

Home > Games > Magic > Magicthegathering.com > Columns

A Top 8 for the Ages

Brian David-Marshall
The Week That Was
Friday, April 29, 2005



This weekend in Detroit far exceeded my expectations. While it is a good thing to have some fresh faces make it to the Top 8 of a Grand Prix or Pro Tour, you still want to see your top-name players do well. The [Top 8 from Detroit](#) looked like the type of Grand Prix Top 8 from years past where every player sitting down to draft had plenty of Pro Tour experience under their belts.

Some numbers for this Grand Prix Top 8:

- 2: Pro Tour champions
- 3: 2005 Invitationalists
- 4: Green drafters
- 4: Players with a Pro Tour Top 8
- 7: Pro Tour Top 8s
- 17: Grand Prix Top 8s

Winner Jordan Berkowitz came to Detroit with only half a mind to play in the Grand Prix. He was reasonably sure that he would qualify for Pro Tour-London on the basis of his Limited rating. He came to Detroit to hang with friends and possibly pick up a scalped ticket to watch his beloved Philadelphia 76ers get drubbed by the reigning NBA Champion Detroit Pistons. With a 3 p.m. tip-off for the game, Jordan figured he could play in the event and drop if he took a loss. He didn't take one until the final round of Swiss on Day One.

Jordan was pretty disappointed with his green-black draft deck for the [Top 8](#) but despite the [Bile Urchins](#) and five demon-less ogres, he got through a Top 8 gauntlet that had him paired with a Pro Tour Top 8er at each step along the way.

After dominating the Gray Matter PTQ scene for nearly a year qualifying for PT after PT seemingly at will, Jordan earned himself a Top 8 berth at Pro Tour-Venice with a green-red Beasts deck. He finished in the Top 64 of his next Pro Tour in Japan and then took 10th at Worlds in Berlin. It looked like there would be no more PTQs in young Jordan's future . . . although that changed this year.



Jordan Berkowitz earned this handshake.

Jordan found himself sprinting alongside the gravy train as it pulled out of the station. A family situation kept him from attending Pro Tour-Columbus this season and that left Jordan without the requisite Pro Points to attend Pro Tour-Nagoya. He thought he could squeak in on rating but fell four points short of the invite, with one tournament getting in just past the deadline. It was the first time since Venice that Jordan did not have the option of attending a Pro Tour.

He shoehorned his way onto the Atlanta team of Eugene Levin and Gerry Thompson when Mitch Tamblin jumped ship on them, and their team "Last Minute" finished 13th and very much in the money, but still just shy of the Pro Points necessary to qualify for Philadelphia or London. Look for Jordan at his local countdown qualifier this weekend and/or the LCQ next Thursday if he is going to compete in Philadelphia. However, his win in Detroit means that no such shenanigans will be required for London.

As for the rest of the field, Rich Hoan was easily a favorite to win this Grand Prix when the Top 8 was announced. Like Jordan, this was actually his first Grand Prix Top 8 appearance although he had played on the Sunday stage in Pro Tour competition. Outside of Anton Jonsson, Rich has to be considered the most consistent Limited player on the Pro Tour with a ridiculous string of high finishes at every Limited PT over the past few seasons, most recently finishing 11th in Nagoya . The Detroit coverage included [a detailed look inside Rich's Top 8 draft strategy](#).

Jeroen Remie lived up to the advance billing this humble reporter gave his presence in Detroit with yet another strong finish in his impressive career. Jeroen was the winner of the writer's ballot for this year's Invitational and is also a key figure in the union of the Dutch team and the TOGIT squad preparing for Philly. Jeroen, who is staying in Indiana with Gabe Walls through to the Invitational, recorded his third GP Top 8 and it was the second time he has accomplished that feat on American soil -- which is fitting since he spends so much time in the States -- to go along with three Pro Tour Top 8s. He won Pro Tour-Seattle with Von Dutch in his most recent Top 8 appearance.

