

**It's Nationals Season! Three-Time Pro Tour Top 8 competitor Tomi Walamies checks in with a report on what it's like to play in a Nationals that is not his own.**

## The Queen And I

Tomi Walamies

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- [Tomi Walamies Archive](#)

*"When I grow up, I want to be the English champion!" -Tomi Walamies, 1982, first words*

**H**ello dear readers. I am Tomi, and I am here to tell you of the magical tournament that is the English National Championships of **Magic: The Gathering**. But what does all that mean? Let's break it down.

*England* - The land of hope.

*National Championships* - The fight for the biggest honor.

**Magic: The Gathering** - LOL, whatever you topdecker, I can't believe you play that.

But before we get into all that, it is appropriate that I introduce myself. Way too modest to do it with my own words, I shall use those of my fellow competitor at a side event draft at Nationals: "Some years ago... you used to be fairly good... right?" I would have to agree with his observation. I basically grew up playing this game for the past ten years and somewhere in there I had good finishes. My speciality were the Constructed formats and I would often be seen playing something fairly cool. Tier two, homebrew, any60... call it what you want. I did considerably worse at Limited and have been at the absolute last draft table of both a Pro Tour and the World Championships.

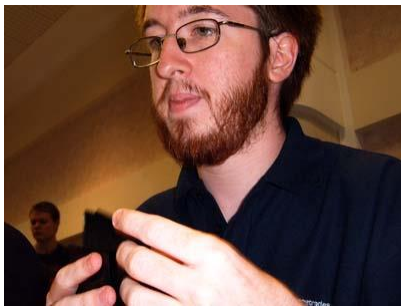
Some of you might know me from my earlier writing. I have done articles for sites that are more directed towards tournament players. But you guys are more casual, right? I shall go less high brow on technicalities and just fill in the awkward gaps with random jokes, making this kind of like a date. I have thought about writing for this site for quite a while, and a tournament report feels like the logical way to start. Let's see how this goes.



Due to a lot of work commitments I have been unable to play much **Magic** lately. I showed up at Prague but didn't finish in the money. My most distinct memory of that particular weekend is drafting a fourth pick [Temple Garden](#) at the very last table on day two. Not to show off or anything. Green or white mana, not bad. Into play untapped it can come! Powerful is!  
Also not bad:

## 110 Walamies, Tomi [ENG] 24 50.0000%

I qualified for English Nationals via rating. I have lived in London for the past year, so my ratings were moved to the English page. In order to gain a citizenship, I would have to stay here for god knows how many years, do all these tests, and/or marry a citizen. In order for Wizards to consider me English, I just have to inform them of an address change. No wonder companies are more effective than countries - they have less bureaucracy.



*Tomi's roommate and 2005 English National Champion Richard Moore*

I did not have much time to test. I even skipped the *Coldsnap* release, as I had had a lot of ice cream the night before (family site) and felt considerably ill. I borrowed loads of cards on **MagicOnline** from my Texan buddy Jim Mason and played with a few decks. I kept losing in the Constructed queues to this same guy with a U/G Snake deck. First, I reacted like any sensible **Magic** player trying to find the best deck (omg lol this guy whatever I was probably unlucky), but then my roommate Richard Moore suggested we try out the Snakes ourselves. It worked wonders in the casual room and after some tweaking, we had a deck.

The U/G deck was very similar to [Counter Rebels](#). It had quick men, a hard to deal with card advantage machine ([Sosuke's Summons](#)), and counters. It worked okay against fast decks and had an improved game after sideboard due to Glares of Subdual. The good matchups though were the slower decks. If they tap out to do anything, we can just punish them with [Coat of Arms](#) or Seshiro, but if they just sit there, we can beat them with our guys that may or may not have Jitte. The worst matchup by far was B/W Ghost Husk as they had [Orzhov Pontiff](#). First it kills all our guys, and then it repeats a few turns later.

