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# United Nations

Brian David-Marshall  
The Week That Was  
Friday, September 23, 2005



Saturday is the big day. The [Prerelease](#) will finally be here and players all over the world will be lining up for the new set. However, there will be some notable exceptions. Road Warrior Olivier Ruel, who actually made a point of playing in a Prerelease on a trip to Japan earlier this year, will be missing his first Prerelease in recent memory.

Also among the missing are some pretty high-profile, hardcore gamers. Joining Olivier on the back of the milk carton are Jeroen Remie, Osyp Lebedowicz, Sam Gomersall, Kai Budde, Masashi Oiso, and a host of the game's biggest names. Prerelease tournaments are obviously not designed with the Pro player in mind, but many of them look forward to playing with the new cards for the first time as much as any other player.

So why am I so sure that Osyp and company won't be in attendance? In addition to worldwide prerelease tournaments for *Ravnica: City of Guilds*, there is also a special [exhibition tournament](#) taking place this weekend in Moscow, Russia to celebrate the release of *Ninth Edition* in its ninth language – Cyrillic.



The format for the weekend is Local Heroes vs. The Best of the Rest. Sixteen of the top players from Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus will be pitted against a murderer's row of the game's top talent. Players on each side will play against every other player from the opposing side once in single-game matches. At the end of 16 rounds of Sealed Deck play (something of a misnomer here, since there are no *Ninth Edition* Tournament packs – players will build their sealed deck out of five booster packs of *Ninth*), the tournament will cut to a Top 8 with the top 4 players from each side advancing.

This is where the event gets really cool. The players will be Rotisserie drafting a full set of FOIL *Ninth Edition* in Cyrillic. Rotisserie draft is a rarely used format (it is only trotted out at Invitational events, for the most part) where the eight players will sit around a table with the entire set spread out before them. The player going first selects a card, and the players then each pick a card in sequence until the eighth player picks two and the turn order reverses – and the “lucky” player who got to draft first doesn't get another pick until every other player has made two, at which time he makes his second and third pick. This pattern continues until the entire set is drafted and each player has to build their deck from what is in front of them.

To make things a little more interesting, the players will be segregated for the quarterfinals and semifinals to ensure a Local Hero faces off against the best of the Best of the Rest in the finals. It should be in the best interests of adjacent drafters from opposing sides to be cooperative in the draft.

Osyp Lebedowicz, who despite his Ukrainian heritage will be playing for the Best of the Rest, was looking forward to the event even though it meant missing the prerelease of *Ravnica*.

“It should be fun,” Osyp said, downplaying the possibility of the draft turning cutthroat. “I'm not sure how competitive it will be. I think it will be pretty good spirited, like a prerelease.”

Still, Osyp did give away any hints as to what his strategy would be for the draft, although he has been instructed to pick up as many Russian *Ninth Edition* cards as possible for his teammate Josh Ravitz (who is noted for his tricked-out decks with hard-to-find foreign language foils).

As for the card Osyp was hoping to pick up for himself: “I would love to get some black-bordered *Hypnotic Specters*, the new art is awesome.”

Jeroen Remie marveled at the opportunities he has been offered by the game that has been such a huge part of his life for many years. He was looking forward to belatedly celebrating his recent birthday with good friends.



Osyp's hopping the pond to celebrate the introduction of Russian cards.

“It's all about hanging out with friends, having fun, these things are the gravy on the whole PT thing. I feel so blessed you have no idea,” Remie rhapsodized.

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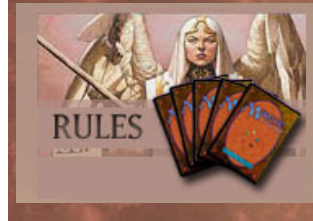
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As for playing with *Ninth Edition* in Limited, Remie explained that he really liked green and blue, provided he could get the card that makes it all come together for him.

"*Giant Spider* is the biggest of games," grinned the Pro Tour-Seattle winner. "I haven't seen anyone beat a spider yet – in one draft I went pick 1, 2 and 4 *Giant Spider*. Couldn't lose a game ever."

One of the players that will be trying to get through Remie's Giant Spiders will be Rustam Bakirov. Rustam is best known for winning [Grand Prix-Leipzig](#) and has made the Top 4 of Russian Nationals twice. He also made the Top 4 in the last big event in his country three years ago.



*Bakirov triumphed over an 898-player field at GP-Leipzig.*

"It is a long-overdue move on Wizards' part," answered Rustam when asked about how he felt to have a set released in Cyrillic – and about the Invitational. "I certainly think that **Magic** will grow. I think that such an event is really great. Russia hadn't any sort of 'major' event since GP Moscow in 2001. And the fact I'm invited makes me proud."

Rustam is a seasoned Pro and has played against many of the players who are flying in from the far reaches of the globe for this tournament. While this weekend's coverage will certainly play up the David and Goliath angle, intimidation is not going to be a factor for the confidant Bakirov.