Also staying at Casa de Walls in the weeks leading up to Philadelphia was Mike Krumb, the least recognizable member of the Top 8 draft. Krumb was the only player to reach the semifinals without a Pro Tour Top 8 on his resume. He did reach the Top 8 of Grand Prix-Kansas City last season and is considered an up-and-coming Limited player on the American front.

PRODUCTS

MAGIC ONLINE

MESSAGE BOARDS

MAGIC General Forum

magicthegathering.com Forum

RULES



Osyp Lebedowicz has to be the top American player in the game at this point. He continues to post strong finishes at GPs regardless of whether they are Limited or Constructed. He has a pair of Pro Tour Top 8s, including a win in Venice, and came within a few decimal points of ringing up a third such appearance in Nagoya. The immensely popular player, sometimes referred to as "Joe Black," is going to be attending this year's Invitational as the landslide winner of the North American ballot.

William Postlethwait was also playing in his first Grand Prix Top 8 and has never seen Sunday action on the Pro Tour. If his name sounds familiar, that's because he finished fourth at U.S. Nationals last year, losing to Ben Zoz in the 3rd/4th place playoff.

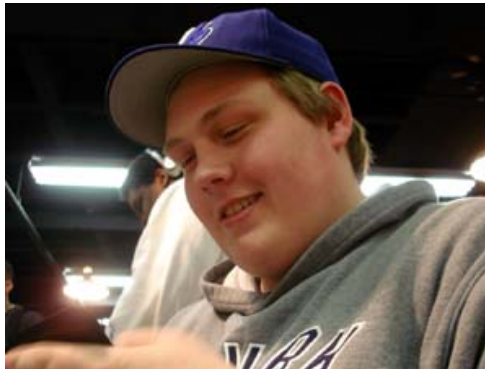
Limited or Constructed, Osyp's always near the top.

You might not know Sam Gomersall's name, but you should. Like Rich Hoan, he has posted a string of high money

finishes in Limited Pro Tours over the past couple seasons. The nomadic Englishman is missing the Top 8 appearance that Richie racked up in Yokohama and perhaps that has kept him under many people's radar, but not that of his fellow Pros. Sam was selected on the Player's Ballot for this year's Invitational, voted on by the Pros in attendance at Pro Tour-Atlanta. Sam is on a very short list of the best players to never reach the Top 8 of a Pro Tour.

Rounding out the Top 8 was one of the most popular players on the Pro Tour. Former TOGIT owner Patrick Sullivan last saw the elimination rounds of a Grand Prix alongside Adam Horvath and Osyp Lebedowicz at Grand Prix-Washington, D.C. when they finished second to Bill Stead, Charles Gindy, and Chris Fennell. Sullivan may be best known for Mike Flores' constant references to Patrick's Red Deck Wins build that he utilized to dominate East Coast PTQs in the past.

You really do have to go back a couple of years to find a Grand Prix Top 8 this loaded with experienced players. There was not an asterisk to be found in the elimination rounds. In fact, the amateur prize went to Kyle Smith in 10th place and there were only three amateurs in the Top 16 players. There were two more players with Pro Tour Top 8 experience lurking in the bottom half of the Top 16. Gadiel Szeifer could likely have drawn into the Top 8 with Berkowitz, but with Jordan unable to consult the standings, he did not want to take any chances with his Top 8 berth.



Rich Hoan showed why he's such a feared Limited foe.

Matthew Wood found himself paired with Jeroen Remie for the final round of the Swiss this weekend in a 'win and in' situation. As part of Pocket Rockets at Pro Tour-Seattle, Wood felt the sting of elimination at Remie's hands when they lost to Von Dutch in the semifinals. Once again, Remie sent the Canadian home frustrated. Other names of note in the Top 16 included U.S. National Champion Craig Krempels, Osyp's Pro Tour-Atlanta teammate John Fiorillo, and John Pelcak, Gadiel's compadre on :B.

