

**SHAMAN WEEK**[MAGICTHEGATHERING.COM](#)[ARCHIVES](#)[TOURNAMENT CENTER](#)[MAGIC ONLINE](#)[GATHERER](#)[Home](#) > [Games](#) > [Magic](#) > [Magicthegathering.com](#) > [Columns](#)

# Ending Block-on-Block Violence

*Aaron Forsythe  
Latest Developments  
Friday, March 10,  
2006*

As we finish working on one block here in R&D and begin working on the next, we often have discussions about what Standard will lose when the new set rotates in (knocking out the block two previous), and what the new block will want to do to compensate. Will red be lacking good small creature? Is the best countermagic leaving? Will colors other than green lose their ability to accelerate? Basically we want to make sure things never get too out of whack.

In these discussions, we sometimes talk about what the "ideal" Standard deck should look like. Not what colors it is or whether it wins fast or slow, but rather where its cards come from.

Take a look at the following four decks, which happen to be the top four finishers from the 2004 World Championships.

PRODUCTS

MAGIC ONLINE

Top 8 Decklists

Pro Tour-Hollywood Qualifier Season

MESSAGE BOARDS

Magic General Forum

magicthegathering.com Forum

RULES

### Green-White Slide

Julian Nuijten – 2004 World Champion

Main Deck 60 cards		Sideboard
7 Forest	2 Akroma's Vengeance	3 Circle of Protection: Red
6 Plains	4 Astral Slide	4 Oxidize
4 Secluded Steppe	2 Decree of Justice	3 Plow Under
4 Tranquil Thicket	1 Plow Under	2 Rude Awakening
4 Windswept Heath	4 Rampant Growth	3 Scrabbling Claws
25 lands	4 Renewed Faith	
	2 Wing Shards	15 sideboard cards
	4 Wrath of God	
	23 other spells	
4 Eternal Dragon		
4 Eternal Witness		
4 Viridian Shaman		
12 creatures		

### Affinity

Aeo Paquette – 2004 Worlds Finalist

Main Deck 60 cards		Sideboard
3 Blinkmoth Nexus	4 Chrome Mox	4 Annul
3 Glimmervoid	4 Cranial Plating	4 Furnace Dragon
4 Great Furnace	4 Shrapnel Blast	4 Seething Song
4 Seat of the Synod	4 Thoughtcast	3 Serum Visions
4 Vault of Whispers	4 Welding Jar	
18 lands	20 other spells	15 sideboard cards
4 Arcbound Ravager		
4 Arcbound Worker		
4 Disciple of the Vault		
4 Frogmite		
4 Ornithopter		
2 Somber Hoverguard		
22 creatures		

### Goblins

Ryo Ogura – 2004 Worlds Semifinalist		
Main Deck 60 cards		Sideboard
4 Blinkmoth Nexus	4 Electrostatic Bolt	2 Arc-Slogger
19 Mountain	4 other spells	2 Gempalm Incinerator
23 lands		2 Goblin Charbelcher
4 Clickslither		4 Relic Barrier
2 Gempalm Incinerator		3 Sulfuric Vortex
4 Goblin Piledriver		2 Sword of Fire and Ice
4 Goblin Sharpshooter		15 sideboard cards
4 Goblin Sledder		
4 Goblin Warchief		
3 Siege-Gang Commander		
4 Skirk Prospector		
4 Sparksmith		
33 creatures		

Ironworks Manuel Bevand – 2004 Worlds Semifinalist		
Main Deck 60 cards		Sideboard
2 Ancient Den	4 Chrome Mox	4 Furnace Dragon
4 Darksteel Citadel	4 Condescend	4 Mana Leak
4 Great Furnace	3 Fabricate	3 Pyroclasm
4 Seat of the Synod	1 Fireball	4 Seething Song
3 Tree of Tales	1 Goblin Charbelcher	15 sideboard cards
2 Vault of Whispers	4 Krark-Clan Ironworks	
19 lands	4 Myr Incubator	
0 creatures	4 Pentad Prism	
	3 Serum Visions	
	3 Talisman of Dominance	
	3 Talisman of Progress	
	3 Thirst for Knowledge	
	4 Thoughtcast	
	41 other spells	

Bring back memories? The format was Standard using the full *Onslaught* block, the full *Mirrodin* block, and *Eighth Edition*. Looking back on these decks now, it is clear to me that these are prime examples of what the “ideal” Standard deck is *not*.

Why not? Here are some numbers.

WORLDS 2004	Cards from Block 1	Cards from Block 2	Cards from Core Set	Percentages	Uniques from Block 1	Uniques from Block 2	Uniques from Core Set	Percentages
Nuijten - GW Slide ( <i>Onslaught</i> / <i>Mirrodin</i> / <i>Eighth</i> )	30	8	9	64% / 17% / 19%	9	2	3	64% / 14% / 21%
Paquette - Affinity ( <i>Onslaught</i> / <i>Mirrodin</i> / <i>Eighth</i> )	0	60	0	0% / 100% / 0%	0	16	0	0% / 100% / 0%
Ogura - Goblins ( <i>Onslaught</i> / <i>Mirrodin</i> / <i>Eighth</i> )	33	8	0	80% / 20% / 0%	9	2	0	82% / 18% / 0%
Bevand - Ironworks ( <i>Onslaught</i> / <i>Mirrodin</i> / <i>Eighth</i> )	0	60	0	0% / 100% / 0%	0	19	0	0% / 100% / 0%

A few quick notes on this and the following tables: The total number of “cards” looked at includes neither basic lands nor sideboards. If a card is in an expansion and the Core Set at the same time (think *Shatter*), it is counted for the Core Set. A “unique” card can be thought of as a line on a decklist and has nothing to do with the number of any particular card played.

