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Case Stated

Brian David-Marshall
The Week That Was
Thursday, October 28, 2004



This is a great week to be a **Magic** player. We are smack dab in the middle of the two huge Constructed **Magic** weekends in two different formats just as *Champions of Kamigawa* becomes legal for sixty-card play. This past weekend saw players all around the globe trailblazing the new Standard format at their local Champs tournaments. From New York to Newfoundland and New Zealand to Nagano players gathered to earn their hometown championships and answer all the questions about the emerging format.



They were also answering my questions. We sent out a simple five question form to all the tournament organizers (Thank you Tom Ko!) and asked them to have their Top 8 players fill it out and email me their replies. I received enough feedback to actually make a dent in my Gmail account's storage capacity and I have been plowing through it since Sunday. Thank you to everyone who took the time to send in the questionnaire--I'm sorry I couldn't use everybody's answers but as it is this article is threatening to swell past 10,000 words.

In the interests of this week's Top Ten theme I have selected players wielding ten different decks and included their comments...

Okay, I am fudging a bit to accommodate to try and stay on theme. I have selected responses from ten players not playing Affinity and one player with Affinity...

Still fudging. Despite another dominant weekend there was a wide variety of decks that did well this weekend. And while I have tried to stick to ten decks (plus Affinity) I was not able to stick to ten players (plus one Affinity player). There were a couple of interesting variations of Black-Green and additional replies from those players.

There really was a surprising number of deck types that made it to the Top 8 this weekend. Far more than are represented in this column. Pore over the [Champs decklist page](#) and you will find more decks than you can shake a **Disrupting Scepter** at--kudos to Greg Collins, Doug Beyer, and everyone else involved in making the Deckbuilder project such a great success. It's simply unheard of to have so many decklists so quickly, and they're even downloadable for *Magic Online*!

There is no way around the fact that Ravager Affinity decks remained a force to be reckoned with this weekend. The format's villain continued to dominate and took multiple Top 8 berths in many events and won more than a few to boot. One of those winners was Chris Roy of New Hampshire.

Chris Roy / New Hampshire -- Winner
Affinity

<p>Main Deck 60 cards</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 4 Darksteel Citadel 3 Glimmervoid 4 Seat of the Synod 4 Tree of Tales 4 Vault of Whispers <hr/> <p>19 lands</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 4 Arcbound Ravager 4 Arcbound Worker 4 Disciple of the Vault 4 Frogmite 4 Myr Enforcer 4 Ornithopter <hr/> <p>24 creatures</p>	<p>Sideboard</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 4 Chromatic Sphere 4 Cranial Plating 4 Thoughtcast 3 Tooth of Chiss-Goria 2 Welding Jar <hr/> <p>17 other spells</p> <p>15 sideboard cards</p>
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Chris explained his deck choice, "Initially, I planned on having Affinity as a backup deck to play, assuming I couldn't find anything that could consistently beat it as well as have game versus the rest of the field. Not only was I unable to find a deck that could fill this role, but I was also convinced I should play Affinity when I read Dan Paskin's recent article regarding 'What would Dave Price do?' Based on these occurrences as well as my already having a lot of experience with Affinity from the previous year, I scrambled the night before the tourney to make a

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version with which I felt comfortable about my chances against other Affinity decks as well as being able to navigate a field of hate."

Chris' State Championship was held at Hammer Comics, owned by Pro Tour veteran Shawn "Hammer" Regnier. In addition to Shawn there is also a strong Pro player base in the New England area that offered him some strong shoulders to stand on. "I was very busy with both school and work, so I didn't have much time to playtest for this event. However, I'm very grateful that I had such a strong group of players I could count on to keep me informed. Early on, in preparation for both Type 2 and Team Sealed, Tom and Pete Guevin and I looked through all of the new cards from *Champions* to see which were playable."



Shawn 'Hammer' Regnier

His playtesting sessions kept getting distracted and finally he and the elder Guevin buckled down to hone his deck. "Time was running short, and I needed a strong Affinity list for my predicted field of Affinity, Rats, Tooth and Nail, and Big Red, so I asked Tom for help. In hindsight, I might have changed a few sideboard cards, but the deck ran smoothly and was very strong despite being made on such short notice."

"The toughest matchups for me were both against Mono Blue Control decks (which I think were inspired by Mike Flores). I won both those matches and also beat two Tooth and Nail, two Affinity, one Ponza, and a blue-red March/Obliterate deck, losing to one Tooth and Nail along the way. I think the Standard metagame will mainly consist of Affinity, Tooth and Nail, Rats, and Mono Blue Control. Although I overlooked it at first, States might have seen the emergence of Mono Blue Control as a viable arch-type."

