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The Week That Wandered

Brian David-Marshall
The Week That Was
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There have been few columns in my magicthegathering.com tenure that have been as gratifying to write as this one. First of all it was preceded by an amazing week hanging around the Wizards offices. The bulk of the week was spent watching videos of old Pro Tours that have not been seen since they were originally recorded. When I wasn't doing that I got to hang out and draft with the R&D gang all week -- and got paid for it no less.

The best part though was righting wrongs. I had the opportunity to fill in a hole in the event coverage page by digging up the PT Rome decklists that have not been online in years and most importantly I got to slay a demon that had been chasing after Matt Place for close to a decade.

It has been a pretty cool week. I have been at the Wizards office in Renton for the past five days working on Hall of Fame matters, as well as fleshing out my role as the Pro Tour Historian. I have shared meals, stories, meetings, and drafts with the hard-working and passionate people who have the good fortune to make the game we all love.

The bulk of the work I have been doing involves going through the stacks and stacks of videotape from Pro Tours past to get a sense of what historically relevant material is available. Virtually every Pro Tour was there from the very beginning, with some amazing footage. The clips from Pro Tour II featured interviews with both finalists – Tom Guevin and champion Hammer Regnier – and revealed quite a bit about how Limited has changed over the years.

Hammer's deck was very controllish and was short on actual win conditions – Hammer continually passed on direct damage for cards that would simply stall out the game. His deck was dominated by control cards such as *Circles of Protection*, *Swords to Plowshares*, and *Gaseous Form*. He even passed the popular *Anaba Shaman* for the lowly *Giant Oyster*. Hammer compared his deck to the *Millstone* archetype that his friend Michael Loconto used to win the first Constructed Pro Tour.

"I played with extra cards because I expected to deck a few times," explained Hammer in his post-game interview with then cub reporter Mark Rosewater. "I told my cameraman Josh, 'Josh I am definitely going to deck a few people. I will play with extra cards and when I sideboard, I'm sideboarding extra cards because they are going to put in extra cards.'"



This is the tip of the video iceberg...

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Shawn "Hammer" Regnier

Winner Pro Tour II – Los Angeles - Clam Control

Main Deck
43 cards

9 Island	1 Dark Maze	2 Alabaster Potion
5 Plains	1 Giant Oyster	1 Animate Dead
4 Swamp	1 Giant Tortoise	1 Blue Elemental Blast
18 lands	1 Grapeshot Catapult	1 Circle of Protection: Black
	1 Samite Healer	1 Circle of Protection: Green
	1 Wall of Bone	1 Control Magic
	1 Yotian Soldier	1 Counterspell
		1 Disenchant
7 creatures		1 Feast of the Unicorn
		1 Flood
		4 Gaseous Form
		1 Power Sink
		1 Spell Blast
		1 Swords to Plowshares
		18 other spells

Keep in mind this was the first-ever Booster Draft tournament of any significance. Players had still not learned the joys of attacking for two from potential Hall of Famer Brian Hacker one year later (on the same boat). The popular

strategy at the time of Hammer's event was to go for big powerful spells and Hammer turned that strategy on its ear with his big deck, life gain, and stall cards.

Getting decklists, event summaries, and maybe even some of the video up onto the coverage page for those early Pro Tour events is going to be part of my historian gig. One of the first things I did was to make a list of holes in the coverage. The second thing I did was to begin looking for ways to fill them. It amazes me that after all these years around the game, I am still like a kid in a candy store when you let me loose into a room full of Pro Tour video and old Sideboard magazines.

One hole that has always glared in the tournament center was the lack of coverage from Pro Tour-Rome. It turns out that that between the U.S. and European offices (and however many intervening years), the coverage had fallen through the cracks and was nowhere to be found. Fortunately we were able to sic Monty Ashley on the trail and he dug it up on archive.org and it should soon be added to the Tournament Center.

