

Home > Games > Magic > Magicthegathering.com > Columns

## Watch and Learn

Brian David-Marshall  
The Week That Was  
Friday, May 27, 2005



Malaysia's Terry Soh took the first [Magic Invitational](#) title for an APAC player when he beat Japan's Resident Genius Tsuyoshi Fujita in the finals at E3. For his efforts, Terry's Jin, Master of Disruption will be featured in an upcoming expansion of **Magic: The Gathering** -- joining past winners' cards, including [Meddling Mage](#), [Voidmage Prodigy](#), and [Shadowmage Infiltrator](#).



Terry Soh, Master of the 2005 Invitational.

"I was very happy to have the first APAC card ever printed," Soh said. "It certainly means a lot to our part of the globe here."

It did not look like fate was going to be on Terry's side after he lost to Tsuyoshi Fujita's goblin deck during Online Extended in the second leg of the finals. Soh said the finals were definitely the most exciting part of the week, but he was disappointed that his Slide deck lost that format.

"I have so much faith in it beating Goblins," he said. "If I have a chance again, I'm for sure siding in the Oxidize, since turn-one Vial is the only way for him to win."

The finals closed on Standard and Terry stayed perfect with his Tooth and Nail when he beat Fujita's rareless recursive rat deck. Terry's deck had a heavy beatdown sideboard and the two players played a guessing game after Game One -- a guessing game Fujita lost when he left his creature control in the sideboard for the second game.

When Jin, Master of Disruption sees the light of day a year or so from now, it will provide a rematch of sorts as it vies with Fujita's Unluckyman's Paradise in the price guides as the sought-after rares from that set.

Fujita's card, which was chosen by the fans as the second card from the [16 cards designed by the Invitationalists](#), easily lapped the competition more than twice as many votes as the next card. Jeroen Remie did not know it at the time but he should have been rooting for Fujita to win the finals. Had Fujita won over Terry, Jin would have remained on the shelf and Rock Beast would have taken the fan vote.

Here are the final results:

|                           |              |               |
|---------------------------|--------------|---------------|
| Unluckyman's Paradise     | 2709         | 24.1%         |
| Rock Beast                | 1302         | 11.6%         |
| Pedro, Salsa Master       | 1190         | 10.6%         |
| He Who Laughs Last        | 937          | 8.3%          |
| Toutounepif, Sexy Beast   | 739          | 6.6%          |
| Jin, Master of Disruption | 608          | 5.4%          |
| Lightning Bringer         | 584          | 5.2%          |
| Adaptation                | 556          | 4.9%          |
| Doppelganger Factory      | 506          | 4.5%          |
| The Shuffler              | 472          | 4.2%          |
| Go Anan Card              | 430          | 3.8%          |
| Threatening Dragon        | 394          | 3.5%          |
| Obsessive Necromancer     | 246          | 2.2%          |
| Ca the Pirate             | 214          | 1.9%          |
| Savior of Wisdom          | 191          | 1.7%          |
| Ebok, Son of Heimens      | 179          | 1.6%          |
| <b>Total</b>              | <b>11257</b> | <b>100.0%</b> |



PRODUCTS

MAGIC ONLINE

MESSAGE BOARDS

Magic General Forum

magicthegathering.com Forum

RULES

Like many of you, I have been watching Invitational replays over the past week. With more than 120 matches to choose from, I have still barely scratched the surface. Instead of trying to watch every single match, I have been skimming the cream off of the top and watching the players with the top results in each format. You get an interesting mix of the good fortune, good decks, and good times that way. Here's a quick breakdown if you want to catch the highlights of each format.

## IPA Draft

*Invasion/Planeshift/Apocalypse* was the first format which did not bode well for Julien Nuijten or Pierre Canali, both of whom had never drafted the format before. Their inexperience was Remie's good fortune though, as he fed by the two players in two-thirds of the packs. Not surprisingly, Jeroen was one of three players to run the table in IPA.

The highlight of Jeroen's draft saw Remie (one of the players most associated with Rock decks in recent memory) opening Rock fixture *Spiritmonger* on command in the final pack. Even before landing the black-green behemoth, Remie's deck was rock solid thanks to cards like *Trench Wurm*, *Urborg Drake*, and *Hypnotic Cloud* winding their way to him late in the first pack despite almost no other playables as the packs passed through Canali's and Nuijten's virtual hands.

It is almost impossible to stick to two colors in IPA draft. The basic draft strategy has always been to take the best cards and worry about your mana later. In many other draft formats, you will find that by sticking to your colors you can send signals to players downstream from you that will be reciprocated in the next pack. IPA is not that type of draft format. Canali and Nuijten were playing by a set of rules that just don't apply in IPA.

