

# The End of a Season, the Beginning of Search for

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The 2005 **Magic** World Championships concluded last weekend in Yokohama, Japan. The Japanese capped a year littered with Pro Tour Top 8 appearances, Grand Prix bum rushes onto American soil, and the emergence of a couple of new stars on the scene with a definitive finale to the 2005 Pro Tour season. Despite a confident start by the best American team in years, the World Championships's host nation left the **Magic** universe stunned via a clean sweep of individual titles of World Champion and Player of the Year, simultaneously unseating Team USA in three-man competition. Home court advantage served Japan well...



2005 World Champion Katsuhiko Mori

Though these highly skilled and dedicated players have received the lion's share of online hype over the last 12 months, it was actually the French who took the majority of the individual titles... Pierre Canali's Arcbound Ravagers dodged Shuhei Nakamura's Pillages in the Columbus finals, last year's Player of the Year Gabriel Nassif and his team Nova bested *this year's* eventual Player of the Year Kenji Tsumura and his One Spin squad on the way to the team win in Atlanta, and Antoine Ruel defeated both the storied Tsuyoshi Fujita and the ubiquitous Kenji before taking his Champion's crown at Pro Tour Los Angeles. Tabling for a moment the fact that 2005's dominant Tsumura *also* made an appearance in Pro Tour Philadelphia's finals (losing to 2005's lone American champion Gadiel Szleifer), only Shu Komuro managed to actually bring home (or *keep at home* in the case of the Pro Tour Nagoya winner) a first place trophy for Japan... despite continuous Top 8 finishes care of superstars like Masashi Oiso, Tsuyoshi Fujita, Ryuichi Arita, and of course eventual Player of the Year Tsumura. Chalk one up for World Champ Katsuhiko Mori.

Not surprisingly, Japan's strong weekend started in the tournament's first format: Standard. The field was defined by Mono-Blue Control (well, maybe not "*mono-*" due to a universal Black splash), but the Japanese rocked it rogue style with a new deviation called GhaziGlare. As its name implies, GhaziGlare marries disparate *Ravnica* threats Vitu-Ghazi, the City-Tree and consensus best Limited open Glare of Subdual. The deck can function as a reasonable G/W beatdown deck with Vitu-Ghazi as a finisher, or can create an Opposition-inspired board advantage via tons of creatures and Glare of Subdual. GhaziGlare has many unique elements, such as choosing Seed Spark over Naturalize as main deck removal (why not make two Icy Manipulators while killing that opposing Jitte?) and the underrated Congregation at Dawn... What Boros deck can survive midgame topdecks of Loxodon Hierarch, Loxodon Hierarch, and – you guessed it – Loxodon Hierarch?



As with many creative Japanese decks in the past, GhaziGlare incorporates multiple distinct and effective strategies. It is on the one hand the Vitu-Ghazi deck we have been waiting for

*It's no Opposition, and it's no joke*

since *Ravnica's* unveiling of the heir to Kjeldoran Outpost, the successful weapon that Fungus Fire and other such decks have been approaching, but have failed to reach until now. It is an offensive Jitte deck, with mana acceleration and efficient threats, echoing some of the best elements of the TOGIT Three-color Control deck from *Kamigawa* Block, all the way to the double Yosei lock, especially after boards. Over the course of three games, GhaziGlare can even play a Greater Good/fatty plan, much like some of the States-dominating Champs decks we looked at a few months back.