Erik Lauer		Pro Tour-Rome 1998 Top 8	
Main Deck 62 cards		Sideboard	
3 City of Brass	3 Abeyance	1 Abeyance	
4 Tolarian Academy	3 Counterspell	1 Capsize	
3 Tundra	4 Impulse	4 Chill	
4 Underground Sea	4 Lotus Petal	1 City of Solitude	
3 Volcanic Island	4 Mana Vault	1 Gloom	
4 Wasteland	1 Mind Over Matter	1 Gorilla Shaman	
21 lands	4 Mox Diamond	1 Hydroblast	
	3 Scroll Rack	1 Jester's Cap	
	1 Stroke of Genius	1 Perish	
0 creatures	4 Time Spiral	3 Pyroblast	
	3 Urza's Bauble		15 sideboard cards
	3 Vampiric Tutor		
	4 Windfall		
	41 other spells		

Olle Rade		Pro Tour-Rome 1998 Top 8	
Main Deck 60 cards		Sideboard	
2 City of Brass	1 Armageddon	1 Disenchant	
2 Gemstone Mine	4 Aura of Silence	2 Karma	
2 Kjeldoran Outpost	3 Cursed Scroll	2 Pyroblast	
7 Plains	4 Lightning Bolt	2 Red Elemental Blast	
4 Plateau	4 Mox Diamond	2 Serrated Arrows	
4 Wasteland	2 Swords to Plowshares	1 Suleiman's Legacy	
21 lands	4 Tithe	1 Swords to Plowshares	
	22 other spells	4 Warmth	
4 Jackal Pup			15 sideboard cards
3 Paladin en-Vec			
4 Savannah Lions			
2 Soltari Priest			
4 White Knight			
17 creatures			

Tommi Hovi		Pro Tour-Rome 1998 Top 8	
Main Deck 60 cards		Sideboard	
4 Ancient Tomb	3 Abeyance	1 Arcane Denial	
3 City of Brass	3 Intuition	4 Chill	
4 Tolarian Academy	4 Lotus Petal	4 Gorilla Shaman	
4 Tundra	4 Mana Vault	2 Red Elemental Blast	
4 Volcanic Island	3 Mind Over Matter	4 Wasteland	
19 lands	4 Mox Diamond		15 sideboard cards
	3 Power Sink		
	2 Scroll Rack		
	4 Stroke of Genius		

0 creatures

4 Time Spiral
3 Voltaic Key
4 Windfall

41 other spells

Mark Le Pine

Pro Tour-Rome 1998 Top 8



Main Deck 60 cards

23 Island

23 lands

0 creatures

3 Arcane Denial
4 Counterspell
4 Force of Will
3 Force Spike
4 High Tide
4 Impulse
4 Intuition
3 Mind Over Matter
4 Stroke of Genius
4 Time Spiral

37 other spells

Sideboard

2 Boomerang
4 Chill
4 Energy Flux
3 Hydroblast
2 Rebound

15 sideboard cards

Federico Dato

Pro Tour-Rome 1998 Top 8



Main Deck 60 cards

22 Island

22 lands

0 creatures

4 Arcane Denial
4 Force of Will
4 High Tide
4 Impulse
4 Intuition
2 Merchant Scroll
3 Mind Over Matter
1 Rescind
4 Stroke of Genius
4 Time Spiral
4 Turnabout

38 other spells

Sideboard

3 Counterspell
3 Disrupt
3 Hydroblast
2 Mana Web
2 Rescind
2 Vision Charm

15 sideboard cards

Justin Gary

Pro Tour-Rome 1998 Top 8



Main Deck 60 cards

3 Flood Plain
4 Mishra's Factory
6 Plains
4 Plateau
1 Tundra
4 Wasteland

22 lands

2 Aura of Silence
4 Cursed Scroll
2 Disenchant
2 Incinerate
4 Lightning Bolt
3 Swords to Plowshares
4 Tithe

21 other spells

1 Gorilla Shaman
4 Savannah Lions
4 Soltari Priest
2 Suq'Ata Lancer
2 Warrior en-Kor
4 White Knight

17 creatures

Sideboard

2 Abeyance
2 Aura of Silence
1 Disenchant
1 Dwarven Miner
1 Firestorm
2 Gorilla Shaman
3 Honorable Passage
4 Pyroblast

16 sideboard cards

André Konstanczer



Pro Tour-Rome 1998 Top 8		
Main Deck		Sideboard
60 cards		
2 Bad River	3 Contagion	4 Bottle Gnomes
4 Badlands	4 Dark Ritual	2 Dread of Night
2 Lake of the Dead	3 Demonic Consultation	2 Meltdown
2 Sulfurous Springs	4 Drain Life	2 Perish
9 Swamp	4 Duress	4 Pyroblast
4 Wasteland	2 Firestorm	1 Spinning Darkness
23 lands	4 Hymn to Tourach	15 sideboard cards
	4 Necropotence	
	2 Yawgmoth's Will	
4 Knight of Stromgald	30 other spells	
2 Sedge Troll		
1 Sengir Vampire		
7 creatures		

