of Chaos
<hr/>		1 Floral Spuzzem
15 land	2 Stasis	2 Karma
1 Clone	1 Timetwister	1 Magical Hack
2 Old Man of the Sea	1 Time Walk	1 Power Sink
1 Time Elemental	1 Regrowth	1 Presence of the Master
1 Vesuvan Doppelganger	1 Armageddon	1 Reverse Damage
1 Birds of Paradise	2 Disenchant	1 Sleight of Mind
1 Ley Druid	1 Kismet	1 Kismet
4 Serra Angel	4 Swords to Plowshares	1 Winter Blast
<hr/>		15 sideboard cards
11 creatures	1 Wrath of God	
	1 Black Lotus	
	1 Black Vise	
	1 Howling Mine	
	1 Icy Manipulator	
	1 Ivory Tower	
	1 Mana Vault	
	2 Meekstone	
	1 Mox Emerald	
	1 Mox Jet	
	1 Mox Pearl	
	1 Mox Ruby	
	1 Mox Sapphire	
	1 Sol Ring	
	1 Winter Orb	
	<hr/>	
	34 other spells	

Before the finals, I was perfectly calm. I had competed in and won big tournaments before, so this kind of pressure was not new to me. Some of my opponents in earlier matches at Gen Con were visibly nervous. One guy couldn't stop his hands from shaking while he was playing. I just kept thinking to myself, "Not Bertrand. Please don't pair me with Bertrand." Each time when they announced the pairings, I was very happy to find out that I wasn't playing him.

He had me kind of psyched-out from the beginning. It didn't help that he was wearing sunglasses and had a reputation for winning a lot of games. Especially his reputation for winning games in under four turns. By the time I got to the finals, I started to get a little nervous. Now I was finally playing Bertrand, the man to beat.

I wanted to put down the new Spellground I had been given for the finals, but Wizards of the Coast asked me not to, since they were planning on filming the finals and wanted a black background so that the cards would show up well on the video tape. Unfortunately, they later misplaced the tape, so I never did manage to get a copy of it.

Finals, First Duel

Bertrand was very careful to shuffle my deck into piles ahead of each duel, to make sure that my cards were completely randomized. I did likewise. I noticed that about half of his cards were Alphas and half Betas. This made me a little suspicious, thinking "What if all his lands are Alphas, or something like that?", but the judges assured me that they had already checked it out and there was no pattern as to which ones were Alphas and which ones were Betas. I thought pretty seriously about putting all the Alphas in one stack and all the Betas in another and then

cutting so that one stack was on top. I wanted to see if that would get a reaction. But I didn't, figuring that one of the two might give him a huge advantage, and that I didn't want to take that kind of chance.

Opening Hands

Zak: Ivory Tower, Mana Vault, Mox Emerald, Savannah, Stasis, Stasis, Tropical Island

Bertrand: Chain Lightning, Mox Emerald, Mox Ruby, Psionic Blast, Sylvan Library, Taiga, Whirling Dervish

*I was not very happy with my opening hand, since I got two copies of **Stasis**, a card that I usually don't like to draw until late in the game. On a brighter note, I did have land and I did get an **Ivory Tower**, something I hadn't drawn much during the tournament.*

Opening Roll: On a ten-sided die (Bertrand's), Zak rolls a 4 and Bertrand rolls a 3. Zak gets to go first.

*I was ready to flip a coin to see who went first, but Bertrand was ready with a 10-sided die. I rolled first and got a four. I was sure that he was going to play first, but my luck held, and he rolled a three. At the time, whoever played first also drew first, giving a large advantage to the player going first. I really wanted to go first, since that way I would at least get to play a card or two before being hit with **Channel/Fireball**. This combo was universally feared and despised. It resulted in **Channel** eventually being banned. I can't begin to describe to you the fear that the matches would end quickly with twenty points of red doom. Anyone could get a lucky draw and lose before they got a chance to show what their deck could do.*

Turn #1 Zak: 20 Bertrand: 20

Zak's Hand: Ivory Tower, Mana Vault, Mox Emerald, Savannah, Stasis (2), Tropical Island.

In Play: Nothing.

Zak draws Savannah, plays Savannah, taps Savannah and casts Ivory Tower.

*This seemed like a decent start. I was a little nervous, though, since I was afraid that he would cast **Channel/Fireball** and kill me immediately, before I could play much of anything. It could happen.*

Turn #2 Zak: 20 Bertrand: 20

Bertrand's Hand: Chain Lightning, Mox Emerald, Mox Ruby, Psionic Blast, Sylvan Library, Taiga, Whirling Dervish.

In Play: Nothing.

Bertrand draws Chain Lightning, plays Mox Emerald, Mox Ruby, Taiga, taps Taiga to cast Chain Lightning on Zak. Taps Mox Ruby and Mox Emerald to cast Sylvan Library.

*Now I was starting to sweat. He's damaged me already and he's got the Sylvan out to help him find the **Channel**. I was totally psyched out at this point.*

Turn #3 Zak: 17 Bertrand: 20

Zak's Hand: Mana Vault, Mox Emerald, Savannah, Stasis (2), Tropical Island

In Play: Ivory Tower, Savannah

Zak gains two life from the Ivory Tower. Zak draws Mana Drain and plays Tropical Island.

*After drawing the **Mana Drain**, I thought that I had better prepare to cast it by playing a **Tropical Island**. This was probably a little bit premature, since that would be one less card in hand for the **Ivory Tower**, but I was still sweating the possibility of the **Channel/Fireball**.*

Turn #4 Zak: 19 Bertrand: 20

Bertrand's Hand: Chain Lightning, Psionic Blast, Whirling Dervish.

In Play: Mox Emerald, Mox Ruby, Sylvan Library, Taiga.

Bertrand draws (with the Sylvan Library) Chain Lightning, Mishra's Factory, Birds of Paradise. He keeps the Birds of Paradise and places the rest back on top. He taps the Mox Emerald and the Taiga to play Whirling Dervish. He taps the Mox Ruby to play Chain Lightning on Zak (down to 16).

He's really coming out after me quickly. I'm feeling it now. I'm worried. His deck isn't letting up at all.

Turn #5 Zak: 16 Bertrand: 20

Zak's Hand: Mana Drain, Mana Vault, Mox Emerald, Savannah, Stasis (2).

In Play: Ivory Tower, Savannah, Tropical Island.

Zak gains two life from the Ivory Tower and draws Kismet. Zak plays Savannah, Mox Emerald, and casts Kismet.

This was a huge mistake. I felt that I had to do something to slow him down. I let the pressure get to me. The right move was just to hold everything in my hand and gain from the Ivory Tower. This probably cost me the game. I was thinking that it would work well with the two Stasis that I had in my hand, but I never got enough blue in play to make Stasis really useful.

Turn #6 Zak: 18 Bertrand: 20

Bertrand's Hand: Birds of Paradise, Psionic Blast.

In Play: Mox Emerald, Mox Ruby, Sylvan Library, Taiga, Whirling Dervish.

Bertrand draws Mishra's Factory, Chain Lightning, Fireball. He keeps the Mishra's Factory. Plays the Mishra's Factory, tapped. Taps Mox Emeralds to play the Birds of Paradise, tapped. Attacks with Whirling Dervish, which does one point of damage to Zak and gains a +1/+1 counter.

Turn #7 Zak: 17 Bertrand: 20

Zak's Hand: Mana Drain, Mana Vault, Stasis (2)

In Play: Ivory Tower, Kismet, Mox Emerald, Savannah (2), Tropical Island.

Zak draws a Mox Sapphire.

At this point, I should still have the Kismet and the Mox Emerald in my hand and just be playing the second Savannah. That would have given me a lot more life, which I definitely needed against Bertrand.

Turn #8 Zak: 17 Bertrand: 20

Bertrand's Hand: Psionic Blast

In Play: Birds of Paradise, Mishra's Factory, Mox Emerald, Mox Ruby, Sylvan Library, Taiga, Whirling Dervish.

