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Three Adventures

Brian David-Marshall
The Week That Was
Friday, September 30, 2005



By all accounts the *Ravnica* Prerelease weekend was a smashing success. Tournament organizers reported big spikes in attendance (as well as medium Johnnies and smallish Timmies) all over the world. Players seem excited – I know my local draft mailing list has been buzzing with activity – and the early word seems to be extremely positive from both a Limited and Constructed perspective.

If you missed all the fun or simply don't live within range of a Prerelease, you can join in the multi-color madness at [release events](#) at stores all over the world October 7-9. The format is Sealed Deck or Booster Draft and prizes include packs of the set and unique items. While supplies last, everyone who shows up gets a *Ravnica* foil card (which will be revealed next week), and the top three finishers and one door prize winner will get a *Ravnica* life counter (pictured right).



Finish in the top three at a release event and this is yours.

While I did manage to sneak into Neutral Ground late Sunday afternoon with garment bag in tow (for that story, you'll have to read farther down the column), I have not had the chance to play Sealed Deck with the new cards yet – only a handful of drafts. I am looking forward to remedying this next Saturday.

One of the tournaments that [I discussed in my primer](#) that you see at Prereleases is the Big Flight. Not every organizer offers this tournament, but it is very popular for that ones that do. How popular? Well, Mike Guptil (of the oh-so Professional Event Services) held a 203-person tournament on Saturday morning (in addition to flight after flight of 64 players throughout the weekend) in Columbus, Ohio.

When the dust settled from the Big Flight, only one player was left standing with a perfect 8-0 record. Thomas DiFrancisco, playing in his very first DCI-sanctioned **Magic** tournament, trampled through the field with the forces of the Golgari at his command. For his efforts, Thomas was rewarded with two boxes of *Ravnica* boosters. Here is the deck that Thomas used:

Thomas DiFrancisco
Golgari Glen Ross / 8-0 Columbus Prerelease

Main Deck
40 cards

8 Forest 1 Golgari Rot Farm 9 Swamp <hr/> 18 lands	1 Bramble Elemental 1 Carven Caryatid 1 Centaur Safeguard 1 Civic Wayfinder 1 Dimir House Guard 1 Elves of Deep Shadow 1 Golgari Rotwurm 1 Greater Mossdog 1 Keening Banshee 1 Mausoleum Turnkey 1 Netherborn Phalanx 1 Shambling Shell 1 Siege Wurm 1 Stinkweed Imp 1 Thoughtpicker Witch 1 Vindictive Mob <hr/> 16 creatures	1 Brainspoil 1 Clinging Darkness 1 Disembowel 2 Fists of Ironwood 1 Gaze of the Gorgon <hr/> 6 other spells
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While this was Thomas' first DCI-sanctioned tournament, it was far from his first experience with the game. In fact, Thomas has been playing the game on and off since the release of Revised a decade ago, although he considers himself more of a collector and casual player.

"I've always been fascinated by the game. A particular friend and I kinda got each other going in the game about 10 years ago and we have been pushing each other to break MTG theory ever since," explained Thomas.

As to why he decided to take the plunge and play in a tournament after all these years: "That same friend, Clinton Karr, a.k.a. TheOriginalGasFace on MTGO. That, and I really wanted to play the new set before it came out, and

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of course the opportunity for free cards if I won."



Thomas attributed his victory to the synergy of his deck. No single card stood out as the ace of his staff. He credited the already fearsome **Bramble Elemental/Fists of Ironwood** tandem with some victories. He snuck out a win or two with the aid of the **Netherborn Phalanx** and took down a couple the old-fashioned way with a trampling **Siege Wurm**.

Thomas was surprised that the **Bramble Elemental/Fists** combo worked as well as it did, but the card that really caught him off guard was a flyer with some unimpressive stats in the lower righthand corner.

"**Stinkweed Imp** was also among the better than originally thought," he said. "He completely stalled the air attack. He single-handedly can scare off 8/8 flyers. Everybody played a role, either removal, stompy, acceleration, fixing, and stall."

I asked Thomas for a scouting report on what colors seemed most played.

"I thought white and green were the most played, and blue the most splashed. Most seemed to want to abuse two guilds in three colors. I actually credit this as being one of the reasons I won. I only had to worry about two colors, and I had acceleration and fixing. Most other people had to worry about getting that third color down. There were a couple off-guild two colors that I crossed along the way."

There is only one way to go in Sealed, as far as Thomas is concerned (and since he lost only three games on the day, his opinion merits attention). "Golgari = broken. I learned that firsthand. This deck steamrolled the field. If 8-0 isn't enough, check out these other facts about my performance: No. 1 - No rares in the deck; No. 2 - Didn't sideboard once in eight matches; No. 3 - Only one match took me longer than 20 minutes to win."

So after putting it off for 10 years, what did Thomas think of his first sanctioned tournament? "Fun! Not many rules hassles or rude players. Everything went great for my first DCI experience."

Final Draft

I did not get to play in a Sealed Deck tournament due to a wedding Saturday evening. After shaking off a champagne headache Sunday morning, I managed to get to Neutral Ground by the afternoon as the two final drafts of the weekend were signing up. I hopped into the one that was starting while I waited for my friends to finish up their tournaments so we could draft amongst ourselves (assuming everyone managed to win some packs).

I have been to just about every prerelease with the exception of two – and one of those was the **Ice Age** Prerelease in Toronto, Canada – and yet I was still excited as I sat down to open my first pack of **Ravnica**. There were no dual lands or Birds to tempt me to rare draft so I took a **Watchwolf** with my first pick and followed it up with **Seeds of Strength**. My third pick was **Faith's Fetters** followed by another **Seeds**. I was happily settling into green-white until I saw a fifth-pick **Skyknight Legionnaire**.