So was this the best Top 8 of all time in a Grand Prix? That is a hard call to make because many of the older Grand Prix Top 8s look much more impressive in hindsight. For example, when Kai Budde won Grand Prix-Vienna '98-99, he had yet to win a Pro Tour. In hindsight, that GP Top 8 has to rank up there among the best of all time with not only Kai but Pro Tour winners Jon Finkel and Randy Buehler, not to mention 1997 World Champion Jacob Slemr. In fact there were SIX players in that Top 8 who would eventually have PT Top 8s to their credit -- Peer Kroeger and Mad Genius Erik Lauer were also there.

It is too soon to place this particular GP in the appropriate historical context. I think it safe to say that it is the best Grand Prix Top 8 so far this season by a wide margin. Boston comes close with three Pro Tour Top 8 players and Masahiko Morita (who despite not having a PT Top 8 can be given credit for his Grand Prix resume), but other than that event you are hard pressed to find a lineup as experienced and well-respected as the one to emerge from Detroit.

Here are all the Grand Prix Top 8s so far this season. Players with a Pro Tour Top 8 to their credit at the time of the Grand Prix in bold.

Rimini, Italy: 1. Domingo Ottati, 2. Florian Pils, 3. Giovanni Gesiot, 4. Luka Gasparac, 5. Davide Ghini, 6. Jan Brodzak, 7. Andrea Paselli, 8. Luca Cialini

Vienna, Austria: 1. Nikolaus Eigner, 2. **Antoine Ruel**, 3. Rene Krafft, 4. Sasha Zorc, 5. Sebastian Aljaj, 6. Daniele Canavesi, 7. Dario Minieri, 8. Stefan Jedlicka

Austin, Texas: 1. **Jonathan Sonne**, 2. Eugene Levin, 3. Chris Prochak, 4. Gerry Thompson, 5. Jim Finstrom, 6. **Neil Reeves**, 7. Michael Jacob, 8. Mike Thompson

Helsinki, Finland: 1. **Olivier Ruel**, 2. Mikko Leiviska, 3. Jean Charles Salvin, 4. Ulrik Tarp, 5. **Anton Jonsson**, 6. Wenzel Krautmann, 7. Pavlos Akritas, 8. Erkki Siira

Brisbane, Australia: 1. Will Copeman, 2. Anatoli Lightfoot, 3. **Masami Ibamoto**, 4. Andrew Grain, 5. Tom Hay, 6. Andrew Varga, 7. Jarrod Bright, 8. Bryce Trevilyan

Yokohama, Japan (Kaji makes Top 8 later in season): 1. Kazuki Katou, 2. Tomohiro Kaji, 3. Akira Asahara, 4. Koutarou Ootsuka, 5. Masahiko Morita, 6. Rei Hashimoto, 7. Takashi Akiyama, 8. Ren Ishikawa

Porto Alegre, Brazil: 1. **Jose Barbero**, 2. Gabriel Caligaris, 3. Mauro Kina, 4. Rafael Mendonça, 5. Guilherme Fonseca, 6. Paulo Rosa, 7. Renato Wholers, 8. Adilson de Oliveira

Paris, France: 1. Wilco Pinkster, 2. Bastien Perez, 3. Wessel Oomens, 4. **Raphael Levy**, 5. Giuseppe Reale, 6. Arnost Zidek, 7. Stephen Meyer, 8. Jean-Baptiste Gouesse

Boston, Massachusetts: 1. **Masashi Oiso**, 2. Lucas Glavin, 3. Keith McLaughlin, 4. Benjamin Dempsey, 5. **Osyp Lebedowicz**, 6. Masahiko Morita, 7. Anthony Impellizzeri, 8. **Daniel O'Mahoney-Schwartz**

Eindhoven, Netherlands: 1. Sebastien Roux, 2. Rogier Maaten, 3. Xuan-Phi Nguyen, 4. Tobias Radloff, 5. **Kamiel Cornelissen**, 6. Michael Leicht, 7. Petr Nahodil, 8. Bas Postema