Bertrand draws a Chain Lightning, a Fireball, and a Lightning Bolt. He keeps the Lightning Bolt. He taps the Taiga to activate the Mishra's Factory and attacks with the Mishra's Factory and the Whirling Dervish for four points of damage. The Whirling Dervish gains a +1/+1 counter, to 3/3.

Relentless.



Turn #9 Zak: 13 Bertrand: 20

Zak's Hand: Mana Drain, Mana Vault, Mox Sapphire, Stasis (2).

In Play: Ivory Tower, Kismet, Mox Emerald, Savannah (2), Tropical Island.

Zak gains 1 life from the Ivory Tower to 14 and draws a Swords to Plowshares. He immediately taps a Savannah to cast Swords to Plowshares on the Whirling Dervish, causing Bertrand to gain three life.

He's still got me psyched out. I make another rookie mistake. I should have held the Swords to Plowshares and cast it on his turn when he attacked.

Turn #10 Zak: 14 Bertrand: 23

Bertrand's Hand: Lightning Bolt, Psionic Blast

In Play: Birds of Paradise, Mishra's Factory, Mox Emerald, Mox Ruby, Sylvan Library, Taiga.

Bertrand draws a Fireball, a Chain Lightning, and a Kird Ape. He keeps the Fireball. He taps the Mox Emerald to activate and attack with the Mishra's Factory for two points.

He's keeping pace with my Ivory Tower without much trouble.

Turn #11 Zak: 12 Bertrand: 23

Zak's Hand: Mana Drain, Mana Vault, Mox Sapphire, Stasis (2).

In Play: Ivory Tower, Kismet, Mox Emerald, Savannah (2), Tropical Island.

Zak gains one life from the Ivory Tower and draws a Black Lotus.

At least I've realized my mistake now and I'm holding cards again.

Turn #12 Zak: 13 Bertrand: 23

Bertrand's Hand: Fireball, Lightning bolt, Psionic Blast.

In Play: Birds of Paradise, Mishra's Factory, Mox Emerald, Mox Ruby, Sylvan Library, Taiga.

Bertrand draws a Chain Lightning, a Kird Ape, and a Taiga and keeps the Chain Lightning. He taps the Mox Emerald to activate and attack with the Mishra's Factory for two points of damage. Then, he taps the Mox Ruby to cast Chain Lightning.

He's really coming out after me quickly. At this point, I'm getting near the danger zone where he just finishes me off with Lightning Bolts drawn from the Sylvan Library. I'm thinking that I've got to do something quick.

Turn #13 Zak: 8 Bertrand: 23

Zak's Hand: Black Lotus, Mana Drain, Mana Vault, Mox Sapphire, Stasis (2).

In Play: Ivory Tower, Kismet, Mox Emerald, Savannah (2), Tropical Island.

Zak gains two life from the Ivory Tower and draws a Mox Pearl. Zak plays a Mox Sapphire.

Now I'm set up for the Mana Drain, but I should have kept the Kismet in my hand. With that, I still would have had a decent amount of life.

Turn #14 Zak: 10 Bertrand: 23

Bertrand's Hand: Fireball, Lightning Bolt, Psionic Blast

In Play: Birds of Paradise, Mishra's Factory, Mox Emerald, Mox Ruby, Sylvan Library, Taiga.



Bertrand draws a **Kird Ape**, a **Taiga**, and a **Channel** and keeps the **Channel**. He taps the **Mox Emerald** to activate and attack with the **Mishra's Factory** for two.

*Now, Bertrand is set up. He's ready for **Channel/Fireball**, but he's eyeing my two untapped blue. He thinks that I might have a **Counterspell**. Little does he realize that I've only got one counter in the deck -- but it's in my hand. It's amazing how it seems to be there when I really need it. If only I don't blow it on the wrong thing...*

Turn #15 Zak: 8 Bertrand: 23

Zak's Hand: **Black Lotus**, **Mana Drain**, **Mana Vault**, **Mox Pearl**, **Stasis (2)**

In Play: **Ivory Tower**, **Kismet**, **Mox Emerald**, **Mox Sapphire**, **Savannah (2)**, **Tropical Island**.

Zak gains two lives from the **Ivory Tower** and draws a **Time Walk**.

*Here I make another mistake. I never used the **Time Walk**. If I still had a full hand, it would have given me another card and three more life. I should have at least used it to get two more points of life and another card. Sigh.*

Turn #16 Zak: 10 Bertrand: 23

Bertrand draws a **Kird Ape**, a **Taiga**, and a **Mox Sapphire**. Bertrand keeps a **Kird Ape**. Bertrand taps the **Mox Ruby** to summon the **Kird Ape**. Zak taps the **Tropical Island** and the **Mox Sapphire** to cast **Mana Drain**, successfully countering the **Kird Ape**. Bertrand taps the **Birds of Paradise** and the **Mox Emerald** to cast **Channel** and the **Taiga** to use **Channel** to cast a 10 point **Fireball**, doing 10 points of damage to Zak, winning the duel, with the final score of Zak: 0, Bertrand: 13.

*I took a gamble that didn't pay off. I felt that I had to stop him from swarming me with creatures. I should have just relaxed and used the **Time Walk** to try to draw one of my many creature defense spells. I should have trusted my relatively heavy creature defense to stop his critters and used my counter to stop his direct damage. It looks like he probably would have won this one anyway, even if I didn't counter this, since I was low on life and he had a lot of direct damage in his hand. I was really annoyed with myself for ending the game with a **Time Walk** in my hand.*

Zak's remaining cards: **Black Lotus**, **Mana Vault**, **Mox Pearl**, **Stasis (2)**, **Time Walk**. Bertrand's remaining cards: **Lightning Bolt**, **Psionic Blast**.

Second Duel

Sideboard Exchanges:

Zak takes **Disenchant**, **Kismet**, and **Swords to Plowshares** from his deck and puts them in his sideboard. He takes **Circle of Protection: Red**, **Power Sink**, and **Reverse Damage** from his sideboard and puts them in his deck.

*I didn't see much to use the **Disenchant** on, so I took it out. I needed something to make room for the stuff that I was sure that I needed. Also, I was extremely bothered by the **Channel/Fireball** -- all my worst fears were realized in the previous game -- so I wanted to put in everything that could possibly defend against it. I was hoping that this would be the game where I'd get to use a **Reverse Damage** against the **Channel/Fireball**. I've always wanted to do that, but to this day, I've never had the pleasure. **Kismet** didn't help at all the last game, so I took it out. A fourth **Swords to Plowshares** didn't seem as useful as **COP: Red**, so that was an easy choice.*

*I was going first, which I was looking forward to, even though it didn't seem to help much the first game. I was still worried a lot about **Channel/Fireball**, thinking, "What if he gets a really lucky draw and kills me first turn, before I even get to do anything?" I was a little distressed at the thought that he might just blank me out completely, and I would have lost 0-2 in the finals. I thought that would be completely embarrassing.*

*I managed to calm down a little bit after side boarding, thinking, "Aha, I've side-boarded. I've got you now!" Because of my confidence in my side-board, I was mentally able to get back in the game and overcome the intimidation of playing against the French National Champ's quick-kill **Channel/Fireball** deck in the finals of the first World Championships.*

*At this point, I thought really seriously about playing the **Chaos Orb**. After all, I had put it in the deck specifically to play against people who used it, namely Bertrand. But I finally decided that it just wasn't that nice of a card. I decided that just because someone else tainted his or her deck with it does not mean that I should.*

*We're both spreading our cards out a bunch during all three duels, so that there isn't any chance of the **Chaos Orb** hitting more than one of our cards. At one point during one of the later duels, Bertrand jokes a little bit with the camera man by playing his land spread out so far that it's almost off the table and can't be fully captured in a single shot with the camcorder. Each time the cameraman attempts to film the land near the edge of the table, Bertrand moves it a little farther away.*

Bertrand makes no exchanges with his sideboard.

*Why should he? His strategy seemed to be working just fine. He was dominating. He forces were coming against me so quickly that I had very little time to think. Later, upon seeing his sideboard, I was surprised that he hadn't put in one of the **Tsunami's** or the **Flashfires**, since either one would kill 8 of my 15 land, over half the land in my deck.*

Opening Hands:

Zak: **Control Magic**, **Library of Alexandria**, **Mox Emerald**, **Serra Angel**, **Strip Mine**, **Tundra**, and **Winter Orb**.