From a development standpoint, this analysis is painful to look at. The Affinity and Ironworks decks are quite literally Block decks—neither of them get so much as a single card from the other Standard-legal sets. The other two may as well be Block decks with a few minor tweaks; if you recall, Goblins and *Astral Slide* were two of the premier powerhouses in the *Onslaught* Block environment.

Those of you with experience playing *Mirrodin* cards may be quick to blame that block’s insular “doesn’t-play-nice-with-others” mechanics, but the problem is much bigger than that. Here are four high-finishing decks from the previous year’s Worlds—2003:

Wake		

Daniel Zink – 2003 World Champion

Main Deck

60 cards

- 2 Elfhome Palace
- 2 Flooded Strand
- 4 Forest
- 7 Island
- 4 Krosan Verge
- 4 Plains
- 4 Skycloud Expanse

---

- 27 lands

---

- 0 creatures

---

- 1 Circular Logic
- 3 Compulsion
- 3 Cunning Wish
- 2 Decree of Justice
- 4 Deep Analysis
- 4 Mana Leak
- 1 Mirari
- 3 Mirari's Wake
- 3 Moment's Peace
- 3 Renewed Faith
- 2 Vengeful Dreams
- 4 Wrath of God

---

- 33 other spells

Sideboard

- 3 Anurid Brushhopper
- 1 Circular Logic
- 2 Exalted Angel
- 1 Hunting Pack
- 1 Krosan Reclamation
- 1 Ray of Distortion
- 3 Ray of Revelation
- 1 Renewed Faith
- 1 Vengeful Dreams
- 1 Wing Shards

---

- 15 sideboard cards

UG Madness

Dave Humpherys – 2003 Worlds Semifinalist



Main Deck

60 cards

- 1 Centaur Garden
- 2 City of Brass
- 8 Forest
- 11 Island

---

- 22 lands

---

- 4 Aquamoeba
- 3 Arrogant Wurm
- 4 Basking Rootwalla
- 4 Wild Mongrel
- 3 Wonder

---

- 18 creatures

---

- 4 Careful Study
- 4 Circular Logic
- 2 Deep Analysis
- 1 Krosan Reclamation
- 2 Quiet Speculation
- 1 Ray of Revelation
- 3 Roar of the Wurm
- 3 Unsummon

---

- 20 other spells

Sideboard

- 1 Deep Analysis
- 2 Envelop
- 1 Krosan Reclamation
- 2 Mana Leak
- 2 Nantuko Vigilante
- 2 Phantom Centaur
- 1 Ray of Revelation
- 2 Stupefying Touch
- 1 Unsummon
- 1 Wonder

---

- 15 sideboard cards

Goblin Bidding

Wolfgang Eder – 2003 Worlds Top 8



Main Deck

60 cards

- 4 Bloodstained Mire
- 1 City of Brass
- 10 Mountain
- 3 Shadowblood Ridge
- 4 Swamp

---

- 22 lands

---

- 3 Gempalm Incinerator
- 1 Goblin Grappler
- 4 Goblin Piledriver
- 2 Goblin Sharpshooter
- 4 Goblin Sledder
- 3 Goblin Taskmaster
- 4 Goblin Warchief
- 4 Siege-Gang Commander
- 3 Skirk Prospector
- 4 Sparksmith

---

- 32 creatures

---

- 3 Patriarch's Bidding
- 3 Smother

---

- 6 other spells

Sideboard

- 2 Cabal Therapy
- 2 Dark Banishing
- 2 Flaring Pain
- 1 Smother
- 4 Starstorm
- 4 Sulfuric Vortex

---

- 15 sideboard cards

Rift-Slide

Gabe Walls – 2003 Worlds Top 8



Main Deck

60 cards

Sideboard

4 Forgotten Cave	3 Astral Slide	1 Ancestral Tribute
8 Mountain	4 Burning Wish	2 Cleansing Meditation
8 Plains	3 Decree of Justice	1 Decree of Annihilation
4 Secluded Steppe	4 Lightning Rift	1 Decree of Justice
3 Temple of the False God	4 Renewed Faith	1 Demolish
27 lands	2 Slice and Dice	1 Eternal Dragon
	4 Spark Spray	1 Exalted Angel
	3 Wrath of God	2 Morning Tide
3 Eternal Dragon	27 other spells	2 Obliterate
3 Exalted Angel		1 Overmaster
6 creatures		1 Slice and Dice
		1 Wrath of God
		15 sideboard cards

Again we see *Astral Slide* and Goblins, this time joined by the *Odyssey*-block Dynamic Duo of Madness and Wake. All we're missing is *Psychatog*. The numbers:

WORLDS 2003	Cards from Block 1	Cards from Block 2	Cards from Core Set	Percentages	Uniques from Block 1	Uniques from Block 2	Uniques from Core Set	Percentages
Zink - Wake ( <i>Odyssey</i> / <i>Onslaught</i> / <i>Eighth</i> )	28	7	10	62% / 16% / 22%	10	3	3	63% / 19% / 19%
Humpherys - UG Madness ( <i>Odyssey</i> / <i>Onslaught</i> / <i>Eighth</i> )	36	0	5	88% / 0% / 12%	13	0	2	87% / 0% / 13%
Eder - Goblin Bidding ( <i>Odyssey</i> / <i>Onslaught</i> / <i>Eighth</i> )	6	39	1	13% / 85% / 7%	2	12	1	13% / 80% / 7%
Walls - Rift-Slide ( <i>Odyssey</i> / <i>Onslaught</i> / <i>Eighth</i> )	4	37	3	9% / 84% / 7%	1	11	1	8% / 85% / 8%

Three of the four decks get about 85% of their cards from within a single block; one of them doesn't use anything from the other Standard-legal block at all. The fourth deck, Wake, makes good use of a few cards from outside the *Odyssey* block, but not quite enough that it doesn't feel simply like a juiced-up version of the block Wake deck.

