

# Prague Postgame: Part One

Brian David-Marshall  
The Week That Was  
Friday, May 12, 2006



This has been a hectic couple of weeks. I've had non-stop playtesting in the days leading up to [Pro Tour-Prague](#), a full slate of coverage plus webcasting duties, and now right into my digital commentary for the 2006 **Magic** Invitational. Throw in a little jetlag and you have the makings of a fairly short column this week. Boosted in spirit by the excellent spirits in Prague, I had originally intended for this to be a mega-column that incorporated everything that got missed over the last weekend.



Takuya Osawa came back from Prague \$40,000 richer.

Rather than force Takuya Osawa to share any spotlight – other than with Tsuyoshi Fujita and a couple of giant fatties – I am going to focus almost exclusively on my post-PT interview with the freshly crowned Pro Tour champion. Although the 21-year-old Tokyo player considers himself a professional gamer, he listed Otaku – or fanboy – as his occupation in his player profile. He is specifically a fan of Japanese girl pop music.

On the road to the Pro Tour-Prague championship, Osawa's two hobbies intersected in a most fortuitous way. While Pro Tour photographer extraordinaire Craig Gibson snapped the trophy shot at the Charles Bridge, I asked Osawa about the circumstances that led him to the happiest tourist photos in his young life.

"I am 21 years old and basically a **Magic** Pro player," Osawa prefaced his story with a little background. "And I am a big fan of Japanese pop music – I go to a lot of concerts. It just so happened that one of my favorite bands was having a concert in Osaka so I went there to see them. I ended up hanging out with the Fujitas (Osamu and Tsuyoshi) for a while and they humored me to let me practice with them. I might have actually inconvenienced my Tokyo friends by not being there to test with them."

It was while watching Tsuyoshi draft that Osawa began to understand how the format had changed with the addition of *Dissension*.

"When I was drafting RRG I was mostly drafting power cards," he explained. "I was thinking back to *Invasion* which was about the Crisis colors where you go for aggressive decks with powerful cards with green not existing. When *Dissension* came in I tried sticking to that strategy and it was not doing very well.

"While playtesting and hanging around in Osaka I noticed that Tsuyoshi Fujita was playing decks with an aggressive low curve – and relying on *Utopia Sprawl* to fix the colors. I decided I would try it and it worked pretty well. When I sat down to draft this weekend I aimed for the low aggressive curve and *Utopia Sprawls* to keep tempo."

Osawa's use of *Utopia Sprawl* was perhaps the most interesting element of his draft. Relative to the signets and double lands the latest incarnation of *Wild Growth* was heavily undervalued and allowed Osawa to focus his earlier picks on creatures and spells essential to his aggressive draft style while allowing him to get the mana fixing/acceleration later on in the draft.

"I don't necessarily put *Utopia Sprawl* higher than any other cards. If it comes to me I will pick them but I am not going to pick one over any card that might be useful. It is not like I would pick *Utopia Sprawl* more highly than a bounce land – I really, really want the double-color lands – it is just that everyone else around me was grabbing them up and I never saw any."



Another aspect of his Top 8 run was his deliberate and patient style of play. Despite having a menagerie of monsters in his deck and often being at a decided advantage on the board, Osawa never fell prey to the temptation to over-commit. He was content to send in his guys one at a time and force his opponents to throw a creature under its wheels every turn.

"I usually play more control-style decks and I am not used to playing aggressive decks," explained Osawa when asked about his deliberate play style. "So playing an aggressive deck is new to me. What happened is I slipped into my old habits and went for a lock-down

PRODUCTS

MAGIC ONLINE

MESSAGE BOARDS

Magic General Forum

magicthegathering.com Forum

RULES



Prague was an unforgettable stop for many players.

approach. It was also made easier by the fact that since they revealed the decklists before the match I knew exactly what trick cards all of my opponents had so I could think about what they might have and – hopefully – anticipate them.”

In the end he only lost one game throughout the Top 8 and was soon hoisting the third championship trophy of his career. How did this one compare to his other titles?

“I won a local store championship and I was the Kanagawa Prefecture Champion two years ago – playing Affinity of course! I am just about as happy as I was winning the Prefecture Championship,” joked Osawa through an enormous smile. “This is definitely the best – winning the Pro Tour.”

While he is only 21 years old, Osawa has been playing for quite some time ... long enough that he can't recall the exact details of when he started.

“I don't remember what set was out when I first started but it was during junior high school when my friends were playing. They wanted me to join them and that was how I started. It was – I don't know – 7 or 8 years ago.”

It was friends who got him started and he credits friends with his continued success.

“It hasn't really sunk in yet that I have won. I don't think of myself of the best player or the strongest drafter. I don't really know what to say

right now. I just want to thank everyone who helped me – all of my friends. I don't think I am particularly good or the best player. This environment really helped me, the format was really good, I practiced a lot, and things seemed to click but I would not have gotten here without all the playtesting and help that everyone game me. I would just like to thank them.”

The players he credits with helping him prepare for Pro Tour after Pro Tour include some great names: Itaru Ishida, Ryo Ogura, Shu Komuro, and Akira Asahara. And don't forget the pop band Morning Musume, which led him to Osaka to test with Fujita. He planned to thank everyone with his winnings.

“I will spend the money on better seats at concerts and in more places. I will also treat my friends and playtest partners to a great meal.”

As Osawa looked at the fabulous sight of the Vltava River from the bridge, he could scarcely believe his good fortune.

“I actually came to the Charles Bridge on Thursday before registration. It is really impressive – beautiful. This is easily the best part of Prague. It is just amazing that someone like me who doesn't even have a real job gets to travel around and have fun and see these places. It is an amazing experience – it is like a dream.”



Osawa celebrates with Ryo Ogura, left, and Shu Komuro.

I asked him for any advice – he will have to get used to playing that role now that he is a champion – for people drafting the full block at Friday Night **Magic** tonight.

He looked at his \$40,000 check, hefted his Pro Tour trophy, and grinned slyly, “Bloodthirst and graft is teh hax!”

Thanks to Ron Foster and Yoshiya Shindo for the translation.

## Firestarter: Friday Morning Quarterbacks

Now that you have had a week to linger over the [draft viewer](#), who do you think had the best draft? What would you have done sitting in De Rosa's seat? Would you have taken **Doubling Season**? **Halcyon Glaze**? What about the other seats? Share you thoughts, picks, and strategies in the forums.

*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.*



[Discuss](#) on the message boards



[Respond](#) via email



[Brian David-Marshall](#) archive

© 1995-2007 Wizards of the Coast, Inc., a subsidiary of Hasbro, Inc. All Rights Reserved.  
[Terms of Use](#) - [Privacy Statement](#)

