



MAGICTHEGATHERING.COM

ARTICLES

Related links

Read other articles

TOURNAMENTS

MAGIC ONLINE

Article Search

# Kicking Myself

Brian David-Marshall · *The Week That Was*  
Thursday, February 10, 2005



It is rare that I regret passing up a coverage assignment as much as I did this past weekend with [Grand Prix–Boston](#). In addition to the countless people I missed seeing and hanging out with, the event was rife with drama, storylines, and tech. All the ingredients that make for a delicious coverage recipe. I enjoy coverage in general -- even Team Rochester, which most people hate covering -- but Constructed events are usually the plum assignments and this one was especially juicy.



Oiso left the East Coast triumphant.

One of the storylines from this weekend was obviously the presence of a contingent of Japanese players that bore an uncanny resemblance to the upcoming **Magic** Invitational APAC region ballot. The group included some of the most successful Grand Prix and Pro Tour players in recent memory. By now you surely know that Class of Columbus alumnus Masashi Oiso won the event, but joining him on the trip were fellow alumnus Shuhei Nakamura, Pro Tour–Amsterdam finalist Osamu Fujita, and Japanese National Champion Tsuyoshi Fujita. All four of these players have reached the finals of a Pro Tour, with seven Top 8 visits between them.

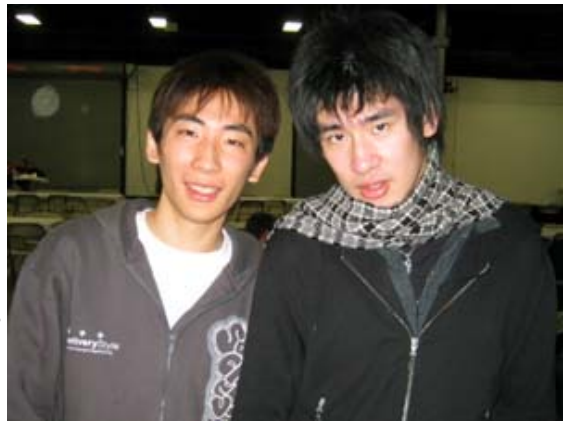
Joining Oiso in the Top 8 of the event was Masahiko Morita, one of the most successful Grand Prix players in the history of the game. This weekend marked the thirteenth time his name has shown up in the brackets of the coverage page -- he won Osaka just a few weeks back as a member of P.S.2. He is in rarified air, with only Kai Budde and Alex Shvartsman having more Grand Prix Top 8 appearances. Morita is one of Japan's best-kept secrets because he rarely travels outside of the APAC region for events.

The presence of the Japanese created quite a stir at the event, as well as on Internet Messenger windows and IRC channels around the world. Were the Japanese pulling a Shvartsman? Alex Shvartsman was the most notable Pro player to exploit Asian Grand Prix tournaments in the early days of the Pro Tour (when they were perceived to be softer competition than North American and European events), although many players routinely did this. Mike Flores even put forth that theory in [yesterday's column](#).

The buzz also suggested that the Oiso-led squad would head west to conquer GP–Seattle and then blaze a trail back to burn down Atlanta before heading home. Nothing could be further from the truth. Legendary Japanese deck builder Go Anan moved to the United States recently live in Boston and study English. If that name seems familiar to you it is because Go Anan's name is attributed to nearly every significant Japanese deck development from Kuroda's Big Red deck that won Kobe to Tsuyoshi Fujita's green-red Goblin deck from Nationals to Morita's winning Affinity build

from Grand Prix–Kuala Lumpur. (It is my understanding that the Go Anan brand on a deck actually betrays the handiwork of Tsuyoshi Fujita.)

So the group decided to use Grand Prix–Boston as an excuse to visit their close friend and try their hand at the North American **Magic** scene while they were here. According to Gabe Walls, who spent a lot of time with them this weekend, there was little chance of them sticking around this continent for very long because “they can’t stand the food when they are in the States. They just go to the supermarket and buy prepackaged sushi.”



Oiso, left, and Morita faced each other in the quarterfinals.

Something that became apparent, talking to friends who were at the event, is that Oiso is finally garnering some recognition -- from players outside of Japan -- as one of the very best players in the game. Pro after pro I spoke with marveled at how well he played. Mike also talked about this in yesterday’s column, saying he was humbled watching the four-time Pro Tour Top 8 competitor play his matches.

Jeff Garza, an up-and-coming American player from New England, was impressed by the little things Oiso did and felt like he learned much by observing him in action.

“I think the best thing about Oiso’s play was his use of **Cabal Therapy**,” Garza said. “In slower matchups where you could get an idea of what they had he would hit like 80 percent of the time. At the same time people seemed to ALWAYS miss against him -- usually after he **Brainstormed** but still left certain cards in hand that would have been very good to Therapy away.”

The “development” of the Japanese mental game is a story that has been picking up steam. There has always been a sweeping generalization regarding Asian players and their unwillingness to bluff or play any kind of head games. Whether it was Kuroda’s dramatic flair, Terry Soh’s bluff, or Oiso’s match in the finals, that perception is starting to crumble away.

I spoke with finalist Lucas Glavin about that play and he emphatically denied that he was somehow tricked into making an error by Oiso, preferring that the blame fall squarely on his own shoulders. I have followed Lucas’ career since he won the final iteration of the [Your Move Games/Neutral Ground Grudge Match](#) a couple of years ago. I was impressed by his technically excellent play and have been looking forward to his breakout tournament since then.



“I’ve obviously replayed the game a thousand times in my head, and this is all I can come up with,” Glavin said. “I think I was so fixated on the game situation, the fact that to **Reanimate** the Ghoul would put me at 1 life, the fact that the Grand Prix would be won or lost on that turn, that for some reason I fast forwarded past the crucial step of **Cabal Therapying** myself.