Why was Standard during that time period simply one Block deck fighting another? Why couldn't interesting hybrid decks using cards from all available sets flourish? There are myriad possible reasons, which I'll outline below.

**1) The most powerful cards (or mechanics) in the block are the "linear" ones.** What do the following powerful cards have in common: *Astral Slide*, *Arcbound Ravager*, *Circular Logic*, *Goblin Warchief*, *Krark-Clan Ironworks*? Each of them tells you exactly what kinds of other cards to fill your deck with. *Astral Slide* demands cycling cards. *Ravager* and *Ironworks* require artifacts to fulfill their potentials. The *Warchief* commands Goblins. And *Circular Logic* wants free permanent discard outlets.



The problem arises when the only place to find the necessary kinds and quality of cards to combine with these powerhouses to make interesting Standard decks is in the same block as the cards themselves. All the cheapest artifacts are in *Mirrodin*. All the most aggressive Goblins are in *Onslaught* (as are the *only* cycling cards).

And *Odyssey* is the home to the best discard enablers the game has ever seen. Our designers may have believed that most of these cards weren't too overly parasitic—after all, they did work with other cards in the game. *Eighth Edition's* *Goblin Raider* plays just fine with the *Warchief*. *Arcbound Ravager* can eat a *Mirari* just as easily as it can an *Ornithopter*. But in reality, while it may look like you have a few choices, you really have no choices at all. The mechanical themes of the blocks were turned up to levels unmatched by the neighboring blocks and Core Sets.

**2) Neighboring blocks have nothing to do with one another.** Sometimes this happens because of unintentional bad planning in R&D. When we decided to "retire" all the popular creature types in the *Odyssey* block (Goblins, Merfolk, Elves), we had no real idea that we'd be doing a "tribal" block next. By the time we realized we'd like to have some decent Goblins and Elves running around Standard to give players deckbuilding options with *Onslaught*, it was too late.

Sometimes the blocks have nothing to do with one another on purpose, which turns out to be a bad idea in retrospect. We intentionally "starved" the world on gold cards leading up to *Invasion* and on artifacts leading up to *Mirrodin*. The former worked out well; the latter not so much. Why? Because *Invasion* didn't tell you "play as many gold cards as you can," whereas *Mirrodin* told you to "play as many artifacts as you can." Because there weren't too many other artifacts in the Standard environment to choose from, *Mirrodin* decks tended to be very insular.

**3) Core Sets are too weak.** Core Sets tend to contribute to Standard all the time, but usually with support cards. *Birds of Paradise*, *Duress*, *Mana Leak*, and *Enlightened Tutor* are all fine cards, but they tend to merely shore up existing strategies as opposed to opening doors to new ones. One way to absolutely guarantee that Standard feels different from the various block formats is to put cards that enable new decks in the Core Set. The best historical examples are cards like *Armageddon* and *Opposition*, both of which enabled decks that were comprised of Core Set cards plus cards from expansions.

Assuming we could address all these problems, what would "ideal" Standard decks look like? I went rooting around old web coverage and came up with four good examples from various points in time.

### Squirrel-Opposition

Ken Krouner – 2002 Worlds Top 8

Main Deck 60 cards		Sideboard
7 Forest	4 Circular Logic	1 Flametongue Kavú
5 Island	3 Deep Analysis	3 Gainsay
3 Karplusan Forest	4 Fire/Ice	2 Krosan Reclamation
2 Shivan Reef	4 Opposition	2 Phantom Centaur
4 Yavimaya Coast	2 Quiet Speculation	2 Ray of Revelation
21 lands	2 Roar of the Wurm	1 Simoon
	2 Squirrel Nest	2 Static Orb
	21 other spells	2 Unnatural Selection
4 Birds of Paradise		15 sideboard cards
3 Flametongue Kavú		
3 Llanowar Elves		
4 Merfolk Looter		
4 Wild Mongrel		
18 creatures		

### Fires

Jon Finkel – 2000 PT Chicago Top 8

Main Deck 60 cards		Sideboard
4 Brushland	4 Chimeric Idol	2 Aura Mutation
2 City of Brass	4 Fires of Yavimaya	3 Earthquake
6 Forest	4 Saproling Burst	2 Flashfires
4 Karplusan Forest	3 Urza's Rage	2 Hurricane
3 Mountain	2 Wax/Wane	1 Kavú Chameleon
4 Rishadan Port	17 other spells	2 Obliterate
23 lands		1 Rith, the Awakener
		2 Tangle
2 Ancient Hydra		15 sideboard cards
4 Birds of Paradise		
4 Blastoderm		
2 Kavú Chameleon		
4 Llanowar Elves		
1 Rith, the Awakener		
3 River Boa		
20 creatures		

