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# Old Dogs, New Tricks

Brian David-Marshall  
The Week That Was  
Thursday, December 2, 2004



Throwback Week, eh?

I think I can handle being marginally on-theme this week, especially in light of some of the recent names that have popped up in the winner's circle of PTQs recently. Two columns back ([while previewing Aesthetic Consultation](#)) I did not take a moment to comment on a couple of the game's older players winning qualifier tournaments. That trend continued the following week while I was sleeping off my turkey dinner, but first let me take a paragraph or two to shine the spotlight on a throwback that warranted mention two weeks ago.

Gary Krakower was the 1997 Canadian National Champion and led his country's team to the Team Championship at Worlds, defeating a team from Sweden that consisted of Mike Donais, Ed Ito, and Gab Tsang. He won Grand Prix-Austin that following year and was an early contributor to the **Magic** newsgroups that eventually coalesced into the dearly departed Magic Dojo, and was a regular contributor to that site once it came into existence.



Gary Krakower

Despite his Dojo roots and all the negative net-deck connotations that come with it, Gary was an inveterate rogue stubbornly playing his **Peacekeeper** deck throughout the *Mirage* Block Constructed season despite the urgings of those around him. One of those pushing Gary to play a better deck was Matt Vienneau, who would later work with Gary on a couple of notable teams that featured Pro Tour winners Mike Pustilnik and David Price over the years.

Although Gary would pop up at the occasional Grand Prix, it has been a few years since he was a fixture on the Pro Tour. I was very happy to see his name show up at the top of the list for a recent Canadian PTQ and I am looking forward to seeing him in Nagoya come January.

The following weekend saw another pair of oldsters win PTQ events -- one of which was a little embarrassing for me. When Greg Collins -- the director of the Tournament Center for this site -- was looking for a video coverage guy for Columbus I suggested my friend Jon Becker. After "pioneering" the role at Worlds in San Francisco, Justin Gary was not going to be available for Columbus since he had qualified for that event. One of the features I used to sell Jon to Greg was that Becker rarely qualified for the Tour.

Jon did a little video work in Columbus and is scheduled to fill that role again in Nagoya, so of course that means he had to go and win a qualifier. Becker went to Maryland two weeks ago and, despite what he called a subpar sealed deck, he made it through the finals and earned the right to play in Nagoya. He is now faced with the decision of a paid trip to Japan and the compensation that comes with the coverage gig or the uncertainty of playing to recoup his costs (and hopefully a little more on top of that).

### Qualifying for Pro Tour-Atlanta

It's time to get off that couch and get the band back together! The [qualifying season for Pro Tour-Atlanta](#) begins Dec. 4. The format is *Champions of Kamigawa* Team Limited, with a Top 2 Rochester Draft.

What would you do in his shoes? If you want to find out what Jon decides, you'll have to tune into the Nagoya coverage.

As for the other 'oldster' . . . a few weeks back I did a feature on [players who made multiple PTQ Top 8s](#) and included a [list of everyone with three or more such appearances](#) over the past few seasons. Within an hour or so of the column going up I received the following e-mail:

Thanks for the props on the list of shame. Here are some other facts...I've played in over 220 individual PTQs (never won one) and I have like 30 PTQ Top 8s. My only PTQ win was from a team PTQ. When I do well you can write this stuff up and make me look even worse.

Later,

Josh Ravitz

Dear Josh,

Why wait?

BDM



Josh is a New Jersey player, and despite being a teenager, is one of the most curmudgeonly players in the history of the game. The first time most people heard of Josh was when he had his "breakthrough" performance at Grand Prix Detroit. "Gramps" had already earned himself a couple grand of the Pro Tour payout when Stalking Tiger Hidden Gibbon finished in ninth place at Pro Tour New York 2001 with Paul Jordan and Matt Urban.



*The Max Fischer Players, left to right: Igor, Josh, Chris*

Ravitz was also responsible for luring a couple of throwbacks back onto the Pro tour in Seattle when he joined forces with Chris Pikula and Igor Frayman to form [The Max Fischer Players](#), where they each earned a couple thousand bucks with an eighth-place finish.

Josh finally put his finals drought behind him with a PTQ win in New Jersey the weekend before Thanksgiving. Keep your eye out for Josh in the Nagoya coverage as he makes his push to become the latest in a long line of "overnight successes" from the TOGIT squad.

Congratulations to Becker, Ravitz, and everyone else who won a PTQ over the past two weeks!