Chris Roy's Top 5 *Champions of Kamigawa* cards from Champs:

1. Sakura-tribe Elder
2. Horobi, Death's Wail
3. Sensei's Divining Top
4. Cranial Extraction
5. Meloku, the Clouded Mirror

Coming into the weekend there were three *Mirrodin* Block Constructed decks that were expected to be dominant in the new Standard format in addition to the already-format-spanning Affinity lists. Tooth and Nail made a splash in the hands of Gabriel Nassif at Pro Tour Kobe and continued to be a force right up through Grand Prix New Jersey when Jeff Garza won that event with Nassif's updated green-red listing.

Unlike Affinity, Tooth and Nail made some gains in *Champions of Kamigawa* with *Dosan the Falling Leaf*, *Boseiju, Who Shelters All*, and *Kiki-Jiki, Mirror Breaker*. It lived up to expectations and made Top 8 all over the globe. (Although nowhere more so than in Japan. If you look at their results it would appear that Tron was the top deck.) In West Virginia it took home the trophy in the hands of Peter J. Sjostedt. Interestingly his deck eschewed the *Kiki-Jiki/Sundering Titan* combo that so many other versions opted for, instead favoring the *Abunas/Angel* lock and the *Bringer/Slaver* combo.

Peter J. Sjostedt / West Virginia -- Winner		G/B Tooth and Nail	
Main Deck 60 cards		Sideboard	
4 Cloudpost	3 Echoing Decay	1 Eternal Witness	
13 Forest	3 Mindslaver	1 Mephidross Vampire	
1 Shizo, Death's Storehouse	2 Oxidize	1 Mindslaver	
5 Swamp	4 Reap and Sow	2 Naturalize	
23 lands	2 Rude Awakening	2 Oblivion Stone	
	4 Sylvan Scrying	2 Oxidize	
	4 Tooth and Nail	1 Rude Awakening	
	22 other spells	2 Solemn Simulacrum	
1 Bringer of the White Dawn		1 Sundering Titan	
1 Darksteel Colossus		1 Triskelion	
1 Duplicant		1 Viridian Shaman	
3 Eternal Witness		15 sideboard cards	
1 Leonin Abunas			
1 Platinum Angel			
3 Sakura-Tribe Elder			
2 Solemn Simulacrum			
2 Viridian Shaman			
15 creatures			

Peter chose the deck based on his expectation of the West Virginia metagame. "Going into the tournament I expected the field mostly to be Affinity (at least 50%) with the secondary deck of choice for most people being green-blue control (at least the blue-white players that found out they couldn't run it this year). After that I viewed Tooth, green-X and mono-black (though I didn't know it was going to be as big as it was going to be) as rounding out the meta. Expecting this, I thought green-black Tooth splashing for Echoing Decay would be perfect for the day. Ravager, Disciple, rude lands, Witness, rats, birds etc. seemed like a perfectly good reason to run them with what I predicted."

Peter moved **Mindslaver** into his maindeck after experiencing disappointment with **Oblivion Stone**. He made another change based on the buzz on the Internet. "With everyone and their brother talking about **Cranial Extractions**, I decided to cut in two **Rude Awakenings** to the main and one in the board for alternate win conditions."

The **Mindslavers** helped him out considerably in what he considers his worst pairing. "Monoblack is definitely my worst match up, but I ended up going 4-1 games and 2-0 matches against it. This was due largely to **Mindslaver** activations casting a few X = 0 **Death Clouds**--or **Persecutes** if they ran them."

Peter offered some suggestions for players looking to play his deck. "Were I to play again knowing the metagame, I'd completely cut the **Oblivion Stones** out of the board for more alternate kill and cut the **Bringer of the White Dawn** lock out completely."



While most of the green-black Tooth decks went in the direction of the second color for **Cranial Extraction**, Peter did not run them in his deck. He could not manage to track them down in time for the tournament but after playing with the deck does not feel they were necessary. In fact, there were some advantages to having his opponent think he might cast an **Extraction**--especially if they were sporting their own. "It is fun to fake having them well enough to hear them name it the first time they cast it."

Also not in his deck was the legendary land that had so many people excited about the archetype. "One thing I view of interest is that I chose not to run **Boseiju** at all. I viewed blue as too underrepresented to have a colorless land that comes in to play tapped and deals damage to me," he explained.

Like Tooth and Nail, Big Red decks gained a number of tools in the new set including **Kumano**, the red dragon, and some semi-recursive burn spells. Brian Naftzger used two of those three additions in his Top 8 listing from California Sates.