### Replenish

Tom van de Logt – 2000 Worlds Top 8

Main Deck 60 cards		Sideboard
4 Adarkar Wastes	4 Attunement	1 Chill
9 Island	3 Counterspell	1 Circle of Protection: Black
8 Plains	1 Energy Field	1 Cursed Totem
4 Rishadan Port	3 Enlightened Tutor	2 Daze
25 lands	4 Frantic Search	3 Erase
	1 Mystical Tutor	2 Lifting Refrain
	4 Opalescence	1 Seal of Cleansing
	3 Parallax Tide	2 Submerge
	4 Parallax Wave	2 Wrath of God
	4 Replenish	15 sideboard cards
	1 Seal of Cleansing	
	1 Seal of Removal	
	1 Sky Diamond	
	1 Wrath of God	
0 creatures	35 other spells	

## Survival-Recur

Brian Selden – 1998 World Champion



### Main Deck 60 cards

3 City of Brass  
8 Forest  
1 Gemstone Mine  
2 Karplusan Forest  
2 Reflecting Pool  
1 Swamp  
2 Underground River  
2 Undiscovered Paradise  
1 Volrath's Stronghold

2 Firestorm  
2 Lobotomy  
4 Recurring Nightmare  
2 Scroll Rack  
4 Survival of the Fittest

14 other spells

22 lands

4 Birds of Paradise  
1 Cloudchaser Eagle  
1 Man-o'-War  
2 Nekrataal  
1 Orcish Settlers  
2 Spike Feeder  
1 Spike Weaver  
1 Spirit of the Night  
1 Thrull Surgeon  
1 Tradewind Rider  
2 Uktabi Orangutan  
1 Verdant Force  
4 Wall of Blossoms  
2 Wall of Roots

24 creatures

### Sideboard

4 Boil  
2 Dread of Night  
3 Emerald Charm  
1 Hall of Gemstone  
2 Phyrexian Furnace  
2 Pyroblast  
1 Staunch Defenders

15 sideboard cards

HISTORICAL IDEALS	Cards from Block 1	Cards from Block 2	Cards from Core Set	Percentages	Uniques from Block 1	Uniques from Block 2	Uniques from Core Set	Percentages
Krouner - Squirrel-Opp ( <i>Invasion / Odyssey / Seventh</i> )	13	17	18	27% / 35% / 38%	4	6	5	27% / 40% / 33%
Finkel - Fires ( <i>Masques / Invasion / Seventh</i> )	18	12	21	35% / 24% / 41%	5	5	6	31% / 31% / 38%
van de Logt - Replenish ( <i>Urza's / Masques / Sixth</i> )	17	13	13	40% / 40% / 40%	5	5	6	31% / 31% / 38%
Selden - Survival-Recur ( <i>Mirage / Tempest / Fifth</i> )	14	26	11	27% / 51% / 22%	9	13	4	35% / 50% / 15%

To me, these decks are things of beauty. My criterion was a simple one—double-digit cards from each of the two relevant blocks *and* the Core Set. I made this up on the fly while writing the article; in R&D, we talk about the ideal Standard deck in abstract and have never actually created a metric to measure it. Obviously this rule is not hard and fast and we should never be trying to force this kind of mixing too much. Should we do our jobs well, this kind of stuff should spring up relatively regularly.

The surprising news to me was that decks that met this criterion were really hard to find, even throughout time, usually because the Core Sets weren't chipping in all that much. I'm still not sure that we as a department will agree that the Core Set should be contributing all that many cards to top-tier decks, but as one of the architects of *Ninth Edition* I wanted to make sure that it did its part to keep Standard fresh.

On that topic, how have we been doing recently with regards to the three problems I listed above? We knew that *Odyssey / Onslaught / Mirrodin* was a low point for Standard deckbuilding—so have we actually corrected anything?

**1) On the strength of “linear” cards.** *Kamigawa* had quite a few linear cards and mechanics, from “splice onto Arcane” to the tribal interactions of Spirits, Snakes, and Samurai. But we did two things right with those cards. One, if we did make a segment of linear cards powerful, we didn't make enough of them to fill an entire deck. So if you like the interaction between *Lava Spike* and *Glacial Ray*, you still have to look hard for cards to flesh out your deck. Similarly, Hondens work well together but only combine to make a portion of a total deck. Two, if there were enough cards to make a whole deck, we didn't push the mechanic very hard. Snakes are a great example of this—they were decent in block, but aren't a real player in Standard, which is fine by us. After all, there are next to no other playable Snakes in Standard, and we didn't want a top-tier Standard deck to be made from all *Kamigawa* cards. *Kamigawa's* “spiritcraft” cards are another fine example.

Ravnica has very few powerful linear cards at all—most of its power is very open-ended. All **Loxodon Hierarch** and **Lightning Helix** demand is that you play mana of their colors; whatever cards you choose to surround them with is up to you. Of the seven keywords so far in the block, only dredge has the potential to be really insular (as it has been in Extended), but in general you tend to see one or two cards from each mechanic in decks as opposed to a deck stuffed with every card that shares a keyword.

**2) On blocks not working together well.** We didn't really address this issue fully until *Ravnica* design, wherein we consciously chose to incorporate two of *Kamigawa's* major themes—legends and Spirits—into the newer block. These decisions have paid off—I have seen Minamo untap Niv-Mizzet numerous times, and similarly **Plagued Rusalka** was triggering **Tallowisp** regularly at [last weekend's Pro Tour](#).

Ideally we'll be able to subtly weave cards into existing themes from block to block from now on.

**3) On the Core Set being too weak.** The addition of the painlands alone to *Ninth Edition* puts it on the map, as just being able to access better mana makes decks possible in Standard that are not in block. Additionally, there are some great “build-around” cards in *Ninth* like **Wildfire**, **Battle of Wits**, and **Greater Good**.