The format I was most confident about was *Ravnica* block draft. Too bad that it only made up three rounds of the tournament. I need more [Temple Gardens](#). *Coldsnap* drafting scared me considerably, so I tried to look for advice online. I stumbled into an article by Josh Ravitz about the format which managed to explain it in a nutshell. It was one of the most concise and useful pieces of writing I have seen in a long time. Basically what he said that snow is the new Affinity and there are so many playables that you can take snow lands early.

I arrived to beautiful Birmingham via a night train at 2am and heard that I've got off at the wrong station.

Richard forgot to tell me that I am not supposed to go to Birmingham city centre, but instead to the Birmingham airport. I should have figured it out by myself. Or I suppose I could have read the



tournament info site before travelling. I then took a twenty pound cab ride to the hotel next to the site. Money well spent.

I got to the hotel, woke up Richard and informed him that I am playing the B/W Ghost Husk deck instead. This kind of decision is known as "Late night panic." It means a situation where a player abandons the one deck they know something about in order to play the one deck that beats it. It is not an uncommon phenomenon at all, but so far no one has ever had any success with the strategy. I just couldn't shake the image of having to bury all my snakes over and over again.

This is what I should have played:

### Richard Moore, U/G Snakes



#### Main Deck

60 cards

1 <a href="#">Azorius Chancery</a>	3 <a href="#">Coat of Arms</a>
4 <a href="#">Breeding Pool</a>	4 <a href="#">Remand</a>
2 <a href="#">Forest</a>	4 <a href="#">Sosuke's Summons</a>
3 <a href="#">Island</a>	4 <a href="#">Umezawa's Jitte</a>
1 <a href="#">Okina, Temple to the Grandfathers</a>	3 <a href="#">Voidslime</a>
1 <a href="#">Plains</a>	_____
4 <a href="#">Simic Growth Chamber</a>	18 other spells
3 <a href="#">Temple Garden</a>	<b>Sideboard</b>
4 <a href="#">Yavimaya Coast</a>	3 <a href="#">Glare of Subdual</a>
_____	2 <a href="#">Meloku the Clouded Mirror</a>
23 lands	3 <a href="#">Naturalize</a>
4 <a href="#">Coiling Oracle</a>	3 <a href="#">Ninja of the Deep Hours</a>
1 <a href="#">Meloku the Clouded Mirror</a>	4 <a href="#">Spell Snare</a>
4 <a href="#">Patagia Viper</a>	_____
4 <a href="#">Sakura-Tribe Elder</a>	15 sideboard cards
4 <a href="#">Sakura-Tribe Scout</a>	
2 <a href="#">Seshiro the Anointed</a>	
_____	
19 creatures	



Instead I went with this hero:

## **Tomi Walamies, B/W Husk**



### **Main Deck**

*60 cards*

- |   |                                     |
|---|-------------------------------------|
| 4 <a href="#">Caves of Koilos</a>           | 4 <a href="#">Castigate</a>         |
| 1 <a href="#">Eiganjo Castle</a>            | 3 <a href="#">Mortify</a>           |
| 4 <a href="#">Godless Shrine</a>            | 3 <a href="#">Pithing Needle</a>    |
| 4 <a href="#">Orzhov Basilica</a>           | 4 <a href="#">Promise of Bunrei</a> |
| 5 <a href="#">Plains</a>                    | _____                               |
| 1 <a href="#">Shizo, Death's Storehouse</a> | 14 other spells                     |
| 4 <a href="#">Swamp</a>                     |                                     |

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23 lands

- 4 [Dark Confidant](#)
- 3 [Eight-and-a-Half-Tails](#)
- 2 [Ghost Council of Orzhova](#)
- 4 [Isamaru, Hound of Konda](#)
- 4 [Nantuko Husk](#)
- 3 [Orzhov Pontiff](#)
- 3 [Plagued Rusalka](#)

### **Sideboard**

- 4 [Last Gasp](#)
- 1 [Mortify](#)
- 4 [Okiba-Gang Shinobi](#)
- 1 [Orzhov Pontiff](#)
- 1 [Savra, Queen of the Golgari](#)
- 4 [Shining Shoal](#)

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15 sideboard cards

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23 creatures



The one Savra is self-explanatory.