Main Deck 60 cards		Sideboard
4 Blinkmoth Nexus	2 Damping Matrix	1 Damping Matrix
4 Great Furnace	3 Electrostatic Bolt	3 Grab the Reins
16 Mountain	4 Magma Jet	4 Shatter
24 lands	4 Molten Rain	3 Shunt
	3 Pulse of the Forge	4 Stone Rain
4 Arc-Slogger	3 Pyroclasm	15 sideboard cards
1 Kumano, Master Yamabushi	4 Seething Song	
1 Ryusei, the Falling Star	3 Shrapnel Blast	
4 Slith Firewalker	26 other spells	
10 creatures		

Brian's long-standing love of red cards was a big factor in choosing the deck and he offered 60% of a Top 10 list to fully explain his choice, "I chose Big Red for the following reasons:

- 6) I started in Revised and fell in love with **Fork** and have been serving with Red ever since.
- 5) Big Red just finds ways to win.
- 4) Consistency is very important and Big Red is very consistent.
- 3) I had really good success with Big Red in **Mirrodin Block**.
- 2) I'm anti-affinity and refuse to play it.
- 1) #1 Reason I went with Big Red instead of Green/Black Cloud was everyone said the deck had no chance in the Meta so I wanted to prove everyone wrong!"

Despite his love of red this was not his original deck during testing. "It was a last minute decision of mine to just play Big Red. I just threw together my **Mirrodin Block** version and tweaked it to Type 2. The main reason is I just have more fun playing Big Red and it just always finds a way to win games."

Brian claims his toughest match on the day was against blue-green decks although he managed to slip past two of them victoriously in the Swiss. That other deck on the other hand... "Affinity is always tough if I don't draw into enough hate. I swept it round one and lost to Affinity 1st round of the top 8. "If I only saw **ebolt**, **Pyroclasm** or **Seething Song** It would have been a different story."



His best match-up was White Weenie--a deck he claimed was tearing it up against Affinity on the weekend but, "White Weenie just can't deal with Big Red too well."

Brian Naftzger's Top 5 *Champions of Kamigawa* cards from Champs

1. Sakura-Tribe Elder
2. Cranial Extraction
3. Kokusho, The Evening Star
4. Kodama's Reach
5. Gifts Ungiven/Hinder

One of the most popular decks on the *Mirrodin* Block PTQ circuit was a green-red anti-affinity deck that became known as Freshmaker. Dustin Cristos was one many players who opted to explore the archetype for the new Standard. The Top 4 from his tournament were all Affinity decks proving that even Freshmaker can't beat all the Affinity decks all the time.

Dustin Cristos / California - 8th place		Freshmaker	
Main Deck 60 cards		Sideboard	
2 City of Brass	4 Electrostatic Bolt	3 Cranial Extraction	
12 Forest	4 Magma Jet	3 Karstoderm	
10 Mountain	4 Plow Under	4 Naturalize	
24 lands	12 other spells	4 Oxidize	
		1 Swamp	
4 Arc-Slogger		15 sideboard cards	
4 Birds of Paradise			
4 Eternal Witness			
4 Hearth Kami			
4 Molder Slug			
4 Sakura-Tribe Elder			
24 creatures			

Dustin chose the deck for not only its Affinity match up but for its speed and consistency. He was also packing a little surprise in his board for *Tooth and Nail*. "The reason I played Freshmaker was it beat Ravager and it had a 50/50 chance against almost everything else--if not more. I was able to cast third turn *Molder Slugs* and *Plow Unders* all day--not to mention a dreaded third turn *Cranial Extraction* after sideboarding. This deck beats affinity plain and simple the rest of the field was just chop liver."

He found his dream match-up waiting for him at the table in the first three rounds but its creatureless cousin presented him with a less satisfying experience. "My toughest match up was KCI (Ironworks). It went off faster then I could control. Although I cast a cranial extraction turns 3-4-5 on him game three for the Ironworks he had a counter for each one."

Blue-green was a popular choice throughout the previous block season and they found their champions for the new Standard as well. In fact, in Maryland it earned one player the trophy.



Sean Vandover / Maryland -- Winner		Blue/Green Shackles Control	
Main Deck 60 cards		Sideboard	
10 Forest	4 Condescend	2 Echoing Truth	
13 Island	2 Echoing Truth	3 Engineered Explosives	
23 lands	3 Hinder	3 March of the Machines	
	3 Oxidize	1 Oxidize	
	2 Rude Awakening	1 Plains	
4 Eternal Witness	4 Thirst for Knowledge	3 Plow Under	
3 Solemn Simulacrum	4 Vedalken Shackles	2 Sundering Titan	
4 Viridian Shaman	4 Wayfarer's Bauble	15 sideboard cards	
11 creatures	26 other spells		

Sean audibled to the deck after recalling his positive experiences that he and a friend had with the deck on the PTQ circuit. "I chose this deck (at midnight the night before Champs!) because a friend and I played it at the end of the MirBC season, and it qualified us both for PT Columbus. As a result of testing for the Columbus PTQ season, I was very familiar and comfortable with the deck. So I replaced a couple cards with better options in the new environment, and went to work."