A loyal and effective weapon, GhaziGlare both took eventual semifinalist Tomohiro Kaji to a 6-0 Day One record and handed Katsuhiko Mori his giant \$35,000 check. Here are two looks at the deck from Day One and overall big winners:

Katsuhiko Mori



Main Deck	Sideboard
60 cards	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4 Brushland</li> <li>5 Forest</li> <li>1 Okina, Temple to the Grandfathers</li> <li>1 Plains</li> <li>4 Selesnya Sanctuary</li> <li>4 Temple Garden</li> <li>4 Vitu-Ghazi, the City-Tree</li> </ul> <hr style="width: 20%; margin-left: 0;"/> <p>23 lands</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3 Arashi, the Sky Asunder</li> <li>1 Birds of Paradise</li> <li>3 Kodama of the North Tree</li> <li>3 Llanowar Elves</li> <li>4 Loxodon Hierarch</li> <li>4 Selesnya Guildmage</li> <li>4 Wood Elves</li> <li>2 Yosei, the Morning Star</li> </ul> <hr style="width: 20%; margin-left: 0;"/> <p>24 creatures</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2 Congregation at Dawn</li> <li>3 Glare of Subdual</li> <li>3 Pithing Needle</li> <li>2 Seed Spark</li> <li>3 Umezawa's Jitte</li> </ul> <hr style="width: 20%; margin-left: 0;"/> <p>13 other spells</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2 Carven Caryatid</li> <li>2 Greater Good</li> <li>3 Hokori, Dust Drinker</li> <li>1 Kodama of the North Tree</li> <li>1 Kodama's Reach</li> <li>2 Naturalize</li> <li>1 Seedborn Muse</li> <li>1 Wrath of God</li> <li>2 Yosei, the Morning Star</li> </ul> <hr style="width: 20%; margin-left: 0;"/> <p>15 sideboard cards</p>

Tomohiro Kaji



Main Deck	Sideboard
60 cards	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4 Brushland</li> <li>6 Forest</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2 Congregation at Dawn</li> <li>3 Glare of Subdual</li> <li>2 Arashi, the Sky Asunder</li> <li>4 Carven Caryatid</li> <li>3 Greater Good</li> </ul>

1 Okina, Temple to the Grandfathers  
 4 Selesnya Sanctuary  
 4 Temple Garden  
 4 Vitu-Ghazi, the City-Tree

23 lands

2 Arashi, the Sky Asunder  
 3 Kodama of the North Tree  
 4 Llanowar Elves  
 4 Loxodon Hierarch  
 4 Selesnya Guildmage  
 4 Wood Elves  
 2 Yosei, the Morning Star

23 creatures

3 Pithing Needle  
 2 Seed Spark  
 4 Umezawa's Jitte

14 other spells

1 Hokori, Dust Drinker  
 2 Naturalize  
 1 Seedborn Muse  
 2 Yosei, the Morning Star

15 sideboard cards



Sharing Kaji's spot at 6-0 on Day One was eventual Finalist Frank Karsten. Karsten had many cards in common with the GhaziGlare 75 -- Yosei, Greater Good, and *Kamigawa* Block's dominant land, good old basic Forest -- but went with a Gifts Ungiven engine instead of focusing on weenie creatures, Jitte, and the beatdown. Karsten's deck incorporates many of the effects we have come to associate with one another in not dissimilar decks over the course of *Kamigawa* Block and Standard tournaments -- Sensei's Divining Top, Sakura-Tribe Elder, and other shuffle effects -- and can defend

itself with tons of removal cards. After sideboarding, Karsten's Greater Gifts can switch into a more conventional Gifts Ungiven engine with Hana Kami and Arcane/Splice tricks.

## Frank Karsten



### Main Deck 60 cards

2 Brushland  
 4 Forest  
 1 Island  
 1 Miren, the Moaning Well  
 1 Okina, Temple to the Grandfathers  
 2 Overgrown Tomb  
 3 Plains  
 1 Shizo, Death's Storehouse  
 3 Swamp  
 2 Temple Garden

2 Farseek  
 3 Gifts Ungiven  
 3 Goryo's Vengeance  
 3 Greater Good  
 4 Kodama's Reach  
 1 Last Gasp  
 1 Putrefy  
 1 Reclaim  
 1 Recollect  
 3 Sensei's Divining Top  
 4 Wrath of God