Of course, by addressing problem #1 on this list we allow more Core Set cards to creep into Standard. Cards like **Phyrexian Arena**, **Ravenous Rats**, and **Sudden Impact** have been around forever, but by loosening up the tyranny of linear block mechanics on deck construction we open the door for these more versatile cards to show up.

Let's take a look at the Top 4 finishers from Honolulu to see how it has all shaken out.



Gruul Beats		
Mark Herberholz – 2006 PT Honolulu Champion		
<b>Main Deck</b> 60 cards		<b>Sideboard</b>
6 Forest	4 Char	4 Blood Moon
4 Karplusan Forest	3 Flames of the Blood Hand	1 Flames of the Blood Hand
7 Mountain	3 Moldervine Cloak	2 Naturalize
2 Skarrg, the Rage Pits	10 other spells	2 Rumbling Slum
4 Stomping Ground		2 Tin Street Hooligan
23 lands		4 Umezawa's Jitte
4 Burning-Tree Shaman		15 sideboard cards
4 Dryad Sophisticate		
3 Frenzied Goblin		
4 Giant Solifuge		
4 Kird Ape		
4 Scab-Clan Mauler		
4 Scorched Rusalka		
27 creatures		

Zoo		
Craig Jones – 2006 PT Honolulu Finalist		
<b>Main Deck</b> 60 cards		<b>Sideboard</b>
4 Battlefield Forge	2 Bathe in Light	1 Flames of the Blood Hand
1 Brushland	4 Char	2 Giant Solifuge
1 Eiganjo Castle	3 Flames of the Blood Hand	3 Guerrilla Tactics
2 Forest	4 Lightning Helix	3 Hunted Wumpus
1 Karplusan Forest	3 Shock	2 Tin Street Hooligan
1 Plains	16 other spells	4 Umezawa's Jitte
4 Sacred Foundry		15 sideboard cards
4 Stomping Ground		
4 Temple Garden		
22 lands		
3 Burning-Tree Shaman		
4 Isamaru, Hound of Konda		
3 Kami of Ancient Law		
4 Kird Ape		

4 Savannah Lions  
4 Watchwolf

22 creatures

## Owling Mine

Tiago Chan – 2006 PT Honolulu Semifinalist



### Main Deck 60 cards

10 Island  
2 Mikokoro, Center of the Sea  
2 Mountain  
4 Shivan Reef  
4 Steam Vents

22 lands

4 Kami of the Crescent Moon

4 creatures

4 Boomerang  
4 Ebony Owl Netsuke  
2 Evacuation  
4 Exhaustion  
4 Eye of Nowhere  
4 Howling Mine  
4 Remand  
4 Sleight of Hand  
4 Sudden Impact

34 other spells

### Sideboard

3 Blood Moon  
3 Mana Leak  
2 Meloku the Clouded Mirror  
3 Pyroclasm  
4 Threads of Disloyalty

15 sideboard cards

## Hand in Hand

Olivier Ruel – 2006 PT Honolulu Semifinalist



### Main Deck 60 cards

4 Caves of Koilos  
1 Eiganjo Castle  
4 Godless Shrine  
4 Orzhov Basilica  
2 Plains  
1 Shizo, Death's Storehouse  
6 Swamp

22 lands

4 Dark Confidant  
4 Ghost Council of Orzhova  
3 Hand of Cruelty  
2 Okiba-Gang Shinobi  
2 Paladin en-Vec  
4 Plagued Rusalka  
4 Ravenous Rats  
2 Shrieking Grottesque  
3 Teysa, Orzhov Scion

28 creatures

4 Castigate  
3 Mortify  
3 Umezawa's Jitte

10 other spells

### Sideboard

2 Cranial Extraction  
1 Descendant of Kiyomaro  
2 Distress  
2 Orzhov Pontiff  
2 Phyrexian Arena  
2 Seize the Soul  
2 Slay  
2 Terashi's Grasp

15 sideboard cards

HONOLULU TOP 4	Cards from Block 1	Cards from Block 2	Cards from Core Set	Percentages	Uniques from Block 1	Uniques from Block 2	Uniques from Core Set	Percentages
Herberholz - Gruul Beats (Kamigawa / Ravnica / Ninth)	3	36	8	6% / 77% / 17%	1	10	2	8% / 77% / 15%
Jones - Zoo (Kamigawa / Ravnica / Ninth)	11	25	17	21% / 47% / 32%	4	7	6	24% / 41% / 35%
Chan - Owling Mine (Kamigawa / Ravnica / Ninth)	14	4	26	32% / 9% / 59%	4	1	7	33% / 8% / 58%
O. Ruel - Hand in Hand (Kamigawa / Ravnica / Ninth)	12	32	10	22% / 59% / 19%	5	9	3	29% / 53% / 18%

Yes, Herberholz's Gruul deck is essentially a block deck with **Kird Apes**. And yes, Chan's Owling Mine relies a little too heavily on *Ninth* and not enough on stuff from *Guildpact*. But overall this is the best Standard has ever looked in my opinion. In fact, this cross-section is probably *more* perfect than if every deck were an even blend of each constituent part. Some decks have a "Ravnica" feel, some have a "Kamigawa" feel, and some even have a "Ninth" feel, but they all rely on key pieces from the other sets to make the whole what it is. Most

importantly, there are no zeros anywhere on the chart.

Can we keep this up? I hope so, but it is difficult. We don't want to avoid new linear mechanics—after all, many of those turn out to be incredibly fun and popular (such as Slivers). We know a large group of players don't enjoy agonizing over deckbuilding but would rather instead throw a bunch of cards that share a type or keyword together, and we need to make sure they have a good experience as well. But what we can do is stop regularly pushing set themes to the level where they are incompatible with everything else in the environment. I'd like to think that we've already done that.

