



## Fun with Sakashima, *Saviors* League, and Jamie Wakefield

*Bennie Smith*  
*Into the Aether*  
 Thursday, July 7, 2005



I had a feeling that the [Really Really Big News](#) from last week would meet with overwhelmingly positive response, and based on the feedback from the forums and the emails you sent in, I think that feeling was justified. You all seem to be just as eager and excited as I am to dive into *Mirage*, either again (for you old-schoolers) or for the very first time. One thing I did want to address real quick before moving on, though. Justin answered a lot of questions for us, but as many of you pointed out in your emails to me, there are of course still other questions we'd all like to know. Many details are still forthcoming, and the release isn't going to hit until sometimes around December. I'm sure Into The Aether will be previewing more details of the rollout as it gets closer to release date. Stay tuned!



### *Saviors* Release Events

I hope everyone had plenty of opportunity to have fun with the *Saviors* release events. I had time for some League action (more on that in a minute) and did some drafting (lost in the first round—*again!*). I noticed a few new Avatars popping up to spice things up. Since Sakashima, the Impostor probably isn't seeing too much action yet on the Vanguard scene, I thought I'd give people a chance to play against it, and I was curious whether my deck idea for it would perform. To refresh your memory, here's my original build:

**Avatar - Sakashima, the Impostor**

60 cards

4 <a href="#">Blinkmoth Nexus</a>	4 <a href="#">Ornithopter</a>	4 <a href="#">Genesis Chamber</a>
18 <a href="#">Swamp</a>	4 <a href="#">Steel Wall</a>	2 <a href="#">Skeleton Shard</a>
1 <a href="#">Mikokoro, Center of the Sea</a>	4 <a href="#">Arcbound Worker</a>	
1 <a href="#">Miren, the Moaning Well</a>	4 <a href="#">Clockwork Beetle</a>	6 other spells
	4 <a href="#">Arcbound Slith</a>	
24 land	4 <a href="#">Arcbound Stinger</a>	
	4 <a href="#">Eater of Days</a>	
	2 <a href="#">Triskelion</a>	
		30 creatures

Here's what the avatar does:

**Sakashima, the Impostor**, Hand +0, Life +1  
 2: Choose a creature you control. It becomes a copy of target creature except for its name.

After playtesting, I found that this build is an okay starting place but there are some flaws. First, while the mana curve is fairly low, 24 mana sources just does not work out so well. Sakashima's ability costs two mana to activate, and that can slow down the works somewhat.

Something to keep in mind when using this avatar for the first time: activating Sakashima may feel a little bit counterintuitive at first. You might want to choose the creature you're going to be changing first, but that's not how it works. After you click on the avatar, you will need to click on the creature you want to copy first; then you pay the two mana, and then you click on the creature you control that will copy everything about that creature except for the name. There's opportunity for your opponent to disrupt your plans here; each time you click on a creature, your opponent can respond with creature

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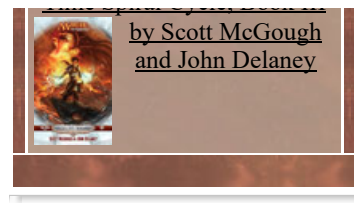
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removal before the effect happens. Playing the mirror match gets even more tricky if you're trying to copy one of your opponent's creatures and he has two mana available. I was trying to copy my opponent's big blocker and instead ended up copying a newly transformed Birds of Paradise (the exact opposite of a big blocker).

Another unpleasant surprise is forgetting that abilities that reference the name of the card itself don't work on your Sakashi-made copy. For instance, I was playing against a Snakes deck, and they attacked with something pretty nasty. I blocked with my Steel Wall, and then copied Tangle Asp, with the thought that Tangle Asp's ability would end up nuking her Big Bad. Didn't happen. Confused, I hovered my mouse over my mutated Steel Wall. Tangle Asp's ability read clear as a bell right on the card: *Whenever Tangle Asp blocks or becomes blocked by a creature, destroy that creature at end of combat.* Then it hit me: The ability refers to Tangle Asp blocking or becoming blocked, but my creature isn't a Tangle Asp, it's a Steel Wall (even though everything else looks just like Tangle Asp). Make sure to keep that in mind when on the prowl for a worthy copy target.



Another thing to keep in mind is that, while you can copy legends to your heart's content, keep an eye on the names. My opponent played a Sachi, Daughter of Seshiro against me, and I started copying her, turning my Arcbound Worker, Arcbound Stinger, and Steel Wall all into Legendary Creature – Snake Shamans. The nice thing is that they all boosted each other's toughness and enabled each of them to tap for two green mana. Then I dropped an Arcbound Worker, copied Sachi and boom! Lost two creatures to the mighty Legend Rule.