### Sideboard

1 Cranial Extraction  
 1 Death Denied  
 4 Defense Grid  
 1 Dosan the Falling Leaf  
 1 Hana Kami  
 1 Hideous Laughter  
 1 Ink-Eyes, Servant of Oni  
 1 Last Gasp  
 1 Loxodon Hierarch  
 1 Meloku the Clouded Mirror  
 1 Rending Vines  
 1 Soulless Revival

2 Tendo Ice Bridge

26 other spells

15 sideboard cards

1 Watery Grave

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23 lands

1 Kagemaro, First to Suffer

2 Kokusho, the Evening Star

4 Sakura-Tribe Elder

4 Yosei, the Morning Star

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11 creatures

While Standard gets the most love at the World Championships every year due to that Top 8 thing, there was another equally important Constructed format for the purposes of determining the Top 8 (not to mention one that you are probably battling through week in and week out right now): Extended. The same format that is currently feeding invitations to PT Honolulu showcased a reasonably fresh Extended deck, the lone 6-0 on Day Three of Worlds:

## Javier Dominguez - 6-0



### Main Deck

60 cards

5 Forest

1 Island

4 Overgrown Tomb

1 Plains

2 Polluted Delta

1 Swamp

1 Temple Garden

1 Watery Grave

4 Windswept Heath

2 Yavimaya Coast

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22 lands

4 Cabal Therapy

1 Duress

3 Gifts Ungiven

1 Haunting Echoes

3 Living Wish

2 Pernicious Deed

4 Putrefy

1 Sensei's Divining Top

3 Smother

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22 other spells

### Sideboard

1 Carven Caryatid

1 Dimir House Guard

2 Duress

1 Eternal Witness

1 Katakai, War's Wage

1 Llanowar Wastes

1 Loxodon Hierarch

1 Meloku the Clouded Mirror

2 Naturalize

1 Stabilizer

1 Viridian Shaman

2 Withered Wretch

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15 sideboard cards

4 Birds of Paradise

1 Carven Caryatid

3 Eternal Witness

1 Genesis

1 Loxodon Hierarch

1 Ravenous Baloth

4 Sakura-Tribe Elder

1 Withered Wretch

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16 creatures

Javier Dominguez missed Top 8 on tiebreakers, finishing 11th, but his Extended deck was flawless in *its* performance. Dominguez's deck is a hybrid between perennial Extended favorite The Rock and Standard and Block Constructed powerhouse Gifts Ungiven. Gifts Ungiven (the card, rather than the deck) super charges The Rock, answering a lot of questions while accelerating the long game elements that the normally ponderous threat deck often has difficulty catalyzing. Case in point: Genesis. Genesis is often a dorky Durkwood Boars, at least initially...

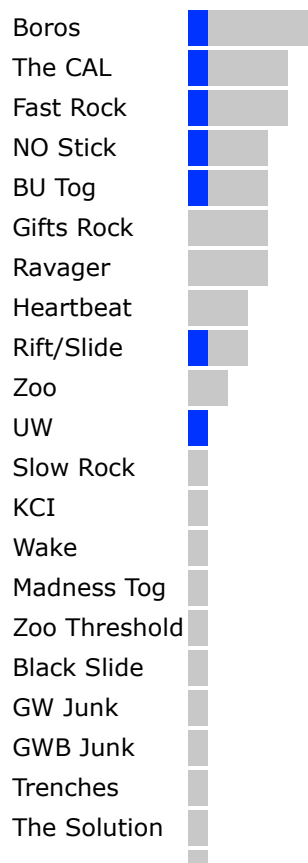


The Rock has to get Genesis killed somehow -- many times going down in cards in the short term -- in order to start reaping long term card advantage. Gifts Ungiven allows The Rock to "tutor" for both Genesis and Cabal Therapy (as well as two more targets), to get its machinery going a turn or more early.

It doesn't really matter where the opponent puts Cabal Therapy relative to Genesis. If both go to hand, Dominguez can play Genesis four-into-five and follow-up with Cabal Therapy and a flashback. If Cabal Therapy hits the graveyard, Genesis comes online a turn more quickly, and if Genesis goes to the graveyard for whatever reason... everything is great to begin with.