His original deck choice was going to be a Beacon/**Blasting Station** deck that he tested against Affinity, Tooth and Nail, Ironworks, and red-green. He realized that he had always had good Affinity match-ups with his PTQ deck and made the change. "The toughest match-up I had at Champs was round one against a creatureless mono-red burn deck. I managed to win in three, locking him out with Witness/**Plow Under** repeatedly. The easiest match-up was Affinity, with my opponent drawing the nuts and still losing game one and my sideboard owning him game two."

Sean felt that green-black would have made a stronger showing if not for some deck building restrictions early on in the new format and expects it to become a major force in Standard. "The problem with the deck at Champs was that it requires multiple chase rares from CHK, and therefore many people were unable to get all the cards they needed to put together an optimal build. Blue-green, Affinity, Tooth and Nail, and March/Obliterate will comprise the remainder of the metagame. I think that we will see less Affinity than usual for the next few months as people try out new deck ideas, but that it will become the most played deck again relatively soon."

Sean Vandover's Top 5 *Champions of Kamigawa* cards from Champs:

1. **Cranial Extraction**
2. **Kodama's Reach**
3. **Kokusho, the Evening Star**
4. **Sakura-Tribe Elder**
5. **Sensei's Divining Top**

Another popular deck from the PTQ circuit was blue-white **Pristine Angel** control. Many pundits (including myself and Flores) dismissed the blue-white control deck as a viable option for States and yet Noah Long pirouetted his way through Provincials to lead the deck to a Top 4 finish.

Main Deck		Sideboard
60 cards		
2 Ancient Den	4 Annul	2 Bribery
1 Coastal Tower	2 Condescend	3 Circle of Protection: Red
9 Island	3 Damping Matrix	4 March of the Machines
9 Plains	3 Echoing Truth	4 Purge
1 Seat of the Synod	4 Ghostly Prison	2 Time Stop
22 lands	3 Hinder	
	2 Mana Leak	15 sideboard cards
4 Pristine Angel	2 Pulse of the Fields	
4 creatures	2 Rewind	
	3 Thirst for Knowledge	
	3 Wayfarer's Bauble	
	3 Wrath of God	
	34 other spells	

Noah tested a variety of decks against what he considered to be the Top 3 decks in the field. He and his brother Byron conducted their playtesting via telephone and what came over the line to them was a clear message to play the control deck. "I chose this deck because I wanted to surprise all of the decks. I was hoping to play Affinity, KCI and Tooth and Nail decks with my constant counters and the surprisingly effective main deck **Damping Matrix** and **Ghostly Prison** lock down."

Noah felt that he could have won the tournament if not for one small error that cost him his semi-final match-up against Andy Eng's **Tooth and Nail** deck (there was an error on the Champs page--Andy actually won the tournament!) "I messed up by not putting **Sacred Ground** into my sideboard before I handed in my deck list."

If Noah could have chosen his ideal match-up each round he would have played nothing but decks with artifact lands. "My best match-ups on the day were against Affinity and KCI. The main board **Damping Matrix** is basically the card that allowed me to get by game one with consistent wins, allowing me to add the four **March** for game two. I went 3-0 in the Swiss rounds against two Vial Affinity and one KCI. I was almost bouncing off the wall after I found out I was playing KCI in the Quarters! I took it 2-1."



Noah Long's Top 5 *Champions of Kamigawa* cards from Champs:

5. **Kiki, Jiki, Mirror Breaker**: "He was the reason Tooth and Nail won in British Columbia on Saturday. It is absolutely insane!"
4. **Kodama of North Tree**: "He found his way into the 3rd place deck of blue-green control and into most other decks that ran green."
3. **Boseiju, Who Shelters All**: "This land absolutely messed me up completely! With not being able to counter a damn thing it kinda sucked!"
2. **Cranial Extraction**: "This card was the only reason I lost in the Swiss rounds! The surprising thing about the deck I played, is that the only win condition is the **Pristine Angels**. By this point you probably can figure out what happened in that sad, sad match of mine. Bye-bye Angels!"
1. **Sakura Tribe-Elder**: "This card is with no doubt the best card that came out of Champions for the Standard format. It slows Affinity by chump blocking and increasing your mana development at the same time. NO, WAIT! It chump blocks ANYTHING (that doesn't fly of course) and speeds up your mana. I saw at least 5-6 decks that splashed a third colour because they could count on the Elder to fix the mana flow by at least 3rd-4th turn."