After a refreshing four hour sleep, I was ready to win games and take names. The tournament site was a typical conference hall. I was expecting more like a castle with maidens, jovial music, and the occasional jester. Is this too much to ask? Maybe I am just spoiled by the Finnish Nationals, which are always held at the biggest local igloo.

During the player meeting, we were told that this would be the last English Nationals. A bit harsh, I thought, but soon heard that it would be replaced by an UK Nationals. This seemed like a sensible idea at first, but then I got scared. What if they did the same with Nordic countries? I don't want to play in the same nationals with Swedes and Norwegians! They smell.

(They don't really)

Time to battle.

**Round one versus Ben Coleman with U/W Board Control**

Ben had some apparently popular netdeck that I'd never seen. [Azorius Guildmage](#), [Court Hussars](#), Descendants of Kiyomaro. The long and short of this is that I just got double flooded. But it's not that simple. Ben played quite well, while I was just learning how my deck moves. If I sacrifice this I get... hey wait I need that... but if I respond here... hey cool, another land - just what I needed. (sarcasm) From what I could analyze while being on the wrong end of actual spells is that the matchup seemed quite even. I asked around, and this seemed to be the consensus.

Matches 0-1, games 0-2

### Round two versus Gregory Squire with White Weenie splash blue

Gregory was splashing blue for [Mana Leaks](#) and [Azorius Heralds](#). He double mulliganed first game and played hardly a spell. This was turning out to be quite the interesting tournament. We then proceeded to play two really close, back and forth games where the key cards were his numerous protection from black guys. I manoeuvre around them with my 8.5 Tails and pull out a close one. We discuss the matchup and deem it to be fairly even.

1-1, 2-3

### Round three versus Lian Pizzey with W/B/G

We chatted a bit at the beginning about how little chance he has of winning. I mostly just nodded, as he kept telling me how good I am. The feeling of invulnerability was slightly diminished as I pull a quick loss with the classic favorite known only as Screw-Flood. In the first game, I wasn't quite in it considering that my only spell was Isamaru. I had some hope in the second one even with the flood, until he dropped [Night of Souls' Betrayal](#). I was overrun by a large number of [Loxodon Hierarchs](#) and assorted dragons.

I have a considerably poor record in tournament matches against people who bemoan their fate in the beginning. Or maybe I just remember the ones that I lose? Nevertheless I would now like to take a moment to celebrate this loss with a joke from my stand-up set. "I had this business, I was trying to grow earthworms. As you may know, they are asexual. The problem was that I couldn't make ends meet."

1-2, 2-5

Ugh! A one-two start was not what I was looking for. It wasn't made easier by the fact that Richard came up to me after every round and talked about how good Snakes is in the metagame. Rub it in, will you? It seems that absolutely everyone who I know even remotely is currently at 2-1. They exchanged stories about their numerous wins and how easy it was. I sat in the corner and tried to look unhurt. Every once in a while someone would walk by, ask about my record, and then it would



*Is it still a netdeck if you've never seen it?*

get awkward. When an Englishman cannot come up with an optimistic compliment about your situation, you know you've hit the pits.

Happily, the draft was now upon us. Nothing takes away frustration like getting to crack open packs. I started with the mighty [Civic Wayfinder](#). Not too shabby a card in a format where three-color decks are the norm. I picked up removal and big guys, but never get any nice bounce or card drawing. I ended up with a decent B/R/G deck with some removal, but too slow a mana curve. The top of the curve was quite amusing though: [Skarrgan Firebird](#), [Borborygmos](#), and [Rakdos the Defiler](#). During the deck construction, I maintained a calm and focused face, but on the inside I was giggling like a little girl when thinking about all those monsters.