Bertrand: **Bayou**, **Demonic Tutor**, **Kird Ape**, **Lightning Bolt**, **Mind Twist**, **Mishra's Factory**, and **Sylvan Library**.

*I'm pretty happy with my opening draw, since it's only the second time in the whole tournament that I've drawn the **Library of Alexandria** on the opening hand. Also, I've got land again. That's promising.*

Turn #1 Zak: 20 Bertrand: 20

Zak's Hand: **Control Magic**, **Library of Alexandria**, **Mox Emerald**, **Serra Angel**, **Strip Mine**, **Tundra**, and **Winter Orb**.

In Play: Nothing.

Zak draws **Birds of Paradise**, plays the **Library of Alexandria**. Taps the Library to draw **Swords to Plowshares**. Plays the **Mox Emerald**.

*Here, I overlooked the fact that I could play the **Birds** this turn. This was a mistake that everyone but me noticed. I guess I was still a little psyched-out. As soon as I said, "Done," I realized my mistake and commented on it to one of the judges who mentioned that he saw it, too. As it turned out, this mistake didn't affect the game at all, since I fixed it next turn.*

Turn #2 Zak: 20 Bertrand: 20

Bertrand's Hand: **Bayou**, **Demonic Tutor**, **Kird Ape**, **Lightning Bolt**, **Mind Twist**, **Mishra's Factory**, and **Sylvan Library**.

In Play: Nothing.

Bertrand draws a **Psionic Blast** and plays a **Mishra's Factory**.

Turn #3 Zak: 20 Bertrand: 20

Zak's Hand: **Birds of Paradise**, **Control Magic**, **Serra Angel**, **Strip Mine**, **Swords to Plowshares**, **Tundra**, **Winter Orb**.

In Play: **Library of Alexandria**, **Mox Emerald**

Zak draws a **Time Elemental**. Zak taps the **Mox Emerald** to play the **Birds of Paradise**. Zak taps the Library to draw a **Meekstone**. Zak plays a **Strip Mine**.

*Here, I'm thinking that I can strip the **Mishra's Factory** if I need to, but that I want to be sure to take out his **Library of Alexandria** if he draws one. I probably should have taken the **Mishra's***

factory out right away, since there might have been a chance that Bertrand was hosed for mana, and since I had the Library, I could reasonably expect to draw more land. As it turned out, Bertrand wasn't playing the *Library of Alexandria*.

Turn #4 Zak: 20 Bertrand: 20

Bertrand's Hand: Bayou, Demonic Tutor, Kird Ape, Lightning Bolt, Mind Twist, Psionic Blast, and Sylvan Library.

In Play: Mishra's Factory.

Bertrand draws a Taiga, plays the Bayou, taps the Bayou and the Mishra's Factory to cast the Demonic Tutor. He considers Ancestral Recall, Birds of Paradise, Black Lotus, Chaos Orb, and Time Walk and finally decides on the Black Lotus. He plays the Black Lotus and taps it to cast a Mind Twist for two, causing Zak to discard the Tundra and a Winter Orb.

A lot of people thought that perhaps Bertrand made a mistake in his selection of cards here. I'm not sure that he did. I think that perhaps people just didn't understand the reason that he did what he did. I often wonder if I'd gotten him a little psyched-out at this point. Perhaps Dominic's earlier comment to Bertrand in French helped out after all.

He wanted to hit me with the Mind Twist when he knew that I couldn't counter it. After seeing a counter last game and not much else, he might have thought that I had a whole bunch of them in my deck. Also, he might not have liked the Kismet and might be trying to hit big casting cost cards out of my hand before I got a chance to play them. But perhaps the best reason for using the Mind Twist was to take me below the number of cards that I needed to have to use the Library of Alexandria.

Here, Bertrand picks the card at the front of my hand and the card at the back of my hand. I hadn't shuffled the cards prior to his selection, not realizing that he was using a very advanced tactic to try to knock the best cards out of my hand. After he chose what he did, I later figured out why he picked the way he did. He took the card from the front of my hand figuring that this was the card I was planning on playing next. He was right, but unfortunately for him, I was planning on playing a land next, and he got the Tundra. He also took the card from the back of my hand, figuring that this was a card that I wasn't planning on playing for a while, perhaps my best card and that I put it there until I could save up enough mana to cast it. Unfortunately for him, I had put the Winter Orb there, since I was not planning on casting it with a Library of Alexandria in play on my side.

Turn #5 Zak: 20 Bertrand: 20

Zak's Hand: Control Magic, Meekstone, Serra Angel, Swords to Plowshares, Time Elemental.]

In Play: Birds of Paradise, Library of Alexandria, Mox Emerald, Strip Mine.

Zak draws a Tropical Island.

At this point, I'm still trying to recover enough from the Mind Twist to be able to use the Library of Alexandria. Fortunately for me, I knew what to do in this case and wasn't shaken enough to try to immediately play something. I'd been in this type of situation before in practice games against Clint, so I just waited patiently. Plus, I figured that my poor Time Elemental would just get bolted immediately anyway.

Turn #6 Zak: 20 Bertrand: 20

Bertrand's Hand: Kird Ape, Lightning Bolt, Psionic Blast, Sylvan Library, Taiga.

In Play: Bayou, Mishra's Factory.

Bertrand draws a Mox Sapphire and plays it. He plays a Taiga. He taps the Mox Sapphire and the Bayou to cast Sylvan Library. He taps the Taiga to summon a Kird Ape.

There's that darn Sylvan Library again. And a Kird Ape. Where are the Disenchant and the Swords to Plowshares that I sideboarded out?

Turn #7 Zak: 20 Bertrand: 20

Zak's Hand: Control Magic, Meekstone, Serra Angel, Swords to Plowshares, Time Elemental, Tropical Island.

In Play: Birds of Paradise, Library of Alexandria, Mox Emerald, Strip Mine

Zak draws Stasis and taps the Library of Alexandria to draw Timetwister. Zak plays a Tropical Island and taps the Mox Emerald, the Strip Mine, the Tropical Island, and the Birds of Paradise to cast Control Magic on Bertrand's Kird Ape.

Now I'm a little bit happier. The Library is working for me again and I've stolen his best critter, which is big enough to block Bertrand's Factory.

Turn #8 Zak: 20 Bertrand: 20

Bertrand's Hand: Lightning Bolt, Psionic Blast

In Play: Bayou, Mishra's Factory, Mox Sapphire, Sylvan Library, Taiga.

Bertrand draws a Mox Jet, Argothian Pixies, and a Psionic Blast. He keeps the Argothian Pixies. He taps the Taiga to cast a Lightning Bolt on the Kird Ape, destroying it. He taps the Mox Sapphire and the Bayou to summon Argothian Pixies.

Well, so much for the Kird Ape. I was actually looking forward to hitting him with his own creature, but it wasn't going to happen.

Turn #9 Zak: 20 Bertrand: 20

Zak's Hand: Meekstone, Serra Angel, Stasis, Swords to Plowshares, Time Elemental, Timetwister.

In Play: Birds of Paradise, Library of Alexandria, Mox Emerald, Strip Mine, Tropical Island.

Zak taps the Library of Alexandria to draw a Mox Sapphire. Zak draws a Savannah. Zak plays the Savannah and taps the Mox Emerald, Savannah, Mox Sapphire, Tropical Island, and Birds of Paradise to summon a Serra Angel.

I still haven't used the Strip Mine on his Mishra's Factory, figuring that I need the mana right now.

Turn #10 Zak: 20 Bertrand: 20

Bertrand's Hand: Psionic Blast

In Play: Argothian Pixies, Bayou, Mishra's Factory, Mox Sapphire, Sylvan Library, Taiga

Bertrand draws a Mox Jet, a Psionic Blast, and a Tropical Island and keeps the Tropical Island. He plays the Tropical Island and taps the Tropical Island, the Taiga, and the Mox Sapphire to cast Psionic Blast on the Serra Angel, killing it. Bertrand takes two points of damage from the Psionic Blast. Bertrand taps the Bayou to activate the Mishra's Factory. He attacks with the Mishra's Factory and the Argothian Pixies for four points of damage.