I don't for the most part like Wish sideboards, but Dominguez's is fairly practical. His Living Wish can get Llanowar Wastes (the deck is mostly Black and Green, though a successful Wish presupposes Green mana in the short term) and increases his access to the Life from the Loam hating Withered Wretch in Game One. One interesting singleton in Javier's sideboard is Stabilizer. This card may be a late season sleeper to hose the rising Astral Slide and continually popular Life from the Loam engine decks.


Speaking of these, the week's tally:



- Dredgatog █
- Mono-Black █
- BW Aggro █
- Burning Tog █

Interestingly, given our data at the time of this writing, no deck claimed more than one PT slot this week (though I suspect when this goes up, you'll see more than one first place NO Stick). That said, Boros Deck Wins seems like one of the best decks for battling through the Swiss rounds, leading all decks in Top 8s and equaling six other archetypes with one Blue Envelope on the week. The CAL, arguably the most powerful deck in Extended – and a notorious candidate for Stabilizer to squash – finished just behind Boros, along with Raphael Levy's aggressive Rock deck. It's funny how the simple strategies of clocks + Molten Rain (from Boros) and aggression + disruption and potentially Withered Wretches can trump much more powerful engines.

For a completely different look at aggression and card power, here is one of the most interesting decks from the week's crop.

**Adam Ragsdale**


<b>Main Deck</b>		<b>Sideboard</b>
<i>60 cards</i>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3 Barbarian Ring</li> <li>2 Forest</li> <li>1 Mountain</li> <li>1 Nantuko Monastery</li> <li>1 Plains</li> <li>2 Sacred Foundry</li> <li>3 Secluded Steppe</li> <li>2 Temple Garden</li> <li>1 Tranquil Thicket</li> <li>4 Windswept Heath</li> <li>4 Wooded Foothills</li> </ul> <hr/> 24 lands	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4 Call of the Herd</li> <li>3 Firebolt</li> <li>4 Life from the Loam</li> <li>4 Lightning Helix</li> </ul> <hr/> 15 other spells	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2 Compost</li> <li>2 Flaring Pain</li> <li>4 Loxodon Hierarchy</li> <li>4 Pithing Needle</li> <li>3 Purge</li> </ul> <hr/> 15 sideboard cards
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 Anger</li> <li>3 Anurid Brushhopper</li> <li>3 Grim Lavamancer</li> <li>3 Katakai, War's Wage</li> <li>3 Mystic Enforcer</li> <li>4 Nimble Mongoose</li> <li>4 Wild Mongrel</li> </ul> <hr/> 21 creatures		

I always take a second look at hybrid decks, and Adam Ragsdales' from Osawa, Ontario is a fascinating example. I love Threshold decks, and this Threshold-Zoo-Life from the Loam mish-mash



has all the old favorites... even sometime superstar Mystic Enforcer! Mystic Enforcer was the distinguishing bomb in sickestever.dec (Super-Gro, whatever you want to call it), the eventually dominant deck of Extended past, and has unstoppable buddy Nimble Mongoose along for the ride. The best offensive two-drop in **Magic** history and the synergistic Call of the Herd round out the *Odyssey* Block love fest in this versatile weapon. Dredging Life from the Loam is very good with both the Threshold and Flashback elements, fuels Grim Lavamancer... and of course helps to draw extra cards. There are subtle elements in this deck, too, like being able to match Brushhoppers with Balancing Act, or recover Nantuko Monastery attack after attack. I'm not sure if Adam's deck is the best beatdown available... but it's at least fabulously cool.

As far as archetype decks, I still think Heartbeat is the best choice for winning a PTQ (although, or perhaps in support, I played Rift/Slide myself last weekend). Lots of decks just can't beat Heartbeat, at least in Game One (Rift/Slide, Boros, and so on), and it is a lot better against NO Stick than most players – even Heartbeat players themselves – realize.

Good luck this weekend, no matter what you choose to play!