Playing against Sachi made me realize: each copy of Sachi (or another shaman if Sachi is out there) can “pay” for itself by gaining the ability to tap for two mana. I decided to retool the deck from base black to base green and include four copies of Sachi. I also realized that the mighty Troll Ascetic is also a shaman, and if I transformed an Arcbound or Clockwork critter into a Troll clone, it could be rather fierce. A strong mid-game attack that can more easily enable the final Eater of Days kill by getting their life points low enough seemed like a good idea. Here's what I changed the deck to and I've been winning more frequently.

Avatar - Sakashima the Impostor		
60 cards		
4 <u>Blinkmoth Nexus</u>	4 <u>Ornithopter</u>	1 <u>Pulse of the Tangle</u>
19 <u>Forest</u>	4 <u>Clockwork Beetle</u>	
1 <u>Mikokoro, Center of the Sea</u>	3 <u>Steel Wall</u>	1 other spell
1 <u>Miren, the Moaning Well</u>	4 <u>Arcbound Worker</u>	
	4 <u>Arcbound Slith</u>	
25 land	4 <u>Arcbound Stinger</u>	
	4 <u>Troll Ascetic</u>	
	4 <u>Sachi, Daughter of Seshiro</u>	
	3 <u>Eater of Days</u>	
	34 creatures	

One opponent dubbed it the Mutant Clockwork Troll Army, and that's certainly an appropriate name. Fueled by mana from Sachi's shaman boost, all of my cheap little artifact critters quickly transmogrify into a horde of 4/3 or 5/4 Trolls, which can win the game all their own. However, dropping an Eater of Days and copying it for a lethal attack is still the most stylish way to claim victory.



In the course of playing a few mirror matches, I ran across some other interesting ideas for Sakashima. One player used it in conjunction with Brothers Yamazaki. Each time he copied a Brothers, he boosted both “real” Brothers by +2/+2 so they got to be quite huge. I was quite thrilled with Troll regeneration in this game.



One mirror match opponent had a similar thought as I did, but instead of creating a horde of Trolls, he accelerated his mana so he could cast Plated Slagwurms and then replicate *them*. Think six or seven Trolls are bad? Imagine a swarm of Slagwurms! The only way I ended up winning this game was the fact that I could clone my opponent's Traproot Kami, big enough from all the forests to block the Slagwurms until I could hopefully get two more creatures than my opponent (one way I did this was to transform my two Blinkmoth Nexi into Birds of Paradise). Once I got enough mana, I had to “end of turn” tap enough mana to turn all of my Traproots into creatures that could attack. Then during my main phase, drop an Eater of Days and attack with all of my creatures. Whichever two aren't blocked get transformed into Eater of Days for lethal damage. Whew! The Sakashima mirror match is quite challenging, especially since you don't want to give your opponent free Eaters of Days.



One thing I've decided to do as of writing this is to jot down all the interesting things I've used Sakashima's ability to copy. At the top of the list is Cosmic Larva, which one of my opponents was unhappy to see springing forth across the tables from the bodies of Clockwork Beetles and Steel Walls.

### Saviors League Card Pool

Some of you have enjoyed looking over my League card pool and suggesting certain approaches to building a competitive deck from it. Some of you have also pulled out your hair in frustration at my sometimes-feeble attempts at Limited deckbuilding. Luckily, my man Ken Krouner has offered to chime in with some pro-level deck building advice on my card pool when I play in these things, so you get the best of both worlds: check out my limited card pool, look at what Joe Average Limited Player (me) decides to build from it, and then see what Kartin Ken (and friends!) advise.

Here's my card pool:

Blessed Breath 1*	Eye of Nowhere 4.4	Devouring Greed 2.4
Cage of Hands 2*	Ideas Unbound 4.4	Distress 4
Cowed by Wisdom *	Consuming Vortex 1.4	Exile into Darkness 4.4
Vigilance *	Hisoka's Defiance 1.4	Sink into Takenuma 3.4
Araba Mothrider 1*	Murmurs from Beyond 2.4	Death of a Thousand 4.4
Araba Mothrider 1*	Murmurs from Beyond 2.4	Honden of Night's Reac 3.4
Inner-Chamber Guard 1*	Oppressive Will 2.4	Cruel Deceiver 1.4
Innocence Kami 3.3	Peer Through Depths 1.4	Deathcurse Ogre 5.4
Kitsune Blademaster 2*	Psychic Puppetry 1.4	Gnat Miser 4
Kitsune Bonesetter 2*	Time Stop 4.4.4	Gnat Miser 4
Kitsune Dawnblade 4*	Freed from the Real 2.4	Kagemaro, First to 3.4
Kitsune Loreweaver 1*	Descendant of Soramar 3.4	Kami of Empty Graves 3.4
Kiyomaro, First to Star 3.3	Descendant of Soramar 3.4	Nezumi Bone-Reader 1.4
Konda's Hatamoto 1*	Kiri-Onna 4.4	Nezumi Cutthroat 1.4
Lantern Kami *	Sire of the Storm 4.4.4	Rag Dealer 4
Pious Kitsune 2*	Soratami Cloudskater 1.4	Raving Oni-Slave 1.4
Torii Watchward 4.4	Soratami Savant 2.4.4	Razorjaw Oni 3.4
Yosei, the Morning Star 3.3	Trusted Advisor 4	



Yeah, there are some ridiculous bombs here. This is the sort of card pool I could only dream about ever getting in paper **Magic**, with all of the rares being either Constructed worthy or decent casual cards.

White is a no-brainer with Yosei, the Morning Star and Kiyomaro, First to Stand being powerful, board-dominating cards. Blue was interesting with Time Stop. But Kagemaro, First to Suffer lured me into building a W/B build that performed rather erratically. Both 'Maros won me games all on their own, but because they both key on "hand size matters" sometimes they are just abominable in a deck with hardly any way to manipulate hand size. Here's what I ran through a few matches:

### Saviors League Deck

40 cards

<p>8 Plains</p> <p>9 Swamp</p> <p>17 land</p>	<p>1 <u>Yosei, the Morning Star</u></p> <p>1 <u>Kiyomaro, First to Stand</u></p> <p>2 <u>Araba Mothrider</u></p> <p>1 <u>Innocence Kami</u></p> <p>1 <u>Kitsune Blademaster</u></p> <p>1 <u>Konda's Hatamoto</u></p> <p>1 <u>Lantern Kami</u></p> <p>1 <u>Kitsune Dawnblade</u></p> <p>1 <u>Kitsune Loreweaver</u></p> <p>1 <u>Kagemaro, First to Suffer</u></p> <p>1 <u>Kami of Empty Graves</u></p> <p>1 <u>Cruel Deceiver</u></p> <p>1 <u>Nezumi Cutthroat</u></p> <p>1 <u>Raving Oni-Slave</u></p> <p>1 <u>Razorjaw Oni</u></p> <p>1 <u>Rag Dealer</u></p>	<p>1 <u>O-Naginata</u></p> <p>1 <u>Tenza, Godo's Maul</u></p> <p>1 <u>Blessed Breath</u></p> <p>1 <u>Cage of Hands</u></p> <p>1 <u>Devouring Greed</u></p> <p>1 <u>Honden of Night's Reach</u></p> <p>6 other spells</p>
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17 creatures

I was particularly impressed with Kiyomaro, First to Stand, dropping it with just three cards in hand; I just stopped playing any cards for the next five turns. The next turn it became a 4/4 with vigilance, easily bigger than the other creatures on the board, so I attacked with it and got to keep it on defense. Next turn, same thing as a 5/5, the next turn same thing as a 6/6, and the next turn as a 7/7 spirit linked, "good game sir!"

Ken Krouner happened to have a couple other Pros hanging at his pad this past weekend, practicing for Pro Tour London. PT Atlanta finalist Don Smith and current US National team member and GP New Orleans winner Bill Stead put their heads together with Ken and cooked up this R/W decklist:

1 [Blessed Breath](#)  
 1 [Cage of Hands](#)  
 2 [Araba Mothrider](#)  
 1 [Innocence Kami](#)  
 1 [Kitsune Blademaster](#)  
 1 [Kitsune Loreweaver](#)  
 1 [Kiyomaro, First to Stand](#)  
 1 [Konda's Hatamoto](#)  
 1 [Lantern Kami](#)  
 1 [Torii Watchward](#)  
 1 [Yosei, the Morning Star](#)  
 1 [Feral Lightning](#)  
 1 [Barrel Down Sokenzan](#)  
 1 [Hanabi Blast](#)  
 1 [Yamabushi's Flame](#)  
 1 [Blood Rites](#)  
 1 [Hearth Kami](#)  
 1 [Kami of Fire's Roar](#)  
 1 [Shinen of Fury's Fire](#)  
 1 [Sokenzan Spellblade](#)  
 1 [Tenza, Godo's Maul](#)

Ken had this to say: “The one card we want to work into this build is the [Inner-Chamber Guard](#). There are 3 late game bombs (Yosei, Maro, and Spellblade) and he buys you time to get to them. If you do decide to play Black/White you *have* to find room for the guard! But we all agree that Red/White is the way to go with this deck, but this decklist might be one card off.”