Whoops! Looks like I should have killed his Factory after all.

Turn #11 Zak: 16 Bertrand: 18

Zak's Hand: Meekstone, Mox Sapphire, Stasis, Swords to Plowshares, Time Elemental, Timetwister.

In Play: Birds of Paradise, Library of Alexandria, Mox Emerald, Strip Mine, Savannah, and Tropical Island.

Zak taps the Library of Alexandria to draw an Icy Manipulator and then draws a Howling Mine. Zak plays a Mox Sapphire. Zak sacrifices the Strip Mine to destroy Bertrand's Mishra's Factory. Zak taps the Mox Sapphire, Mox Emerald, and Tropical Island to summon a Time Elemental.

I'm thinking that he's out of stuff to kill critters with (since his hand is empty) and that I might be able to have a lot of fun with the Time Elemental. I'm really looking forward to toying with him.

Turn #12 Zak: 16 Bertrand: 18

Bertrand's Hand: nothing

In Play: Argothian Pixies, Bayou, Mox Sapphire, Sylvan Library, Taiga, Tropical Island.

Bertrand draws a Psionic Blast, a Mox Jet, and Birds of Paradise, and keeps the Psionic Blast. He attacks with the Argothian Pixies for two points of damage.

I'm still getting hit. This is getting annoying. At least he doesn't have enough cards in his hand that he can Channel/Fireball me immediately.

Turn #13 Zak: 14 Bertrand: 18

Zak's Hand: Howling Mine, Icy Manipulator, Meekstone, Stasis, Swords to Plowshares, and Timetwister.

In Play: Birds of Paradise, Library of Alexandria, Mox Emerald, Mox Sapphire, Savannah, Time Elemental, and Tropical Island.

Zak draws a Time Walk and taps the Library to draw Armageddon. Zak taps the Tropical Island and the Mox Emerald to cast Time Walk. Zak taps the Mox Sapphire and the Birds of Paradise to cast Howling Mine. Zak taps the Savannah to cast Meekstone.

I'm thinking that with the Time Walk, I'll get two more cards from the Howling Mine and then cast the Icy to tap the Mine on my extra turn.

Turn #14 Zak: 14 Bertrand: 18

Zak's Hand: Armageddon, Icy Manipulator, Stasis, Swords to Plowshares, and Timetwister.

In Play: Birds of Paradise, Howling Mine, Library of Alexandria, Meekstone, Mox Emerald, Mox Sapphire, Savannah, Time Elemental, Tropical Island.

Zak draws Reverse Damage and Vesuvan Doppelganger (from the Howling Mine) and taps the Library to draw a Savannah. Zak plays the Savannah and taps a Mox Sapphire, Mox Emerald, Tropical Island, and Savannah to cast an Icy Manipulator.

I'm a happy camper now. All I've got to do is not get killed too quickly, and I'll have a lot of fun. If I can just avoid the Channel/Fireball and the Chaos Orb...

Turn #15 Zak: 14 Bertrand: 18

Bertrand's Hand: Psionic Blast

In Play: Argothian Pixies, Bayou, Mox Sapphire, Sylvan Library, Taiga, Tropical Island

Zak taps a Savannah to activate the Icy Manipulator to tap the Howling Mine on Bertrand's upkeep.

Bertrand draws a Mox Jet, Birds of Paradise, and a Mishra's Factory. He keeps the Mishra's Factory and plays it. Then, he attacks with the Argothian Pixies.

Turn #16 Zak: 12 Bertrand: 18

Zak's Hand: Armageddon, Reverse Damage, Stasis, Swords to Plowshares, Timetwister, Vesuvan Doppelganger.

In Play: Birds of Paradise, Howling Mine, Icy Manipulator, Library of Alexandria, Meekstone, Mox Emerald, Mox Sapphire, Savannah (2), Time Elemental, Tropical Island.

Zak draws a Tropical Island and taps the Library to draw Siren's Call and then draws a Power Sink from the Howling Mine. Zak plays a Tropical Island and taps two Tropical Islands, a Mox Sapphire, a Mox Emerald, and the Time Elemental to return Bertrand's Mishra's Factory to his hand.

Zak taps a Savannah to cast Swords to Plowshares on Bertrand's Argothian Pixies, removing them from the game and giving Bertrand two life. Zak taps the Savannah to use the Icy Manipulator to tap the Howling Mine.

*Here, I made a minor mistake. I shouldn't have used the **Time Elemental** until Bertrand's turn. That way, I could still use it defensively, if I needed to.*

*About this point, I realize that we're both drawing three cards per turn. The only difference is that I get to keep all three of mine and he has to put two of his back (or take massive amounts of damage -- four points per card -- from the **Sylvan Library**). I'm happy.*

Turn #17 Zak: 12 Bertrand: 20

Bertrand's Hand: **Mishra's Factory**, **Psionic Blast**

In Play: **Bayou**, **Mox Sapphire**, **Sylvan Library**, **Taiga**, **Tropical Island**

Bertrand draws a **Mox Jet**, **Birds of Paradise**, and a **Kird Ape** and keeps the **Kird Ape**. Bertrand plays a **Mishra's Factory** taps the **Taiga** to summon the **Kird Ape**.

Turn #18 Zak: 12 Bertrand: 20

Zak's Hand: **Armageddon**, **Power Sink**, **Reverse Damage**, **Stasis**, **Siren's Call**, **Timetwister**, **Vesuvan Doppelganger**.

In Play: **Birds of Paradise**, **Howling Mine**, **Icy Manipulator**, **Library of Alexandria**, **Meekstone**, **Mox Emerald**, **Mox Sapphire**, **Savannah (2)**, **Time Elemental**, **Tropical Island (2)**.

Zak taps the **Library** to draw a **Mox Ruby**. Zak draws a **Tropical Island** and a **Serra Angel** (from the **Howling Mine**). Zak plays a **Mox Ruby** and a **Tropical Island** and casts a **Serra Angel**. Zak taps a **Tropical Island** to use the **Icy Manipulator** to tap the **Howling Mine**. Bertrand taps the **Tropical Island**, the **Mox Sapphire**, and the **Taiga** to cast **Psionic Blast** on Zak's **Serra Angel**. Zak taps both of his **Tropical Islands** and his **Birds of Paradise** to cast **Power Sink** on Bertrand's **Psionic Blast**. Bertrand cannot pay the two extra mana, so the spell is successfully countered.

*Now, I'm very happy, since I've got a **Serra** into play and he used up the spell that he'd been saving to kill it. Fortunately, I remembered what happened the last time I played a **Serra Angel**, and was able to avoid it this time.*

Turn #19 Zak: 12 Bertrand: 20

Bertrand's Hand: Empty

In Play: **Bayou**, **Kird Ape**, **Mishra's Factory**, **Mox Sapphire**, **Sylvan Library**, **Taiga**, **Tropical Island**.

Bertrand draws **Birds of Paradise**, **Mox Jet**, and a **Tropical Island** and keeps the **Birds of Paradise**. Bertrand casts the **Birds of Paradise** using his **Bayou**.

*At this point, he could have attacked with something, bluffing that he had drawn a **Lightning bolt**. He missed a good opportunity to do some damage. He probably figured that he needed something to throw in the way of the **Serra Angel**. In his place, I probably would have almost given up on the **Channel/Fireball** and started drawing extra cards with the **Sylvan**. But maybe not, who can say.*

Turn #20 Zak: 12 Bertrand: 20

Zak's Hand: **Armageddon**, **Reverse Damage**, **Stasis**, **Siren's Call**, **Timetwister**, **Vesuvan Doppelganger**.

In Play: **Birds of Paradise**, **Howling Mine**, **Icy Manipulator**, **Library of Alexandria**, **Meekstone**, **Mox Emerald**, **Mox Ruby**, **Mox Sapphire**, **Savannah (2)**, **Time Elemental**, **Tropical Island (3)**, **Serra Angel**.

