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Into The Aether Checks in With the E3 Contest Champ

Bennie Smith
Into the Aether
 Thursday, April 13, 2006



The [2006 Magic Invitational](#) is coming up in less than a month, and Wizards of the Coast recently ran a promotion through *Magic Online* to fly the winner and his guest out to Los Angeles to hang out at our All-Star Game. I caught up with [E3 Championship](#) Winner Przemysław Wołowiec to ask him a few questions.

We'd like to know a little bit about you for our files...

My name is Przemysław Wołowiec, I live in Poland, and I've been playing **Magic** for about 6-7 years. My accomplishments are: 65th at Pro Tour Venice and 13th at Grand Prix Leipzig - I don't play that much abroad; don't have enough money to travel, unfortunately.

I qualified for the E3 Champs in an Ext 2x playing U/B Tog. Once I made Top 8 in the Champs I drafted an U/b/r combination for the win. The deck was strongly focused on getting Niv-Mizzet into play and once that happened, the rest was quite easy! Watch the replays of some of the games, it was real fun!

I watched the replay of the finals; in game 1 przemol played a turn 6 Niv-Mizzet after clearing away boris92's early assault. Boris92 played a [Fiery Conclusion](#) to kill it, but przemol turned around and played [Vigor Mortis](#) to bring it back—ouch! At least he didn't have Green mana to spend on the spell... Next turn, he dropped a [Tidewater Minion](#) to untap his Niv, and follows up with a [Chronarch](#) for [Vigor Mortis](#) in case something happens to his broken Dragon. Oof! A [Compulsive Research](#) pretty well seals the deal.

Game 2, turn 3, he transmutes [Ethereal Usher](#) for his Niv-Mizzet, which promptly comes down on turn 6, followed by [Dismitter](#) and then [Tidewater Minion](#).

Fun, Przemysław? Fun for whom?! Your deck is brutal! Here's the list:

Przemysław Wołowiec dec

40 cards

1 Dimir Aqueduct	1 Bloodscale Prowler	1 Boros Signet
7 Island	1 Dimir House Guard	1 Cleansing Beam
4 Mountain	1 Dimir Infiltrator	1 Compulsive Research
5 Swamp	1 Ethereal Usher	1 Consult the Necrosages
17 land	1 Golgari Guildmage	1 Cremate
	1 Izzet Chronarch	1 Last Gasp
	1 Niv-Mizzet, the Firemind	1 Peel from Reality
	1 Steamcore Weird	1 Psychic Drain
	1 Tidewater Minion	1 Telling Time
	1 Vedalken Dismitter	1 Train of Thought
	1 Vedalken Plotter	1 Vigor Mortis
	1 Wee Dragonauts	
		11 other spells
	12 creatures	

Who are you bringing with you to the E3?

I invited my long time friend and teammate Krzysztof "BILON" Hoffmann.



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Are there any of the Invitationals that you're particularly interested in meeting? Who would you like to see win?

Well I like Ruel brothers - I played once against Olivier - he's a really easy going man.

Has Wizards of the Coast told you about any other events at E3 besides the **Magic** Invitational that you will be going to?

No, I know nothing about what I am going to see on E3. Maybe it's better - I am preparing myself for lots of fun! LA is LA - I doubt I am going to sleep a lot during the trip!

What are your favorite **Magic** Online formats? Do you play in many of the Premier Events?

I like Limited most, but I also play Extended (Tog forever!!). Recently I stopped playing Standard - I like pure control decks like U/W, or Mono-Blue Tron and they are gone for at least some time. For now I am focusing on playtesting for Pro Tour--Prague.

Przemysław has agreed to touch base with Into The Aether after the **Magic** Invitational to give us some behind the scenes observations and hopefully some funny stories. Stay tuned!

Extended 4x Open (720596) Recap

Saturday, April 8, 2006
96 players

The winning deck was an interesting brew, with all the best control cards from those three colors, plus Isochron Scepter (which seemed to imprint Lightning Helix most often). In the replays I never saw Orim's Chant imprinted, but with Cunning Wish I'm willing to bet there's at least one copy of Chant in the sideboard for the combo kill. The second and both fourth place decks are listed below.