“I was disappointed in the match coverage because it doesn’t really explain the situation accurately. I never tutored for a **Starlit Sanctum**, it doesn’t say I was at low life because my lands were **Tarnished Citadel** and **Forbidden Orchard**, and it somehow suggests that Oiso ‘bluffed’ me right out of the tournament, which is absolutely ridiculous. I considered the possibility that he had **Maggot Carrier** in his hand, but it was clear that I was willing to take the risk rather than give him an extra draw step when I flashed back **Krosan Reclamation**, targeting **Reanimate** as opposed to **Exhume/Therapy**.

*Oiso, left, and Glavin study decklists before the finals.*

“Between you and me, I believe there are only two possible explanations for what happened. Either I'm a bad player who got

lucky to have gotten that far in the tournament, at which point the clock struck 12 and I went back to being miserable, or I'm a good player who made a mistake.”

As for the notion that somehow The Mistake will have some long-lasting effect on the Massachusetts-based player, you have never spoken with the pragmatic Glavin. “As for 'handling' the mistake I made, I really don't care about it. Sure at the time I was frustrated with myself for having done it, but there were a lot of things I had to be happy about. On the dollars-and-cents side of things, we had made a \$2100/\$2000 prize split before the match, so all it cost me was \$100. If I had misplayed at any other point in the tournament it would have cost me the Top 8, or even more money in the single elimination rounds.

“Someone said that apart from the money, the mistake must have been a tremendous blow to my pride, or that it will 'haunt' me for a long time to come. My response to that is that I'm proud of how well my deck performed, and I'm proud of the fact that I played a very complicated deck well for 17 and 2/3 rounds of the event.”

For those of you living under a rock for the past week, Lucas' deck was a combination of two different combo decks. He took the Reanimation combo from Cephalid Breakfast and poured some infinite Life gain on top of it. The frame of the deck was hammered out by Dan O'Brien and handed to Lucas for inspection the Monday before the Grand Prix.

“I used to play the Hermit Druid/Sutured Ghoul deck and the Cephalid deck reminded me of it, and adding the Life combo to the mix seemed like a pretty smart idea. The reason being, many decks in the format could not handle the Life component (RDW, Goblins, Affinity, UG), while against others the Life plan was completely useless (Aluren, Mind's Desire). On the flipside, the Cephalid/Ghoul plan was powerful against the aforementioned combo decks because it usually goes off faster than Desire or Aluren, but it's less effective against the aggressive decks which can usually find ways to disrupt the combo.

“I made some quick revisions the following day and we began testing on Wednesday. At this point we were just focused on tuning a few cards in the maindeck and figuring out what Living Wish targets were needed. In all honesty, I wasn't 100 percent satisfied that we really nailed down a completely optimal version of the deck by the time the GP started, but I certainly think we were ahead of the rest of the field.”



*Glavin tirelessly tested his Cephalid-Life combination deck.*

For people considering this flexible breakfast buffet of combos, Lucas advises that you put in some serious playtesting before you take it out in the field.

“I have no idea what kind of adjustments people are going to make given the results of this Grand Prix, so I couldn't honestly tell you if it's a good deck to play given the field. It certainly was a good deck to play for last weekend's field, but Extended seasons always have a way of shifting from week to week. The deck is absurdly hard to play, and I'm not just saying that to cover myself for making a mistake. In order to play the deck properly, you need to know how to play individual matchups, which game plan to go on, how to use your tutors, and be aware of the deck's many subtle nuances. The bottom line is you really need to practice to play the deck properly.”

## Lifetime Achievement Award

That's what **Magicthegathering.com** readers gave to Kai Budde this past week when they voted him into this year's Invitational as the European representative. Despite his fantastic resume, Kai was far behind all the other candidates in current Pro Standings after Nagoya. Kai was sitting in 40th place, almost 30 spots behind the next lowest possible candidate.



At the same time it is very hard to argue with Kai's lifetime achievements. Despite a slow start to the current season, I wouldn't be at all surprised to see Kai high on the Player of the Year payout -- or on another Invitational card.

The Euros dominated the top of the charts in the Pro Standings and someone worthy was going to get the shaft. There are still plenty of ballots to go and you could easily see a fair share of them getting a deserved nomination on several of the remaining tickets -- Resident Genius, Road Warrior, Fan Favorite, Judges pick, Pro Players pick, Writers pick, or the mysterious R&D pick.

This week's vote is for the Latin American Region -- [go here](#) to vote.

## Firestarter: What the Deck???

Pow!

Bam!

Bash!

That is the sound of players all over the world hitting the [PTQ Top 8 decks page](#) like it owed them money. There are some crazy decks there. The Welder -Reanimator deck from last week showed up in the Top 8 of Grand Prix-Boston. Which one will win next weekend's PTQs? Is it Kiki-Opposition complete with all sorts of combo-tastic Kki-Jiki/Mystic Snake nuttiness? How about good ol' White Weenie?

It is a wide-open field with what seems like eight new decks in each Top 8. What list has impressed you the most? Use the "discuss" button right below to chime in with your opinions.



[Discuss](#) on the message boards



[Respond](#) via email



[Brian David-Marshall](#) archive

[WHAT'S NEW](#)

[CORPORATE INFO](#)

[WHERE TO BUY](#)

[INTERNATIONAL](#)

[HELP](#)

[SITEMAP](#)

[PRODUCTS](#)



© 1995-2005 Wizards of the Coast, Inc., a subsidiary of Hasbro, Inc. All Rights Reserved.

[Wizards is headquartered in Renton, Washington, PO Box 707, Renton, WA 98057.](#)

[PRIVACY STATEMENT](#)