

Home > Games > Magic > Magicthegathering.com > Columns

Grand Plans

Brian David-Marshall
The Week That Was
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Loosen up your wrist and get ready for a busy weekend of clicking around the Tournament Center. Hot on the heels of the *Magic Online* release of *Dissension*, there are three Limited Grand Prix events taking place around the globe.

Ray "blisterguy" Walkinshaw will be bringing you the blow-by-blow action from Kuala Lumpur, which kicks off Friday night if you're in the U.S. Local hero Terry Soh will have a rare opportunity to play in his own backyard and Masahiko Morita will look to repeat his best finish from the last time the Grand Prix series rolled through Malaysia. Morita won't be alone, however, as a whole cadre of Japanese superstars are making the trip.

Over in Europe, Hanno Terbuyken and Jörn Hajek will be heading up the coverage for Grand Prix-Torino, which will no doubt be another tournament with staggering attendance. It's actually a three-day affair, with Friday focused on fun side events and gunslinging against Pros such as Olivier Ruel, Antti Malin, Tiago Chan, and Bernardo Da Costa Cabral. It's been five years almost to the day since a Grand Prix was in Torino. Back then, the format was teams and the event was won by the hot beverage aficionados who eventually became known as Team Clegg.

Even as I write this, I am keeping one eye on the cable box – the only clock in my home office – as I have to fly out Thursday afternoon to bring you the 40-card fights from Toronto. Despite its rich *Magic*-al history, there has not been a Grand Prix in Toronto since 1997. That event was a coming-out party for the newly formed Team CMU – it was the first event they attended as a team with veterans Randy Buehler and Erik Lauer dragging along freshmen Mike Turian and Dan Silberman. All but Randy made the Top 8, although he would eventually qualify for that season's Pro Tour and do pretty well once he got there.

If you go to the Tournament Center and look up the coverage of the event, you will find that ... well, actually I can just copy the Top 8 in its entirety right here:

- 1 Brian Kibler
- 2 Erik Lauer
- 3-4 Tony Tsai
- 3-4 Matt Place
- 5-8 Dan Silberman
- 5-8 Steven O'Mahoney-Schwartz
- 5-8 Michael Turian
- 5-8 Bruce Cowley

Not too long ago I attempted to recreate Mike Turian's decklist from that event. The format was *Mirage* Block Constructed and I was intrigued to see a successful decklist that featured *Giant Mantis*.

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	

As I was looking back on the history of Toronto *Magic*, I became interested in seeing what the other decks from the Top 8 looked like. I remembered that Kibler had played one of my favorite decks from that PTQ season.

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The deck featured a combo with **Serrated Biskelion** and **Vodalian Illusionist** which – at the time – exploited the timing rules to create an unending supply of -1/-1 tokens by phasing out the Biskelion with the Illusionist at just the right moment. Under the current timing rules it seems pretty obvious, but back then Kibler had to make sure how the Head Judge was going to rule prior to the tournament before he could play the deck.

I poked around and was able to find the list and Kibler's report from that event. While future R&D members Place and Turian played in the Top 8, [Kibler credited](#) yet another Wizards staffer with the design of the deck – and it is one of the foundations of Brian Schneider's reputation as one of the game's great deck designers.

Brian Kibler - Winner Grand Prix Toronto '97		
THE ILLUSIONIST DECK - Mirage Block Constructed		
Main Deck 60 cards		Sideboard
17 Island	3 Abduction	2 Boomerang
4 Quicksand	4 Dissipate	2 Disrupt
2 Winding Canyons	4 Impulse	1 Dream Tides
23 lands	2 Memory Lapse	1 Flooded Shoreline
	3 Power Sink	2 Floodgate
	1 Ray of Command	2 Knight of the Mists
4 Man-o'-War	17 other spells	1 Power Sink
4 Ophidian		2 Ray of Command
4 Serrated Biskelion		2 Undo
4 Vodalian Illusionist		15 sideboard cards
4 Waterspout Djinn		
20 creatures		

Now that I had two decks from the Top 8 I decided to see what else I could unearth. Next up was [Tony "The Shark" Tsai's mono-black decklist](#).