Seattle, Washington: 1. Ernie Marchesano, 2. Taylor Putnam, 3. **Shuuhei Nakamura**, 4. Max McCall, 5. Grant Struck, 6. John Ripley, 7. **Tsuyoshi Fujita**, 8. Ryan Cimera

Singapore: 1. **Itaru Ishida**, 2. Shih Chien Chan, 3. **Ichirou Shimura**, 4. Sun Kit Yeung, 5. Dennis Yuladinata, 6. **Shu Komuro**, 7. Oliver Oks, 8. Gabriel Kang

Leipzig, Germany: 1. Rustam Bakirov, 2. Rosario Maij, 3. Maximilian Bracht, 4. Niki Jedlicka, 5. Philip Fetzer, 6. Sune Ellegaard, 7. Bernardo Da Costa Cabral, 8. Mateusz Dabkowski

Lisbon, Portugal: 1. Marcio Carvalho, 2. Luis Sousa, 3. Mikael Polgary, 4. David Blazquez, 5. Joao Martins, 6. Pierre-Jerom Meurisse, 7. Marco Manuel, 8. **Anton Jonsson**

Detroit, Michigan: 1. **Jordan Berkowitz**, 2. **Richard Hoen**, 3. Michael Krumb, 4. **Jeroen Remie**, 5. **Osyp Lebedowicz**, 6. William Postlethwait, 7. Sam Gomersall, 8. Patrick Sullivan



Lost in the Detroit fervor was Marcio Carvalho's victory in Lisbon over 1,165 other players.

This just in...

This past weekend saw a couple of players with Pro Tour Top 8 experience make their way back to the Pro Tour via the PTQ scene. Occasional magicthegathering.com columnist Chad Ellis won a Boston PTQ on Saturday, which is not surprising because Chad actively tries to qualify and is one of the more formidable opponents you could ever face at that level of competition. What is surprising is the qualification of Tomi Walamies after winning a 151-person qualifier in London for Pro Tour-London.

Tomi left **Magic** to pursue his career as a stand-up comedian. He was apparently taking part in a comedy tour that stopped in London. His schedule worked out so that he was able to get away for the day to try his hand at *Champions Limited*. There is no word yet on if he plans on using the slot. I have not had a chance to catch his stand-up act, but the thought of seeing Tomi playing on the Tour again certainly brought a smile to my face. (A tip of the hat to scorekeeper Jason Howlett for the tip.)

Continental Shift

All is not well in the land of the Block Constructed Supersquad we mentioned in previous columns. After the predictable infighting on such a large squad, several players have splintered off to form a new team apparently spearheaded by John Pelcak. Players on the new squad include Pelcak, Tim Aten, Gadiel Szeifer, Adam Chambers, Andrew Pacifico, Don Smith, Mark Zajdner, Ken Krouner, Eugene Levin, and Lucas Glavin. It will be interesting to see how different the two teams' decks end up being next weekend since many of them had been on the TOGIT list up until last week.

Watch this space...

If you are a Pro Tour player or have ever thought about being a Pro Tour player, you definitely want to check in at magicthegathering.com on Monday. Randy Buehler is going to be posting a feature article about the future of the Pro Tour that is big...no, bigger than big...huge. You will not want to miss it.

Firestarter: Name game

I think that from a historical perspective the Top 8 from Grand Prix-Vienna 98-99 might be the best ever, with half of the Top 8 winning a Pro Tour at some point in their careers and six different players reaching the Top 8 of a Pro Tour. What do you think? You can find all the Grand Prix Top 8s by going [here](#).

And what about the best Pro Tour Top 8 of all time? You can find those [here](#).

*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.



[Discuss](#) on the message boards



[Respond](#) via email



[Brian David-Marshall](#) archive

[About Us](#) | [Jobs](#) | [New to the Game?](#) | [Inside Wizards](#) | [Find a Store](#) | [Press](#) | [Help](#) | [Sitemap](#)

© 1995-2007 Wizards of the Coast, Inc., a subsidiary of Hasbro, Inc. All Rights Reserved.
[Terms of Use](#) - [Privacy Statement](#)