Nicolas Labarre		
Pro Tour-Rome 1998 Top 8		
Main Deck		Sideboard
60 cards		
18 Island	4 Counterspell	2 Bottle Gnomes
4 Wasteland	2 Curiosity	2 Disrupt
22 lands	4 Force of Will	2 Force Spike
	2 Force Spike	4 Hydroblast
	3 Nevinyrral's Disk	1 Nevinyrral's Disk
4 Lord of Atlantis	15 other spells	2 Phyrexian Furnace
4 Man-o'-War		2 Serrated Arrows
4 Manta Riders		15 sideboard cards
4 Merfolk Raiders		
4 Suq'Ata Firewalker		
3 Waterspout Djinn		
23 creatures		

Rome is an important event in that it was potential Hall of Famer Tommi Hovi's 'true' Pro Tour win. Hovi was the first Pro to notch two wins on his belt, with his first coming on the Queen Mary in Los Angeles '97 when David Mills was DQ'd in the finals. (Hovi got the win by default.) When he finally took three games from his opponent in Rome, not only did Hovi become the first player with two Pro Tour titles but he finally felt that he had shaken off the stigma of his win from Los Angeles.

Rome also marked Olle Rade's fifth trip onto the Sunday stage. He was the first player to reach that milestone – something only 13 other players have been able to accomplish since. Filling in holes like that will be a satisfying part of my Historian role.

Speaking of satisfying, I had a great moment going through old video. I was looking through the footage from 1996 U.S. Nationals and was watching a match between Matt Place and eventual champion Dennis Bentley to determine who would advance to the finals. Place had been playing Turbo Stasis all weekend and the deck was the talk of the tournament because of its favorable matchups against the scourge of the tournament scene at the time – **Necropotence**, which was being played by Bentley.

The match between the two players went the full five games. In the final game, Bentley led off with Swamp, **Dark Ritual**, **Hypnotic Specter**. After drawing for his turn, the camera swung around to see Matt's hand and the commentators – Mark Rosewater and Mark Justice – could not believe their eyes when they saw **Force of Will** and another blue card in Matt's hand. Justice lambasted Place throughout the remainder of the game as the **Hypnotic Specter** tore apart Place's hand and ruined his chances of making the finals.

After the match, Mark Rosewater conducted an interview with Place and asked him about why he failed to counter the devastating first-turn play. Place was not as sure as either of the commentators and suggested to Mark that he had drawn the **Force of Will** on his first turn and did not have it in hand when Dennis summoned the Specter.

Mark was adamant and assured a shaken Matt Place that the card was in his hand and he simply failed to use it. Matt's resolve wavered a little and he conceded that he could have misplayed simply because he had never played with **Force of Will** before, and was not used to the idea of being able to counter a first-turn play.



Rosewater and I sat down to review the tape of this famous "misplay" and examined it frame by frame with an exactitude that has not been seen since the Zapruder film. Again and again we watched as Place drew his card and put it to the far right of his hand. Then – frame by frame – we watched as he flicked the card with the card next to it in his hand. The card he had just drawn was one card in from the right of his hand. As the tape cuts to an angle that lets the viewer see Matt's hand, we determined that the second card from the right was **Force of Will** – the card he had just drawn for the turn.

Mark and I raced down to the R&D area and informed Matt of the news. To be precise, all I said to him was, "Matt, you drew the **Force of Will**."

I gave him no context for the statement but still he knew instantly what I was referring to. He slammed both hands on the table and exhaled a breath he had seemingly been holding for 10 years, "I thought I had drawn it that turn but for 10 years people have been telling me it was in my hand. I believed them."