"The visiting team roster is very impressive. It will be a pleasure to play against each and every of them. I remember playing (and beating) Mattias [Jorstedt] and Antoine [Ruel] at GP Moscow. I lost to Kamiel [Cornelissen] at Worlds in SF. Everyone is pretty intimidating. And very beatable

nevertheless"

The Ukraine's Yuriy Kolomeyko was the first player from his corner of the world to step into the Sunday spotlight on the Pro Tour with a Top 8 appearance at Pro Tour-Barcelona. He was looking forward to the high level of competition this weekend without the usual hassles he has to go through to get it.

"It will be fun to play with Pros in Moscow," Kolomeyko said. "Always we are going to play in their countries and now they are coming to us!"

The whole event is going to be covered live by European beat reporter Craig Jones and will be updated throughout the weekend for your reading pleasure when you get home from your own *Ravnica* adventures.

Local Heroes	Best of the Rest
Albert Khamzin (Russia)	Antoine Ruel (France)
Alexander Gerasimenko (Ukraine)	Anton Jonsson (Sweden)
Andrii A Aliksieiev (Ukraine)	Bernardo Da Costa Cabral (Belgium)
Artem Dushkevitch (Russia)	Carlos Romao (Brazil)
Artem Kozachuk (Ukraine)	Gabriel Nassif (France)
Denis Tagunov (Russia)	Jeroen Remie (Netherlands)
Egor Guskov (Ukraine)	Julien Nuijten (Netherlands)
Karyagin Svyatoslav (Ukraine)	Kai Budde (Germany)
Kirill Efimov (Belarus)	Kamiel Cornelissen (Netherlands)
Matvey Linov (Russia)	Masashi Oiso (Japan)
Ruslan Shatskih (Russia)	Mattias Jorstedt (Sweden)
Rustam Bakirov (Russia)	Olivier Ruel (France)
Sergey Kuznetsov (Ukraine)	Osyp Lebedowicz (USA)
Sergey Paigusov (Russia)	Raphael Levy (France)
Sergey V Markov Sr. (Russia)	Sam Gomersall (England)
Yuri Kolomeyko (Ukraine)	Geoffrey Siron (Belgium)

## Handicapping Worlds

As more and more [Nationals results](#) trickle in, we have a pretty good idea about the lineups of most of the teams. The American team still looks to among the favorites with three top-notch players in Antonino De Rosa, Neil Reeves, and Jon Sonne. No other country has fielded a team with as much experience – and experience where it counts for the team competition. Both Sonne and Reeves have Pro Tour Top 4s in Team Rochester Draft.

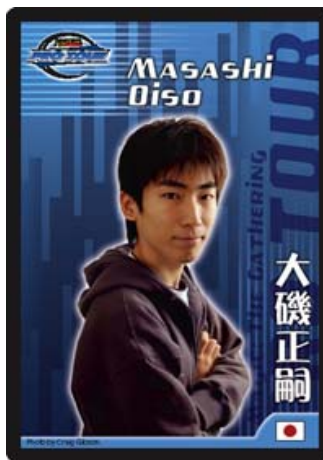
The Japanese team has to be a heavy favorite come Worlds merely based on the presence of Masashi Oiso, who has to be one of the top five players in the world right now. Takuma Morofuji took home the title, but second-place finisher Jun'ya Iyanaga has already rescinded his invitation, which gives the third spot on the team to Ichirou Shimura. Shimura was a member of Team S.A.I., which finished in the Top 4 for Pro Tour-Seattle.

In the days leading up to Pro Tour-London, a local newspaper did a great article about **Magic** in the United Kingdom and it focused on Limited poster child Sam Gomersall and lesser-known but highly regarded Richard Moore.

Richard took home the champion's trophy at English Nats and will be joined by Gomersall and Mark Knight. The stage could be set for the breakout performances that have been predicted for Gomersall and Moore for some time.

A quick scroll through the results shows up a handful of familiar names. Rookie of the Year candidate Julien Goron could lay claim to the title if he successfully leads the French National team to the top of the standings. Vasilis Fatouros is hoping to follow up his Nagoya Top 8 with a big push with the Greek team. Finnish champion Tuomo Nieminen was part of his country's team that [reached the finals](#) against the last American team to win that portion of Worlds, back in 2003.

Of course last year everyone predicted that the Olivier Ruel/Gabriel Nassif powerhouse French team or the Fujita/Tsumura Japanese team would be big winners. Instead it was an unlikely German team led by Sebastian Zink against a Belgian team that introduced the world to Geoffrey Siron.



*The best in the world? Many think so.*

## Firestarter: First Pickings off the Rotisserie

What card would you select first pick from the entire *Ninth Edition* set if you were playing this weekend in the Russian Invitational? You might be able to pick two cards in a row, but you also might not see another card for as many as 14 picks. Do you take an artifact like [Millstone](#)? Do you rare-draft the foil [Hypnotic Specter](#) or [Jester's Cap](#)? As for me, I'm thinking about taking [Trade Routes](#) and then try to wheel [Groundskeeper](#) and [Thought Courier](#) on the way back.

Go to the forums (I know you know how!) and let us know your first pick and why you would choose it.

*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.*



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