Tony Tsai – 3rd/4th Grand Prix Toronto '97		
Deadguy Black - Mirage Block Constructed		
Main Deck 60 cards		Sideboard
4 Quicksand	2 Drain Life	1 Dark Banishing
18 Swamp	1 Gallowbraid	2 Drain Life
1 Winding Canyons	1 Infernal Tribute	2 Enfeeblement
23 lands	4 other spells	3 Forsaken Wastes
		2 Necromancy
3 Barrow Ghoul		3 Touchstone
2 Cadaverous Knight		2 Urborg Justice
3 Crypt Rats		15 sideboard cards
4 Fallen Askari		
3 Hidden Horror		
1 Mischievous Poltergeist		
3 Necratog		
4 Nekrataal		
3 Sewer Rats		
4 Skulking Ghost		
3 Urborg Stalker		
33 creatures		

Bruce Cowley is a long-time New England player who has written several entertaining tournament reports. One of my favorite things about poring over old tournament reports is collecting 'first appearances' and 'origin' stories. Bruce was not trying to be funny when he wrote the following passage, but in hindsight it is pretty amusing. This is how Bruce presented the then-unknown Mike Turian: ["...nice guy from Carnegie Mellon..."](#)

Bruce Cowley – 5th–8th Grand Prix Toronto '97		
Black Body - Mirage Block Constructed		
Main Deck 61 cards		
4 Quicksand	1 Barrow Ghoul	2 Coercion
19 Swamp	2 Bone Dancer	3 Dark Ritual
23 lands	3 Crypt Rats	4 Drain Life
	4 Fallen Askari	1 Gallowbraid
	3 Fledgling Djinn	4 Necromancy

1 Necrosavant	14 other spells
4 Nokrataal	
1 Serrated Biskelion	
1 Skulking Ghost	
4 Urborg Stalker	
<hr/>	
24 creatures	

A pretty understated introduction for someone who would go on to become one of the best players to ever play the game. Dan Silberman was another CMU player in that Top 8 – as was second-place finisher Erik Lauer – and he was playing a deck [designed by one Randolph E. Buehler Jr.](#) Randy would use the same deck a couple of weeks later to qualify for his very first Pro Tour. Randy's deck brings the total number of decks designed and/or played by future R&D members in that long-ago Top 8 to four.

Dan Silberman – 5th-8th Grand Prix Toronto '97		
Sandsipoise - Mirage Block Constructed		
Main Deck		Sideboard
60 cards		
4 Crystal Vein	4 Abeyance	1 Argivian Find
4 Gemstone Mine	4 Dark Ritual	2 City of Solitude
3 Lotus Vale	2 Desolation	3 Coercion
5 Plains	4 Enlightened Tutor	3 Disenchant
8 Swamp	4 Equipose	1 Soul Echo
2 Undiscovered Paradise	2 Impulse	1 Steel Golem
<hr/>	1 Misers' Cage	1 Tariff
26 lands	4 Sands of Time	1 Vision Charm
	1 Tariff	1 Wand of Denial
2 Steel Golem	4 Vampiric Tutor	1 Wildfire Emissary
<hr/>	2 Wand of Denial	
2 creatures	32 other spells	15 sideboard cards

I am still looking for three of the decks from that Top 8. Steven O'Mahoney-Schwartz played Tog. Back then Tog referred to **Necratog**, which was played in a deck with **Ertai's Familiar** and **Song of Blood** to stock the graveyard with creatures to feed the Tog. I have been trying to recreate the deck with Steve – who may actually be in Toronto for THIS weekend's GP – but he cannot recall the exact configuration.

The deck he played was based on – wait for it – a deck that R&D member Mike Donais created and was popularized online by Gary Wise prior to the Grand Prix. Steve and his team of New York-based players changed as many as 10 cards from the Donais build. While I can't find the OMS list, I can provide you with the deck that Steve tinkered with from Gary Wise's original PTQ report, which qualified him for Chicago. Ironically, he beat Mike Donais in the semis to get there.

Gary Wise – Winner Toronto PTQ 8/10/97		
Ertai's Song - Mirage Block Constructed		
Main Deck		
60 cards		
1 Bad River	4 Barrow Ghoul	4 Song of Blood
3 Gemstone Mine	4 Circling Vultures	4 other spells
2 Island	4 Ertai's Familiar	
1 Mountain	4 Fallen Askari	
1 Rocky Tar Pit	2 Fledgling Djinn	
10 Swamp	4 Man-o'-War	
3 Undiscovered Paradise	2 Necratog	
<hr/>	3 Nokrataal	
21 lands	4 Shadow Guildmage	
	4 Skulking Ghost	
	35 creatures	

The remaining missing archetypes are Erik Lauer's mono-black hand destruction deck and Matt Place's mono-blue. If anyone out there has access to these lists – or can approximate them – please hop onto the forums and share them with me.

If that trip down R&D memory lane was fun for you, be sure to tune in for Pro Tour-Charleston's Sunday webcast. Our lunch programming will be a collection of Wizards employees' finest moments on the Pro Tour – Potato Nation in New York, Randy in Chicago, Matt Place in Mainz and Worth Wollpert in Los Angeles. The webcast starts on June 18 at 10:45 a.m. ET.