Zak draws a **Sol Ring** and a **Recall** from the **Howling Mine**. Zak taps the **Mox Ruby** to cast the **Sol Ring**. Zak taps the **Library of Alexandria** to draw a **Ley Druid**. Zak taps the **Mox Sapphire**, the **Tropical Island**, the **Mox Emerald**, and the **Sol Ring** to cast a **Vesuvan Doppelganger**, which takes the form of a **Serra Angel**. Zak attacks with the **Serra Angel**, which is blocked by the **Birds of Paradise**, killing the **Birds**. Zak taps two **Tropical Island** and both his **Savannahs** in order to use the **Time Elemental** to return Bertrand's **Sylvan Library** to his hand. Zak taps the **Birds of Paradise** to activate the **Icy Manipulator** to tap the **Howling Mine**.

*I'm pretty comfortable, since I know that he won't be drawing anything that can kill a **Serra Angel**.*

Turn #21 Zak: 12 Bertrand: 20

Bertrand's Hand: **Sylvan Library**

In Play: **Bayou, Kird Ape, Mishra's Factory, Mox Sapphire, Taiga, Tropical Island.**

Bertrand draws and plays a **Mox Jet**. Bertrand taps the **Mox Sapphire** and the **Bayou** to cast **Sylvan Library**.

He's got nothing better to do.

Turn #22 Zak: 12 Bertrand: 20

Zak's Hand: **Armageddon, Reverse Damage, Stasis, Siren's Call, Timetwister, Ley Druid, Recall.**

In Play: **Birds of Paradise, Howling Mine, Icy Manipulator, Library of Alexandria, Meekstone, Mox Emerald, Mox Ruby, Mox Sapphire, Savannah (2), Time Elemental, Tropical Island (3), Serra Angel, Vesuvan Doppelganger, Sol Ring.**

Zak taps the **Library** to draw an **Old Man of the Sea**. Zak draws a **Tropical Island** and a **Black Vise**. Zak plays a **Tropical Island** and looks through his discard pile.

At this point, I count my mana and start to smile. I realize that I've got just enough mana to win the game. Even though Bertrand is still has 20 points of life, I realize that I've won and that I'm going to kill him before he gets another turn.

Zak taps the **Tropical Island**, the **Sol Ring**, the **Mox Ruby**, and the **Mox Sapphire** to cast **Recall**. Zak trades the **Black Vise** and the **Timetwister** for the **Serra Angel** and the **Time Walk**. Zak taps two **Savannahs**, two **Tropical Islands**, and a **Mox Emerald** to summon a **Serra Angel**. Zak taps the **Tropical Island** and the **Birds of Paradise** to cast **Time Walk**. Zak attacks with the **Serra Angel** and the **Vesuvan Doppelganger** for eight points.

Turn #23 Zak: 12 Bertrand: 12

Zak's Hand: **Armageddon, Ley Druid, Old Man of the Sea, Reverse Damage, Siren's Call, Stasis.**

In Play: **Birds of Paradise, Howling Mine, Icy Manipulator, Library of Alexandria, Meekstone, Mox Emerald, Mox Ruby, Mox Sapphire, Savannah (2), Time Elemental, Tropical Island (4), Serra Angel (2), Vesuvan Doppelganger, Sol Ring.**

Zak doesn't even bother to draw. He declares that he is going to attack with the two **Serra Angels** and the **Vesuvan Doppelganger** to do twelve points of damage and win.

Zak's Remaining Hand: **Armageddon, Ley Druid, Old Man of the Sea, Reverse Damage, Siren's Call, Stasis.**

Bertrand's Remaining Hand: Empty.

Final Score: Zak: 12 Bertrand: 0

So it would come down to the final game. At this point, we both wanted a little bit of a break. We got up, stretched, and walked around a little bit while the referees kept a close watch on our decks. I was back in the match. It would all come down to this, one final game.

Third Duel

Sideboard Exchanges

Zak: takes out both **Meekstones** and puts in **Disenchant** and **Karma**.

*I realized that I wanted a **Disenchant** against his **Sylvan**. I never saw a creature big enough to use the **Meekstone** against. He had cast two different black spells last game and I saw a **Bayou**, so I thought that maybe a decent portion of his deck was **Black**. That made me want to try out **Karma**. Little did I realize that he only had two **Bayous** in his deck and no other swamps.*

Bertrand takes out **Control Magic** and puts in a **Serendib Efreet**.

*When I heard what his sideboard choices had been, they kind of puzzled me at first. The only thing that I can think of is that he thought that the **Control Magic** would be useless after the way the last game ended and that he was planning on using the **Serendib** to kill me even quicker. I was surprised that he didn't put in his **Flashfires** or his **Tsunami**. I guess he thought that they wouldn't be that helpful against me since I had other sources of mana. Or maybe he had planned to use them against mono-color decks, like white weenies or blue counterspell-heavy decks. The **Forcefield** probably wouldn't do too much, since I would use **Stasis** to get around it.*

Opening Hands:

Zak: **Armageddon**, **Howling Mine**, **Ivory Tower**, **Library of Alexandria**, **Mana Drain**, **Old Man of the Sea**, **Power Sink**.

Bertrand: **Bayou**, **City of Brass**, **Fireball**, **Lightning Bolt**, **Mox Sapphire**, **Psionic Blast**, **Volcanic Island**.

*He's going first. I'm praying that he doesn't kill me with a first turn **Channel/Fireball**. Especially after I see my cards. I've got a great draw, one that I'm sure will enable me to win, provided that I can live long enough. **Library**, **Tower**, and both counters. Yeah!*

Turn #1 Zak: 20 Bertrand: 20

Bertrand's Hand: **Bayou**, **City of Brass**, **Fireball**, **Lightning Bolt**, **Mox Sapphire**, **Psionic Blast**, **Volcanic Island**.

In Play: Nothing

Bertrand draws a **Bayou**, plays a **Mox Sapphire** and a **Volcanic Island**.

Turn #2 Zak: 20 Bertrand: 20

Zak's Hand: **Armageddon**, **Howling Mine**, **Ivory Tower**, **Library of Alexandria**, **Mana Drain**, **Old Man of the Sea**, **Power Sink**.

In Play: Nothing.

Zak draws a **Regrowth** and plays the **Library of Alexandria**. Zak taps the **Library** to cast **Ivory Tower**.

At this point, Bertrand totally loses his temper. The two cards that he hated most from our last two games show up in my opening hand. This was really bad luck for Bertrand. Even after he himself shuffled my cards into numerous piles. He can't believe it. He was fuming. He insists that the referees check my deck to make sure that I've only got one copy of each in my deck. They check, and assure him that my deck is tournament legal. I'm quite happy that he's so disturbed by my draw, but a little bit miffed that he asked them to check my deck. I hope that his karma catches up with him...

Turn #3 Zak: 20 Bertrand: 20

Bertrand's Hand: **Bayou** (2), **City of Brass**, **Fireball**, **Lightning Bolt**, **Psionic Blast**

In Play: **Mox Sapphire**, **Volcanic Island**

Bertrand Draws and plays a **Taiga**.

Turn #4 Zak: 20 Bertrand: 20

Zak's Hand: **Armageddon**, **Howling Mine**, **Mana Drain**, **Old Man of the Sea**, **Power Sink**, **Regrowth**.

In Play: **Ivory Tower**, **Library of Alexandria**.

Zak gains two life from the **Ivory Tower**, draws a **Strip Mine**, taps the **Library** to draw a **Tundra**, plays the **Strip Mine**, and sacrifices the **Strip Mine** to destroy Bertrand's **Taiga**.

Dare I hope that he's mana-hosed?

Turn #5 Zak: 22 Bertrand: 20

Bertrand's Hand: Bayou (2), City of Brass, Fireball, Lightning Bolt, Psionic Blast.

In Play: Mox Sapphire, Volcanic Island

Bertrand draws a Whirling Dervish and plays a Bayou.

He's got to play out his Bayou's now if he wants to cast the Dervish.