Matt Place		
Top 4 U.S. Nationals 1996 - Turbo Stasis		
Main Deck 60 cards		Sideboard
4 Adarkar Wastes	4 Arcane Denial	1 Black Vise
4 City of Brass	4 Boomerang	2 Blue Elemental Blast
13 Island	3 Despotic Scepter	2 Disenchant
4 Underground River	1 Feldon's Cane	2 Hydroblast
25 lands	4 Force of Will	1 Kismet
	4 Howling Mine	1 Lodestone Bauble
	1 Ivory Tower	3 Mana Short
	2 Kismet	1 Swords to Plowshares
0 creatures	1 Land Tax	2 Wall of Air
	4 Lim-Dul's Vault	
	2 Recall	15 sideboard cards
	4 Stasis	
	1 Zuran Orb	
	35 other spells	

Stumping MichaelJ



One of those aforementioned coverage holes allowed me to defeat one MichaelJ Flores this week at Deck Game. Deck Game is a game in which Mike tries to figure out which significant deck you are referring to with only a small portion of the decklist. Usually he is being fed by Jon Becker, but I managed to stumble across something that I was sure he could never guess. I only gave him one card in the decklist – **Giant Mantis**.

To Mike's credit, he figured out that the deck had to be a *Mirage* Block Constructed deck. He ran through the Paris competitors and took a wild stab that the deck belonged to Sturla Bingen. He was wrong. The deck in question actually belonged to R&D's Mike Turian who used it to qualify for Pro Tour-Chicago and to reach the Top 8 of Grand Prix-Toronto. His deck was a green-white Maro deck that ran **Giant Mantis** to fill out the creature slots.

Mike was beside himself and accused me of not giving him enough information. "You gave me one card! If you gave me so much as a **Mistmoon Griffin** I would have gotten Turian. **Mistmoon**, **Maro**, **Striped Bears** – easily I hit Turian there."

My defense is that the card is unique enough – it is probably the only time the Mantis has appeared in a high-level tournament Top 8 constructed deck. Turian smiled roguishly as he helped me recreate the list. "**Giant Mantis** was so good against **Hazerider Drake** in that format. It was also good against **Nekrataal**. He was a 2/4 and they couldn't get through him. And nobody ever wanted to **Nekrataal** a **Giant Mantis**."

There may actually be a Toronto fantasy rematch in the offing this week. Worth Wollpert – also from R&D – just missed the cut to the Top 8 of that event when he lost to eventual winner Brian Kibler in the final round. Kibler defeated Turian in the first round of elimination.

"So if you had beaten Kibler, I could have won that Grand Prix," Turian realized.

"My mono-black deck would have rolled over you," scoffed Wollpert as he looked over the list. "All you have is three **Scalebane's Elite** and some **Pacifisms**."

Turian just smiled, "Don't forget the **Mistmoon Griffin**."



Mike Turian was bold enough to run **Giant**

Mike Turian - Green-white Maro		
Top 8 Grand Prix Toronto - Mirage Block Constructed		
Main Deck 60 cards		
12 Forest	2 Giant Mantis	4 Abeyance
4 Grasslands	4 Maro	2 Disenchant
6 Plains	4 Mistmoon Griffin	4 Pacifism
22 lands	4 River Boa	3 Tithe
	3 Scalebane's Elite	13 other spells
	4 Striped Bears	
	4 Wall of Roots	
	25 creatures	

Back to the Future

When Pro Tour-Los Angeles rolls around ([on its new date](#)), don't be surprised if you see the name Adam Yurchick doing really well with small, efficient, white creatures. If Adam's name seems familiar at all it is because he has popped up on the deck page (occasionally as Adam Yarchick) multiple times with a fifth-, second-, and first-place finish in PTQs with White Weenie before reaching the Top 4 of [Grand Prix-Minneapolis](#) this weekend – one of three such decks in the Top 8 of Minneapolis.