Manuel Bevand showed **Krark-Clan Ironworks** decks to be a viable choice for Standard with his Top 4 performance at Worlds. As players prepared for Champs it was on many of their minds. A couple of people even played it. Zachary Wilson managed to Top 4 his event with the deck.

Zachary Wilson / Maryland -- 4th Place		atxt 	
Krark Clan Ironworks			
Main Deck 60 cards		Sideboard	
3 Ancient Den	4 Chrome Mox	3 Early Frost	
4 Darksteel Citadel	4 Condescend	3 Furnace Dragon	
4 Great Furnace	4 Fabricate	4 Mana Leak	
4 Seat of the Synod	1 Goblin Charbelcher	2 Seething Song	
2 Tree of Tales	4 Krark-Clan Ironworks	3 Shatter	
2 Vault of Whispers	4 Myr Incubator		
19 lands	4 Pentad Prism		15 sideboard cards
	3 Serum Visions		
0 creatures	4 Talisman of Dominance		
	2 Talisman of Progress		
	3 Thirst for Knowledge		
	4 Thoughtcast		
	41 other spells		

Zachary originally planned on playing Affinity but stumbled across some bad match-ups courtesy of new Champions cards that gave him pause. "It was seemingly the best deck by default. However, the week before States I was disconcerted to learn that my friend's Ponza deck with **Hearth Kamis** was regularly beating affinity in testing. When I voiced concerns about playing the latter at States, it was suggested that KCI might be a fine deck choice, as it could effectively skirt one for one artifact removal spells with card drawing while stranding creature removal in the opponent's hand."

He did not actually playtest the deck, instead opting for countless goldfish draws--which seems identical to play testing with this deck--to get a feel for it. He looked at Manuel Bevand's suggestions on how to update the deck but only changed one **Fireball** to a **Fabricate**. "The Fireball, while occasionally effective, was ultimately just a random one-of that I couldn't tutor for."

He liked this deck's chances against his dreaded Ponza match-up. "The deck seems to have a virtual bye vs. Ponza and most forms of big red. Its countermagic coupled with its speed hinders their ability to respond effectively to the combo kill. This is true to a lesser extent of red-green, Tooth and Nail, and random aggro decks such as White Weenie or red-white Samurai--which actually put up a showing in Maryland!"



Manuel Bevand, Worlds '04

Over the course of the tournament he found two bad match-ups for his deck. Ironically, one of them was Affinity. The speed of the deck was often too much for him to get around and an early **Cranial Playing** often proved fatal. He relied on the "eggs in one basket" **Furnace Dragon** strategy for games two and three. But it was not his worst match-up, "Blue-green is an absolute nightmare. The targeted green removal, combined with countermagic and **Echoing Truth** is extremely effective against the deck."

Death Cloud decks never got the full attention they deserved during the PTQ season but you would see black-green and even mono-black decks pop up in the elimination rounds with enough regularity that it was not an unexpected deck coming into last tournament weekend. Black-green was heavily hyped on the various websites and it proved to be very strong with multiple players taking home trophies under a dark Death Cloud. Here are two different incarnations of the deck. The first won Kentucky States but it is the second that piqued my curiosity due its inclusion of **Hana Kami** the splice mechanic. Both deck builders are regular **Magic** columnists on the internet.

Joshua X Claytor / Kentucky -- Winner
Black Green

Main Deck 60 cards		Sideboard
1 Boseiju, Who Shelters All	4 Barter in Blood	1 Boseiju, Who Shelters All
12 Forest	3 Death Cloud	1 Death Cloud
10 Swamp	4 Echoing Decay	4 Naturalize
23 lands	4 Kodama's Reach	3 Persecute
4 Eternal Witness	4 Oxidize	2 Rude Awakening
4 Kokusho, the Evening Star	4 Plow Under	4 Viridian Shaman
4 Sakura-Tribe Elder	2 Sylvan Scrying	15 sideboard cards
12 creatures	25 other spells	

Joshua and his **Magic** circle put a lot of time into the deck and it seems to have paid off. "I put in about 100 hours worth of playtesting. I tested with local players, Justin Atwood, Ricky Atwood, Clay Baker, Jacob Beal, Robbie Hardin, Ryan Harper, Will Lutes, Dan Meadors, Ken McAlpine, Andy Meradith, and Barry Rowe. It was pretty much a concentrated effort between myself and all of my friends in the area."

"I playtested against KCI, Affinity, Big Red, March of the Indestructibles, Blue Green, Mono Green, Mono Black, Tooth and Nail, and several of the cuter decks that I knew would suck like Kiki Alarm, White Weenie, and Mono blue Control. The deck's toughest matchup by far is KCI. It is an unwinnable matchup unless some certain things happen, like, they have to mulligan to zero, or don't play lands, or leave the table. The easiest matchups were Tooth and Nail and Affinity."