Event City	Event Date	Event TO	Attendance
South Plainfield, N.J. (PT Qualifier)	11/20/2004	Glen Friedman	96
Finish: 1. Josh Ravitz; 2. Anand Khare; 3. Joseph Preossig; 4. Aaron Moshiahwili; 5. John Esposito; 6. Ed Paltzik; 7. James Halter; 8. Bryn Kenney			
Rockville, Md. (PT Qualifier)	11/20/2004	Laurel Chiat	92
Finish: 1. Jonathan Becker; 2. Tommy Ashton; 3. Stephen Behrle; 4. Tony Gregg; 5. Semion Bezrukov; 6. Chad Salo; 7. John Bonnet; 8. Jim Witomski			
Pittsburgh, Pa. (PT Qualifier)	11/20/2004	Mike Guptil	67
Finish: 1. Harry Romesburg; 2. Andrew Wagner; 3. Aaron Vanderbeek; 4. Chad Hienz; 5. Greg Lowe; 6. Lance Bohac; 7. Jeremy Darling; 8. Patrick Hepner			
Johnston, R.I. (PT Qualifier)	11/20/2004	Rob Dougherty	71
Finish: 1. Jim Dyke; 2. Christiaan van Dijk; 3. Lucas Glavin; 4. Gregory Kelly; 5. Michael Cannistraro; 6. Jonathan Morawski; 7. Vince Growke; 8. Joseph Kamourakis			
Brighton, Mass. (PT Qualifier)	11/27/2004	Rob Dougherty	89
Finish: 1. Michael Cannistraro; 2. Walter Egli; 3. Tom Choma; 4. Duncan Bilz; 5. David Santos; 6. David Shiels; 7. Gou Anan; 8. Brian Kowal			
Philadelphia, Pa. (PT Qualifier)	11/27/2004	Glen Friedman	128
Finish: 1. Kate Stavola; 2. Owen Fletcher; 3. James Bradley; 4. Tony Gregg; 5. Bryn Kenney; 6. Anthony Impellizzieri; 7. Steven Hagy; 8. Corey Fisher			

## The 40-Card Net Deck

The big news over the past two weeks has to be three separate Limited Grand Prix events. Two weeks ago there were events in Japan and Brazil and this past weekend was the record-shattering Grand Prix-Paris. Jose Barbero [hoisted the trophy in Porto Alegre](#) while in Yokohama, [Kazuki Katou did the same](#). For Katou, it was his second Grand Prix win in as many Rochester Draft events after taking the title in Shizoka last year during the *Mirrodin* block season.

Paris saw more than 1500 players descend on the tournament site. There were more players than chairs on site, forcing the judging staff, coverage team, and scorekeepers to stand for the first few rounds. The tournament was so large that they had to break Day One into two separate tournaments that ultimately converged on Day Two, with the Top 64 from each half advancing to the Rochester Draft portion of play. Wilco Pinkster emerged from the scrum clutching the trophy to [win the largest Magic tournament on record](#).

Also emerging from that tournament was an awareness of a hot new archetype for this draft format. Late in the Day Two blog, Rui Oliveira [profiled a Dampen Thoughts archetype](#) which first emerged on *Magic Online*. Quentin Martin drafted the following deck which relied on running his opponent's deck out of cards rather than dealing the more traditional 20 points of damage.

<b>Quentin Martin</b>	
<b>Main Deck</b> 40 cards	

13 Island	0 creatures	1 Candles' Glow
5 Plains		2 Consuming Vortex
18 lands		3 Counsel of the Soratami
		3 Dampen Thought
		2 Ethereal Haze
		1 Hisoka's Defiance
		1 Long-Forgotten Gohei
		2 Peer Through Depths
		2 Psychic Puppetry
		4 Reach Through Mists
		1 Sift Through Sands
		22 other spells

The deck relies on splicing **Dampen Thoughts** onto the various and sundry arcane spells to deplete the opponent's deck. Cards such as **Peer Through Depths** and **Reach through Mists** not only provide splice vehicles but help the deck find the next splice device as well. **Ethereal Haze**, **Psychic Puppetry**, and **Candles' Glow** keep you alive long enough to win.

In general, the deck needs to use **Dampen Thoughts** six or seven times in order to win. Quentin needed to go 3-0 in his final pod to make Top 8 but lost in the thirteenth round and just missed the cut. At 12-3, his 11th-place finish was behind ten other players with 12-2-1 records or better.

This was not an entirely unexpected deck, as the deck has been growing in popularity on MTGO for the past few weeks. As with any successful archetype, as the deck becomes more well known its potency decreases as players learn to counter the deck's strategy. Take Grand Prix-Yokohama and Masahiko Morita's Top 8 draft deck as a case in point.