Adam Yurchick		
GP Minneapolis Top 8		
Main Deck 60 cards	Sideboard	
1 Eiganjo Castle	2 Charge Across the Araba	4 Hokori, Dust Drinker
22 Plains	3 Manriki-Gusari	3 Opal-Eye, Konda's Yojimbo
23 lands	3 Otherworldly Journey	3 Orb of Dreams
	2 Shining Shoal	1 Otherworldly Journey
	4 Umezawa's Jitte	3 Pithing Needle
	14 other spells	1 Shining Shoal
4 Celestial Kirin		15 sideboard cards
4 Eight-and-a-Half-Tails		
4 Hand of Honor		
4 Isamaru, Hound of Konda		
3 Kami of Ancient Law		
4 Lantern Kami		
23 creatures		

When I asked Adam what led him to play with the deck this season he explained, "I went to PT Philadelphia and played some 4 color monstrosity, which "underperformed," to say the least, so I decided that for the PTQs I would run a consistent yet powerful deck, so WW was the obvious choice. Although it seems to be nothing but random dudes and combat tricks, it is rich in synergy with its own cards, while at the same time it provides answers to many of the problem cards and decks in the format."

Celestial Kirin has been a key card for the recent high school graduate as it gives him answers for everything from mirror matches to what were pre-Saviors headache-inducing five drops like **Meloku** and **Kodama of the North Tree**. **Manriki-Gusari** is another key card – especially on the PTQ circuit.

"I used it at the GP expecting large amounts of MBA and WW, but the MBA didn't really show up," Yurchick said. "It is very good in those matchups as it deals with all of the important equipment cards, a.k.a. Jitte. For the PTQs I would still run it maindeck, as there should be large amounts of those decks present. For something like a Grand Prix I think it can be safely moved the sideboard. Kirin trumps everything anyways, and cutting (**Manriki-Gusari**) allows for something like **Hokori** to be run main, which is critical against the control decks."



Yurchick, left, advanced to the semifinals in Minneapolis.

Adam was quick to point out that the equipment card wasn't entirely dead against control as it served to make a key guy live through **Hideous Laughter** and, occasionally, **Kagemaro, First to Suffer**. **Opal-Eye, Konda's Yojimbo** – another legend that did not see a lot of play early on in the



format – has been an MVP out of Yurchick's sideboard, and apparently it is catching on.

"Using Opal-Eye in the sideboard is also something that most players do not do. It is tremendous in the mirror match, as it completely controls combat. It is also great against **Umezawa's Jitte**, as Opal-Eye can block or redirect the damage, and then prevent it, preventing counters from being added to the equipment. In the beginning of the season I saw no one using it, but by the Grand Prix I saw it a few times, and surprisingly enough, all of the WW decks in the Top 8 ran it."

Not really that surprising, considering Sean Inlow (who also made the Top 8) was a playtest partner of Adam's and ran a nearly identical build. The PTQ version of the deck took advantage of the **Tallowisp** engine while the GP version cut that out to include **Charge Across the Araba** and **Manriki-Gusari**.

Adam ran afoul of Mark Herberholz in the semifinals which would seem to support the claim that the PTQ popular White Weenie decks cannot be the Pro-favored Gifts decks. Adam disagreed with that notion and explained the key to victory.

"My friend Sean actually had great success against Gifts and beat it many times throughout the tournament, even without **Pithing Needle** sideboard. The key to winning is using **Needle** to deal with **Sensei's Divining Top**, **Meloku**, and **Hana Kami**, and to get out **Hokori** ASAP and protect it with **Otherworldly Journey**."

Adam was looking forward to playing in the next Pro Tour as well as going to college in the fall. He is expecting an Affinity/Goblins/Slide metagame in Los Angeles and hopes to lift his game to the next level at college.

"My **Magic** career is definitely at a high now, with many good finishes. I have never had a real testing group or even many competent players to play with locally, so almost all preparation has been reading a lot online and testing on various online programs, including **Magic Online**. At college I will be with many more quality players, so I hope to bring my game to the next level. I will obviously have to balance social life/school/**Magic**, but I'm sure it will work out."

Firestarter: Vidiot Box

So...we have this mountain of tape with all these cool, historical feature matches. There are interviews with the winners, losers, and also-rans from just about every Pro Tour ever. We also have awards ceremonies, interviews, and commentary ranging from Brian Weissman to Mark Justice to Brian Hacker.

So the simple question is... What events do you want to see? Which are the ones that should be made available for download or shown during the breaks of Pro Tour coverage from Los Angeles this year? Which all-star Top 8 clashes do you most want to see? Make a good case in the forums and we will try to accommodate.

*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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