That Was Then, This Is RGD

Mirage Block Constructed is the last thing on the mind of most Pro Tour-savvy players this week. The Grand Prix madness is the kickoff to the Pro Tour-Kobe qualifier season. In addition to the three GPs, there are a fair number of Pro Tour Qualifiers going on all over the world. While there has been some analysis of the draft format in the wake of Pro Tour-Prague, there has been little to no insight into the Sealed Deck format. It was only Thursday that *Dissension* became available on *Magic Online* for players to practice this challenging Sealed Deck format.

I know that one of the first features I will be preparing on Saturday will involve watching someone grapple with all 10 guilds present and accounted for and how they cull down to 40 cards. I recently did a little Sealed Deck practice with some friends heading to Toronto and I have the card pool handy for you to toy with for yourself.

Ravnica/Guildpact/Dissension Sealed Deck Pool

White 1 Caregiver 1 Conclave Phalanx 1 Dromad Purebred 1 Nightguard Patrol 1 Oathsworn Giant 1 Azorius Herald 1 Stealing Stance 1 Soulsworn Jury 1 Absolver Thrull 1 Guardian's Magemark 1 Order of the Stars	Blue 1 Drift of Phantasms 1 Flight of Fancy 1 Grayscaled Gharial 1 Muddle the Mixture 1 Remand 1 Snapping Drake 1 Vision Skeins 1 Torch Drake	Black 1 Clinging Darkness 1 Disembowel 1 Golgari Thug 1 Mortipede 1 Necromantic Thirst 1 Nightmare Void 1 Stinkweed Imp 1 Strands of Undeath 1 Slaughterhouse Bouncer 1 Douse in Gloom 1 Poisonbelly Ogre	Red 1 Coalhauler Swine 1 Fiery Conclusion 1 Ordrun Commando 1 Smash 1 Sparkmage Apprentice 1 Torpid Moloch 1 Sandstorm Eidolon 1 Utvara Scalper	Green 1 Bramble Elemental 1 Fists of Ironwood 1 Dryad's Caress 1 Siege Wurm 1 Trophy Hunter 1 Simic Ragworm 1 Beastmaster's Magemark 1 Gruul Scrapper 1 Predatory Focus
Dimir 1 Perplex 1 Psychic Drain 1 Twisted Justice 1 Dimir Guildmage	Golgari 1 Sisters of Stone Death 1 Woodwraith Corrupter 1 Woodwraith Strangler	Boros 1 Rally the Righteous 1 Razia's Purification	Selesnya None	Land 1 Dimir Aqueduct 1 Ghost Quarter 1 Gruul Turf
Gruul 1 Wild Cantor 1 Skarrgan Skybreaker	Izzet 1 Cerebral Vortex 1 Wee Dragonauts	Orzhov 1 Pillory of the Sleepless		Artifact 1 Boros Signet 1 Dimir Signet 1 Selesnya Signet 1 Azorius Signet 1 Terrarion 1 Voyager Staff
Azorius 1 Azorius Ploy 1 Overrule 1 Plumes of Peace	Rakdos 1 Anthem of Rakdos 1 Wrecking Ball	Simic None		

Have at it ... I will be bringing the cards with me to Toronto and will see if I can convince a handful of Limited specialists for their sculpts of the deck and you can compare your version to theirs.

On the 60-Card Front

Mike Flores started looking at the North American Regionals results in [this week's column](#). If you haven't checked out the wealth of information available on the [Regionals Top 8 Decklists page](#), you either don't care about Constructed or were overwhelmed by the sheer number of decklists that lay just one mouse-click away...

Japanese Regionals got under way this past weekend with a tournament in Hiroshima which qualified three players from that countryside region. Unlike the tournaments in North America, there is no monolithic weekend of Regionals in Japan. Events occur week by week and Mike and I will do our best to relay the results to you as they happen. Or if you can read Japanese, follow along by [clicking here](#). Here's a look at the dates and locations:



Another difference in the Japanese Regional tournaments is that the tournaments are being run this year as straight Swiss events with the Top X players earning the invites. X is determined by the region's population in comparison to other regions. It is an interesting experiment that resulted in the following three players from Hiroshima earning a trip to Nationals.

Shohei Yamamoto - Ghazi Glare		
1st Place, Hiroshima Regionals		
Main Deck	Sideboard	
60 cards		
3 Breeding Pool	1 Congregation at Dawn	4 Cranial Extraction
2 Brushland	1 Dovescape	4 Giant Solifuge
1 Eiganjo Castle	1 Glare of Subdual	1 Glare of Subdual
3 Forest	3 Shining Shoal	4 Okiba-Gang Shinobi
1 Island	4 Supply // Demand	1 Swamp
1 Okina, Temple to the Grandfathers	2 Umezawa's Jitte	1 Umezawa's Jitte
1 Overgrown Tomb		
2 Plains	12 other spells	15 sideboard cards
3 Selesnya Sanctuary		
4 Temple Garden		
2 Vitu-Ghazi, the City-Tree		
23 lands		
4 Birds of Paradise		
2 Grand Arbiter Augustin IV		
4 Loxodon Hierarch		