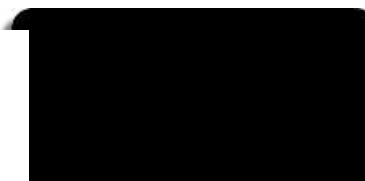


Masahiko Morita		
GP Yokohama Final Rochester Deck		
Main Deck	Sideboard	
40 cards		
10 Island	1 Brutal Deceiver	
8 Mountain	1 Counsel of the Soratami	
18 lands	1 Crushing Pain	
	1 Cut the Tethers	
	1 Desperate Ritual	
	1 Ember-Fist Zubera	
1 River Kaijin	1 Field of Reality	
1 Sokenzan Bruiser	2 Floating-Dream Zubera	
1 Soul of Magma	1 Hearth Kami	
3 creatures	1 Hisoka's Defiance	
	1 Jukai Messenger	
	1 Pious Kitsune	
	1 Reito Lantern	
	1 Ronin Houndmaster	
	1 Soratami Mirror-Guard	
	1 Soratami Rainshaper	
	1 Squelch	
	2 Stone Rain	
	1 Unnatural Speed	
	1 Untaidake, the Cloud Keeper	
	1 Wandering Ones	
19 other spells		
	23 sideboard cards	

Morita actually drafted this deck for the Top 8 of a Grand Prix and came within one game of advancing to the semifinals. However, the sideboarding strategy of eventual tournament winner Kazuki Katou blocked his path. Kazuki sided in his **Shell of the Last Kappa** and rode it to victory in the third game of his quarterfinal match.

Go ahead...spend a few seconds staring directly to the right.

Even if Morita spliced the **Dampen Thoughts** onto something that doesn't target a player (such as **Reach Through Mists**), the **Dampen Thoughts** portion of the spell would still target and the **Shell** could counter both halves of the spell. Short of siding up to 60 cards, Katou did not think the



match up was winnable without the Shell and relied on it to win games two and three after a harrowing loss in the first game.

Now siding up to 60 is actually a popular strategy, although it is risky. As you can see, Morita had plenty of good creatures in his sideboard and if he suspected that his opponent was going to side in an extra 20 cards he could transform into a more aggressive creature-based deck with little difficulty. Akihiro Takakuwa tried to make a run in the second draft of the same Grand Prix with the following deck but ran afoul of a 60-card opponent in the final round.



**Akihiro Takakuwa**  
Grand Prix Yokohama 2nd Rochester Deck

**Main Deck**  
40 cards

7 Forest	2 Floating-Dream Zubera	1 Consuming Vortex
10 Island	2 Hana Kami	3 Dampen Thought
17 lands	1 Matsu-Tribe Decoy	1 Eerie Procession
	2 Orochi Sustainer	2 Eye of Nowhere
	1 Sakura-Tribe Elder	1 Joyous Respite
	8 creatures	2 Kodama's Might
		1 Mystic Restraints
		2 Peer Through Depths
		1 Psychic Puppetry
		1 Reach Through Mists
		15 other spells

Don't expect to see this deck make an appearance at Pro Tour-Nagoya -- although you should probably keep an eye out for it at your local draft and online.

"This is a deck that probably won't work at a PT," according to Takakuwa. "Once your opponents know what you're playing, you're in trouble. However, it still seems that a lot of people don't know about it -- even Oiso didn't. I can't recommend it to people. People can hate-draft you out of it easily. I was lucky enough to get three **Dampen Thoughts**."

Other cards that spell bad news for the archetype include **Distress**, **Stone Rain**, and, of course, the aforementioned **Shell of the Last Kappa** that allowed Katou to go on and win the Grand Prix. For those trying to implement the deck, Takakuwa recommends **Teller of Tales** as the most important creature to acquire for your miniscule creature base since it provides you with a tapper to buy you time while you whittle down your opponent's deck.

## Firestarter: Speaking of Throwbacks...

I had the chance to play in a PTQ this past weekend and finished 11th with two losses. My deck was fantastic featuring **Meloku** and a pair of **Hideous Laughters** (I even spliced one onto the other in one memorable game) but still took two losses. I got Greeded out one match and in the other I was on the draw and mulliganed a six land/**Nezumi Ronin** hand. My next hand had six spells and I lost with a five-card hand.

What do you do when you are looking at a six-land hand? Do you keep it if you are on the draw? On the play? If you want to share your thoughts on the matter use the 'discuss this article' button down below to be shunted over to the forums.

*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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