Much is written about the ability to play multiple colors in IPA due to all the green mana-fixing in the form of *Fertile Ground*, *Quirion Elves*, and the hallowed *Harrow*, but my favorite mana-fixers were all blue in IPA because they served double duty as mana-denial for your opponent. *Dream Thrush*, *Reef Shaman*, and even *Sea Snidd* are all fine and good when casting a dragon or kicking up *Rakavolver*, but are most often used to keep dragons and 'volvers at bay by hitting the opponent's mana during their upkeep.



Canali and Nuijten showed their relative inexperience during the IPA Draft.



If you watch the replay of the match between Kai Budde and Jeroen Remie, you can almost hear the disgust in Kai's chat as he was forced to Strafe a Reef Shaman that made its third appearance of the match in the rubber game. The Shaman kept Kai off of blue mana for Probe for multiple turns in one game and Kai was not up for such shenanigans in the final game. Jeroen's late-pick Hypnotic Cloud turned up in a big way throughout this match, stripping Kai's hand three cards at a time.

Decks in IPA draft are usually defined by the colors of the legendary dragons, but Jeroen's deck defied that convention. He was sporting Darigaaz's Caldera but he was only the teensiest bit red in order to kick up his Agonizing Demise. Green-black-blue was his configuration but the other two 3-0 players chose more dragon routes to victory.

Olivier Ruel was sporting the Treva colors combining the green-white goodness of the first two packs – Armadillo Cloak, Charging Troll, Gerrard's Command, etc. – with the green-blue incongruity of the last pack in the form of triple Gaea's Skyfolk. Fujita went with the classic Crosris colors which are generally regarded as the most powerful if you can get them. His performance bore that theory out perfectly.

Should you find yourself qualified for the next round of IPA events, any of the matches involving these three players would make excellent primers on the format. But if you really want to learn something, you should watch Carlos Romao's matches as object lessons. Carlos spent all three rounds fumbling with Dead Ringers and it seemed that every time he cast the potentially devastating spell, he would lose the game.

That may be because he never seemed to kill anything with it. The card requires that both of the targeted non-black creatures share the exact same colors (check out the awkward rules-speak on the card) in order to kill them both. The card can be confusing online because it will allow you to target two creatures that don't share the same exact colors – it just won't do anything. Carlos whiffed time after time with the card, even failing to kill anything as late as the third round. He finally managed to win that round with two Dead Ringers sitting uncast in his hand during his final game with Gabriel Nassif.



## Auction of the People

During the bidding for Auction of the People, much was made about starting hand size. Bob Maher made it clear during the auction that to his mind, hand size was one of the keys to victory and he was willing to steer clear of the more popular decks to avoid getting stuck with an opening hand of five cards. He ended up working things out in such a way that he and Carlos Romao ended up with eight cards and 25 life. There were actually four decks that ended up going to players with eight-card hands.

What ended up being truly interesting during these three rounds was that none of the four players with eight cards managed to go 3-0 while two players with five-card hands were able to pull off the perfect record. Maher and Eugene Harvey both managed 2-1 records while Carlos went 1-2 and Osyp Lebedowicz went 0-3.

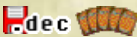
Gabriel Nassif had six cards to work with for his "Pit" deck but was able to take on all-comers with the powerful interaction between **Mobilization** and **Death Pit Offering**. Soh's "Master" deck overcame its five-card handicap by recouping the card disadvantage with **Journeyer's Kite** and smoothing out his mana draws with green and red familiars.

Antoine Ruel's deck was best suited to overcoming its starting hand limitations thanks to its eponymous "Top." In Round 6, Antoine and his brother Olivier played a game that saw Antoine mulligan to three cards, miss his first two land drops, and still win. The two brothers alternately credited/blamed **Sensei's Divining Top** for the win. You can draw your own conclusions about which side each brother fell on.



*Do I hear five life? Five life? Anyone? Going once...*

During the auction, one of the biggest surprises was when Eugene Harvey won "Two" with a half-hearted bid of eight cards and 24 life. Most of the players still in the auction had obviously decided the deck was terrible, but Jeroen – who had actually tested most of the decks in preparing for the event – had to pick his jaw up off the floor to inform everyone that the deck was actually very good.

**Eugene Harvey (8/24) - 2-1**  
 2005 Invitational: Two, designed by Kent Raquet 

**Main Deck**  
60 cards

|                  |                              |                               |
|------------------|------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 14 <b>Forest</b> | 3 <b>Abyssal Horror</b>      | 4 <b>Acorn Harvest</b>        |
| 8 <b>Island</b>  | 3 <b>Hoverguard Sweepers</b> | 4 <b>Careful Study</b>        |
| 2 <b>Swamp</b>   | 6 creatures                  | 4 <b>Fact or Fiction</b>      |
| 24 lands         |                              | 4 <b>Journey of Discovery</b> |
|                  |                              | 4 <b>Kodama's Reach</b>       |
|                  |                              | 3 <b>Spellweaver Helix</b>    |
|                  |                              | 3 <b>Time Stretch</b>         |
|                  |                              | 4 <b>Tooth and Nail</b>       |
|                  |                              | 30 other spells               |

"Two" was a combination Tooth and Nail/Spellweaver Helix deck. **Spellweaver Helix** made a brief appearance in the [Extended metagame](#) when Satoshi Nakamura – one of the first Japanese pros – broke out his **Crush of Wurms/Cabal Therapy/Quiet Speculation** monstrosity in New Orleans. It was more of a Mothra monstrosity than a Godzilla-level event as much more degenerate combos overshadowed the event. Those decks were fueled by the gas of **Mana Severance**, Goblin silliness, and other broken cards not available for MTGO or the looming Extended format.