- 1 Meloku the Clouded Mirror
- 4 Sakura-Tribe Elder
- 3 Selesnya Guildmage
- 1 Simic Sky Swallower
- 4 Wood Elves
- 2 Yosei, the Morning Star

25 creatures

Yuuki Nakatsukasa - Ghost Dad

2nd Place, Hiroshima Regionals



Main Deck 60 cards

- 4 Caves of Koilos
- 1 Eiganjo Castle
- 4 Godless Shrine
- 6 Plains
- 1 Shizo, Death's Storehouse
- 7 Swamp

23 lands

- 4 Dark Confidant
- 3 Descendant of Kiyomaro
- 4 Ghost Council of Orzhova
- 3 Kami of Ancient Law
- 4 Plagued Rusalka
- 4 Tallowisp
- 4 Thief of Hope

26 creatures

- 1 Enfeeblement
- 2 Pacifism
- 1 Pillory of the Sleepless
- 4 Shining Shoal
- 3 Umezawa's Jitte

11 other spells

Sideboard

- 4 Castigate
- 1 Kami of Ancient Law
- 3 Orzhov Pontiff
- 3 Persecute
- 2 Phyrexian Arena
- 2 Pithing Needle

15 sideboard cards

Yuuji Kikuchi - Blue-Black Control

3rd place, Hiroshima Regionals



Main Deck 60 cards

- 2 Dimir Aqueduct
- 7 Island
- 1 Mikokoro, Center of the Sea
- 1 Minamo, School at Water's Edge
- 1 Shizo, Death's Storehouse
- 4 Swamp
- 4 Underground River
- 4 Watery Grave

24 lands

- 1 Keiga, the Tide Star
- 1 Kokusho, the Evening Star
- 3 Meloku the Clouded Mirror

5 creatures

- 2 Hinder
- 3 Last Gasp
- 4 Mana Leak
- 4 Persecute
- 4 Remand
- 4 Repeal
- 2 Sensei's Divining Top
- 4 Spell Snare
- 4 Telling Time

31 other spells

Sideboard

- 2 Cranial Extraction
- 3 Gigadrowse
- 4 Hideous Laughter
- 1 Last Gasp
- 3 Pithing Needle
- 2 Slay

15 sideboard cards

I asked Japan Organized Play Manager (and unofficial TWTW interpreter) Ron Foster to explain the reasoning behind the varying number of slots on the Road to Nationals.

"Before this year, we had a set number of slots for each regional, like most countries," Ron obliged. "We decided to try a variable system this year to address a concern that is often voiced: population disparity. Places like Tokyo and Osaka just have a proportionately overwhelming number of people – even splitting the Regionals up into multiple events for that area (kind of like northern California/southern California) doesn't necessarily solve the problem. So, we had to give places with lots of people a large number of slots, which led to another issue: people from outside the region traveling to play in a given regional.

"Obviously, we want the Hiroshima regional to be an opportunity for people from that region to get to Nationals," Ron continued. "We don't want people from halfway around the country traveling there thinking they will have an easier time than in Tokyo or Nagoya. We could have set up a system like Champs, where we define regions and check IDs, but that's just a lot of extra work for everyone. Like a lot of things the DCI does, this is an experiment at finding a better system. We'll look at the data for 2006, compare it with previous years, and make a decision about whether or not to do this again in 2007."

Running the events on different dates as opposed to one weekend goes back to the early days of tournament **Magic** in Japan.

“When Organized Play first started ramping up in Japan, about 10 years ago now, there were not a lot of certified judges or people who knew how to organize **Magic** events. This limited the scope of everything. Back in the day, there was only one QT per season in Japan, and only one qualifier for Nationals.

“As the playing community grew, the number of qualifiers and other events slowly increased as well. However, there were never enough staff to run multiple events simultaneously so Regionals organically developed in Japan as a series of events as staff would move around the country each week.”

Ron actually played in the very first Nationals qualifier, which was a single-elimination Sealed Deck tournament using 4th Edition. He got as far as the fourth round with a deck that included **Stasis** and **Winter Orb**. He remembers seeing Itaru Ishida, Ken'ichi Fujita, and Koichiro Maki playing at that event.

“Those early events were the foundation of competitive **Magic** in Japan. All the names we know today were at those events,” Ron said.

So don't be surprised if you see Shohei Yamamoto, Yuuki Nakatsukasa, or Yuuji Kikuchi taking Worlds by storm this November.

Firestarter: The Grandest Prix?

Of the three events this weekend, which one will have the most power-packed Top 8? Share your opinions in the forums below – and don't forget to check the Tournament Center throughout the weekend for all the Grand Prix goings-on!

*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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