The eighth place decks were a motley crew with the familiar (Rock, Tooth and Nail) and the new. Zagarna took the new Gruul tools and combined it with old school beats like Call of the Herd, Wild Mongrel, and Phantom Centaur. Firebolt, Magma Jet and Pillage added some zest. iori's deck fooled me, looking for all appearances like CAL with cycling lands and Life from the Loam initially, but instead of Solitary Confinement and Seismic Assault, I saw Wild Mongrel, Terravore and Barbarian Ring! I bet the surprise factor bought iori several victories on the way to Top 8.

Overall, it was a rather diverse mix of decks. Here were the final standings:

- 1st Place: islands are rad, U/R/W Scepter Control
- 2nd Place: Marcin Karolczak, Boros
- 4th Place: Rungee, Tog
- 4th Place: _operator_, Boros
- 8th Place: Zagarna_84, G/R Beats n' Burn
- 8th Place: iori, Life from the Loam
- 8th Place: tg_chn, G/B/w Rock
- 8th Place: prolepsis9, Tooth and Nail



Boros Deck Wins 2nd Place by Marcin Karolczak (Extended)		
Main Deck 61 cards		Sideboard
2 <u>Barbarian Ring</u>	1 <u>Char</u>	2 <u>Disenchant</u>
4 <u>Bloodstained Mire</u>	4 <u>Firebolt</u>	3 <u>Fledgling Dragon</u>
1 <u>Eiganjo Castle</u>	3 <u>Lava Dart</u>	3 <u>Kataki, War's Wage</u>
1 <u>Flooded Strand</u>	4 <u>Lightning Helix</u>	3 <u>Morningtide</u>
4 <u>Mountain</u>	3 <u>Magma Jet</u>	2 <u>Overload</u>
1 <u>Plains</u>	4 <u>Molten Rain</u>	2 <u>Umezawa's Jitte</u>
4 <u>Sacred Foundry</u>	2 <u>Pillage</u>	
1 <u>Shinka, the Bloodsoaked</u>		15 sideboard cards

Keep	21 other spells
1 <u>Windswept Heath</u>	
3 <u>Wooded Foothills</u>	
<hr/>	
22 land	
4 <u>Goblin Legionnaire</u>	
4 <u>Grim Lavamancer</u>	
3 <u>Isamaru, Hound of Konda</u>	
4 <u>Savannah Lions</u>	
3 <u>Silver Knight</u>	
<hr/>	
18 creatures	

Marcin:

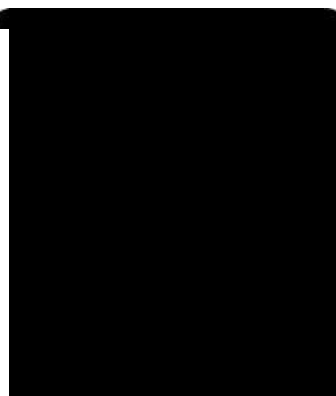
“There were lots of Boros decks - I played against 3 in the Swiss, and one in Top 8. I think that it is an excellent deck, sometimes extremely fast, sometimes more controlling with burn and Lavamancer. Psychatog is also very popular deck; in 7 round I played against Burning Tog, another variation that seems also very popular. It has a lot of options and playing it provides much fun. I also faced a G/U/W Threshold deck, with Meddling Mages, Mongrels, Enforcers and other good stuff, a very interesting deck.

“Most of my mirror matches were won because I actually lost the roll, which made it easier knowing your opponent has the same plan. The sideboard is quite important, as shown in the second and third game with _operator (another excellent Polish player). In other matches I had more luck than my opponents.”

Main Deck		Sideboard
60 cards		
2 <u>Cephalid Coliseum</u>	4 <u>Circular Logic</u>	4 <u>Bottle Gnomes</u>
6 <u>Island</u>	4 <u>Counterspell</u>	2 <u>Darkblast</u>
1 <u>Oboro, Palace in the Clouds</u>	3 <u>Fact or Fiction</u>	4 <u>Duress</u>
4 <u>Polluted Delta</u>	4 <u>Force Spike</u>	4 <u>Leyline of the Void</u>
4 <u>Seat of the Synod</u>	2 <u>Mana Leak</u>	1 <u>Meloku the Clouded Mirror</u>
2 <u>Stalking Stones</u>	4 <u>Opt</u>	
2 <u>Vault of Whispers</u>	3 <u>Smother</u>	15 sideboard cards
3 <u>Watery Grave</u>	3 <u>Stifle</u>	
<hr/>		
24 land	4 <u>Thirst for Knowledge</u>	
31 other spells		
1 <u>Meloku the Clouded Mirror</u>		
4 <u>Psychatog</u>		
<hr/>		
5 creatures		

