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World Championship Deck Design

Brian David-Marshall
The Week That Was
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Pro Tour Hawaii is just one week away, and all over the world players are fine tuning their decks for the first all-Standard Pro Tour since Chicago 2000. If the Standard format causes similar cream to rise to the Top 8 of Hawaii as it did back in Chicago, we are in for one great Pro Tour. It can be argued quite convincingly that there has never been a more star-studded elimination bracket in the ten year history of the Pro Tour; Kai Budde, Kamiel Cornelissen, Rob Dougherty, Jon Finkel, Mike Pustilnik, and Zvi Mowshowitz all have multiple Top 8s to their credit and at least one Pro Tour win on their resume. Only former JSS star Jay Elarar and dragonmaster Brian Kibler made their lone Top 8 appearance at this event, and the latter is certainly one of the game's most popular figures with two Grand Prix trophies keeping his books standing upright.



Pro Tour Hawaii has a lot to live up to when held up against that legendary Day Three. Of course, Hawaii does have a leg up on Chicago in terms of location, especially when you consider that both events will have taken place in the winter. Pro Tour Hawaii is kicking off the 2006 Pro Tour season and will be the first event where Katsuhiko Mori gets to defend his World Championship title. It also means that the Top 8's from Worlds and Hawaii will be back to back Standard Top 8's.

Looking back to last year when the Japanese stunned the world with the completely unexpected GhaziGlare deck for Worlds, one can only wonder what Mori and company will be bringing to the table this season. According to Japanese coverage reporter Keitia Mori, the Japanese are still wondering themselves – despite an all-star squad that includes the World Champion, Player of the Year, Masashi Oiso, and rising star Tomohiro Kaji.

According to Keitia, the Japanese designers are still trying to gauge the metagame and develop what the World Champion has dubbed “an offensively transformative sideboard”.

If you look at successful Japanese deck designs, you will notice that they often have the capability to become very different decks after sideboarding. The deck that Katsuhiko Mori used to win Grand Prix Niigata is a perfect example of this philosophy. Godo's Gifts was a finely-tuned-but-typical Gifts Ungiven control deck that could completely trump the aggressive Black weenie and White weenie strategies that were so popular at the time.

The only problem was that in a two-day tournament, that strategy would become increasingly irrelevant as the tournament progressed and more and more control decks rose to the top. Just look at the Top 8 from Niigata and you will see nothing but control decks of one stripe or another. At that point – let's call it Day 2 for the sake of simplicity – your deck needs to have a plan to beat up on all the control decks that have beaten up all the aggro decks.

Enter [Godo, Bandit Warlord](#) and [Tatsumasa, the Dragon's Fang](#).

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RULES

Katsuhiko Mori		"Godo's Gifts" designed by Katsu-Mori	
		txt	
Main Deck		Sideboard	
60 cards			
8 Forest	1 Cranial Extraction	1 Cranial Extraction	
1 Island	1 Death Denied	1 Exile into Darkness	
1 Okina, Temple to the Grandfathers	4 Gifts Ungiven	1 Ghost-Lit Stalker	
1 Shizo, Death's Storehouse	1 Goryo's Vengeance	2 Godo, Bandit Warlord	
8 Swamp	2 Hideous Laughter	2 Hideous Laughter	
4 Tendo Ice Bridge	4 Kodama's Reach	1 Horobi's Whisper	
23 lands	4 Sensei's Divining Top	1 Meloku the Clouded Mirror	
	4 Sickening Shoal	1 Mountain	
	1 Soulless Revival	1 Okiba-Gang Shinobi	
1 Ghost-Lit Stalker	1 Wear Away	1 Rending Vines	
1 Hana Kami		1 Tatsumasa, the Dragon's Fang	
1 Ink-Eyes, Servant of Oni	23 other spells	1 Umezawa's Jitte	
3 Kagemaro, First to Suffer		1 Wear Away	
2 Kokusho, the Evening Star			
1 Meloku the Clouded Mirror		15 sideboard cards	

1 Myojin of Night's Reach
4 Sakura-Tribe Elder

14 creatures

It was the same way at the World Championships, where Boros Deck Wins was one of the most popular strategies. Ghazi Glare was perfect for defeating that aggressive creature deck, but as those decks fell by the wayside, it was not as adept at handling control decks, which is why the top decks had the capability of transforming into from GhaziGlare to GhaziGood with **Greater Good**, Yosei, Hokori, and **Seedborn Muse**.