Turn #6 Zak: 22 Bertrand: 20

Zak's Hand: Armageddon, Howling Mine, Mana Drain, Old Man of the Sea, Power Sink, Regrowth, and Tundra.

In Play: Ivory Tower, Library of Alexandria.

Zak gains three lives from the Ivory Tower. Zak draws Stasis and plays Tundra.

Turn #7 Zak: 25 Bertrand: 20

Bertrand's Hand: Bayou, City of Brass, Fireball, Lightning Bolt, Psionic Blast, and Whirling Dervish.

In Play: Bayou, Mox Sapphire, and Volcanic Island

Zak taps his Library to draw a Timetwister on Bertrand's upkeep.

Bertrand draws a Lightning Bolt and plays a Bayou. Bertrand taps both Bayous to summon a Whirling Dervish.

Turn #8 Zak: 25 Bertrand: 20

Zak's Hand: Armageddon, Howling Mine, Mana Drain, Old Man of the Sea, Power Sink, Regrowth, Stasis, and Timetwister.

In Play: Ivory Tower, Library of Alexandria, and Tundra

Zak gains four lives from the Ivory Tower on his upkeep. Zak draws Wrath of God. Zak discards Armageddon and Timetwister.

I figured that I didn't want to play Armageddon with the Library in play and that I certainly didn't want to refill Bertrand's hands with Bolts by playing Timetwister. I also thought that if I really needed either of these spells, I had a Regrowth.

Turn #9 Zak: 29 Bertrand: 20

Bertrand's Hand: City of Brass, Fireball, Lightning Bolt (2), and Psionic Blast

In Play: Bayou (2), Mox Sapphire, Volcanic Island, and Whirling Dervish

Zak taps the Library to draw a Mox Emerald on Bertrand's upkeep.

Bertrand draws a Kird Ape and plays the City of Brass. Bertrand taps the Volcanic Island to summon a Kird Ape. Bertrand attacks with the Whirling Dervish, which does 1 point of damage to Zak and gains a +1/+1 counter, to 2/2.

Turn #10 Zak: 28 Bertrand: 20

Zak's Hand: Howling Mine, Mana Drain, Old Man of the Sea, Power Sink, Regrowth, Stasis, Mox Emerald, Wrath of God.

In Play: Ivory Tower, Library of Alexandria, Tundra

Zak gains 4 life from the Ivory Tower. Zak draws a Tropical Island and plays it. Zak plays the Mox Emerald. Zak taps the Library to draw a Ley Druid. Zak taps the Tundra, Tropical Island, and Mox Emerald to summon the Old Man of the Sea. Bertrand taps the City of Brass to cast a

Lightning Bolt on the Old Man of the Sea, killing it. Bertrand takes one point of damage from the City of Brass.

You might be wondering why I played an Old Man instead of the Wrath of God. With the Old Man, I could block the Dervish and then next turn, take the Kird Ape. This way, he'd be forced to use up some direct damage on the Old Man and I'd give him another chance to play a creature before I used the Wrath of God. If he doesn't have any direct damage, I'm in a better position than he is.

Turn #11 Zak: 32 Bertrand: 19

Bertrand's Hand: Fireball, Lightning Bolt, and Psionic Blast

In Play: Bayou (2), City of Brass, Kird Ape, Mox Sapphire, Volcanic Island, and Whirling Dervish

Bertrand draws and plays a Tropical Island. Bertrand attacks with the Whirling Dervish and the Kird Ape. The Dervish gains a +1/+1 counter, to 3/3.

Turn #12 Zak: 28 Bertrand: 19

Zak's Hand: Howling Mine, Mana Drain, Power Sink, Regrowth, Stasis, Wrath of God, and Ley Druid

In Play: Ivory Tower, Library of Alexandria, Tundra, Mox Emerald, and Tropical Island.

Zak taps the Library of Alexandria to draw Karma. Zak gains four lives from the Ivory Tower. Zak draws and plays a Savannah. Zak taps the Tundra, Tropical Island, Mox Emerald, and Savannah to cast Karma.

I'm still high enough on life that I don't have to worry about the creatures that he's got out. I want to start hurting him and still give him another chance to cast a creature, so I cast Karma instead of Wrath.

Turn #13 Zak: 32 Bertrand: 19

Bertrand's Hand: Fireball, Lightning Bolt, and Psionic Blast

In Play: Bayou (2), City of Brass, Kird Ape, Mox Sapphire, Tropical Island, Volcanic Island, and Whirling Dervish.

Bertrand takes two points of damage from the Karma on his upkeep.

Bertrand draws Birds of Paradise. Bertrand taps the Bayou to summon the Birds of Paradise. Bertrand attacks with the Kird Ape and the Whirling Dervish for five points of damage. The Dervish gains a +1/+1 counter to 4/4.

There's what I've been waiting for -- the third creature. Unfortunately, it's just a Birds and not another damage-dealer.

Turn #14 Zak: 27 Bertrand: 17

Zak's Hand: Howling Mine, Mana Drain, Power Sink, Regrowth, Stasis, Wrath of God, and Ley Druid

In Play: Ivory Tower, Library of Alexandria, Tundra, Mox Emerald, Tropical Island, Karma, and Savannah.

Zak taps the Library of Alexandria to draw Reverse Damage.

Zak gains four lives from the Ivory Tower.

Zak draws Swords to Plowshares. Zak taps a Tundra, a Savannah, a Tropical Island, and a Mox Emerald to cast Wrath of God, killing the Birds of Paradise, the Kird Ape, and the Whirling Dervish.

Flush! Everything dies...

Zak discards the Howling Mine.

I don't want him drawing anything useful, and I'm already getting plenty of cards.

Turn #15 Zak: 31 Bertrand: 17

Bertrand's Hand: Fireball, Lightning Bolt, and Psionic Blast

In Play: Bayou (2), City of Brass, Mox Sapphire, Tropical Island, and Volcanic Island

Bertrand takes two points of damage from the Karma on his upkeep.

Bertrand draws and plays a Tropical Island.

I figure that he's not going to play any more swamps, but I don't realize that it's because they're both in play. Talk about luck...

Turn #16 Zak: 31 Bertrand: 15

Zak's Hand: Mana Drain, Power Sink, Regrowth, Stasis, Reverse Damage, Swords to Plowshares, and Ley Druid

In Play: Ivory Tower, Library of Alexandria, Tundra, Mox Emerald, Tropical Island, Karma, and Savannah.

Zak taps the Library of Alexandria to draw Disenchant. Zak gains four lives from the Ivory Tower. Zak draws and plays a Savannah. Zak taps the Savannah and the Mox Emerald to cast Disenchant on Bertrand's Mox Sapphire.

Nothing better to do with it, this way I'm set up for the Winter Orb.

Turn #17 Zak: 35 Bertrand: 15

At this point, they're announcing the life totals to the crowd. I couldn't be happier. The booming voice saying, "Zak 35, Bertrand 15" is giving me even more confidence. I'm starting to believe that I'm going to win it all.

Bertrand's Hand: Fireball, Lightning Bolt, and Psionic Blast

In Play: Bayou (2), City of Brass, Tropical Island (2), and Volcanic Island

Bertrand takes two points of damage on his upkeep from Karma. Bertrand draws Argothian Pixies. Bertrand taps both Bayous to summon Argothian Pixies. Zak taps the Tundra and the Tropical Island to cast Mana Drain on the Argothian Pixies, successfully countering the spell.

I'm not really worried at this point, but no sense in letting him have any creatures.

Turn #18 Zak: 37 Bertrand: 13

Zak's Hand: Ley Druid, Power Sink, Regrowth, Reverse Damage, Stasis, and Swords to Plowshares.

In Play: Ivory Tower, Karma, Library of Alexandria, Mox Emerald, Savannah (2), Tropical Island, and Tundra.

Zak gains two lives from the Ivory Tower. Zak draws a Savannah. Zak taps the Library to draw Disenchant. Zak plays the Savannah. Zak takes two points of mana burn from the extra points of mana left from Mana Drain.