### Round four versus Udo Kaiser with more than one color



Udo put out some small flyers and quite a few different colors of mana. I cast [Fertile Imagination](#) for two saprolings and saw his hand of red spells. I blew up his only red mana, a Signet, with [Indrik Stomphowler](#) and then dropped [Borboborosmosmos](#). A race was won. Udo's misfortune continued in game two as he drew his [Convolute](#) one turn after I had resolved my Defiler. Udo just kept passing the turn with all his lands untapped, so I chickened out from attacking in fear of a [Repeal](#) or Peel from reality. He finally tapped half his lands for some guy and passed. I drew something insignificant, closed my

eyes and attacked. Thirty seconds pass and Udo was still thinking. Half my permanents were in the graveyard. The thought going through my mind was, "Does he have it?"

Then suddenly all games were stopped as it was five o'clock. Time for the tea break. I agonize for the entire half an hour. Should I have sugar or not?

Finally we went back to the tables and I heard "Okay, damage." The rest was academic.

2-2, 4-5

### Round five versus Michael Bungey with quite a few colours

Michael had a good deck filled with flyers, removal, bounce and card drawing. He stalled a bit on land in game one, so I just started dropping these absurdly big guys. It was not the late game that my deck had issues with. After game one, I realized that I am quite outclassed in this matchup and need more luck to win one of the next two.

I got a tough choice on turn 3 of the second game. I could have [Sundering Vitae](#)'d his [Izzet Signet](#) or just passed the turn. Michael didn't have too many red sources in his Blue/White deck and the only enchantment I'd seen was [Plumes of Peace](#). I thought for ages and passed. He then proceeded to win a close game by casting three critical red spells from his only red source. I did get to Vitae his [Faith's](#)

[Fetters](#), but the Signet would have been a better target. I felt disappointed. The Tomi of old would have just gone for it and killed the artifact. Nowadays I am often playing it too safe. You need to take calculated risks to win these things.

The third game was a typical anticlimax, as I just mulligan and stumble. In this match we played one good game and I messed that one up.

2-3, 5-7

### Round six versus Rob Wagner with more colours than you



Rob and I had quite similar decks except that his big guys weren't as impressive: Two [Helldozers](#). As we were playing these games of attrition finally won by my recurring Firebird, I was taken back in time to 1994. I was playing at the local junior high school during lunch break and putting Instill Energies onto my Demonic Hordes like it was nothing. I finally ran out of lands to destroy in the three-player game and was facing my first ever existential crisis. What do you do when there is nothing left to conquer?

Rob was a good sport about it and suggested that we play some Extended after the match. He gave me a Heartbeat deck while playing himself with some odd [Wild Mongrel-Life from the Loam](#) thing. I utterly demolished him in two games and all was good.

3-3, 7-7

I figured after the draft that what I had was a 2-1 deck. I took the Izzet gambit, but got none of their cards. I then proceeded to stubbornly pass all the good Orzhov cards and ended up with mediocre Gruul. Often your draft is made in the second pack where you see whether the guy on your left is willing to cooperate. I passed almost no blue at all in the beginning, but then again I didn't see much. The guy on my left, Uda, ended up being in every color, so no wonder he wanted to take the Izzet goodies. I should have adapted to that.

At this point I needed to win out to make the Top 8. It was time to do my prerelease draft. I opened my first *Coldsnap* booster and looked at the cards. Pretty pictures. Nice, this is the removal I read about. Hey look, there is another one. Wow, is this green guy big. And hey that one sure has a lot of text. This will be fu...

"Ten seconds!"

Whoops! Quick! Does my rare have flying? It did. I took the [Rimefeather Owl](#) and proceeded to pick up lots of blue. [Frost Raptor](#), [Frozen Solid](#) and [Krovikan Whispers](#) went really late. Second pack gave me some black in the form of Chills to the Bone and Disciples of Tevesh Tzat plus mediocre guys. I picked up some red while trying to decide my colours. The last booster was another ridiculous blue affair with two more [Krovikan Whispers](#) and a never ending stream of flyers. It was fair to say that my deck was a proper beating.