Main Deck 60 cards		Sideboard
4 Brushland	2 Congregation at Dawn	2 Carven Caryatid
5 Forest	3 Glare of Subdual	2 Greater Good
1 Okina, Temple to the Grandfathers	3 Pithing Needle	3 Hokori, Dust Drinker
1 Plains	2 Seed Spark	1 Kodama of the North Tree
4 Selesnya Sanctuary	3 Umezawa's Jitte	1 Kodama's Reach
4 Temple Garden	13 other spells	2 Naturalize
4 Vitu-Ghazi, the City-Tree		1 Seedborn Muse
23 lands		1 Wrath of God
		2 Yosei, the Morning Star
		15 sideboard cards
3 Arashi, the Sky Asunder		
1 Birds of Paradise		
3 Kodama of the North Tree		
3 Llanowar Elves		
4 Loxodon Hierarch		
4 Selesnya Guildmage		
4 Wood Elves		
2 Yosei, the Morning Star		
24 creatures		

Not only do the Japanese hope to gauge the metagame for Day 1 of Hawaii, they feel a need to anticipate the Day 2 metagame as well - something which often requires two different strategies.

"95% of the decks on the Standard Pro Tour are not going to surprise us," explained the World Champion. "But we have a problem with the differences in the field between Day 1 and Day 2. For example, let's pretend that anti-aggro control decks are the solution on Day 1. Now, let's think about Day 2 - lots of the decks that advance are going to be control decks."

"So anti-control cards would be a silver-bullet for the Day 2 field, but they will be pretty crappy for the Day 1 field. This is the metagame."

Mori would love to find a deck for Hawaii similar to his GhaziGlare deck from Worlds. "The deck I used is one that was developed in Japan. I think the maindeck and sideboard were exquisitely balanced."

It's quite a bit of pressure for the World Champion, but not as much as he faced going into his last round of the Swiss in Yokohama against Bas Postema. After leading the entire field for most of the weekend, Mori went into a spiral in the waning rounds of the tournament and found he was facing elimination in the final Swiss match of the weekend after only needing to lock up a win and a draw in the last five rounds to reach the Top 8.



"Well, I really focused myself on the match," recalled Mori when asked about his mindset going into his match with Postema. "I have a tanktop shirt I always wear for important games, and I made sure I was wearing it and nothing else for this match. I was thinking to myself "This is it". I thought I would look like a fool to have been consistently so close to the top of the standings and then lose in the last round."

"I got a little depressed in the middle of the match. At one point, I was pretty confident I was going to lose - I figured I had a maybe 1-in-10 chance of winning - and I thought "Well, that's it - there goes another Top 8." Somehow, I managed to pull off a win I didn't think I could have, something I probably couldn't do again in a thousand games. When I knew I had

made Top 8, I was the happiest I've ever been since I started playing **Magic**. It was better even than when I won the Masters with Kuroda and Morita."

Despite his Masters win and his subsequent Rookie of the Year title, this was Mori's first trip to the proverbial Sunday stage. Once he got there, he felt confident that he would at least notch two wins.

"I felt pretty confident that I could make it to the finals. I was pretty relaxed while playing and I think I was able to play out the games at my own pace. I remember in my match with Nakamura looking in his eyes and somehow just knowing he had the disenchant."

"Kaji and I are friendly rivals, and had been competing since the beginning of the season to see who could come out on top. We'd gone 1-1-1 in Worlds, so this was a final for ourselves. I felt like I was meant to win, and I did (even though Kaji made a lot of mistakes out of fatigue)."

"I remember the start of the fourth game with Karsten," said Mori of the last Match of the 2005 season. "I was up 2-1. My opening hand had five lands and **Greater Good**. I kept that hand, but by the third turn or so I thought to myself that I wouldn't be able to catch up to Karsten - he was developing too quickly for me to recover. In spite of that, I stuck it out and got a chance when he made a mistake. I was able to capitalize on that and pull the game and the match off."

"It was my goal to make Worlds my first PT Top 8. I'm (of course) very happy to have made it," said Mori, before taking a moment to thank the people who have had a hand in his success. "I have been influenced by a lot of people over my career: Masaya Mori, Masahiko Morita, Jin Okamoto, Osamu Fujita, Tsuyoshi Fujita, and Itaru Ishida. I owe them all something."



After seven years of playing the game since first discovering it while living in Chicago, Mori finally has a Pro Tour trophy for his mantle that he can put alongside his Masters win, Grand Prix Championship, and Rookie of the Year title. That collection of hardware puts him in pretty exclusive company. If he can follow up with another Top 8, it will put him in the even more exclusive company of those multiple Top 8ers from Chicago 2000.

Regional Balloting Heats Up

After taking care of the Road Warrior, Resident Genius, and The Fanatic spots, this week we had the first regional winner determined. Leading off the four regions was [Asia/Pacific](#), with a power-packed lineup of candidates. Masashi Oiso stormed to victory, capturing 40.4% of the APAC votes. Oiso also won this category last year, but was unable to attend the Invitational.



This week's ballot looks to [Latin America](#). Although this region hasn't stretched its fingers out to top-level Pro Tour and Grand Prix participation, its members defend their home turf as well as anyone. Vote now!

Firestarter:

Kai Budde, Kamiel Cornelissen, Brian Kibler, Rob Dougherty, Jon Finkel, Mike Pustilnik, Zvi Mowshowitz, and Jay Elarar made up one of the toughest PT Top 8's of all time. Has there ever been one tougher in the history of the Pro Tour?

*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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