In closing, here are a dozen more decklists from Honolulu and the most recent round of Nationals and Worlds, going back about a year. The numbers tend to be pretty good across the board, as all these events happened after the major banning of affinity cards. Some decks favor certain blocks to be sure, but there is only a single zero on the chart. I hope that's the last zero I'll ever see in one of these analyses, and Standard will continue to showcase different decks than those we'll see in Block play.



Let's end all the Block-on-Block violence. Drop me a line if you feel strongly one way or the other.

### Heartbeat Combo

Max Bracht – 2006 PT Honolulu Top 8

Main Deck 60 cards		Sideboard
10 Forest	1 Boomerang	3 Iwamori of the Open Fist
10 Island	1 Compulsive Research	1 Keiga, the Tide Star
1 Mountain	4 Early Harvest	2 Meloku the Clouded Mirror
1 Swamp	4 Heartbeat of Spring	1 Pyroclasm
22 lands	1 Invoke the Firemind	3 Savage Twister
4 Drift of Phantasms	4 Kodama's Reach	1 Umezawa's Jitte
1 Maga, Traitor to Mortals	4 Muddle the Mixture	4 Vinelasher Kudzu
4 Sakura-Tribe Elder	1 Recollect	15 sideboard cards
9 creatures	4 Remand	
	4 Sensei's Divining Top	
	1 Weird Harvest	
	29 other spells	

### Izzetron

Osyp Lebedowicz – 2006 PT Honolulu Top 8

Main Deck 60 cards		Sideboard
1 Minamo, School at Water's Edge	1 Blaze	4 Annex
4 Shivan Reef	4 Compulsive Research	4 Giant Solifuge
4 Steam Vents	2 Confiscate	2 Pyroclasm
2 Tendo Ice Bridge	4 Electrolyze	2 Repeal
4 Urza's Mine	1 Invoke the Firemind	1 Ryusei, the Falling Star
4 Urza's Power Plant	4 Izzet Signet	2 Smash
4 Urza's Tower	4 Mana Leak	15 sideboard cards
23 lands	2 Pyroclasm	
4 Keiga, the Tide Star	4 Remand	
4 Meloku the Clouded Mirror	2 Telling Time	
8 creatures	1 Tidings	
	29 other spells	

### Ghost Dad

Ben Goodman – 2006 PT Honolulu Top 32

Main Deck 60 cards		Sideboard
4 Caves of Koilos	1 Indomitable Will	2 Blessed Breath
1 Eiganjo Castle	3 Pillory of the Sleepless	3 Cranial Extraction
4 Godless Shrine	4 Shining Shoal	1 Enfeeblement
6 Plains	4 Sickening Shoal	1 Kami of Ancient Law
1 Shizo, Death's Storehouse	1 Strands of Undeath	1 Miren, the Moaning Well

6 Swamp	13 other spells	2 Persecute
1 Tomb of Urami		1 Pillory of the Sleepless
23 lands		2 Pithing Needle
		2 Umezawa's Jitte
		15 sideboard cards
4 Dark Confidant		
4 Ghost Council of Orzhova		
3 Kami of Ancient Law		
3 Plagued Rusalka		
4 Tallowisp		
2 Teysa, Orzhov Scion		
4 Thief of Hope		
24 creatures		

Roxodon Hierarchy		
Jelger Wiegiersma – 2006 PT Honolulu Top 32		
<b>Main Deck</b> 60 cards		<b>Sideboard</b>
2 Godless Shrine	4 Castigate	1 Eradicate
1 Orzhov Basilica	4 Cranial Extraction	4 Last Gasp
4 Overgrown Tomb	3 Faith's Fetters	2 Naturalize
4 Plains	3 Mortify	3 Nezumi Shortfang
1 Selesnya Sanctuary	4 Orzhov Signet	2 Night of Souls' Betrayal
1 Shizo, Death's Storehouse	4 Phyrexian Arena	1 Peace of Mind
3 Swamp	3 Putrefy	2 Pithing Needle
4 Temple Garden	4 Wrath of God	15 sideboard cards
3 Vitu-Ghazi, the City-Tree	29 other spells	
23 lands		
2 Angel of Despair		
2 Ink-Eyes, Servant of Oni		
4 Loxodon Hierarch		
8 creatures		

GhaziGlare		
Katsuhiro Mori – 2005 World Champion		
<b>Main Deck</b> 60 cards		<b>Sideboard</b>
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
3 Arashi, the Sky Asunder		15 sideboard cards
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		