Dan Skinner (A.K.A. Rungee):

“This deck is a pretty stock Tog list with a surprise special sauce: three maindeck Stifles. Many people find it an eccentric card choice, until it derails their whole game plan in a way they never expected, often fizzling a critical Mindslaver, Pernicious Deed, or Barbarian Ring-for-the-win. The dream, of course, is to counter their first turn fetch land, which nearly every deck in the format will lead with. If that happens, they will be saddled with a hefty mana disadvantage, and then will have a very hard time breaching your wall of permission and card draw. Using Stifle to pressure their mana makes Force Spike all the more devastating (*I watched one replay where he stifled G/B/W Rock's turn*

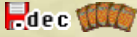


I fetchland, then Mana Leaked his next three plays, all of which were Sakura-Tribe Elders. Obviously, the Rock had some mana problems that game – Bennie).

“The Extended metagame on MODO is healthy and diverse, with Boros Deck Wins being the most popular deck at the moment. This has pushed the once-dominant Affinity to the sidelines, as Kataki and the new Shattering Spree decisively end the dreams of many an artifact army. Affinity is Psychatog’s worst enemy, and its sharp decline is what allows Tog to really succeed. With the U/W dual in Dissension, it will soon be very easy to splash Kataki here, so even that may change.

“I enjoy this deck a lot, and not only because I’ve done quite well with it. Every game is close, but this deck rewards tight play splendidly with long stretches of winning. There are many subtle decisions to make every turn, based on considerations of tempo, card advantage, life total, mana development, and Tog size. Overall I think this deck is a great choice for a wide-open Extended metagame.”



Boros Deck Wins 4th Place by _operator_ (Extended) 

Main Deck 61 cards		Sideboard
2 <u>Barbarian Ring</u>	1 <u>Char</u>	2 <u>Disenchant</u>
3 <u>Bloodstained Mire</u>	4 <u>Firebolt</u>	2 <u>Faith's Fetters</u>
1 <u>Eiganjo Castle</u>	3 <u>Lava Dart</u>	3 <u>Molten Rain</u>
3 <u>Flooded Strand</u>	4 <u>Lightning Helix</u>	3 <u>Morningtide</u>
2 <u>Mountain</u>	3 <u>Magma Jet</u>	3 <u>Sulfuric Vortex</u>
2 <u>Plains</u>	1 <u>Molten Rain</u>	2 <u>Umezawa's Jitte</u>
4 <u>Sacred Foundry</u>	3 <u>Pillage</u>	
1 <u>Shinka, the Bloodsoaked</u>		15 sideboard cards
<u>Keep</u>	19 other spells	
4 <u>Wooded Foothills</u>		
22 land		
4 <u>Goblin Legionnaire</u>		
4 <u>Grim Lavamancer</u>		
3 <u>Isamaru, Hound of Konda</u>		
1 <u>Kataki, War's Wage</u>		
1 <u>Mystic Crusader</u>		
3 <u>Savannah Lions</u>		
4 <u>Silver Knight</u>		
20 creatures		

operator broke down the overall metagame for us, sans a few decks:

- 20 Boros Deck Wins (2 with Scepters, 2 splashing Black)
- 6 Rock (1 Gifts, 3 with Red, 1 with White)
- 11 Tooth and Nail
- 3 No-Stick
- 3 Cunning Wake
- 9 Psychatog (2 Burning Tog)
- 6 Affinity
- 2 Balancing Tings
- 5 Friggoid
- 4 Macey Rock
- 2 CAL

The rest was rogue -- Clerics, U/W Control, Life from the Loam engine, Nimble Mongooses, MBC, Mono-Green beatdown, Astral Slide and so on.

Visions: Behind the Curtain with RachelR

RachelR:

"I've been out of town, then out sick, and things have been really crazy at work since I've gotten back, so I haven't really had a chance to think about this. There are a few amusing things that happened while programming *Visions* that I have notes jotted down about, but I don't know how much of a story I can write about them and whether it's still relevant.