I had two [Grim Harvests](#), but didn't realize how good they were, so left the other one in the sideboard. I showed my deck to several people and they told me to put the third Whispers in the sideboard. This just seemed wrong to me, as the card looks so powerful. Maybe people are afraid to play these risk-reward cards, opting instead for mediocre things? It seems that the first pick cards that take the longest time to catch on are either creatures with reusable abilities ([Troubled Healer](#), [Sparksmith](#), [Daru Stinger](#), [Kabuto Moth](#)) or swingy cards with considerable drawbacks ([Reckless Spite](#), [Magma Burst](#), [Kaervek's Purge](#)). Not that they take too long anymore, as for the past few years there have been numerous pick order articles on major sites immediately after a new set appears. Gone is the sense of discovery. I long for the fifties.



*Quick! Does my rare have flying?*

## Round seven versus Larry Devis with G/R

Larry had some off-color snow lands to activate his [Stalking Yetis](#). These guys would have been a big issue for me, but I drew the [Grim Harvest](#) just in time. Eventually he had to trade the Yetis for some bigger guys and I just brought them back. This black card is quite nice! I won with a Whispers. In game two, a Yeti killed something until trading with my [Adarkar Windform](#). I Whispered an enchanted guy, getting three-for-one in a trade and then took control once again with [Grim Harvest](#). This time I had two of them in my deck.

4-3, 9-7

Hardly the record I was looking for, but it was nice to make a comeback from the 2-3. My mood is often quite closely related to the result of my past rounds, so I was actually happy. As always, it was nice to play against English people. I have played half a dozen tournaments in the past year here in the country and am still amazed by how cordial everyone is. It is rare for anyone to lash out any

kind of abuse after losing. There had been a few matches, though, where the loser has been bitter and sarcastic after the round, but I can hardly complain as it was always me.

For quite a few times during the tournament someone who was playing close to me called a judge over. It was always just to check up on some rules issue, like "can I do this with this card?" I am used to playing at Pro Tours where "Judge!" means that someone is trying to gain some advantage over their opponent and get them a game loss for making a mistake. Hence I still get a bit uneasy when I hear the sound. Kind of like a war veteran when faced with something loud. Okay, not that extreme.

I have played **Magic** mostly in Finland, the USA, and England. These are the three places where I have stayed for longer periods of time. The countries in question are fairly different, and it shows in the way their tournament players act. Casual players on the other hand are quite similar all around the world. Every prerelease I go to seems to be filled with the same kind of sheer joy of discovery. The same is true for Friday Night **Magic**. But when you go any higher up the tournament ladder, it starts to change.

In the U.S. there seem to be a lot of friendly rivalries between different teams. These lead to all kind of weird rubdowns after the matches. It is quite common to have someone point out a mistake you made after a match. This isn't normally meant to be annoying in any way, the U.S. player just likes to celebrate his or her victory with comments that prove he or she played well in the match. The nation is quite clearly highly competitive and a lot of the players at the PTQ level and higher really want to become better at the game.

In Finland, the tournaments are more quiet. We are just more silent in general and not much into small talk. It is considered rude to interrupt someone's thinking process with any kind of Rounders-like gametalk. It is also quite rare for someone to shout out a cheer after winning a match and then go and do a round of high fives with all his mates.

The UK is like a mix of the two. People are quite calm about most things, but there is more talking than back home. The attitude in general is more casual than I've seen anywhere. There is also a general sense of politeness similar to what I have encountered in Japan. During Nationals, I was talking on my cell phone both at the beginning of a round and during a side event draft. No one commented about it, but I could see mildly disapproving stares. They just didn't want to say anything about it. It took me a while to realize I was being inconsiderate.

Disclaimer: All of the above is a generalization to some degree. Back at school, my main subject was International Business, so I am quite interested in the differences between nations. I have enjoyed playing tournaments in all three places, but the experiences have been quite different.



