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Nagoya Nuggets



Brian David-Marshall · *The Week That Was*
Thursday, February 3, 2005

While at [Pro Tour–Nagoya](#) last weekend, I had the exciting opportunity to sit in the whisper booth alongside Randy Buehler and provide color commentary for the Top 8 of this historic event. I was terrified beyond belief going into the experience but I am happy with my performance and especially happy to have had a chance to call Terry Soh's endgame against Frank Karsten in the quarterfinals.

It was the fourth game in a [best-of-five match](#) and Terry was up two games to one. He found himself in a poor position and looked to be overrun at any minute. Frank sent in a couple of attackers to dwindle down Terry's side of the table but the young Malaysian player only chose to block a Blademaster, letting a potential eight points of damage through -- exactly matching his life total. After Terry announced his blocks he turned to the judge to double-check his life totals, "Nine life, right?"

Except he was at eight. Frank had to commit tapping his **Kabuto Moth** in order to deal the full lethal amount of damage. Frank was faced with trying to decide if the meticulous Soh had actually incorrectly kept track of his own life total or was bluffing, since Terry had two open mana and a **Thief of Hope** on the board -- any instant arcane spell would bring Terry up to one when the turn was over. Frank considered his options for a long time and decided that if Terry was bluffing it was actually a double bluff -- meaning Soh had nothing and was trying to buy a turn by making Frank think he was bluffing.

Eventually, Frank went for the latter and committed his **Kabuto Moth**. Terry not only had an arcane spell, but it was **Soulless Revival** bringing back a spirit for another **Thief of Hope** activation on Terry's next turn. Now it was Frank's turn to bluff a **Candles' Glow**, but the Malaysian player did not have the luxury of considering a bluff and sent everyone over on his next turn. Frank could only offer his hand in concession.

It was one of the most exciting endgames I have ever witnessed. It is rare that you see the bluffsmanship of the game play such a decisive role in such a high-stakes match. The last time I can remember seeing anything like it was in Game 2 of Jon Finkel's [quarterfinal match with Benjamin Caumes](#) at Pro Tour–Yokohama. Jon shot a **Wirewood Herald** with **Sparksmith** knowing full well that Caumes would fetch a **Timberwatch Elf**. Jon did not have a second goblin to enable his **Sparksmith** to kill the elf when it came down, but Caumes could not know that. Jon played like the second goblin was lurking in his hand the entire time and as a result Caumes did not play the **Timberwatch** until it was too late and Jon took the game.

WEBCAST ARCHIVE

Watch Terry Soh's masterful bluff (found in Quarterfinals Part II, at the one-hour, 20-minute mark) and all the Top 8 action from Sunday's webcast from Pro Tour–Nagoya.

- [Finals](#): Shu Komuro vs. Anton Jonsson (57 MB zip)
- [Semifinals, Part I](#) (45 MB zip)
- [Semifinals, Part II](#) (62 MB zip)
- [Quarterfinals, Part I](#) (45 MB zip)
- [Quarterfinals, Part II](#) (94 MB zip)
- [Top 8 Draft](#) (13 MB zip)



Soh's bluff revealed a Magic mind of the highest order.

Another exciting aspect of sitting in the whisper booth was the opportunity to talk with Randy Buehler about some of the exciting developments for the Pro Tour, the just-announced Invitational balloting, and developments for the Tournament Center over the course of constructed PTQ seasons.

When players came to this past weekend's event, they were greeted with free snacks, beverages, pens and paper, and abundant land for side drafting. They were also pointed in the direction of the brand-spanking new [Pro Players' Lounge](#). The Lounge was a players-only area where the participants could go between rounds to unwind. There were complimentary snacks and beverages, free Internet and long-distance phone service, and plenty of the players' favorite movies playing at all times.



The Pro Players' Lounge offered a place to relax.

From the moment they walked in until the minute they left, the players were dealing with a kinder, gentler Pro Tour. There are plenty of other developments on the horizon -- but they are not quite ripe enough to be plucked from the grapevine just yet.