Basically, they are:

"**Kaervek's Spite** has 'discard your hand' as an additional cost. In *Magic Online*, we don't move the card to the stack until after you pay costs. So in my first attempt at programming it, the **Kaervek's Spite** you are trying to play got discarded to pay its own cost. As a result, it couldn't move to the stack and didn't resolve. In order to solve this problem, I put in special code to not discard cards to pay a cost that are in the process of being played.

"In my first attempt at programming **Time and Tide**, I forgot to put in the code at the end of the function to tell the program to progress to the next step. So you could press okay indefinitely to keep swapping what creatures were phased in and out. I fixed it easily, but it was amusing to watch for a little while.

"**Infernal Harvest** was really, really good when I first programmed it. It wasn't checking the extra cost correctly, so it never actually forced you to return the lands to your hand. It also let you target anything at all that you wanted, not just creatures. So basically you could assign as much damage as you wanted to anything you wanted, and not pay anything for it above the normal mana cost for the card."



Thanks, Rachel!

Attack of the Killer Kobolds

Yes, Kobolds are back, of a sort, in Standard Vanguard with the advent of the Nekkartaal avatar. Last week I proposed a weenie beatdown approach, but a few people on the forums, in emails and through PMs mentioned to me Nekkartaal could get much more broken than that through one specific card: Glimpse of Nature! Here's the "combo" kill version of the Kobolds deck:

Kobolds Attack! (Standard Vanguard) 1.dec

Avatar - Nekkartaal
60 cards

4 <u>Brushland</u>	4 <u>Bile Urchin</u>	2 <u>Cloudstone Curio</u>
4 <u>Temple Garden</u>	4 <u>Dark Confidant</u>	4 <u>Glimpse of Nature</u>
4 <u>Tendo Ice Bridge</u>	4 <u>Festering Goblin</u>	3 <u>Sensei's Divining Top</u>
12 land	4 <u>Ghost-Lit Stalker</u>	9 other spells
	4 <u>Gnat Miser</u>	
	4 <u>Nezumi Shadow-Watcher</u>	
	3 <u>Orzhov Pontiff</u>	
	4 <u>Plagued Rusalka</u>	
	4 <u>Rag Dealer</u>	
	4 <u>Thoughtpicker Witch</u>	
	39 creatures	

I corralled my buddy Shane (A.K.A. Triple_S) into playing his very first Vanguard game while I was testing this deck, so of course Kobolds ran ridiculously well against him! Hopefully I didn't scare him off.

Here's what the board looked like at the end of my turn 1:



Obviously, I got “the Glimpse Draw.” What was particularly nice was dropping those three early [Gnat Misers](#) so that if Shane couldn't play too many spells, his hand size would force him to discard.



Next turn I draw [Orzhov Pontiff](#) and it's game over, except that Shane luckily drew [Mana Leak](#) to buy him a couple more turns. He actually lives until turn 4, where a [Wrath of God](#) might save him, but it doesn't show up and he dies to [Bile Urchin](#) activation.

I think we might need to keep an eye on the Nekkartaal Avatar; as Affinity for Artifacts has shown, being able to play spells for no mana can be very dangerous. In Extended Vanguard even more crazy things can happen with this Avatar, and I can only imagine what adding [Dark Ritual](#) does in Classic Vanguard.

Just think, the key to Vanguard Broken Land can be yours, just for participating in a *Visions* 2x or 4x Sealed event or league!

RATS! A Tip When Using Gatherer

Two weeks back when I did my [Orzhov-tinged look at Visions](#) cards, I mentioned [Crypt Rats](#) as being Uncommon. Sharp-eyed Pauper Deck enthusiasts were quick to point out that [Crypt Rats](#) are actually common in *Visions*! In tracking down the cause of my error, I found that Gatherer was the ultimate source, though through no fault of its own. As wonderfully handy as Gatherer is, it is not a full-fledged database and is programmed to be a super-easy, super-fast way of searching for cards. When generating a list, cards that change commonality between sets might show up as showing the wrong rarity in Gatherer, so if you want the best, most accurate list of such things, go to the actual [product page](#) (in this case, [Visions](#)) for it.

*Bennie Smith has been playing **Magic** since Arabian Nights, and writing about it nearly as long. Several of his early musings appeared on the Magic Dojo, and from there he became a featured writer for Star City Games and a Contributing Editor for Scrye Magazine before he started writing for [magicthegathering.com](#). While a casual gamer at heart, Bennie also thoroughly enjoys the competitive side of **Magic** and won the Virginia State Championship in 1999.*



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