If you watch the replays, you can see Eugene locking his opponents down with **Spellweaver Helix** imprinted with **Time Stretch** and **Kodama's Reach**. Every subsequent **Kodama's Reach** was two additional turns for Harvey although his opponent would often concede before he could untap for any of them. The deck's designer was limited to cards with the word "two" on them when building it, but for the upcoming Extended format, there will be no such restrictions. I think Harvey's performance warrants that a Spellweaver Helix deck is at least worth some playtesting – especially with cards such as **Eternal Witness** ready to jump into the soup.

## Champions-Betrayers Sealed Deck with Vanguard

After a couple of awkward formats, Carlos Romao started putting together a string of impressive finishes down the home stretch that left him in fourth place (the highest-placing finisher not from the APAC region). Not surprisingly, he chose to use Akroma as his avatar. While Harvey did manage an impressive showing with Phage, the Vanguard format was all about Akroma and Flametongue. The two finalists used each of the two avatars in their two forays into the format (during the three-round section and the finals). Watching the finals, it was very interesting to see how the format played out entirely differently than traditional Limited formats.

Neither player would commit a creature to the board in the second game of the finals until Soh offered up **Scourge of Numai** on turn 10. Fujita was playing with Flametongue – he had played with Akroma earlier in the tournament – and

although he could have come roaring out of the gate with **Child of Thorns** on turn one under normal circumstances, the random ability of **Flametongue** meant there was an 80 percent chance the Child would end up dying as it came into play.

As long as Terry held his creatures back, Fujita could not reliably make a creature play. Terry blinked first with his **Scourge**, and if Fujita had been the tiniest bit lucky with his soulshifted creatures in the latter stages of the second game, he could have conceivably forced a third game. It still made for compelling viewing as Fujita clung to life while his creatures stubbornly refused to hit the lucky numbers.



Soh and Fujita swapped avatars in the finals.

## Online Extended

Online Extended – soon to be offline Extended as well – was a tale of two Rocks. Julien Nuijten and Jeroen Remie put up disappointing 1-2 finishes with Remie's trademark deck. Masashiro Kuroda, on the other hand, was the only player to 3-0 the format and he did it with his take on Rock. The two decks look very similar with **Birds**, **Sakura-Tribe Elders**, and **Flametongue Kavu**, but Kuroda's deck had maindeck **Troll Ascetics** while the Dutch version ran them in the side in favor of **Baloths** and **Spiritmongers**. That's a bit more info to keep track of as the Extended format gets closer and closer to lining up the online and offline versions.

## Standard

The most relevant format out of all five that were played was obviously the Standard format that wrapped up the week's event. Mike Flores looked at [most of the relevant decks in his column](#) but he gave short-shrift to Tim Aten's rat-ninja deck. The deck is teeming with what Mike likes to call deck velocity, where cards are moving from zone to zone with significant impact on the game state. Tim was one of four players to 3-0 the format, following on the heels of the deck designer Cedric Phillips coming one win short of making the Top 8 of the LCQ in Philadelphia.

Watch any of the replays from Tim's games and you will see an incredibly powerful deck put through its paces by one of the game's top young players. **Ravenous Rats** keep coming back for a second helping thanks to **Skullsnatchers** stealing away cards from the potential grasp of **Eternal Witnesses**. **Nekrataal** jumping back into hand to make way for a **Throat Slitter** is just plain 'ol filthiness and **Ink-Eyes** is even fouler. I think the deck is being unfairly overlooked if you don't at least consider it for your Regionals gauntlet.

Aten's closing comments as he locked up his 3-0 to escape the basement were very funny and should serve as a reminder that although the deck may not be getting the hype, it should not be overlooked again.

## Firestarter: Inviting Play

Now that we have the two selections from the crop of 16 Invitationalists' cards, what do you think will happen to each over the coming year? The cards are always tweaked by R&D as they test cards in the context of the new set. **Solemn Simulacrum** ended up much better than the original design by Jens Thoren, and Bob's **Dark Confidant** shows improvement over his revised submission (after the poison-counter card he originally submitted was rejected).

So, what will the fate of Terry's and Tsuyoshi's cards be in the next year? Share your opinions on the message boards.



*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

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