What do *you* think is the one card they're off? Or are they *completely* off?

## Interview with The King of the Fatties

Legendary **Magic** writer and two-time Pro Tour competitor Jamie Wakefield recently came back to **Magic** and has jumped into *Magic Online* quite enthusiastically. Jamie was kind enough to take a few minutes to answer some questions for [magicthegathering.com](#)'s readers.

**IntoTheAether:** Name, age, location?

**JW:** Jamie C. Wakefield, 39, Middlebury Vermont

**IntoTheAether:** How long have you been playing **Magic**?

**JW:** I started with *The Dark* and stopped after *Urza's Saga*. I came back at the beginning of *Kamigawa* Block.

**IntoTheAether:** Why did you stop playing the first time?

**JW:** Urza's Block = Solitaire **Magic**. The death of the mid-game. Games being decided on opening hand instead of play skill. And a lot of it probably because of the discovery of the first online game that really grabbed my attention, Asheron's Call.

**IntoTheAether:** Why did you come back?

**JW:** I got bored with World of Warcraft. When I quit **Magic**, my wife Mare and I got into MMORPG's hardcore. 14-hour days playing on Saturday and Sunday. We went through Asheron's Call 1, Asheron's Call 2, DAOC, City of Heroes and finally WoW. WoW didn't hold my interest and with nothing else on the horizon, I decided it was time to look for something else. More than a few people did everything they could to get me to try **Magic** again.

**IntoTheAether:** What surprised you most about **Magic** when you returned to the game?

**JW:** MTGO. When I left, play testing was done for an hour at the store after I got out of work, or by having a gathering at my or a friend's house on the weekend. With *Magic Online*, that's all changed. Being able to get a game or even a card, at any time of the night or day, is huge for me. It's quadrupled the amount of play testing I can do, and there's no store nearby right now, so without MTGO, I'd be lost. Instant gratification is a big deal for me. I'm not a very patient man.

**IntoTheAether:** How long have you been playing MTGO?

**JW:** 2-3 months. Some friends set me up with an account with an INSANE amount of cards worth a fortune. They got me almost every green and artifact card that was tournament legal. The generosity was really overwhelming to me. And it got the desired result of hooking me on *Magic Online*. I have purposefully never revealed their names so they don't have friends or associates asking them “Hey, how come you never hooked me up?” as humans are wont to do.



*Competing at Pro Tour Chicago '99*

**IntoTheAether:** What's your favorite online format(s)?

**JW:** The driving force behind me playing **Magic** is *competition*. I live to compete. My favorite format is whatever format is going to be played in the next qualifier. Two weeks ago, my favorite format was Standard as I was practicing for Regionals. Today, my favorite format is *Kamigawa* Block for the upcoming PTQ's. I'm experimenting with that, and while I was initially frustrated, I'm really enjoying it now.

**IntoTheAether:** Have you played Vanguard much? What's your favorite avatar?

**JW:** I have never played a game of Vanguard, but if I did, my avatar would be the Elvish Champion. Oddly enough, I dreamed I was playing in a tournament last night and my opponent in the first round had a play mat that was a Vanguard card, and it was Standard legal. It was explained to me that Vanguard cards have benefits and drawbacks that balance them out, so you could play Standard using Vanguard or not. And then my opponent played two huge Black Fatties on the first turn reducing me to 4 and I was like WTH?

**IntoTheAether:** What do you think of the announcement that *Mirage* will be released on MTGO?

**JW:** Right now, it doesn't interest me. The second they have a format for a PTQ or Grand Prix or Pro Tour that uses *Mirage*, I'll be thrilled to death that I can test online with it.

**IntoTheAether:** Do you have a deck you play in one of the casual online formats that you'd like to share with us?

**JW:** Sadly, I don't even know what the casual online formats are. I've never explored that aspect of the program.

*My favorite format is whatever format is going to be played in the next qualifier...*

**IntoTheAether:** Did you play in Regionals this year? How did it go?

**JW:** I did play in Regionals and I was not Super Lucky Guy. I played 2 Blue decks and a Black deck, both of which I expected to see very little of, and my deck doesn't perform at all versus Vedalken Shackles or Terror. I did not make Top 8 and dropped when I was 3-2-1.