Greater Gifts	
Frank Karsten – 2005 Worlds Finalist	
<b>Main Deck</b> 60 cards	<b>Sideboard</b>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2 Brushland</li> <li>4 Forest</li> <li>1 Island</li> <li>1 Miren, the Moaning Well</li> <li>1 Okina, Temple to the Grandfathers</li> <li>2 Overgrown Tomb</li> <li>3 Plains</li> <li>1 Shizo, Death's Storehouse</li> <li>3 Swamp</li> <li>2 Temple Garden</li> <li>2 Tendo Ice Bridge</li> <li>1 Watery Grave</li> </ul> <hr/> <p>23 lands</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 Kagemaro, First to Suffer</li> <li>2 Kokusho, the Evening Star</li> <li>4 Sakura-Tribe Elder</li> <li>4 Yosei, the Morning Star</li> </ul> <hr/> <p>11 creatures</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2 Farseek</li> <li>3 Gifts Ungiven</li> <li>3 Goryo's Vengeance</li> <li>3 Greater Good</li> <li>4 Kodama's Reach</li> <li>1 Last Gasp</li> <li>1 Putrefy</li> <li>1 Reclaim</li> <li>1 Recollect</li> <li>3 Sensei's Divining Top</li> <li>4 Wrath of God</li> </ul> <hr/> <p>26 other spells</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 Cranial Extraction</li> <li>1 Death Denied</li> <li>4 Defense Grid</li> <li>1 Dosan the Falling Leaf</li> <li>1 Hana Kami</li> <li>1 Hideous Laughter</li> <li>1 Ink-Eyes, Servant of Oni</li> <li>1 Last Gasp</li> <li>1 Loxodon Hierarch</li> <li>1 Meloku the Clouded Mirror</li> <li>1 Rending Vines</li> <li>1 Soulless Revival</li> </ul> <hr/> <p>15 sideboard cards</p>
---	---	--

<b>Enduring Ideal</b>		
Akira Asahara – 2005 Worlds Semifinalist		
<b>Main Deck</b>		<b>Sideboard</b>
<i>60 cards</i>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4 Adarkar Wastes</li> <li>1 Boseiju, Who Shelters All</li> <li>7 Island</li> <li>3 Plains</li> <li>4 Sacred Foundry</li> <li>4 Tendo Ice Bridge</li> </ul> <hr/> <p>23 lands</p> <p>0 creatures</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4 Boros Signet</li> <li>1 Compulsive Research</li> <li>3 Confiscate</li> <li>4 Enduring Ideal</li> <li>4 Faith's Fetters</li> <li>4 Fellwar Stone</li> <li>3 Form of the Dragon</li> <li>1 Ivory Mask</li> <li>4 Sleight of Hand</li> <li>4 Telling Time</li> <li>4 Wrath of God</li> <li>1 Zur's Weiriding</li> </ul> <hr/> <p>37 other spells</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4 Defense Grid</li> <li>1 Genju of the Realm</li> <li>1 Ivory Mask</li> <li>4 Mana Leak</li> <li>1 Privileged Position</li> <li>4 Pyroclasm</li> </ul> <hr/> <p>15 sideboard cards</p>

<b>Critical Mass Update</b>		
Antoine Ruel – 2005 Worlds Undefeated		
<b>Main Deck</b>		<b>Sideboard</b>
<i>60 cards</i>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5 Forest</li> <li>4 Island</li> <li>1 Minamo, School at Water's Edge</li> <li>1 Miren, the Moaning Well</li> <li>1 Oboro, Palace in the Clouds</li> <li>1 Okina, Temple to the Grandfathers</li> <li>3 Overgrown Tomb</li> <li>1 Swamp</li> <li>2 Tendo Ice Bridge</li> <li>4 Yavimaya Coast</li> </ul> <hr/> <p>23 lands</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2 Keiga, the Tide Star</li> <li>3 Kodama of the North Tree</li> <li>3 Llanowar Elves</li> <li>3 Meloku the Clouded Mirror</li> <li>4 Sakura-Tribe Elder</li> <li>4 Wood Elves</li> </ul> <hr/> <p>19 creatures</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4 Hinder</li> <li>3 Mana Leak</li> <li>3 Putrefy</li> <li>3 Sensei's Divining Top</li> <li>1 Time of Need</li> <li>4 Umezawa's Jitte</li> </ul> <hr/> <p>18 other spells</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3 Cranial Extraction</li> <li>3 Iwamori of the Open Fist</li> <li>1 Mana Leak</li> <li>3 Naturalize</li> <li>1 Putrefy</li> <li>4 Threads of Disloyalty</li> </ul> <hr/> <p>15 sideboard cards</p>

<b>Viridian Rats</b>


### Jason Olynyk – 2005 Canadian National Champion

#### Main Deck 60 cards

4 Blinkmoth Nexus  
4 Llanowar Wastes  
1 Shizo, Death's Storehouse  
12 Swamp  
2 Tendo Ice Bridge

---

4 Aether Vial  
3 Night's Whisper  
3 Pithing Needle  
3 Rend Flesh  
4 Umezawa's Jitte

23 lands

16 other spells

3 Chittering Rats  
3 Hypnotic Specter  
2 Ink-Eyes, Servant of Oni  
2 Nekrataal  
4 Nezumi Shortfang  
4 Ravenous Rats  
3 Viridian Shaman

21 creatures

#### Sideboard

3 Cranial Extraction  
4 Distress  
1 Hypnotic Specter  
1 Pithing Needle  
3 Razormane Masticore  
2 Sword of Light and Shadow  
1 Viridian Shaman

15 sideboard cards

### Jushi Blue

Neil Reeves – 2005 US Nationals Finalist



#### Main Deck 60 cards

21 Island  
4 Stalking Stones

---

4 Jushi Apprentice  
4 Spire Golem

8 creatures

3 Annul  
3 Boomerang  
2 Condescend  
4 Hinder  
4 Mana Leak  
2 Oblivion Stone  
3 Rewind  
2 Thirst for Knowledge  
4 Vedalken Shackles

27 other spells

#### Sideboard

1 Annul  
2 Echoing Truth  
1 Mephidross Vampire  
1 Sakashima the Impostor  
4 Threads of Disloyalty  
1 Triskelion  
4 Twincast  
1 Uyo, Silent Prophet