When the Top 8 sat down to draft for the final time on the weekend, it was announced that their Rochester Draft would be the last such event held on the Pro Tour. Individual Rochester Draft is going to be replaced by the more popular Booster Draft format for the remaining events this season -- Nationals and Worlds, specifically. When I asked Randy about the justification for this development, he simply explained that

nobody ever plays Rochester outside of high-level events where the format is mandated. If you have ever waited three hours in a Rochester Draft queue on MTGO then you know what he means.

The last little nugget that Randy let slip was that the next Sunday webcast from Pro Tour--Atlanta will allow the viewers at home to see the players' hands as the match plays out. In the past this was rendered impossible, because the reactions of the crowd at the venue when a pivotal card is drawn at just the right time tipping off opponents to play around timely answers.

In Atlanta, the matches will be played out in a separate location where the hoots and hollers of the crowd cannot reach the eager ears of the competitors. It should make for an even more compelling webcast with all of the players' decisions laid out for the world to see -- and to second guess.

The really big news that Randy let slip was regarding the voting for [this year's Magic Invitational](#) which is going to involve the **Magic** community to a greater degree than ever before. The voting kicks off today with the [European ballot](#), featuring eight players. I had a hand in writing the profiles for each of the candidates and it was very intriguing to look at the players from three different perspectives.

If you look at the players based on last year's [Player of the Year race](#), you get one set of results and find yourself wondering how third-place finisher Rickard Osterberg could be left off the ballot. You could simply look at the results from this year's [Player of the Year race](#) but that is way too small a sample of results to work with.

Now if you take the [results of the last 12 months](#) into consideration you get a much more accurate snapshot of the status of the game's best players. One thing that screams out from the top of the list is that Antoine Ruel is having the best run in the game despite not having won a major event. He finished second in San Diego and has finished high in the money in every event since then up until Nagoya.

Looking at the last 12 months provides a fresh perspective on	Name	Pro Points
Osterberg as well, who fell off from 3rd place all the way down to 50th. Despite a strong start the season with a high finish in Boston and a win in New Orleans, the latter portion of Osterberg's season and the beginning of this one don't warrant putting him ahead of the other candidates on this list.	1. Antoine Ruel	69
	2. Olivier Ruel	63
	3. Jelger Wiegersma	57
	3. Gabriel Nassif	57
	5. Kamiel Cornelissen	55
	6. Anton Jonsson	52
Another striking drop-off that warrants mentioning is that of Kai Budde. The Invitational ballot is not based solely on the accumulation of Pro Points, and for that Kai has to be thankful since he has plummeted from 8th place at the end of	7. Masashiro Kuroda	50
	7. Julien Nuijten	50
	9. Jin Okamoto	49
	10. Tsuyoshi Ikeda	48

last season to 40th in our 12-month snapshot of the standings. Kai is an active voice in the **Magic** community, writing about the game on a regular basis, and is one of the game's enduring stars.

10. Jeroen Remie 48
For [complete standings](#), click here.

You can call into question upwardly mobile Frank Karsten's exclusion from the ballot over Nicolai Herzog -- who like Budde failed to attend this past Pro Tour -- but with two Pro Tour victories in the past year you can't overlook the man who was just narrowly nudged out of last year's Player of the Year title. Besides, between the development of Vial Affinity and the annotated draft list that Frank carried around all weekend in Nagoya, I have a feeling he might find his way onto the Resident Genius ballot this season.

It's tough because the top of this 12-month list is dominated by Europeans. The top 20 is almost entirely made up of European and Japanese players, with only Osyp Lebedowicz cracking the that section from the US. Now it is in your hands to vote one of these worthy Europeans to take the first of many Invitational slots determined by you, the fans.

Canadian Review

Looking over the middle portion of the 12-month standings, I was reminded of my oversight when writing the Nagoya Preview article. I had tabled the paragraph about Canadian **Magic** until I heard back from Aeo Paquette about whether or not he would be attending. Since he had made two PT Top 8 appearances in two outings, I would be remiss in not leading off any section pertaining to the Canadian **Magic** scene with him.