Due to my four hours of sleep the night before, I jumped into bed immediately. Nine hours later, I woke up determined to win all my remaining rounds. To be perfectly honest, I woke up cursing my alarm clock and then tried to find the shower without opening my eyes too much. I read somewhere that there is a correlation between being skilled in math and being bad at waking up in the morning. Sounds logical, but I don't know if I can count on it (clever pun).

### Round eight versus Amar Dattani with G/W/u



"So, where do you usually play **Magic**?" "I don't." Amar was more than a little puzzled by my answer. I contemplated explaining it a bit further, but then just decided to relish in his confusion. I asked him the same question and he looked at me as if I'm braindead before pointing at his "Manchester Magic Club" shirt.

In game one, Amar beat me like a fool with his Juniper Order Druid and the [Diamond Faerie](#). The three [Krovikan Whispers](#) were nowhere to be seen. Amar seems to have really high quality guys, but

due to his color choices is highly lacking in the removal department. He stalls on land in game two and my fliers do their thing. The third game is a drawn out affair with my recycling [Gutless Ghoul](#) with [Grim Harvest](#). Eventually I drew into my Whispers, [Frozen Solids](#), and the Owl. 5-3, 11-8

### Round nine versus Laszlo Leka with B/G

Laszlo is originally from Hungary and in the country to study English. It seems that this whole "playing Nationals in a different country" thing is a more popular phenomenon than I thought.

I dropped two quick Disciples in the first game and Laszlo never got rid of them. I eventually ended up sacrificing one to kill an [Arctic Nishoba](#), but by then I was already beating him with the Owl. In game two Laszlo got me to eight until I stabilized. He then showed me two [Soul Spikes](#). I could have blocked a [Boreal Druid](#) with Disciple when at nine life, but chose not to. I might have done that if I knew [Soul Spike](#) existed. Game three was good old Owl beats, as mister Leka did not draw his only answer, [Garza's Assassin](#). Don't you just love rares?

6-3, 13-9

I ended up going 5-1 in Limited after failing to achieve much with my Husk deck. Sadly I now had to go back to the 60-card format. All I needed was a measly 3-0 to earn a spot in the Top 8.

### Round ten versus Werner Cloete with U/W Board Control

Werner is originally from South Africa and he just decided to spend a year in England. I was playing against two fellow outsiders in a row. We spoke about his 6-0, 0-6 run at the World Championships. Apparently he just got screwed with solid decks. Werner wasn't too happy with the deck he had now, but had still managed to go 2-1 in the first Standard portion. It turns out he is playing an almost identical semicontrol deck as my first round opponent.



I won the first game with a great draw. Husk went lethal on turn 5 with backup from 8.5 Tails. I figured there was no chance Werner had a [Shining Shoal](#) main and just went for it. Turned out he had quite a few of them, but had just failed to draw any. I had a great opening hand for game two: Confidant, 8.5, [Mortify](#), Husk. When Werner mulliganed, I proceeded to pump the fist in my mind. I am not the nice guy you might think. What happened then was that Werner [Spell Snared](#) both my guys and calmly beat me down with a Jitte'd up [Hand of Honor](#) as I drew nothing of significance. Thanks for the game! We topped with all off with a nailbiter of a third game where I double mulligan and miss my second land drop. It was an honor!

Werner was apologetic and pointed out that I would also have wished for him to take a double mulligan. I considered lying to his face and saying "No" but instead remained quiet.

6-4, 14-11

I was now officially out of contention. There were still some prizes for the Top 32, so I shouldn't drop out after all this trouble. Whenever I can no longer make the Top 8 of a tournament, I feel hollow for

a while. I just walked around the tournament site looking at people playing their games. Once more, Richard entertained me with stories about how Snakes destroyed his opponent.

### Round eleven versus Crispin Bateman with B/W

Crispin had a slow B/W deck with lots of removal and the [Dimir House Guard](#) transmute engine. Game one was more of the good old, as he used killed one of my two lands with [Angel of Despair](#) on turn 7. This felt a lot less bad than all the earlier stupid draws, as I was out of contention. It was more like mild discomfort. Maybe this is how other people feel when losing? I have always taken **Magic** really seriously even when playing on the casual level. This has made it quite tough to just have sheer fun at events like prereleases. I should loosen up a bit.