15 sideboard cards

### Flores Red

Josh Ravitz – 2005 US Nationals Top 8



#### Main Deck 60 cards

4 Blinkmoth Nexus  
15 Mountain  
1 Swamp  
4 Tendo Ice Bridge

---

4 Arc-Slogger  
4 Solemn Simulacrum

8 creatures

3 Beacon of Destruction  
4 Magma Jet  
4 Molten Rain  
4 Pulse of the Forge  
4 Sensei's Divining Top  
4 Shrapnel Blast  
1 Sowing Salt  
4 Wayfarer's Bauble

28 other spells

#### Sideboard

3 Boseiju, Who Shelters All  
3 Cranial Extraction  
4 Culling Scales  
4 Fireball  
1 Sowing Salt

15 sideboard cards

### Tooth and Nail

Julien Goron – 2005 French Nation Champion



#### Main Deck 60 cards

1 Boseiju, Who Shelters All  
7 Forest  
1 Okina, Temple to the Grandfathers  
4 Urza's Mine  
4 Urza's Power Plant  
4 Urza's Tower

---

2 Chrome Mox  
2 Oblivion Stone  
3 Plow Under  
4 Reap and Sow  
4 Sensei's Divining Top  
4 Sylvan Scrying  
4 Tooth and Nail

#### Sideboard

3 Creeping Mold  
3 Iwamori of the Open Fist  
2 Molder Slug  
1 Oblivion Stone  
1 Plow Under  
4 Troll Ascetic  
1 Viridian Shaman

21 lands	23 other spells	15 sideboard cards
3 Eternal Witness 1 Kiki-Jiki, Mirror Breaker 1 Mephidross Vampire 4 Sakura-Tribe Elder 1 Sundering Titan 1 Triskelion 3 Vine Trellis 2 Viridian Shaman		
16 creatures		

OTHER RECENT DECKS	Cards from Block 1	Cards from Block 2	Cards from Core Set	Percentages	Uniques from Block 1	Uniques from Block 2	Uniques from Core Set	Percentages
Bracht - Heartbeat (Kamigawa / Ravnica / Ninth)	17	17	6	43% / 43% / 15%	5	6	3	36% / 43% / 21%
Lebedowicz - Izzetron (Kamigawa / Ravnica / Ninth)	11	23	26	18% / 38% / 43%	4	7	9	20% / 35% / 45%
Goodman - Ghost Dad (Kamigawa / Ravnica / Ninth)	23	21	4	48% / 44% / 8%	9	7	1	53% / 41% / 6%
Wiegiersma - Roxodon (Kamigawa / Ravnica / Ninth)	7	38	8	13% / 72% / 15%	3	13	2	17% / 72% / 11%
Mori - GhaziGlare (Kamigawa / Ravnica / Ninth)	15	28	10	28% / 53% / 19%	6	9	3	33% / 50% / 17%
Karsten - Greater Gifts (Kamigawa / Ravnica / Ninth)	29	10	10	59% / 20% / 20%	12	7	4	52% / 30% / 17%
Asahara - Enduring Ideal (Kamigawa / Ravnica / Ninth)	9	17	24	18% / 34% / 48%	3	5	8	19% / 31% / 50%
A. Ruel - Critical Mass (Kamigawa / Ravnica / Ninth)	30	6	14	60% / 12% / 28%	13	2	4	68% / 11% / 21%
Olynyk - Viridian Rats (Mirrodin / Kamigawa / Ninth)	14	18	16	29% / 38% / 33%	4	7	5	25% / 44% / 31%
Reeves - Jushi Blue (Mirrodin / Kamigawa / Eighth)	21	8	10	54% / 21% / 26%	7	2	3	58% / 17% / 25%
Ravitz - Flores Red (Mirrodin / Kamigawa / Eighth)	35	9	0	80% / 20% / 0%	9	3	0	75% / 25% / 0%
Goron - Tooth and Nail (Mirrodin / Kamigawa / Eighth)	24	11	18	45% / 21% / 34%	10	5	5	50% / 25% / 25%

## Last Week's Poll:

Which of the following lands will be the most abundant in this weekend's Top 8 Standard decks from the Pro Tour?		
Steam Vents	1890	20.5%
Temple Garden	1609	17.5%
Godless Shrine	1556	16.9%
Overgrown Tomb	1390	15.1%
Stomping Ground	959	10.4%
Watery Grave	862	9.4%
Sacred Foundry	571	6.2%
Yavimaya Coast	140	1.5%
Adarkar Wastes	111	1.2%
Sulfurous Springs	110	1.2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>9198</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

The *correct* answer was **Steam Vents**, as three of the Top 8 decks were blue-red.

## This Week's Poll:

**Should Standard be a regular Pro Tour format?**

Yes, Honolulu was great.  
 No, I don't like pros dictating the metagame.  
 No, it isn't as interesting as Block or Extended.  
 I don't care.

Aaron Forsythe was a professional **Magic** player and Internet columnist prior to leaving Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania to join Wizards of the Coast. His first duty here was Content Manager of this very website, a job that required him to do actual work as opposed to playing games all the time. So when a position opened in R&D, he jumped at the chance. He is now director of **Magic R&D**, and still plays **Magic** in his free time when he's not busy playing **Magic**.



[Discuss](#) on the message boards



[Respond](#) via email



[Aaron Forsythe](#) archive

---

[About Us](#) | [Jobs](#) | [New to the Game?](#) | [Find a Store](#) | [Press](#) | [Help](#)

---

© 1995-2008 Wizards of the Coast, Inc., a subsidiary of Hasbro, Inc. All Rights Reserved.

[Terms of Use](#) - [Privacy Statement](#)