**IntoTheAether:** You became well known in the **Magic** community on the strength of your engaging writing and storytelling skills. I hope to hear coming back to **Magic** means coming back to writing about **Magic**?

**JW:** Star City Games has always been good to me, so I approached them first when I got back into **Magic**. They immediately promised me a spot, and I now write an almost weekly column for them. I average about 3 columns a month. The early columns dealt with me rediscovering **Magic** and the new cards. But now, just like the old days, it details my friends and I playing **Magic** and trying to qualify for the big Show.

**IntoTheAether:** Thanks, Jamie!

**JW:** You're welcome!

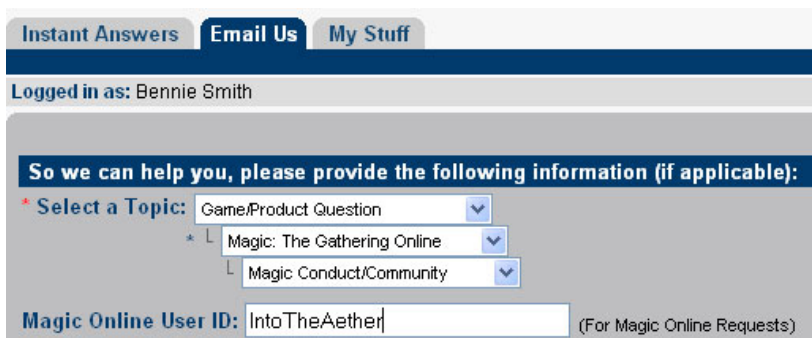
## Tips & Tricks

I've been playing MTGO for several months now, and I think I've gotten spoiled. By spoiled I mean that just about every one of you that I've met online has been at the very least cordial, but most often you are all pleasant and quite enjoyable, and I've really enjoyed the games we've shared. So it came as a big shock after doing a draft and getting paired up to run into a grade-A jerk. As the computer was rolling the dice and asking the winner whether he or she would go first, I typed in the customary greeting "hello and good luck." My opponent responded with... well, let me say he responded by typing a letter, a space, and another letter, with the two letters together being a euphemism for a rather rude and crude curse phrase. Now, I know jerks will be jerks and there are bigger things in this world to get worked up over, but one thing that has always gotten under my skin is rudeness for no reason. Being born and raised in Virginia, perhaps it's the Southern in me showing, but people who bring bad attitudes to gaming need to check it at the door. At the core, games are supposed to be about having fun, and being nasty to your opponent is not accomplishing that goal unless you have a serious problem.

It would have been very easy to just right-click on this jerk's screen name, select *Block user* and never have to see another word he types (which I did do). But honestly, that's not enough. Jerks like that will keep on spreading their nastiness to every stranger they meet, and I'd hate for someone new to the game still trying to see whether MTGO is for them or not to run into the jerk and scare them away.

So let's be proactive. Report the jerk. That's what I did. It's pretty simple. First, get a screenshot of the moment by holding down <Alt> and punching the Print Screen button. Then pull up your Paint program, click on Edit and then Paste. Save it. Make sure you note the online name of the jerk, your event ID (located at the bottom of your screen), and the game ID (which should be located along the bottom of your play area, above your hand area). PM the Adept running the event and let him know what happened.

If you don't have a chance to PM the Adept, there's another option. Go here (<http://wizards.custhelp.com>) and click on the Email Us tab. Under the Select a Topic, pick Game/Product Question, then **Magic: The Gathering Online**, and then **Magic** Conduct/Community.



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\* L Magic: The Gathering Online  
L Magic Conduct/Community

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Make sure to type in the information you noted above, and attach the screenshot before you send it.

I think if enough people are willing to report behavior in violation of the Code of Conduct, the few jerks that are floating around will learn a hard lesson in manners.

## Coming Up

I'd like to follow up on the Little Format That Could, *Rainbow Stairwell!* Any fans that would be willing to share their \$0.02 about the current state of the format, please drop me an email.

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*Bennie Smith has been playing **Magic** since Arabian Nights, and writing about it nearly as long. Several of his early musings appeared on the Magic Dojo, and from there he became a featured writer for Star City Games and a Contributing Editor for Scrye Magazine before he started writing for **magicthegathering.com**. While a casual gamer at heart, Bennie also thoroughly enjoys the competitive side of **Magic** and won the Virginia State Championship in 1999.*

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