I never heard back from him and I never went back and incorporated anything about the Canadian **Magic** scene into the preview. Pretty bad news for me, since including the likes of Murray Evans, Richard Hoan, Mark Zajdner, and Jeff Cunningham could only reflect well on me when they all turned in solid Top 24 performances.

I will be doing a column with members of the Nagoya Top 8 in the near future, but I wanted to take time out of this column to call some attention to the remarkable Pro Tour run that Richard Hoan is experiencing. At the last four Limited Pro Tours, Hoan has finished in the Top 16 with one Top 8 to show for it. I shared a plane ride with Richard from Nagoya to Narita Airport, and he agreed to talk about his recent success and relative anonymity.

BDM: Tell me about your recent Limited PT finishes.

Rich: I came 22nd in Chicago, 8th in Yokohama, 10th in Amsterdam, 12th in San Diego, 11th in Nagoya. I've also done no worse than 5-1 in limited at Nationals over the last 3 years.

BDM: What needs to happen for you convert that string of Top 16s into Top 8s?

Rich: I could say something like I needed to be a little bit luckier, and while that is true to an extent, each time when I thought back on the tournaments I can see errors I made in the later rounds of the tournaments. Whether its my mulligans in Amsterdam against Aeo Paquette, where I mulliganed a little too aggressively because I overrated my deck and underrated his. Or in Nagoya where I didn't block all of Jeroen's creatures on a pretty fishy looking attack, and got killed by a **Devouring Rage** that I didn't think was in his deck.



Rich Hoan, during his Top 8 appearance in Yokohama.

BDM: Randy told me a story about you and Sam Gomersall going "all in" for this event. Can you give me the full version?

Rich: Basically, Sam and I had gone into debt trying to raise our end-of-year payouts, and the plan didn't really pan out. I, for example, spent my summer traveling, mostly for GPs and twice lost the last round playing for another PT point. I then convinced Sam to cross the Atlantic for a PTQ and GP Chicago. At the PTQ we had fairly mediocre sealed decks, were 3-0, won and Sam wrote the win as a loss. Obviously we lost the next two rounds. We then got bad sealed decks in Chicago. Then at the PTQ in Chicago, we were in the finals, and couldn't really split because we needed the money ASAP and they couldn't do that. So we played and got crushed after coming out of the draft with the feeling that we couldn't lose.

BDM: How have you fared at Constructed events?

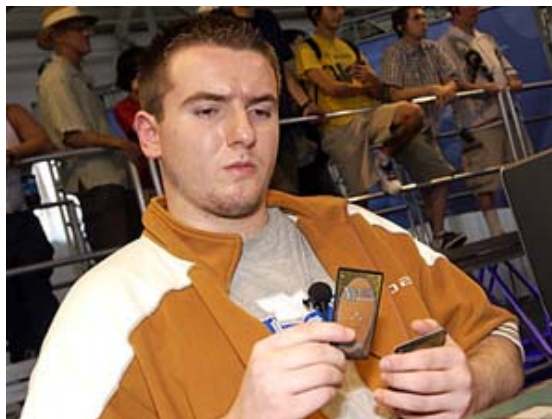
Rich: I only have one money finish at a Constructed PT. That was PT New Orleans, and even that tournament was a disaster. I played the Dutch Goblin deck and was 10-2 after 12 rounds. Then in round 13 I threw away the match by stacking incorrectly with **Goblin Recruiter**. I proceeded to lose the next three rounds by losing the die roll three times and always going off the turn after my opponent did.

BDM: Tell me about the Canadian Magic community. Do you feel you get lost in the shadow of the U.S.?

Rich: There are three distinct stages of the Canadian **Magic** Community. It begins with the Eric Tam, Terry Borer, Paul McCabe stage. That was when Canada was at the forefront of worldwide **Magic** with two of the best players in the world and a host of other very solid pros.