John H. Klauk / Mississippi - 8th Place
Garden State

Main Deck 60 cards		Sideboard
11 Forest	4 Death Cloud	4 Cranial Extraction
9 Swamp	4 Kodama's Reach	3 Nezumi Shortfang
20 lands	4 Rend Flesh	4 Oxidize
4 Eternal Witness	3 Soulless Revival	4 Terror
4 Hana Kami	3 Wear Away	15 sideboard cards
4 Kokusho, the Evening Star	18 other spells	
2 Phyrexian Plaguelord		
4 Sakura-Tribe Elder		
4 Solemn Simulacrum		
22 creatures		

John wrote a lengthy reply to my questionnaire and I am just going to let him explain his deck in his own words. His deck utilizes one of my favorite combos in ChK draft involving **Hana Kami**, **Soulless Revival** and any Arcane Spell.

"While I am no Pro Tour player (yet!), I always do well at MS States, having 4 Top 8s out of the last 6 years. I am known at this event for rocking the boat with different decks. For example, I played Blue Adept Bounce the year of **Replenish** (locking them at 3 land), A **Keldon Firebombers/Veteran Brawler** Deck during Rebel Madness, A **War Elemental** Deck when Affinity first reared its ugly little head, **Battle of Wits** when U/G was coming alive, etc..."

"Anyway, though I always enjoy myself, and despite what others may claim, my designs are usually more than decent in the current metagame. This year however, I really think I have stumbled upon something that is exciting. I really liked some of the black-green decklists I was seeing, but I changed several card choices. And it was fantastic! My only losses this year came against Affinity (clearly the best deck in the format), but by no means did I roll over to it."

"Don't get me wrong. I do NOT hate "netdecks". I simply like to try to have fun and be innovative during States. It is the one competition I get back to my "roots"."

"So, it looks a lot like the standard black-green builds, but it feels like you are playing a much more powerful deck. During the course of the day I was able to set up several dominating board positions. I was able to Rend Flesh



every turn versus a Freshmaker Deck. I was able to **Cranial Extraction** every threat out of a mirror matchup (except for a lone **Sakura-Tribe Elder!**...?). But my favorite was the following sequence. On the play versus Vial Affinity in game two."

Turn 1: Forest, **Hana Kami**. Opponent **Vault of Whispers**, **Aether Vial**.

Turn 2: Forest, Attack, **Wear Away** Vial. Opponent **Blinkmoth Nexus**, **Arcbound Ravager**.

Turn 3: Swamp, **Kodama's Reach** for Forest in play and Swamp in hand. Opponent **Great Furnace**, **Cranial Plating**, Equip. Attack...**Oxidize** Plating.

Turn 4: Swamp. Opponent **Chromatic Sphere**, **Frogmite**, cac Sphere for Blue, **Thoughtcast**, make Blinkmoth a creature, Attack. Block Ravager with **Hana Kami** and sac during damage opponent sacs working to Ravager and I sac **Hana Kami** to retrieve **Wear Away**.

Turn 5: Forest, **Wear Away** Ravager splicing **Souless Retrieval** for **Hana Kami**.

"Once I found another land I was able to **Wear Away** once a turn bringing back the **Hana Kami** every turn to block non flyers. Whenever a Rigger, Atog, or Disciple showed up, I was able to **Rend Flesh** if need be. To say that victory was sweet is an understatement."

"Anyway, I thought the approach for B/G was innovative, and I wanted to share both due to my accomplishments with it and to receive feedback from other players. While I know it is not the best deck in the world...we both know what that currently is...it did perform well versus other good players playing the format's archetypes."

"With experience of it under my belt now, I would make this change to the main deck:

-1 **Kokusho, the Evening Star**

-1 **Death Cloud**


+1 **Souless Revival**

+1 **Wear Away**

Sideboard Changes:

None...I used every card and effectively I might add. **Wear Away** was a hidden gem and I destroyed several enchantments with it in the U/W matchup as a bonus! **Souless Revival** and **Hana Kami** are like **Eternal Witness** 5-12."