Another stupid mistake. Of course it really didn't matter at this point, but Bertrand got some pleasure out of my mistake. Had I been thinking, I would have used the extra mana to cast the Ley Druid. That way, he would have to use up more direct damage to kill it or I'd get an extra card every turn with the Druid/Library combo. Now I put cards like Mana Drain on top of my library to remind me to use the mana, and then put them in the graveyard after I've used them.

Turn #19 Zak: 35 Bertrand: 13

Bertrand's Hand: Fireball, Lightning Bolt, Psionic Blast

In Play: Bayou (2), City of Brass, Tropical Island (2), Volcanic Island

Bertrand takes two points of damage from **Karma**. Bertrand draws **Chain Lightning**. Bertrand taps the Volcanic Island to cast **Chain Lightning** on Zak. Zak taps the **Tropical Island**, **Tundra**, **Mox Emerald**, and all three **Savannahs** to cast **Power Sink** for five on the casting of the **Chain Lightning**. Bertrand is unable to pay the five extra mana and the spell fizzles. Bertrand taps all his land from the **Power Sink** and takes one point of damage from tapping the **City of Brass**.

Turn #20 Zak: 35 Bertrand: 10

Zak's Hand: **Disenchant**, **Ley Druid**, **Regrowth**, **Reverse Damage**, **Stasis**, **Swords to Plowshares**.

In Play: **Ivory Tower**, **Karma**, **Library of Alexandria**, **Mox Emerald**, **Savannah (3)**, **Tropical Island**, **Tundra**.

Zak gains two lives from the **Ivory Tower** on his upkeep. Zak draws a **Tundra**. Zak taps the **Library** to draw **Recall**. Zak plays the **Tundra**. Zak taps both **Savannahs** to cast **Regrowth** on **Power Sink**. Zak taps the **Tropical Island** and the **Mox Emerald** to cast **Stasis**.

Bertrand concedes the game.

*I was actually really disappointed that he conceded here. I was really looking forward to toying with him some more. However, knowing what was in his deck like he did, he must have realized that he wouldn't be able to do anything before the **Karma** killed him. Done in by **Karma**, what a way to go.*

My deck wasn't designed to win quickly, it was designed to make the opponent concede. After receiving three concessions in the final five games of the World Championships, I considered it to be a success in that department.

Zak wins the third duel.

Zak wins the World Championship

Final Hands:

Zak: **Disenchant**, **Ley Druid**, **Power Sink**, **Recall**, **Reverse Damage**, and **Swords to Plowshares**

Bertrand: **Chain Lightning**, **Fireball**, **Lightning Bolt**, and **Psionic Blast**.

Final life totals: Zak: 37 Bertrand: 10.

After the game, someone asked me if I played for money, to which I answered, "I do now." I was interviewed almost immediately afterwards, while Mark Rosewater wrote down the contents of the two decks. Bertrand and Dominic both showed me what was in their decks and I let them look at mine. Later, I tried to reconstruct Bertrand's deck from memory, but ended up getting something a lot closer to Dominic's deck. Rosewater asked me not to reveal the contents of my deck, since they didn't want everyone under the sun to copy it.

People ended up trying to copy it anyway, based on what they knew about it from various places. I had a few laughs each time I heard of someone copying my deck and getting it completely wrong. Probably the most common misconception about my deck was that it was chock full of counterspells. A typical attempt was something like, "4 **Mana Drains**, 4 **Counterspells**, etc." Then, people would say that it worked pretty well, but that they could still find ways to beat it. Well, surprise, but you're not playing the same deck.

Analysis of the 1994 World Championship Decks

Why did these decks survive? What were the competitors' decks like at the time?

I believe that you can learn a lot about deckbuilding from studying the decks of the top players, just like you can learn about chess by studying the games of grandmasters. Hopefully, you'll find my thoughts on the championship decks interesting.

Bertrand's deck is the classic approach to playing **Channel/Fireball**. It uses a lot of very advanced techniques. At the time, he was about a month or two ahead of all the competition in Europe in his deckbuilding skill, and half a year ahead of most of the American players. Bertrand

did a great job figuring out what decks were dominating the tournament scene and then he built his deck to stop them.

His plan was to kill the opponent as quickly as possible, ideally with the **Channel/Fireball** combination. In order to do that, he had to be ahead of his opponent on life. That meant he had to attack on turn one and not ever let up.

His deck had a lot of low casting-cost spells, similar to the "Sligh" deck developed two years later, so that he could be sure and cast a spell every turn. You'll notice that there are no cards in his deck with a casting cost higher than four, but that there are several "X" spells with variable casting cost. This is typical for an attacking deck.

He used a relatively high percentage of mana, so that he would be sure and draw enough to cast his spells early in the game -- since his deck was a quick attack deck, and he couldn't afford to wait to draw the land he needed. He included four **Mishra's Factories** so that he would have extra land against a land destruction deck but still be able to attack quickly if he drew a lot of land in his opening hand.

He chose very efficient creatures -- ones that can do a lot of damage for very little mana. **Kird Apes**, **Mishra's Factories**, **Whirling Dervishes**, and **Argothian Pixies**. He included quick sources of non-land mana, both creatures (**Birds of Paradise**) and artifacts (Moxes).

Surprisingly, he didn't include the **Mox Pearl** or the **Sol Ring**, opting instead for more offensive cards and cards that produced mana of the color of his spells. For his deck, this actually makes sense, since he has very few cards that require a substantial amount of colorless mana. In fact, only 10 cards in his deck need two or more colorless mana, and four of those are the **Fireballs** that he plans on casting with **Channel** to end the game. This leaves only six spells (10 percent of his deck) where a **Sol Ring** or a **Mox Pearl** would do much good -- clearly a case where **Birds of Paradise** would be a better choice, since 28 cards (almost half his deck) requires colored mana to cast. Therefore, he takes three **Birds of Paradise** and makes sure that he has a lot of sources of green mana (14 other than the birds, almost a quarter of his deck) so that he can then easily cast them on the first or second turn.

One of the things that Bertrand did better than anyone else at the time was the "meta-game." He fine-tuned his deck to easily stop the main decks that were in style at the time. One of the strongest decks in Europe at the time was the **Juzam Djinn** (and/or **Juggernaut**) deck. This deck hadn't even been seen at the time in America, but sure enough, Dominic made it to the semifinals with a deck like this.

Bertrand included ways to stop this deck for very low mana, so that even if he didn't get enough mana to start the game, he would still easily have a way to deal with the threat. The **Argothian Pixies** could block **Juggernauts** and the **Whirling Dervishes** could block **Juzam Djinn**s. This gave him enough time to find the **Control Magic** or the **Channel/Fireball** combination or the **Icy Manipulator** or the **Chaos Orb**. Most people who look at his deck are surprised that he chose **Argothian Pixies** over **Elvish Archers**, but given the number of **Juggernauts** in play at the time, this makes a lot of sense.

There were also a lot of land destruction decks in play at the time. Bertrand's deck would typically beat them quite easily due to his high percentage of land, his alternate sources of mana, and his low casting-cost spells.

Blue counterspell decks were the another popular deck at the time. Bertrand would play the **Mishra's Factories**, which couldn't be countered, and then continually pummel the opponent with creatures and bolts, always waiting for them to be tapped out before playing **Channel/Fireball**. If he came up against a deck with lots of counterspells and almost no creatures, he would also do very well, since only one card in the deck had to target a creature. At the time, most of the decks without creatures were reactive decks using counterspells and **Control Magic** -- this meant that his **Control Magic** was still good, since he could use it to re-establish control of his own creature if he was playing against a purely reactive deck.

Another clever thing that Bertrand did was to spread his damage sources out over several colors, so that if you got out a **Circle of Protection: Red**, he could still kill you with a green creature or a blue **Psionic Blast**. If you cast **Tsunami** to destroy all his Islands, he could still hit you with a **Lightning Bolt**. This strategy made it easier to get around sideboards.

Inclusion of a fourth color was justified because each of the two cards included was key to his strategy and a potential game winner. The **Demonic Tutor** was necessary to find the **Channel** in

a hurry. The **Mind Twist** was necessary to empty the opponent's hand of counterspells, big creatures, and creature removal cards. Also, it tended to win a lot of games if played early.