From looking through the cards that my friends had shown me (I actually did not look at any spoilers before attending) and talking to people who had drafted a lot on Sunday, the word was that red-white was the best draft deck if you could get it. I hadn't passed anything from the Boros guild to my left and a fifth pick of this caliber seemed like a pretty good indication that it was not being taken to my right, so I took the flyer. I picked a couple of mediocre red cards like **Goblin Spelunkers** and **Orduun Commando** to round out the pack and waited for pack two to see which guild the second pack would lead me toward.

I took two **Veteran Armorers** and another **Faith's Fetters** in my early picks and was still unsure if my white would be accompanied by green or red when I was passed another Legionnaire, followed by a late **Viashino Fangtail** and **Thundersong Trumpeter**. I tucked my green cards away in the back of my stack and settled in for my first adventure with the Boros guild.

I ended up with a few more **Veteran Armorers** and a couple of removal spells – I was passed **Lightning Helix** in the third pack. Here is the deck I ended up playing.



Brian David-Marshall

Boros' Banner Ad - 3-0 Draft deck

Main Deck
40 cards

9 Mountain	2 Goblin Spelunkers	2 Faith's Fetters
8 Plains	1 Nightguard Patrol	1 Fiery Conclusion
17 lands	1 Ordrun Commando	1 Flash Conscription
	2 Skyknight Legionnaire	1 Lightning Helix
	2 Thundersong Trumpeter	1 Rally the Righteous
	5 Veteran Armorer	1 Wojek Siren
	2 Viashino Fangtail	
	1 Viashino Slasher	
	16 creatures	7 other spells

The deck ended up being pretty brutal. The only thing I would have changed would have been to include a couple of additional creatures from the sideboard and cut one land and the **Flash Conscription**. I hear green is pretty good but this and blue-black are the only two decks I have had any success with. What about you? Has anyone had success with non-guild colors?

Last Week

Kudos to everyone who correctly anticipated that the first pick in the [Russian Ninth Edition Rôtisserie draft](#) would be **Loxodon Warhammer**. That is exactly what Julien Nuijten did in the unenviable first position during the Top 8 draft in last weekend's Invitational. The eighth draft position turned out to be the victorious seat as Matvey Linov wheeled **Confiscate** and **Mahamoti Djinn** with the eighth and ninth picks.

Matt ended up being the only player to choose a blue card until Antoine Ruel took **Tidings** in the fourth go around the table. Antoine ended up with a blue-red deck that featured only two creatures and plenty of board control and removal. Neither Matvey nor Antoine even took a loss in the Top 8 until they played each other in the finals. That match went to five games before the Local Hero emerged victorious.



Linov, right, defeated Antoine Ruel with a black-blue concoction.

Read up on [all the coverage](#) from what sounded like a very fun event.

Small Flight/Big Decisions

You may know Jon Becker as the sideline reporter at the Pro Tour and the lovable curmudgeon from his rare guest appearances as a **Magic** writer on various sites. Jon is also an avid drafter and long-time Prerelease veteran. He attended the Philadelphia Prerelease and played in two 32-person flights Saturday. His card pool for the first one presented no tough decisions, begging for a green-white-red deck to be built. Jon obliged and quickly swept through three rounds to take down two handfuls of booster packs.

Jon quickly signed up for another one and found himself looking at a powerful but challenging card pool. Jon ultimately questioned the deck he built as he fell one game short of sweeping his second tournament and lost in the finals – he only got one handful of packs this time.

As for the deck he ended up playing, I will post it in the forums over the weekend, but in the meantime I was curious to hear what you would have done with the same set of cards. Consider this the Firestarter for the week – use the forums to post your approach to this card pool. What are the strongest colors? What are the key cards? (There is one unknown card in the card pool, but Jon assures me it was something unplayable that he either tore up for counters or used a divider in his card box.)

Red (14): Cleansing Beam Coalhauler Swine Dogpile Fiery Conclusion Goblin Fire Fiend Goblin Spelunkers Incite Hysteria Instill Furor Sabertooth Alley Cat Seismic Spike Sell-Sword Brute Surge of Zeal x2 Wojek Embermage	Red/White (4): Boros Fury-Shield (essentially RW) Boros Recruit (Guild) Ordrun Commando (essentially RW) Thundersong Trumpeter	White (8): Caregiver Chant of Vitu-Ghazi Courier Hawk Divebomber Griffin Gate Hound Screeching Griffin Seed Spark Wojek Apothecary	White/Green (7): Centaur Safeguard x2 (Guild) Loxodon Hierarch Selesnya Guildmage Tolsimir Wolfblood Votary of the Conclave x2 (essentially WG)	Green (12): Civic Wayfinder Elvish Skysweeper Gather Courage Gulgari Brownscale Gulgari Grave-Troll Greater Mossdog Root-Kin Ally Scion of the Wild Siege Wurm x2 Sundering Vitae Transluminant
Green/Black (4): Drooling Groodion Gaze of the Gorgon (Guild) Gulgari Germination	Black (6): Last Gasp Nightmare Void Shred Memory Strands of Undeath	Black/Blue (4): Moroi Perplex Szadek, Lord of Secrets Twisted Justice	Blue (9): Convolute Dizzy Spell Flight of Fancy Flow of Ideas Muddle the Mixture	Artifacts/Lands (6): Boros Signet (RW) Dimir Signet (UB) Selesnya Signet (GW)

Golgari Guildmage (Guild)	Stinkweed Imp Thoughtpicker Witch		Quickchange Snapping Drake Terraformer Tidewater Minion Vedalken Dismissor	Dimir Aqueduct (UB) Golgari Rot Farm (GB) Selesnya Sanctuary (GW)
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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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