The big exciting development on the weekend appears to have been the arrival of Mono-Black Control decks featuring some combination of rats, **Horobi**, **Death's Wail**, and **Death Cloud**. Mike Flores already reported on the success of young Josh Sandler at New York States and there were similar stories across the map. One such story takes us to New Hampshire:

Brian Siu / New Hampshire -- 7th Place		.txt 	
Mono Black Control			
Main Deck 60 cards		Sideboard	
2 Blinkmoth Nexus	3 Chrome Mox	1 Distress	
1 Shizo, Death's Storehouse	3 Distress	3 Imi Statue	
18 Swamp	4 Echoing Decay	3 Lose Hope	
21 lands	3 Night's Whisper	1 Nezumi Shortfang	
	4 Relic Barrier	3 Persecute	
	3 Rend Flesh	4 Terror	
4 Chittering Rats	20 other spells	15 sideboard cards	
4 Horobi, Death's Wail			
3 Nezumi Shortfang			
4 Ravenous Rats			
4 Wicked Akuba			
19 creatures			

Brian tested with eventual winner Chris Roy and other friends who all clustered near the top of his tournament's standings. "State Championships was very successful for my team this year. We ended up placing first (Chris Roy), seventh (myself), eight (Jim Dyke), and ninth (Chris Jarmak). I ended up choosing the deck because the deck proved to have odds against every deck except affinity. Against affinity, it was very close to being even."

Brian explained the design process of the deck. "My playtesting is usually with a few select local players that play the Grand Prix and PTQ circuit, as well as a few Pro connections that network information with me. Playtesting for me began about two weeks before the event. Even with only two weeks of preparation, I still got in about a hundred or so games with various decks. My team and I had worked on the block format for Mirrodin, so we had a good working knowledge of every possible configuration of the top decks and the best builds from that block. With that information, we scanned the new Kamigawa set to see if there were any additions that would prove to be useful, as well as any new archetypes that might emerge."

"We tested every possible deck against each other, and in the end it seemed like the choices were narrowed down to Affinity, Rats, and blue-green control. Members on the team had their own personal preference, and in the end I chose to go with the Rat deck because I didn't want to run into all the Affinity hate that I predicted would be at the tournament. My toughest matchups in the tournament were the rogue decks that were around. Rats was designed to beat the key decks, but fell prey to the random elements that States usually brings. The best matchups for the Rat decks were against control decks. Rats demolishes decks like Tooth and blue-green control."

Brian expected that his deck--or some variation of it--would join decks like Affinity and blue-green as tier one decks in the new Standard.. "Overall I found States to be a very good tournament and I know that I certainly had a lot of fun. It was a nice break from the usual Grand Prix and Pro Tour Qualifier events that we usually play in."

One of the more surprising archetypes to emerge from States was White Weenie. The deck apparently gave players who were not expecting to see the ancient archetype fits all weekend. It even took second place in Iowa.



Daniel Wells / Iowa -- 2nd Place		White Weenie	
Main Deck 60 cards		Sideboard	
1 Eiganjo Castle	4 Ghostly Prison	3 Altar's Light	
20 Plains	4 Glorious Anthem	3 Ivory Mask	
21 lands	4 Otherworldly Journey	3 Karma	
	3 Reciprocate	3 Purge	
	15 other spells	3 Wrath of God	
3 Eight-and-a-Half-Tails		15 sideboard cards	
2 Isamaru, Hound of Konda			
3 Kami of Ancient Law			
2 Lantern Kami			
4 Leonin Skyhunter			
4 Samurai of the Pale Curtain			
4 Savannah Lions			
2 Suntail Hawk			
24 creatures			

Like most old-school **Magic** players who choose White Weenie, Daniel's choice was predicated on a nostalgic fondness more than on metagame factors. Although after taking the deck to a 5-1 record at FNM he found it to be better than any incarnation in recent memory. "I chose this deck because first and foremost white weenie was my first love in playing magic. But I have been unable to play it for a long time due to its uncompetitiveness. But after testing it was proving to be the best new deck that I had encountered. And I wanted to go rogue hoping that no one would be expecting it."

He tested the deck extensively and found that he was having troubles with one of the format's emerging archetypes. "Mono black is an auto loss for me game one so I had to devote six cards in my sideboard to this matchup--three **Karma** and three **Ivory Mask**. As to Affinity, even with all the hate Affinity could still pull out wins that it shouldn't have. So I was going 50/50 with Affinity. And I guess that is about as good as you can expect from a deck."

The success of his deck and a number of others buoyed his spirits about the future state of Standard. "The diversity of the field in the top 8 in Iowa gave me great hope for the future."

Daniel Wells Top 5 *Champions of Kamigawa* cards at Champs:

1. Ghostly Prison
2. Samurai of the Pale Curtain
3. Eight-and-a-Half Tails
4. Meloku the Clouded Mirror
5. Otherworldly Journey

Finally the tenth, non-affinity decklist I am featuring today was played to an eighth place finish by Nich Short in the Indiana State Championships. Call it Little Red, call it Ponza, or as Nick prefers you can just call it Sligh with **Lava Spike** and **Glacial Ray** splice-tacularness.