With three **Birds of Paradise**, a **Mox Jet**, a **Black Lotus**, and four lands that could produce black, it was relatively easy for him to get black if he really needed it -- nine sources of mana isn't too bad for only two spells. This ensured that he would almost always have the mana to cast the spell by the time that he drew the card.

It is interesting to note that even his defensive spells -- **Control Magic**, **Chaos Orb**, **Icy Manipulator** -- can be used as an offensive weapon, to take out a land or use a creature against the opponent. He was able to double up on offense and defense successfully by choosing offensive spells that could be used defensively if necessary, like the **Argothian Pixies**.

Bertrand's sideboard is also very interesting and well thought out. **City in a Bottle** was for use against decks with a lot of Djinn and Efreets. **Control Magic** was useful against decks that were able to quickly play a large creature using things like **Mana Vault**. **Disintegrate** would work well against regenerating creatures or against decks using **Mana Flare**. **Flashfires** would stop the white weenie and Circle of Protection strategies. **Forcefield** would also help against the large creature decks using **Berserk**. **Lifeforce** would stop the black weenie decks. **Serendib Efreets** would be sideboarded in against another bolt deck, or if playing against **Moat**. **Tsunami** would go in against the mono-blue counterspell deck. Unlike today, there were a lot of one-color decks in play at the time, so a lot of color-hoser cards made sense. There were also a lot of creature heavy decks, since most players were following the "one-third creatures" rule of thumb. This made anti-creature cards very good.

You might be wondering why Bertrand was playing 61 cards. Apparently, he had heard the same rumor that everyone else had heard -- that ripping up a **Chaos Orb** and flipping the pieces would enable you to destroy all of your opponent's cards, provided you scattered the pieces properly. He had planned for just such an eventuality, in case he should he reached the finals. That's why he played 61 cards -- so that after he ripped up the **Chaos Orb**, he would still have a tournament-legal 60 deck. I overheard him asking a judge about ripping up the **Chaos Orb** before the finals started, and it made me a little bit nervous, but the judge said that it wouldn't work -- once you rip up a **Chaos Orb**, it ceases to be a **Chaos Orb**. Fortunately, the subject didn't come up in the tournament, since he never drew the **Chaos Orb** against me.

One of the first things that I noticed about Bertrand's deck is that it didn't have **Timetwister** or **Wheel of Fortune**. At first, this puzzled me -- I thought if I was playing the deck, I would want to dump my hand quickly and then refill it immediately afterwards. However, if he was playing against another similar deck, it could just as easily give his opponent the cards that he needed to win. To top it off, he might draw those two cards (**Timetwister** and **Wheel of Fortune**) when he didn't have enough mana or when he really needed a **Lightning Bolt** instead. Since he was going all-out offense, those cards do nothing to directly kill the opponent, therefore they slow it down. Personally, I like them, and I would play them in the deck, especially given the low average casting cost of the cards in his deck -- but maybe that is a mistake.

My deck is entirely different. I am focused almost exclusively on defense -- quite a contrast from Bertrand's deck. I am trying to completely control the play environment, so that even if I am at one life, my opponent can do nothing. I am playing a high number of spells and a low number of land cards, with the idea that late in the game, I'm going to draw a spell when I need it instead of drawing a land. I use fairly low casting-cost defensive spells so that I have a chance to hold off the opponent until I can draw enough land to cast my bigger spells.

I tried to use a balance of land, artifact, and creature mana so that it would be more difficult for my opponent to destroy all of my mana. That way, if I played against a land destruction deck, I would still have a decent chance. The **Ley Druid** is from the days when it was legal to play four "Library of Alexandria" cards. Now, **Candelabra of Tawnos**, which serves pretty much the same function and also helps extend **Stasis** for a few more turns, has replaced it. **Birds of Paradise** are pretty standard -- they give you a choice of any color of mana as soon as turn two. Moxes are obviously worth playing -- quick mana sources which aren't destroyed by **Armageddon**. I tried playing just the three moxes in my colors (white, blue, and green), and I found that I didn't get the **Serra Angel** out as quickly as if I played all the moxes.

Strip mines are typically used against the **Library of Alexandria**. They can also be used to take out a key color of my opponent (such as a second blue mana source when I don't want a spell countered) or a really annoying lands, like a **Mishra's Workshop** or a storage land with a dozen counters on it.

On the off chance that my opponent gets only one land in his opening hand (a typical Brian Weissman draw, even when he's playing with 27 land in a 60-card deck), I can destroy it with one of my two strip mines. I once got a draw like that against a land destruction deck in a tournament in Sioux City, Iowa. I used the two [Strip Mines](#), plus [Regrowth](#) and [Recall](#), to destroy five of my opponent's lands. I was eventually able to win, since he didn't get enough mana to cast his [Stone Rains](#) and [Ice Storms](#).

[Ancestral Recall](#) and [Time Walk](#) are a given. These are powerful cards -- it never hurts to draw them (unless, of course, you don't have any blue mana). [Control Magic](#) made sense, since decks were very heavy in creatures at the time. [Mana Drain](#) was there to make people think that I was playing a lot of counterspells and also to give me a quick burst of mana early in the game. [Balance](#) as well is good.

[Siren's Call](#) was included to kill off creatures that tapped for special abilities, like [Time Elemental](#), [Old Man of the Sea](#), [Prodigal Sorcerer](#), [Birds of Paradise](#), and [Ley Druid](#). It also worked to kill small things when I had a [Serra Angel](#) in play, or to kill off all of their creatures when I had played [Stasis](#) after an attack. It got around [Gloom](#) and Protection from White, enabling me to stop [Black Knight](#) decks.

[Stasis](#) was used in combination with the [Serra Angels](#), [Kismet](#), [Icy Manipulator](#), [Siren's Call](#), [Ley Druid](#) (and later the [Candelabra of Tawnos](#)), [Time Elemental](#), and [Black Vise](#). It was the heart of the deck. The idea was that it would work against my opponent no matter what deck they were playing. Since I hadn't seen every conceivable deck type, I wanted something that would work no matter what they were playing. [Stasis](#) tends to lock out everything.

I also wanted to be able to stop creatures of any size. The idea is that the two [Meekstones](#) stop the early big creatures for very little mana and then the [Old Man of the Sea](#) stops everything else. Against a weenie deck, I would plan on taking control of one of the critters and using it to block the others. That way, I could handle two or more of my opponent's creatures with one of mine.

With [Diamond Valley](#), the idea is that this process would go even faster -- plus, the [Diamond Valley](#) would keep my creatures from being removed from the game by my opponent's [Swords to Plowshares](#). The idea would be that I would sacrifice the creature in response to the spell and then later use [Timetwister](#) to get the creature back again. Nobody plays [Diamond Valley](#) any more, but back in the day it was fun to take people's creatures and repeatedly sacrifice them for life. The risk of [Diamond Valley](#) at the time was that if you had it as your only land in the opening draw, you couldn't declare a "no land Mulligan", the rule at the time for getting to re-draw your opening hand. So it was a risky card to put in your deck, because occasionally it would make you lose a game.

People sometimes ask me what I won. Typically I joke, "A case of Turtle Wax, and a year's supply of Rice-A-Roni, the San Francisco Treat™!" It wasn't the big \$30,000-plus checks that today's champions earn. Actually I won a T-shirt, an unopened poker deck with M:TG backs (very rare at the time), a trophy, and a bunch of boosters from out-of-print expansions. Quite a nice prize, \$1,000 or more worth of cards.

Times Have Changed

I hope you've enjoyed reading an old but previously unpublished commentary about what it was like playing in the first World Championships. Magic: The Gathering has changed a lot since the early days. Different cards are banned and restricted. There are more formats than just "Type 1." Draft and sealed deck have risen in prominence, along with "Type 2" and more. People now shuffle their cards repeatedly as they play. Play/draw rule has gone into effect -- no longer does the same person get to play and draw first. But this fact remains -- Magic: The Gathering is still a fun game to play. Some things never change.

- Zak Dolan

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