Then there is the era of Gab Tsang, Gary Wise, and Ryan Fuller. They were probably the best players Canada ever had, but were overshadowed because the world had caught up so much, and they were competing with the likes of Jon Finkel and Kai Budde.

Then there is my generation which has Jeff Cunningham, Murray Evans, and Aeo Paquette. We are starting to come back to the forefront mostly because of the depression in American **Magic**, and how easy it is to get lost in the names of all the awesome Asian players.



Aeo Paquette is 2-for-2 in Top 8s.

BDM: How often do you draft?

Rich: I do almost no drafts in real life because all the Toronto **Magic** players I like have pretty much quit and it takes over an hour to get to the stores, but I love playing **Magic**. I even live with four other **Magic** players, two of them being former National Champions, and am never able to get a draft going. Therefore I've drafted on **Magic Online** more than pretty much anybody. I would confidently wager than I've done more *Champions of Kamigawa* drafts than anybody, except maybe Sam Gomersall.

BDM: How do you approach a new set like *Betrayers*? Will you draft it much in real life before it hits MTGO?

Rich: So far my only experience with *Betrayers* is a couple of team drafts in Nagoya. I will try to get as many drafts in as I can but don't expect to get more than ten in.

BDM: Any early impressions about the set?

Rich: I really haven't played enough to figure out anything solid. The ninja ability is probably vastly overrated since its generally a one-shot deal, and you lose so much tempo in doing it. It also seems like there are a lot less playables than in *Champions* so you basically need to get to 18 playables in pack 1 or else you find lotsa dreck like 2/2 fears for 6 and healing salves in your deck.

BDM: What is your team for Pro Tour–Atlanta?

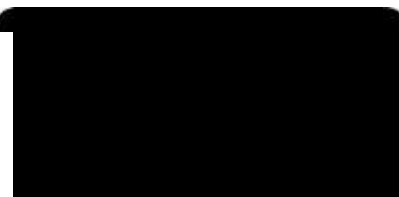
Rich: I'm playing with Sam Gomersall and Mark Herberholz. We decided we were happy playing together after doing many team drafts together at PTs.

BDM: Who are the five most underrated Pros?

Rich: Bernardo Da Costa Cabral, Brock Parker, Gerard Fabiano, Antonino De Rosa, and Sam Gomersall. They are all consistently putting up solid finishes but never get to see the spotlight.

Don't Believe the Hype...Yet!

This past weekend saw the kickoff of the Extended PTQ season for Pro Tour–Philadelphia. In [yesterday's column](#), Mike Flores promised a jaw-dropping development that was among the most exciting in the history of Internet coverage of the **Magic** metagame. If you were listening



to this weekend's webcast you already know what it is, but for the rest of you...[click here](#).

Every week for the remainder of the season, we are going to endeavor to bring you all the North American PTQ Top 8 deck lists from every event listed on that page. What this means for you, the player, is an unprecedented level of information about an incredibly diverse metagame. Whether you are looking for the most up-to-date decklist to play or simply want to be armed to the teeth for those aforementioned, filthy net-deckers, you must visit this page every week.

Never before in the history of the game we all love has this level of information been available to the player base. There were only two PTQs run on the opening weekend and we have all the info from both of those. Early reports show a heavy preponderance of RDW with a cold front of Mind's Desire sweeping in from the coast. There were also a couple of interesting variations on Reanimator and Tog -- check them all out.

Next week the page becomes an utterly insane resource with nine events to choose from, with even more the week after. I am confident that this will become the most essential resource throughout this PTQ season and every subsequent Constructed format season.



Firestarter: Bringing a net deck to a rogue fight!

So which side of the eternal debate do you land on? It has raged since the earliest days of the Dojo. Do you play the best deck or a deck that is uniquely yours? Does the collecting of all the Top 8s from all the North American PTQs help or hurt the rogue deck builder? Does anticipating what everyone will play help you to wedge your deck in between the cracks of the best decks? Start discussing now!



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