Nick Short / Indiana -- 8th Place		Sligh	
Main Deck 60 cards		Sideboard	
16 Mountain 1 Shinka, the Bloodsoaked Keep 17 lands 4 Furnace Whelp 4 Hearth Kami 4 Slith Firewalker 4 Vulshok Sorcerer 2 Zo-Zu the Punisher 18 creatures	3 Chrome Mox 4 Electrostatic Bolt 4 Glacial Ray 4 Lava Spike 4 Magma Jet 4 Molten Rain 2 Stone Rain 25 other spells	4 Drooling Ogre 4 Echoing Ruin 3 Grab the Reins 2 Shunt 2 Stone Rain 15 sideboard cards	

Nich was looking for a deck that would not only beat Affinity but deal with its foils as well. "I noticed everyone seemed to be testing Tooth and Nail or controlling decks to stop Ravager and I wanted to run something to stop both. The speed of the deck can usually outrun the control decks, especially since most of their control elements take the form of artifact destruction. The LD can stall Tooth decks long enough to finish them off. Ravager ended up being a coin flip, but I don't know of any decks which truly have good matchups against ravager. Also, I noticed this deck beat almost every rogue deck I ran into, and I knew I'd encounter several of those at States."

Most of his playtesting was dedicated to playing an MBC deck that he ditched at the last minute and he blames his lack of preparation with his new deck for not advancing farther in the elimination rounds. "I wish I had time to playtest, just so I would have known my mulligan strategy against certain decks. I eventually lost (1-2) to Tooth in the Top 8, but that isn't a bad matchup, I just misplayed. I know now I took a bad hand and made multiple bad decisions and should have easily won otherwise, plus I have to give credit to an opponent who played very well."

Nick Short's Top 5 *Champions of Kamigawa* cards from Champs:

1. Kiki-Jiki, Mirror Breaker
2. Sakura-Tribe Elder
3. Rend Flesh
4. Horobi, Death's Wail (usually in the SB)
5. Hearth Kami



This weekend saw Japan join the Champs program with Prefectural Championships being handled under the able leadership of Ron Foster. Ron reported that all the events went off successfully and attendance exceeded their expectations. The Tokyo attendance outdid several major US markets including New York by five people!

One thing you know you can count on at a Japanese tournament is interesting decklists. Ron sent me one Top 16 decklist that you can't find anywhere else that attempted to abuse the Hondens and other enchantments along with *Yavimaya Enchantress*. I love the interaction between *COP White*, *Eight-and-a-Half-Tails*, and *Shifting Sky*. Probably not what you would deem a Tier One deck but fun stuff that I will certainly be tooling around the casual room with looking to have a good time.

Youichi Yanai		"White Witch"	
Main Deck 60 cards		Sideboard	
4 Elfhome Palace 7 Forest 2 Island 2 Mountain 7 Plains 22 lands 3 Eight-and-a-Half-Tails 4 Sakura-Tribe Elder 4 Yavimaya Enchantress 11 creatures	3 Circle of Protection: White 4 Fertile Ground 4 Ghostly Prison 2 Honden of Cleansing Fire 2 Honden of Infinite Rage 2 Honden of Life's Web 2 Honden of Seeing Winds 2 Otherworldly Journey 3 Oxidize 3 Shifting Sky 27 other spells	4 Forest 3 Ivory Mask 3 Naturalize 2 Otherworldly Journey 3 Sacred Ground 15 sideboard cards	

Firestarter: Columbus Top 8

This weekend is the debut of the new Extended format at Pro Tour Columbus. I wrote a [preview](#) for that event that you can find by going to the [Tournament Center](#) and clicking on the Pro Tour Columbus link. I gave a quick rundown of players to keep an eye out for and you should be getting a DCI Player Rewards Newsletter any minute now with a rundown of the decks that have done well in the past two Extended Pro Tours--that are still tournament legal anyway!

I'm curious to find out who you expect to see playing in the Top 8 Sunday and why. It can be old stand-bys or a local player you think is going to break out this weekend. Also, while you are at it, what decks do you think will emerge in the new Extended format with [Tinker](#), [Metalworker](#), [Ancient Tomb](#), [Oath of Druids](#), [Goblin Recruiter](#), and company removed from the mix--and [Champions](#) tossed in for good measure. Use the "discuss this article" button down below to share your thoughts with me and the rest of the **Magic** community.

*Brian David-Marshall has been involved in **Magic** since 1994 when he was violently shaken by someone searching for the game. He has organized tournaments, run a store, and is currently the Pro Tour Historian. His latest venture is [Top8Magic.com](#), the publishing house that is releasing [Michael J. Flores: Deckade](#).*



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