In game two I utterly destroyed Crispin with Okiba-Gangs. I had been boarding them in all the time - maybe I should have had some main. After a bit of trading, I was just up too many cards for him to make a comeback. 8.5 sealed the deal, as he failed to find a Wrath. The third game was really close with us destroying each other's hand and him killing my guys. It went on forever until I dropped 8.5 with Crispin at six life. On his turn, he transmuted for Wrath and passed. I topdecked a Shinobi and beat him down to three. He decided to discard [Angel of Despair](#) and the Wrath, leaving one card. I pass the turn and he fails to draw a land for his second Angel.

7-4, 16-12

### Round twelve versus Richard Bland with Tron



This was apparently a bad matchup for me. In game one, Richard killed all my lands with [Wildfire](#) and then [Demonfired](#) me out. I put up little to no fight. Shinobis made short work of him in game two, as I protected them with [Shining Shoals](#). He did have pretty cool sideboard tech in the form of [Imaginary Pets](#). They are excellent against Zoo and no slouches against me either.

The third game was possibly the most interesting one I played in the entire tournament. We kept jockeying for position as he killed my guys and I played the occasional discard spell. He [Wildfired](#) and we both just rebuilt. Then he [Wildfired](#) again, emptied his hand in a few turns, and put out

two [Imaginary Pets](#). I Mortified one of them and went down to five. He drew a counter at the worst possible time and couldn't keep the Pet on the table. After it went back to his hand, I rebuilt and won with several Shoals.

8-4, 18-13

5-1 Limited, 3-3 Standard

Richard also ended up 8-4 by going 2-1 in every portion of the tournament. He lost two draft finals while having two mediocre decks. No repeat champion for England then. I watched the Top 8 and only recognized Craig Stevenson and Stuart Wright. Stuart got his worst matchup immediately and lost with Vore to Zoo. Craig won it all with his G/W deck. Congrats to Craig, the editor that could. Also props to Calum Stephenson, Andrew Clayton and Paul Gower for making the Top 4.

My English nationals in a nutshell: I played the wrong Standard deck, drafted stubbornly in *Ravnica* and got the underdrafted color in *Coldsnap*.



## Lessons From English Nationals 2006

- Do not switch decks at the last moment. It is only normal to doubt your decision until the very end, but often it is just better to stick with what you are familiar with. It is okay to make sudden changes if someone gives you a techy deck at the last moment, but I don't recommend just choosing one of the usual suspects instead of the one you had worked on.
- Be adaptable during the draft. It is good to have a plan going in or after the first few picks, but things can change fast. What happens quite often in *Ravnica* draft is that no one really wants the Orzhov guild.
- Blue is often underdrafted in new formats. Sure, I took it mainly since I opened the Owl, but the statement still holds. Keep an eye out for the color that has difficult cards to evaluate.
- Take calculated risks in drafting, deckbuilding, and the games themselves. Sure you end up looking pretty stupid when your Defiler gets bounced during combat, but you would often have lost the game by just waiting, too. If I would have killed a Signet on turn 3 with my sideboarded [Sundering Vitae](#), I might be on my way to Paris now.

And the last lesson: Do as I say, not as I do.

Now it is time for a recommendation. If you like aggro-control decks, at least try out Snakes. There is probably a more tuned list out there somewhere - Richard and I just put the deck together after having played against it twice. Regardless, it is both fun and effective.

## **Epilogue**

After doing some side event drafting and watching the Top 8, I go to collect my prizes for the main event. It is... six boosters. Two *Coldsnap*, two *Ravnica*, a *Guildpact* and a *Dissension*. I thank the person politely, walk away, and just stare at them. Is this what it has come down to? I open my *Coldsnap* and look at the rare. I think it looks a bit odd. A bit out of place. A bit past its prime, it probably would have been good in earlier formats.

Or maybe that's just me.

Tomi Walamies